



# Kent Academic Repository

**Stoner, Jo (2019) *The Cultural Lives of Domestic Objects in Late Antiquity. Late Antique Archaeology (Supplementary Series), 4* . Brill, Leiden, Netherlands, 120 pp. ISBN 978-90-04-38687-7.**

## Downloaded from

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/69374/> The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

## The version of record is available from

<https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004391062>

## This document version

Pre-print

## DOI for this version

## Licence for this version

UNSPECIFIED

## Additional information

## Versions of research works

### Versions of Record

If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

### Author Accepted Manuscripts

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in *Title of Journal* , Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

## Enquiries

If you have questions about this document contact [ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk](mailto:ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk). Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our [Take Down policy](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies) (available from <https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies>).

**THE CULTURAL LIVES OF DOMESTIC  
OBJECTS  
IN LATE ANTIQUITY**

BY

JO STONER

**Contents**

**Foreword**

**List of Illustrations**

## List of Abbreviations

### Introduction

#### 1 Heirloom Objects in Antiquity

- Defining 'Heirlooms'
- Intentional Heirlooms
- Marriage and Dowry
- Death and Burial
- Texts
- Conclusion

#### 2 Gifts in Late Antiquity

- Identifying Gift Objects
- Wedding Gifts
- Other Celebrations
- Imperial Gifts
- Handmade Gifts
- Texts
- Conclusion

#### 3 Souvenirs in Late Antiquity

- Defining Souvenirs
- Secular Late Antique Souvenirs
- Souvenirs and 'Regional Specialities'
- Souvenirs of Events
- Sacred Souvenirs
  - Christian Souvenirs: Relics*
  - Christian Souvenirs: Containers*
- Souvenirs at Home

#### 4 Case Study: Baskets in Late Antiquity

- Introduction
- Evidence and Scholarship
- Baskets and Late Antique Femininity
- Baskets as a Pagan Ritual Object
- Baskets as a Symbol of Plenty
- Baskets and Personal Meaning: Early Christian Monastic Evidence
  - The Production Process*
  - Basket Making as a Spiritual Activity*
  - Basket Making as an Economic Activity*
  - Baskets as Gifts*
  - Baskets as Souvenirs*
  - Baskets as Heirlooms*
- Layers of Meaning

### Conclusions

- Heirlooms
- Gifts
- Souvenirs
- Baskets
- Behaviours and Meaningful Material Culture
- The Multiplicity of Meaningful Objects: Gift, Heirloom, or Souvenir?
- Reconstruction of a Late Antique Home

## **Bibliography**

Ancient Textual Editions and Inscriptions  
Modern Sources

## **Foreword**

This book is based upon my PhD thesis, produced at the University of Kent, as part of the Research Project F/00 236/AF *The Visualisation of the Late Antique City* (2011-2014), funded by the Leverhulme Trust, for which Luke Lavan was 'Principal investigator' and Ellen Swift 'Co-investigator'. Above all, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Ellen Swift, without whose support, enthusiasm and guidance this piece of research would not exist. Also Dr Luke Lavan, for providing me with the chance to work on the this research project, and subsequently to publish my thesis in this current form. I would also like to thank John Beale who generously provided three years of funding for a GTA research scholarship at the University of Kent.

I would like to extend thanks to The Roman Society for their generous grant via the Hugh Last Fund in support of the costs of the illustrative material reproduced in this book. Also to Lloyd Bosworth for kindly advising on the artefact drawings. My thanks also go to the anonymous peer reviewers and my examiners Professors Antony Eastmond and Catherine Richardson, for their insightful comments and recommendations for the process of turning my thesis into a coherent manuscript. Also Michael Mulryan for his editing skills, and Nikos Karydis, Gavin Osbourne, Anne Stutchbury, Joe Williams, and Faith Morgan for their comments, suggestions and support throughout the entirety of this work. In particular, I wish to sincerely thank Professor Liz James for her valuable advice ever since first introducing me to the material culture of Late Antiquity.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to all my friends and family who have forced food, drink, and company upon me as and when necessary, with patience and humour – if you are reading this, you know who you are.

This book is dedicated to my dad Peter.

## List of Illustrations

Fig. 1: The Sevso Hunting Plate, silver with gilt and niello decoration, diameter 70cm, 4th – 5th c. AD. Image: © Hungarian National Museum.

Fig. 2: Fayum portrait of a woman in a torc-style necklace, encaustic on beech wood, height 45.7cm, AD 130-200, Antinoopolis, Egypt, The Walters Art Museum 32.4. Image: © The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

Fig. 3: Hoxne body chain (reverse), gold, mount width 3.5cm, deposited 5th c. AD, British Museum 1994,0408.1. Image: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig. 4: Cage cup, glass, height 12.1cm, early 4th c. AD, excavated Cologne-Braunsfeld, Germany, Romisch Germanisches Museum, Cologne, inv. 60.1. Image: © Rheinisches Bildarchiv, rba 100632.

Fig. 5: Figurine of Dea Nutrix goddess, pipe clay, height 15cm, width 5.4cm, 2nd c. AD, excavated Baldock, Hertfordshire. Image: Reproduced with the permission of North Hertfordshire Museum.

Fig. 6: Globular jug, blown glass, height 16.4cm, 3rd – 4th c. AD, height 16.4 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 74.51.134. Image: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 7: The Projecta Casket (showing lid decoration), silver-gilt, width 48.8cm, late 4th c. AD, British Museum 1866,1229.1. Image: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig. 8: Marriage belt from Antioch or Constantinople, gold, length 75.5cm, 6th – 7th c. AD, Dumbarton Oaks Collection 37.33. Image: © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.

Fig. 9: Wedding ring depicting clasped hands, gold, height 1.6cm, 6th c. AD. The Walters Art Museum, 57.1715. Image: © The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

Fig. 10: Vessel base depicting a couple with Hercules, gold leaf and glass, diameter 10.5 cm, 4th c. AD, British Museum 1863,0727.3. Image: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig. 11: Base of a bowl featuring gold leaf decoration, gold leaf and glass, diameter 14 cm, late 4th – early 5th c. AD, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 17.194.357. Image: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 12: Shallow dish, glass, diameter 27.9 cm, 4th c. AD, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 1976.163.17. Image: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 13: Medallion depicting portrait of woman with infant boy, gold leaf and glass, diameter 4.8 cm, 4th c. AD, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 17.190.109a. Image: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 14: Modern tourist magnet from Rome depicting the Colosseum, resin, diameter 8 cm. Image: author.

Fig. 15: The Rudge Cup (replica), electrotype copy (original is bronze), diameter 9cm, 2nd c. AD, British Museum 1964,1007.1. Image: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig. 16: Copy of the Tyche of Antioch by Eutychedes, bronze, height 15cm, 1st – 2nd c. AD, Yale University Art Gallery 1986.65.1. Image: Yale University Art Gallery.

Fig. 17: Tyche bottle, glass, height 16.5 cm, 2nd – 3rd c. AD. Yale University Art Gallery, 1955.6.81. Image: Yale University Art Gallery.

Fig. 18: Bottle depicting the Alexandria Pharos, glass, size unknown, Poetovio (modern day Ptuj, Slovenia), Regional Museum of Ptuj, Slovenia. Image: drawing by author, after D. L. Knific in Lazar (2009) fig. 1.

Fig. 19: The 'Populonia' bottle with abraded decoration depicting town of Baiae, glass, height 18.4 cm, late 3rd – early 4th c. AD, Corning Museum of Glass 62.1.31. Image: © Collection of The Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, New York.

Fig. 20: Drawing of Populonia bottle depicting Baiae. Image: drawing by author.

Fig. 21: Dish depicting the spa at Umeri, silver, diameter 21.1 cm, from Otañes, Spain, private collection. Image: drawing by author, after Jackson (1999) fig. 5.

Fig. 22: Tapestry with busts of Dionysiac figures including a bald-headed Silenus on the bottom row, linen and wool, width 147.3 cm, 5th – 6th c. AD, from Antinoopolis, Egypt, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 31.9.3. Image: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 23: Leaf of the Consular Diptych of Areobindus, ivory, AD 506, 37.6 x 14 cm, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, inv. no. W-12. Image: © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Leonard Kheifets.

Fig. 24: Contorniate medallion featuring Alexander the Great and the Circus Maximus, bronze, diameter 4cm, AD 356 – 395, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, 13.1695. Photo: © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Fig. 25: Vessel base depicting Trasinius the charioteer, glass and gold leaf, diameter 8.8 cm, 3rd c. AD, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 28.57.24. Image: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 26: Drawing of vessel base depicting Trasinius. Image: drawing by author.

Fig. 27: Beaker engraved with charioteer Eutychedes, glass, height 10.8 cm, 4th c. AD, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 59.11.14. Image: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 28: Drawing of beaker featuring Eutychedes. Image: drawing by author.

Fig. 29: Vessel base depicting a gladiator, glass and gold leaf, width 7 cm, 4th c. AD, British Museum 1898,0719.2. Image: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig. 30: Group of the Ephesian Artemis, terracotta, height 23.5 cm, 2nd c. AD, from Asia Minor, Harvard Art Museums 2012.1.88. Image: Harvard Art Museums /Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Transfer from the Alice Corinne McDaniel Collection, Department of the Classics, Harvard University.

Fig. 31: Pilgrim's jar with Jewish symbols, mould-blown glass, height 7.9 cm, 6th – 7th c. AD, from Palestine, Yale University Art Gallery 1930.439. Photo: Yale University Art Gallery.

Fig. 32: Reliquary box containing stones from the Holy Land, engraved and gilded wood, height 24 cm, 6th c. AD, from Syria or Palestine, Museo Sacro, Musei Vaticani 61883. Image: © Vatican Museums, all rights reserved.

Fig. 33: Pilgrim token of Saint Symeon the Elder, clay, width 2.2 cm, 6th – 7th c. AD, from Syria, The Walters Art Museum 48.2666. Image: © The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

Fig. 34: Pilgrim flask with mould decoration of Saint Menas in the orans position, ballas ware pottery, height 11 cm, Byzantine period, from Alexandria, Egypt, Petrie Museum, London UC19516. Image: Courtesy of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, UCL.

Fig. 35: Pilgrim jug decorated with cross, moulded glass, height 15.1 cm, 6th – 7th c. AD, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 99.21.3. Image: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 36: Pilgrim jug featuring pillar with stylite saint, mould blown glass, height 20.6 cm, 5th – 7th c. AD, from Syria, Yale University Art Gallery, 1955.6.148. Image: Yale University Art Gallery.

Fig. 37: Drawing of jug depicting pillar with Stylite saint. Image: drawing by author.

Fig. 38: Tombstone of Regina featuring a wool basket (bottom right), stone, height 119 cm, 2nd c. AD, Arbeia Roman Fort & Museum, Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums. Image: © Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums/Bridgeman Images.

Fig. 39: Resist dye cloth of Annunciation scene, linen, width 68 cm, AD 300-400, from Akhmim, Egypt, Victoria & Albert Museum 723-1897. Image: © Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Fig. 40: Embroidered textile roundel depicting scene of the Annunciation, linen and silk, diameter 19 cm, 6th - 8th c. AD, from Egypt, Victoria & Albert Museum 814-1903. Image: © Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Fig. 41: Figurine showing Isis nursing Bes seated on a wicker basket, terracotta, height 7.5 cm, early Roman period, from Memphis, Egypt, Petrie Museum, London UC47606. Image: Courtesy of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, UCL.

Fig. 42: Textile with basket design, wool and linen tapestry, width 19.6 cm, AD 300-499, from Egypt, Victoria & Albert Museum 2147-1900. Image: © Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Fig. 43: Fragment of textile wall hanging, wool and linen, width 50 cm, 4th c. AD, from Egypt, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 90.5.153. Image: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 44: Dominus Iulius mosaic featuring baskets of gifts top left, bottom left, and bottom right, width 5.65 m, late 4th c. AD, from Carthage, Bardo Museum, Tunis. Image: © Boyd Dwyer.

Fig. 45: Drawing of decorated section of rim of the Graincourt dish featuring fresh produce and a basket (far right), silver, diameter 35cm, 3rd c. AD, from Graincourt-lès-

Havricourt, France, Musée du Louvre, Paris. Image: drawing © Ellen Swift, after Baratte (1989) no. 87.

Fig. 46: Bundle of date palm leaf strips, height 13.6 cm, from the Monastery of Epiphanius, Thebes, Egypt, 6th c. AD, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 14.1.561. Image: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 47: 5 strand plait, date palm leaf, length 35 cm, 6th c. AD, from the Monastery of Epiphanius, Thebes, Egypt, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 14.1.564. Image: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 48: Peristyle mosaic of man feeding a mule, size unknown, 6th c. AD, from the Great Palace, Constantinople, Museum of Great Palace Mosaics, Istanbul. Image: © Ellen Swift.



## List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations are those used by the *American Journal of Archaeology* for periodicals, and the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd edn. 1999), A. H. M Jones, *Later Roman Empire* (Oxford 1964), G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford 1961) for ancient sources. For papyri, I have used the abbreviations and editions of translations cited in the online checklist of Duke University: J. F. Oates, R. S. Bagnall, S. J. Clackson, A. A. O'Brien, J. D. Sosin, T. G. Wilfong, and K. A. Worp, *Checklist of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets*: <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/texts/clist.html>. Other abbreviations used are listed below:

AP *Apophthegmata Patrum*, The Alphabetical Collection.

AP Sys *Apophthegmata Patrum*, The Greek Systematic Collection.

## Introduction

This is a book about late antique material culture; it is also a book about people's treasured personal possessions. Using evidence from archaeology, texts, and images, it explores how personal domestic objects in Late Antiquity acquired value and importance. Its aim is to provide a new analysis of domestic objects from the period. This book provides an important, but generally ignored, perspective on the lives of artefacts by focusing upon cultural meanings and personal or sentimental values. The result is a more nuanced and authentic view of possessions in the late antique period, taking into account the full range of meanings and values present within examples of material culture. It also allows the discussion of material culture to be representative of a broader section of society, rather than just the elites or middling classes that often form the focus of studies on Late Antiquity. The types of values this book investigates are less tied to economic or status concerns. As such, late antique society as a whole is addressed through its material culture, allowing light to also fall on the possessions of the elusive lower classes of the period.

Over the course of conducting research for this book, I have, unsurprisingly, spent a significant amount of time thinking about my own possessions. I keep returning to one specific item—a silver finger ring—that, as an example of a personal possession, usefully illustrates the kinds of meanings and values that this book seeks to uncover and explore. This ring is an object that I value for several reasons. My late father bought it for me as a gift when I was a teenager. I like the way it looks, despite its visible wear, which reflects the fact that it has been worn almost every day for the last 20 years. It has become a part of my outward appearance, and I consider it to be a material reflection of my identity. It is made of sterling silver and features a semi-precious stone, however it cost less than £100. If I were to lose this ring, I would miss it greatly. These details make it one of my most treasured possessions and something of great personal and sentimental value to me. What is notable in this example are the layers of meanings and values that have accumulated over time—some simultaneously, others consecutively—as my life and the object itself changes. This modest silver ring's value does not rely upon any individual one of these stories, but rather upon the complex web of meanings and events that have built up over the course of its life. My point in telling this story is that the same considerations can be made for objects from Late Antiquity. These webs of interlinked meanings and values are the basis of a range of connections between people and possessions. All objects have stories and, by exploring them, these things can tell us more about the people who owned them, the multiple lives of objects, and ultimately the daily life and culture that produced them. A consideration of the personal values of objects in Late Antiquity can thus reveal the private lives of individuals.

One reason why values such as sentimental worth or personal meaning have been generally neglected in contemporary scholarship on Late Antiquity, is their conception as subjective, and thus impossible to identify.<sup>1</sup> When such values are acknowledged as significant, it is done in passing, with no further attempt to discuss the value of this approach with any real intent. However, well-established theoretical approaches from archaeology, anthropology, and disciplines even further afield, such as psychology and consumer studies, provide the keen researcher with the tools necessary to identify and discuss such scales of value within a meaningful framework.

The theory of object biography looks to the lifespan of an object and the events that occur within it to identify the creation of meaning, and is an approach that underpins this entire book. Anthropologist Igor Kopytoff first discussed the concept of object biography in the 1980s, acknowledging that objects, like people, have life spans, during

---

<sup>1</sup> See Hobbs (2007) 81 and Millett (1994) 100, discussed further below in relation to hoards.

which events and changes occur.<sup>2</sup> Since Kopytoff, the theory of object biography has been variously discussed and developed in scholarship; the archaeologists Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall argued object meaning emerges from moments of social action in the life of an object.<sup>3</sup> If we understand social action to be the biographical events that accumulate to create the history or ‘biography’ of an object—features, as Kopytoff suggests, such as an object’s manufacture or purchase—then it becomes possible to also identify the moments at which meanings are created.<sup>4</sup> These moments, such as an object’s creation, deposition, movement in space, and curation over time, are sometimes possible to identify within the archaeological and textual record, and are the focus of discussion throughout this book. Identifying such biographical events as moments when meaning is created, by extension allows an understanding of an item’s potential value to its owner.

The way in which an object’s biography can affect its value and meanings is seen in several late antique examples. The colour purple—for example in the form of porphyry stone or the murex dye for textiles—held particular prestige in late antique society, and was connected with the imperial family. Its use was restricted and it had connotations of power, luxury, and exclusivity.<sup>5</sup> The reasons why these materials were valued are multiple, however they can be explained in part by using a biographical approach to the material evidence. Porphyry stone is notoriously hard to work and was extracted from the imperial quarries in Egypt, on the empire’s edge.<sup>6</sup> Thus, porphyry required considerable expense and effort to work it, with many man-hours required for its extraction from quarries, transportation, and carving. The value of porphyry objects is thus connected to the material’s origin, both geographically and in terms of production, both key biographical details. The associated connotations that come from this are those of power and wealth, and ultimately that only the imperial family could access this exclusive and expensive material.<sup>7</sup>

It is a similar story for *murex*, the purple dye obtained from a type of sea snail and used to dye cloth. The production technique was difficult and lengthy, with only a small amount of the pigment obtained from each creature, making it an expensive and prestigious commodity.<sup>8</sup> Its difficult production and subsequent exclusive nature are again key elements in its biography, which, as for porphyry, created value and meaning. The effects of these values are identifiable in wider society. Strictly speaking only the imperial family was allowed the prestige of wearing the colour purple, and restrictions were placed upon the manufacture and ownership of purple garments; the Theodosian Code lists the manufacture and concealment of purple clothing as a crime akin to high treason.<sup>9</sup> These examples demonstrate how the biographies of objects can create meaning and value within society, in this case in terms of wealth and political status.

However, events occurring within an object’s biography also create personal meanings and sentimental value. This is through the association of an object’s history with human memory. Anthropologist Annette Weiner, in her discussion of “inalienable” possessions, explained that often the most meaningful possessions have inextricable links with human memory. Objects can function as repositories for memories; through

---

<sup>2</sup> Kopytoff (1986).

<sup>3</sup> Gosden and Marshall (1999) 170.

<sup>4</sup> Kopytoff (1986) 66.

<sup>5</sup> Reinhold (1970); Bowersock, *et al* (1999) 382; Janes (1998a) 37.

<sup>6</sup> Török (2005) 183. The only location from which porphyry was quarried is Mons Porphyrites; see Peacock and Maxfield (2007).

<sup>7</sup> Delbrueck (1932).

<sup>8</sup> Reese (1987) 203-204. Approximately 1200 murex shells produced only 1.6 g of the dye: Munro (1983) 14-15.

<sup>9</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 10.21.3.

their history (or biography) they retain past memories for the future.<sup>10</sup> These kinds of treasured objects function as a reference to the past, such as the ticket stub kept from a concert, or flowers pressed and kept from a wedding day. Such objects preserve an intangible memory, and through their own materiality manifest the abstract as a solid form, recreating something from the past in the present.<sup>11</sup> A quote from the late antique writer and bishop, John Chrysostom, acknowledges directly this commemorative capacity of objects:

[...] and let us endeavour to carry along with us a memento of the present fast when it is over. And as it often happens when we have purchased a vestment, or a slave, or a precious vase, *we recall again the time when we did so, and say to each other, "That slave I purchased at such a festival; that garment I bought at such a time;"* so, in like manner, if we now reduce to practise this law, we shall say, I reformed the practice of swearing during that Lent [...]<sup>12</sup> [My emphasis].

Objects of sentimental value therefore act as authenticators of memory, through their role as material 'witnesses'. The attraction to objects that perpetuate the past stems from the innate human desire to prevent change. Investing objects with personal meaning reflects the desire to create permanence, and thus combat the effects of loss, death, and degeneration that naturally occur in the lived experiences of humans; in this way, objects can preserve, recreate, and regenerate the past.<sup>13</sup> This allows the preservation and maintenance of memory in a world that is forever changing.

Memory is embodied within objects in several ways. Commemoration can be explicit and the primary purpose of an object. In Late Antiquity, the accession to office of consuls, the chief magistrates of the state, was commemorated through the creation of ivory diptychs, which were restricted to this office only, and distributed as gifts to their peers.<sup>14</sup> These were luxurious objects, not only in terms of their prestigious material, but also the craftsmanship involved in their creation. These diptychs were created to commemorate an event, which in turn became a primary feature of the biography of these objects.

Even less overt objects of commemoration have biographical features that are embodied materially and evoke memories. A 4th to 5th c. AD gold bracelet, from the British Hoxne Hoard, features pierced decoration spelling out, *VTERE FELIX DOMINA IVLIANE*, or "Use happily, lady Juliana" presumably referring to the intended wearer of the item.<sup>15</sup> Such personalised objects are common from the Roman and late antique period, with their ownership writ large across their physical form, acting as a memento of their owners' identities.<sup>16</sup> Of course, objects do not necessarily need outward physical signs of their biography to function as holders of memories. This function can still exist as long as someone knows the biography of the possession. This is the case for most personal possessions or domestic objects, and it is their biographies that give them value.

Objects of sentimental value are uniquely valuable to their owners, regardless of any intrinsic or economic worth to wider society, precisely because of their unique

---

<sup>10</sup> Weiner (1992) 7. Similarly Maines and Glynn describe objects as being "numinous", as their significance comes from an association (real or imagined) with a person, place or event endowed with specific importance: Maines and Glynn (1993) 10.

<sup>11</sup> Maines and Glynn (1993) 10. Lynn Meskell discusses a similar concept: Meskell (2005) 5.

<sup>12</sup> Joh. Chrys. *Hom. ad pop. Ant.* 6.17 (transl. Budge (1856) 131) .

<sup>13</sup> Weiner (1992) 7.

<sup>14</sup> Bowes (2001) 338; Delbrueck (1929).

<sup>15</sup> Johns and Bland (1994) 170.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, the Thetford treasure, which contains two spoons engraved with the owner's name, Silviola and one with the name Perservera (now held in the British Museum (accession numbers 1981,0201.69 and 1981,0201.68). See also Johns and Potter (1983).

biography. They are distinct objects in the mind of the owner because, to use the vocabulary of Kopytoff, their biography means they are “singularised”. Singularisation is when an object is considered different for some reason and removed from the commodity sphere, meaning that it is excluded from further economic exchanges: it will not be bought or sold.<sup>17</sup> To be removed from the economic sphere means that the object is either uniquely valuable, or uniquely worthless.<sup>18</sup> Their personal meaning, in the form of the link to the past that they embody, singularises them, meaning that parting from such objects becomes unthinkable for the owner.<sup>19</sup>

Anthropologist David Graeber further defines the concept of singularisation. Instead of emphasising the role of an object’s history in its singularisation, the emphasis should instead be on the object’s *capacity* to accumulate a history, as this is what enhances the object’s ultimate sentimental value.<sup>20</sup> In this sense, the capacity to accumulate and retain histories is linked to the permanence of the object in question. One example, provided by Weiner, is that, of all possible objects, the most ineffectual inalienable possession is food, as its function is to ‘release’ in the form of energy rather than to ‘store’ (in our case, history).<sup>21</sup> Therefore, an ephemeral object might become associated with an event, however if it perishes soon afterwards, without a distance of time, there is no chance for the memory to be retrieved from it, or for the required sense of nostalgia to be sought out by the owner. An object must exist in time and space in order to be able to later provoke memories and feelings in an observer.

One question that is addressed throughout this book is the extent to which people in Late Antiquity chose to rely upon material culture to store their memories. Did the culture of the time encourage the creation of biographical objects, or were these capabilities more often a by-product of an object’s ownership and use? Such a question addresses the extent to which material objects were considered active in Late Antiquity, and able to effect change independently of any human actors. This ability, known as ‘agency’, refers to the capacity of objects to instigate social action, or to cause things to happen. Archaeologist Ian Hodder described objects as representing actions which have the power to change and shape their environment.<sup>22</sup>

Such material agency can be found in the evidence from Late Antiquity: early Christian relics, like the terracotta pilgrim tokens manufactured and distributed at holy sites, were considered to hold divine power within their material nature. A story from the *Vita* of Saint Symeon the Younger, described how a monk named Dorotheos used his pilgrim token to quell a storm he encountered at sea on his return journey from the saint, demonstrating the power of objects to act and cause effect. By crumbling the token on the sea and the boat, the vessel was protected from the raging waters.<sup>23</sup>

The anthropologist Alfred Gell, in his famous work *Art and Agency*, further explored how both people and things act as agents, initiating causal sequences and behaving as the source of social action.<sup>24</sup> This influential concept was built upon further as a method for understanding the interactions of material culture and humans.<sup>25</sup> Gell’s approach to the issue of agency is anthropocentric, placing emphasis on the primacy of human action, and conceiving the agency of objects as an extension of this.<sup>26</sup> However, people

---

<sup>17</sup> Kopytoff (1986) 74, 80.

<sup>18</sup> Kopytoff (1986) 75.

<sup>19</sup> Kopytoff (1986) 80.

<sup>20</sup> Graeber (2001) 34.

<sup>21</sup> Weiner (1992) 38.

<sup>22</sup> Hodder (1987) 6.

<sup>23</sup> *V. Sym. Jun.* 235.

<sup>24</sup> Gell (1998) 16. Gell is one of the key names in work on material culture and agency, and his work is considered groundbreaking. There were, however, a number of scholars who were discussing these ideas in relation to early Christian art prior to this: see Kitzinger (1954), Vikan (1982), Belting (1994).

<sup>25</sup> See also Latour (1999) 174-83, and Knappett (2008).

<sup>26</sup> Gell (1998) 20.

and objects are inextricably tangled together in a symmetrical relationship. Humans use objects and invest their agency in material culture to cause action, however there is also a level of reliance and dependency upon objects which is independent of human intention.<sup>27</sup>

For example, it is clear from the memories that are suddenly and unexpectedly aroused when encountering objects, that remind us of moments from our past, that the capacity of objects to concretise memories in physical form is independent from any human intent.<sup>28</sup> However, human actors also make, use, and preserve objects with the explicit intention of securing memories and sentiment in material form, for example in the case of ready-made souvenirs, such as the Rudge Cup, discussed further in chapter 3. Therefore a symmetrical approach, one that acknowledges the reciprocal relationship between objects and people, is indispensable when considering the lives of late antique objects as meaningful possessions.

The majority of objects discussed within this study were originally domestic in nature, and were used, displayed, or stored within the home. The home is by its nature a controlled environment; the items kept within it are, by necessity, chosen by the inhabitants, and thus reflect their owners. This can be in terms of the image the inhabitants wish to project through material means. The home is, even today, a significant arena for the display of wealth, status, and personal identity. Late antique literature written by leading Church figures, demonstrates how, much to the Church's displeasure, people were attached to their possessions for reasons such as prestige and status. One of the sermons of Asterius of Amasea derided the wealthy for owning luxurious possessions, such as purple wall hangings, extensive dining silver, lamp stands and extravagant silver inlaid furniture.<sup>29</sup>

Of course, the material culture of the home might conversely reflect the lack of control over what items the owners could display; restrictions such as limited finances or unavailability of certain products would affect the contents of a late antique home.<sup>30</sup> The most popular and prestigious household objects were recreated in cheaper materials or manufacturing techniques, to fulfil the desire of the lower classes to emulate the material possessions of the wealthy.

Glass, ceramic and bronze imitations of more expensive silverware can be found in the archaeological record, for example the copper-alloy drinking cups in the 2nd to 3rd c. Chaourse Treasure.<sup>31</sup> Also, some of the 'Balkan' type of terracotta lamps found on the 7th c. Yassi Ada shipwreck, are very similar in style to bronze lamps of the same period.<sup>32</sup> The terracotta versions would be much cheaper to produce and purchase, allowing a wider section of society to own similar-looking objects, and thereby participate in the same fashions.

However, the objects kept within the home can also reflect the inhabitants' personal histories and identities. The intimate space of the home means that many of the objects

---

<sup>27</sup> Hodder (2012) 28. See also Gosden (2005) for a discussion of object-centred agency.

<sup>28</sup> Heersmink (2017) 6-7. In psychology, the ability of objects to store memories is part of distributed cognition: see Michaelian and Sutton (2013) for an overview of the scholarship.

<sup>29</sup> Asterius Amas. *Hom.* 3.

<sup>30</sup> Diocletian's Price Edict shows that a range of different qualities, with associated scales of pricing, were available for most main commodities, for example linen thread of first, second, and third qualities, and 'coarse linen for common people, farmers and slaves': *Ed. Diocl.* 26.1 (transl. Graser (1959) 385-86). In addition, supplies of certain products could be interrupted, especially in rural areas some distance from central commercial markets. Such shortages might result in the reuse and recycling of older material, having a direct impact on domestic material culture: see Swift (2013) 110-12.

<sup>31</sup> Baratte (1993) 231-43, esp. 241. The plating of copper vessels would not only change their appearance but also remove the unpleasant smell produced by the copper alloy beneath. Drandaki (2013) 165, n.7. It should also be noted that the 4th c. AD was a period of luxurious glassware production, and therefore not all examples represent a cheaper equivalent: Dunbabin (2003) 163.

<sup>32</sup> Vitelli (1982) 196-97.

commonly found in domestic environments are, in some way, personal. For this reason, these objects can be considered significant. Psychologist Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi and sociologist Eugene Rochberg-Halton reasoned that domestic objects reflect, as well as shape, the owner's identity and sense of self, occupying as they do a level of permanence in the private dwelling.<sup>33</sup>

This link between identity and domestic objects means that the things a person chooses to surround him- or herself with can tell us specific things, such as the owner's self-image or how they wanted to be seen by others. In terms of identity verification, domestic objects work to remind a person of who they are.<sup>34</sup> Such objects have value, which stems from biographical features rather than prestigious materials, drawing instead upon cultural values or personal and social memory.

As for scholarship on domestic items from Late Antiquity; artefact studies are often art historical in nature, bringing together groups of objects for analysis in terms of iconography, manufacture and their broad function within society. These groups are usually based upon material or object type, resulting in useful works on silverware, ivories, statuary, and textiles, to name a small selection.<sup>35</sup> The nature of these sorts of studies means that their focus is often high status objects, and thus the possessions of the elites. This is in part due to the nature of the surviving material evidence. Modern research is never based upon the full extent of material culture that existed in the past; scholars can only base their research on the information accessible to them through the preserved, published, and otherwise known artefacts at their disposal.<sup>36</sup>

Such surviving items usually represent possessions of the elites as they are the artefacts most often preserved within collections and archives, and thus available for study.<sup>37</sup> One need only think of some of the most famous examples of material culture from Late Antiquity: the Projecta Casket; the Barberini Ivory; and the Rossano Gospels. These objects represent the possessions of the privileged of late antique society, and are often the stars of their museum collections, where they have been preserved for lengthy periods of time.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, objects made from hard-wearing or imperishable materials, such as glass and metal, survive better in a range of conditions in the archaeological record. Such materials, especially high value ones such as gold and silver, are again likely to be associated with the possessions of high status wealthy elites.

Regardless of preservation factors, there is also a bias today towards valuable objects, which, unconsciously or otherwise, are considered worthy of study in a way other more ordinary objects are not.<sup>39</sup> However, elite objects can still be discussed in relation to scales of value that are not intrinsically linked to issues of social and economic status, such as personal meaning and sentiment. In this way, prestigious objects that represent the possessions of only a small segment of late antique society, are discussed within this book, however they are reframed to move away from economic and social value. Thus, these objects can help to reveal the way in which possessions were conceived of and valued by all late antique people, regardless of their social standing or economic means.

---

<sup>33</sup> Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) 14.

<sup>34</sup> Wallendorf and Arnould (1988) 531.

<sup>35</sup> For silverware, see Leader-Newby (2004); for ivories see Al. Cameron (1986), Cutler (1998); for statuettes see Stirling (2005); for textiles, see Stauffer (1995).

<sup>36</sup> Grünbart and Stathakopoulos (2002) 300.

<sup>37</sup> Grünbart and Stathakopoulos (2002) 300.

<sup>38</sup> The Projecta Casket, excavated in the late 18th c., has been in the British Museum collection since 1800: accession no. 1866,1229.1. The Barberini Ivory, named after its famous French owner Cardinal Barberini in the 17th c., is now owned by the Louvre: accession no. OA9063. The Rossano Gospels, or the *Codex Purpureus Rossanensis*, are thought to have arrived at the Cathedral of Rossano, Italy, during the Byzantine period, where they still reside today in the Diocesan Museum.

<sup>39</sup> See Swift (2016) 63-94 for a discussion of such biases in antiquarian and modern scholarship on the material culture of Roman Britain.

The contents of hoards also make a significant contribution to this volume in terms of material evidence. However, like the artificial groupings of objects in studies collected by artefact type, hoard contents can also be difficult to relate back to their original use context. These assemblages of objects, often domestic or personal in nature, have been intentionally deposited for some reason, and this very specific context means they throw up a number of problems when asking questions of value, sentimental or otherwise. Hoards of material buried for safekeeping suggests that they contain material of some sort of worth, and that they were to be retrieved at a later point; this can be identified through their careful wrapping and evidence of packing materials, such as that used with the Hoxne Treasure.<sup>40</sup>

In fact, many scholarly discussions surrounding hoards and these various factors relate to the value of the objects.<sup>41</sup> However, there is more than one type of value, and hoard artefacts can represent sentimental as well as economic value. Curator Richard Hobbs disregards the importance of sentimental value in these kinds of assemblages, stating that it is subjective and only pertinent to the owners of the objects.<sup>42</sup> Others, however, acknowledge the importance of personal value; Martin Millett correctly identifies the importance of considering these “more nebulous values” when assessing the significance of hoards.<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, rather than assuming hoards were collections of possessions from a single home or family, they might reflect something more complicated. For example, the Thetford Treasure represents jewellery collected together by a craftsman for recycling, rather than valuables of an individual or family.<sup>44</sup> Thus, hoards objects cannot be assumed to represent a contemporaneous collection of personal possessions. This does not mean that such evidence is not useful for identifying sentimental value however. In hoards that were deposited at a single point in time, the presence of older objects within the assemblage can suggest behaviours, such as curation or inheritance, over a period of time prior to deposition. This is discussed in more detail in chapter 1.

On the face of it, the most obvious place to look for evidence for domestic objects is from excavation reports of domestic quarters in late antique towns and cities. Excavations of late antique domestic settlements, such as Sagalassos, Aphrodisias and Karanis, reveal domestic space, but again correlating the objects to the space in which they were found can be difficult.<sup>45</sup> Alongside the rich finds of late antique sculpture from the Atrium House in Aphrodisias, 5th to 6th c. *unguentaria* were found under the tetrastyle paving in the building, and within the apse of the peristyle local imitations of African Red Slipware were discovered, as well as various cooking fabrics.<sup>46</sup> It is important to question whether these finds also represent the possessions of the house’s inhabitants, and their normal location within the building.

We know that it is difficult to distinguish between places of use and places of storage within the domestic archaeological record.<sup>47</sup> We also know that domestic sites that were abandoned are unlikely to have finds that represent the material culture of a household going about normal daily business.<sup>48</sup> The misconception that abandoned or destroyed

---

<sup>40</sup> Hobbs (2007) 81.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Aitchison (1988) on the value of coin hoards.

<sup>42</sup> Hobbs (2007) 81.

<sup>43</sup> Millett (1994) 100.

<sup>44</sup> Johns and Potter (1983).

<sup>45</sup> Sagalassos, in south-west Turkey, is the focus of a long-term project by the University of Leuven: see Putzeys *et al.* (2007) 205-37 for discussion of the domestic finds. Aphrodisias, in western Anatolia, Turkey, has been extensively excavated by New York and Oxford universities, and has been subject to an epigraphic study by Charlotte Roueché: see Smith *et al.* (2016), and Roueché and Reynolds (1989). Karanis, in Egypt, has been excavated by the University of Michigan, with an additional focus on the papyri from the site: see Gazda (1983); Thomas (2001); Bagnall and Lewis (1979).

<sup>46</sup> De Staebler (2016) 138-39.

<sup>47</sup> Ellis (2000) 59; Berry (1997) 193-94.

<sup>48</sup> Allison (2004) 37-40.



domestic sites provide the perfect preservation of the ideally representative household, is seen from the excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum.<sup>49</sup> With Pompeii in particular, there was no sudden destruction without warning; instead many of the buildings actually show evidence of repairs, suggesting instead that there were other events such as earthquakes, before the town was destroyed in AD 79. As a result, many of the household assemblages found in the destruction deposits of Pompeii and Herculaneum instead represent domestic life during what could be regarded as a crisis.<sup>50</sup>

Domestic objects in such a situation may not have been kept in their usual locations, instead being relocated for safekeeping, taken out of the home or hidden.<sup>51</sup> Only certain rooms may have been used, or the homes may even have been abandoned completely, meaning the artefacts left to us are actually those discarded and left behind by their owners. Much of this underlines the fact that in these contexts, the domestic artefacts cannot be presumed to represent an ordinary day in an ordinary household of the period. In particular, meaningful possessions would be most likely absent; those of most value would be taken with the departing inhabitants. Of course, there are always exceptions, and depending on the nature of the inhabitants' departure, a variety of possessions could be abandoned along with the home.

Even at sites where most domestic objects have been removed, architectural elements can suggest the original placement of items within the domestic space. Niches were found throughout the Atrium House of Aphrodisias for the likely display of prized possessions; a particularly large one featuring marble revetment was located in one of the northern rooms of the building and was perhaps intended to display large-scale sculpture.<sup>52</sup> The Atrium House became a series of smaller residences during the mid to late 6th c., when it was subdivided. The large amount of sculpture found dumped in the walkway of the house likely reflects the new inhabitants wishing to use niches and other display areas for more functional storage.<sup>53</sup>

Similar architectural features are found in Egypt, in the houses at the site of Karanis, where soot marks suggest their use for lamps; some even featured elaborate decorative mouldings, and could well have been used as domestic shrines.<sup>54</sup> Other more ad hoc and improvisational storage places also existed in these Karanis homes, such as under stairs or on windowsills. A 2nd c. assemblage found on the windowsill of house C61 in Karanis consists of a pottery bowl, six pieces of glass, two baskets, weaving implements, a terracotta lamp, a stirring stick, and two combs, all presumably abandoned or forgotten when the final inhabitants departed.<sup>55</sup>

Organic materials survive better in Egypt than elsewhere in the empire, providing us with rare evidence for personal possessions that might have otherwise perished; as such, Egypt provides a large corpus of evidence for discussion within this book. For example, objects made of plant material often represent lower status objects, and thus might reveal more easily their personal and sentimental values, as any intrinsic value is naturally lower than objects made of precious materials. The evidence collated in this book also represents a diverse geographical spread; due to the nature of the evidence and the difficulty in identifying relevant material, there is little from one location,

---

<sup>49</sup> This is known as the "Pompeii premise": see Allison (2004) 4; Ascher (1961) 324.

<sup>50</sup> Penelope Allison has analysed finds in their context from the households of Pompeii, relating artefacts to their findspots as a starting point for discussions around object function, and use of domestic space: Allison (2004).

<sup>51</sup> Laurence (1994) 5.

<sup>52</sup> Lockey (2016) 251.

<sup>53</sup> Lockey (2016) 251.

<sup>54</sup> Gazda and Royer (1983) 25, 31.

<sup>55</sup> Gazda and Royer (1983) 26. These domestic artefacts likely belonged to the family inhabiting the dwelling before it was abandoned and destroyed, because of the short life span of the mudbrick houses that dominated the settlement, and the fact that they were most often kept within one family through inheritance, before being destroyed and rebuilt: see Van Minnen (1994) 231.

resulting in a broader area of focus. As such, it is accepted that specific conclusions related to confined geographical areas cannot be made; this book focuses instead on broader, but nevertheless insightful, themes and trends.

Karanis, like other sites in Egypt, such as Oxyrhynchus, also reveal the preservation of documentary texts, in the form of papyri and ostraca, in their thousands. Such texts can be invaluable in identifying objects with personal meaning within these settlements, and the lives of the inhabitants.<sup>56</sup> For example, papyrologist Peter van Minnen uses the documentary sources from Karanis to identify the locations and ownership of objects within the town.<sup>57</sup> The historian Averil Cameron stated that investigations into Late Antiquity should aim to integrate all kinds of evidence as closely as possible, and such an inclusive approach to available evidence is echoed within this book.<sup>58</sup> Thus, whilst maintaining a focus on domestic artefacts, evidence from archaeological, visual, and textual (both literary and documentary) sources are also discussed, so as to reveal the meaning and sentimental value of personal possessions in Late Antiquity.

It is clear that no single source type provides definitive evidence for the life of an object within the late antique world. Instead, evidence from more than one source type is compared and combined to try to fill the inevitable gaps. Chronologically, the majority of evidence discussed comes from the first half of the late antique period, with the 3rd to 5th c. well-represented. Where necessary, evidence from before or after that timeframe has been considered as comparative or supporting evidence, to further enlighten the role of meaningful material culture in the empire over time.

### **Structure of this Book**

This book is organised for the most part into thematic chapters, addressing in turn specific categories of meaningful object: the heirloom, the gift, and the souvenir. What is distinctive, and what allows such a categorisation of these kinds of artefacts, is the type of meaning they carry, rather than their physical form. Their sentimental value stems from specific biographical events within their lives. Heirlooms are recognised as having accumulated histories based upon their repeated inheritance between generations of a single family. Gifts are identified as objects involved in social exchanges between individuals, often for a specific occasion. Souvenirs are designated as such because they have come from a certain location or event which they function to commemorate. All of these objects are likely to be found within a domestic environment, having been selected and kept within this setting.

This thematic structure also ensures heirlooms, gifts, and souvenirs are discussed together within one study, allowing comparisons to be made between types of meaningful object, and thus identifying similarities or differences between them. It allows for a greater consideration of the lifespans of objects during which meanings of possessions may change, depending on the events with which they are involved. An object rarely has one single identity in terms of value, purpose, use, or significance during the course of its life. It also rarely embodies the same meanings, functions and values to different people. To consider an object in such a one-dimensional manner is to ignore the reality of objects, their biographies, and relationships with people. Thus, by looking at several types of meaningful object, the existence of multiple identities is acknowledged, and the objects posited as dynamic rather than static in terms of their accumulation of significance.

---

<sup>56</sup> The papyrological texts used in this book are cited using the standard numerical convention referring to published volume. For the current list of published editions of papyri and their abbreviations, see Oates *et al.* (2011). Translations used will be from these main volumes, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>57</sup> Van Minnen (1994).

<sup>58</sup> Av. Cameron (2003) 12.

Chapter 1 begins by defining heirloom objects as an artefact category, before discussing the specific evidential problems and peculiarities that follow any investigation of heirlooms. The rest of the chapter collates the evidence for heirlooms around the contexts in which meaning is created. Intentionally created heirlooms are first considered in relation to marriage and dowry, and death and burial contexts. Specific kinds of objects occur repeatedly within the evidence, including silverware, jewellery, coins, gems and clothing.

This chapter then turns to look at how heirlooms can be created unintentionally, as a by-product of behaviours, such as storage or religious ritual over time, within the domestic space. Examples include statuary, ceramic and glass vessels and various examples of household equipment. The chapter uses these material examples in order to address specific themes within the evidence. The meaning of particular materials is explored in relation to heirlooms, as is the role of objects in specific ritualised behaviours, such as dining. Scales of value are discussed, as are competing uses for objects, with a specific discussion on reuse and recycling associated with classicism, antiques and the appreciation of older objects. The role of texts as objects is also introduced within this chapter, and presents a discussion topic that is returned to in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2 assesses gifts within Late Antiquity. It is structured around gifts specifically associated with occasions, such as weddings and festivals, and gifts associated with specific individuals, in particular evidence for the imperial family. The chapter then turns to look at texts as gifts. The materiality of texts, and their nature as objects, as opposed to simply sources of recorded information, is often forgotten, and this discussion seeks to consider this sometimes overlooked aspect in relation to gift-giving behaviours in Late Antiquity.

Gifts represent some of the better-studied evidence in contemporary scholarship, however the study of gifts often focuses on the evidence of the elites, or imperial largesse. Such evidence is included in this chapter and enables comparison with gift objects of lesser value, so as to identify common themes and traits. Including such a range of evidence also ensures the full spectrum of gift objects from Late Antiquity is represented, and allows further consideration of their lives as domestic objects after this moment of exchange.

Chapter 3 turns to evidence for souvenir objects, and begins by considering the relevance of such terminology and concepts for our period. The evidence for souvenirs is then assessed in two main sections: the first part of the chapter looks at secular souvenirs and objects that are associated with both places and events. Incorporated into this discussion is a consideration of the role food can play in evoking memories of experiences during this period, and the concept of geographically specific objects.

The second part of this chapter assesses evidence for sacred souvenirs, specifically the objects taken home by pilgrims as spiritual mementoes of their travels. This is of course a huge topic; therefore, for the purposes of comparison with secular souvenir evidence, the focus remains on the largely well-studied and documented Christian souvenirs. A comparison between secular and sacred objects has not been undertaken before, and therefore represents a fresh approach to mementoes of this sort from the late antique period, so it is hoped that conclusions about the wider role of souvenirs within society can be drawn.

Such diverse biographical trajectories, and themes relating to the meanings of personal possessions, are brought together in the final chapter through the form of a case-study based around one specific artefact type: the basket. By doing so, the broader themes touched upon in each of the three previous thematic chapters can be applied to one discrete object group, to draw further conclusions about the creation and nature of meaningful domestic possessions. Baskets were chosen for this exercise as there is a large and disparate body of evidence for their role within late antique everyday life, which, generally speaking, has been previously overlooked in scholarship. Therefore,

this chapter reflects a desire to assess previously understudied objects and provide new interpretations.

The opportunity to look for evidence relating to a single artefact type also provides the chance to identify layers of contemporaneous meaning, or the holding of different meanings by similar objects in different contexts. The discussion begins with a consideration of the cultural lives of baskets in three specific contexts. The association of baskets with femininity and wool working is briefly explored, before the role of baskets as pagan ritual objects is considered. The inclusion of baskets in decorative domestic imagery, specifically in relation to concepts of abundance, fertility and plenty, is then outlined. The main section of the chapter turns to evidence from the early Christian monks of Egypt, to assess the role of baskets in light of the previous discussions of heirlooms, gifts, and souvenirs.

A concluding section then completes this book, in which the main findings from each chapter are reviewed in relation to the society and culture of Late Antiquity more broadly. Significant trends and patterns, or anomalies and changes over time, in terms of life and material culture in this period, will be identified and discussed, alongside unifying topics and themes that link the main thematic chapters together. Finally, the book concludes with an imaginative reconstruction of a late antique home in terms of the meaningful material culture present within. It draws upon the evidence discussed throughout this study, and seeks to provide a compelling and evocative example of what is often missing from scholarship on life in Late Antiquity.

## Heirloom Objects in Late Antiquity

### Defining 'Heirlooms'

Heirlooms are possessions given by one generation to the next through donation by family members, or inheritance on the death of a relative. Heirlooms are therefore defined as such by their biography; they are objects associated with family through their continued ownership, and ideally their repeated inheritance, by successive generations. The value of heirloom objects comes from their individual histories, histories with which their owner's own identity becomes entangled.<sup>1</sup> The emphasis placed upon the successive ownership of an heirloom within a family means that disparate generations are linked through the materiality of this one object. Such objects thus work to contract time through their physical embodiment of the past. In this way, these heirloom objects are identical with the inalienable possessions that Annette Weiner describes: these items are imbued with the "intrinsic and ineffable identities of their owners", ideally kept by their own kind and passed down from one generation to another.<sup>2</sup> The value of heirlooms is based upon their retention of memories for future generations, and the ability to hark back to past ancestors, either in a specific or general sense.

Evidence for heirlooms in Late Antiquity comes from a wide variety of sources. Broadly speaking, textual sources can provide explicit descriptions of object biographies, allowing the unambiguous identification of objects that held heirloom status. Literary sources can also refer to the physical or social context of such objects, providing us with an impression of the contemporary role of heirlooms in late antique society. Documentary texts also record and reveal the existence of these objects within the practicalities of everyday life. Surviving legal papers, such as wills, dowry documents, and marriage contracts, document the kinds of objects passed down through the generations of a family, and the occasions on which this sort of behaviour occurred. As such, they have the ability to provide more information than the material remains alone are able to. This chapter seeks to identify the forms these kinds of objects took and the circumstances in which their meaning was created.

### Intentional Heirlooms

It is often unclear from the available evidence whether the majority of heirlooms were acquired to function explicitly as such, or whether these objects' associations with family and ancestral identity grew as a secondary consequence of their preservation and curation within the home over a long period of time. Certain examples unambiguously show that specific objects were intended to function as heirloom possessions, something identifiable through inscriptions, which reveal the objects' association with family identity and heirloom status. The Sevso Treasure is a collection of silver vessels thought to originate from Hungary, and dates to the late 4th to early 5th c.<sup>3</sup> The Hunting Plate (fig. 1), so-called because of the hunting scenes that decorate its rim and central medallion, features an inscription which translates as: "May these little vessels, Sevso, last you for many ages, so that they may serve your descendants worthily".<sup>4</sup> The inscription explicitly states that, not only were the silver items that formed the hoard

---

<sup>1</sup> Graeber (2001) 93.

<sup>2</sup> Weiner (1992) 6.

<sup>3</sup> Mundell Mango (1994) 11.

<sup>4</sup> Dunbabin (2003) 142. The original Latin reads: HAEC SEVSO TIBI DVRENT PER SAECVLA MVLTA POSTERIS VT PROSINT VASCVLA DIGNA TVIS.

given to the named Sevso as a gift, but that these objects were intended to become heirlooms, being passed down through the family by inheritance.<sup>5</sup>

The Hunting Plate is a high quality and high status example of silver dining plate. It therefore had an implicit practical function in dining behaviour and the displaying and serving of food. However, the inscription upon its surface also enables it to commemorate and materially preserve a specific moment in time, namely the act of gift donation and the intention behind it to create an heirloom. Inscriptions on heirloom objects are one way in which the object's link with the past is affirmed in a physical sense. The inclusion of names such as Sevso, link the object to specific individuals and their identities. Their lives as family members and roles as owners of the object are thus preserved and immortalised for future generations. Furthermore, this commemoration and perpetuation of a person's memory is accessible to anyone viewing the object. No longer is the memory exclusively owned by those who personally remember the object or the person with whom it is linked. Its importance as an heirloom is physically inscribed upon the surface of the object.

Technical analysis of the plate reveals wear marks that testify to ancient use.<sup>6</sup> Its main purpose in the home was therefore not solely the embodiment of memories and familial values through display. In terms of its practical uses, the behaviour and context in which the Hunting Plate would be used is revealing. Dining as a social event collects people together to enact group behaviours. Dining together, and using objects such as the Hunting Plate as part of the activity, reinforces the sense of kinship and cohesion of the family group. This is further underlined by the self-referential image in the plate's central medallion, which depicts Sevso and his wife dining outdoors together. As a visible act, this behaviour communicates to others their status as a unified group, whereas participation in communal dining also incorporates individuals into the family unit. All of these meanings are reinforced by the use of dining wares with additional heirloom significance, and simultaneously strengthen and perpetuate the significance of these objects. The inscription can also be interpreted in a broader sense, as a confirmation that such objects were used within domestic material culture as heirlooms, even if the biography of the object is now lost. Furthermore, the ancestral meanings for these objects did not exclude pragmatic use; rather the different scales of meaning and value coexisting within the object actively complement and reinforce one another.

The Sevso Treasure, to which the Hunting Plate belongs, is classified as a hoard, a specific type of artefact assemblage that can reveal the presence of heirloom objects. This is due to a key characteristic of heirlooms: their age. Their preservation and extended curation within a family means that such items are necessarily older than other contemporary examples of material culture; as a result they can be identified within the archaeological record. The nature of hoards means that they are formed of groups of objects deposited in the ground at one time: essentially a sealed assemblage in a closely dated context. Therefore, older objects within the assemblage may well represent heirlooms. This is especially true if the hoard is interpreted as one of household material or personal possessions buried for safekeeping, and ultimately never retrieved.

Of course, the Sevso Treasure represents an anomalous example here; it appeared without warning on the art market in 1980 and has no known provenance.<sup>7</sup> Whilst it is now thought to come from Hungary due to a geographical reference on the famous Hunting Plate (a lake is labelled as "Pelso", the Roman name for the modern Lake Balaton) it lacks specific information surrounding the treasure's findspot, or knowledge over whether the surviving items form the complete collection. Without knowing the

---

<sup>5</sup> Dunbabin (2003) 142-43.

<sup>6</sup> Bennett (1994) 27.

<sup>7</sup> Mundell Mango and Bennett (1994) 11.

context of this assemblage, it is thus difficult to be completely confident in the relationships of the objects to each other.

A further example of heirloom silverware from another late antique hoard bolsters the above interpretations of the Hunting Plate. The 4th c. Esquiline Treasure, which includes the Projecta Casket, represents a collection of household silver apparently formed of heirloom objects passed down through generations of the same family. The classicist Alan Cameron bases this interpretation upon the range of dates of the hoard objects, and the range of monograms relating to the Turcii family inscribed upon the hoard pieces.<sup>8</sup> He proposes that the monogram of Pelegrina and Turcius on the older silverware represents the parents of Secundus, who is himself associated with the Projecta Casket through its inscription.<sup>9</sup> Such items represent objects transformed through time and inheritance into heirlooms, associated with familial values and ancestor identity.

Art historian Kathleen J. Shelton (in response to Cameron's article) suggests an alternative, but not dissimilar, interpretation of the treasure objects as representing a complex social group that evokes the occasions, donors and recipients associated with the silverware.<sup>10</sup> Specifically, there is a silver ewer given to Pelegrina alongside the eight monogrammed plates that bear her name and that of her father.<sup>11</sup> Irrespective of the details of identification surrounding the persons to whom the hoard objects originally belonged, it is clear that these objects represent family heirlooms, and consequently meaningful objects within the family's domestic material culture. This personal familial value can be interpreted as part of the reason, beyond the intrinsic material worth of the silver itself, for the hoard's burial; that is, for safekeeping with the intention of retrieving the items at a later date.

Alongside the explicit inscriptions discussed above, some of the clearest evidence for heirlooms relate to items associated with specific important events within the course of human life, in particular marriage and death. Various objects, such as jewellery, were integrated into important events, including wedding or funerary rituals. In the textual sources, heirloom objects often appear in relation to marriages. In the archaeological record, grave contexts show a correlation between heirlooms and the death of a family member. The transference of heirloom objects is appropriate on these occasions; both marriage and death mark the accession of the new generation within a family and the passing of the old. As stated earlier, heirlooms embody their previous owners in a material sense and work to contract time, bringing the past, present and future generations of a family into contact. It is therefore appropriate to have heirloom objects play a role within events that mark movements in and out of the active realm of the family. Weddings and funerals are liminal moments in the lives of individuals, and mark the movement of a person from one state to another: from child to adult, or living to dead. By including heirloom objects in such significant biographical moments, meaning is both created and confirmed, reinforcing the importance of the object to the identity of the family.

### **Marriage and Dowry**

Textual sources demonstrate that heirloom possessions had a role in marriage rituals through their presence in dowries. The marriage documents of Egypt provide information about the kinds of objects that a bride brought with her into marriage as a

---

<sup>8</sup> Al. Cameron (1985) 135-36.

<sup>9</sup> Al. Cameron (1985) 136. The Casket's inscription reads *SECVNDE ET PROIECTA VIVATIS IN CHRISTO*, or 'Secundus and Proiecta, live in Christ'.

<sup>10</sup> Shelton (1985) 147.

<sup>11</sup> The ewer is associated with Pelegrina through its inscription: *PELEGRINA VTERE FELIX* ('Pelegrina, use with good fortune').

dowry.<sup>12</sup> Egyptian marriage documents up to the 4th c. AD show that dowry objects were generally divided into the *phernê* (φερνή), which the husband controlled during the period of marriage—the value of which he had to return to the bride should the union end—and *parapherna* (παράφερνα), which broadly consisted of the wife's chattels for her own personal use, and which the husband must return the originals of on the dissolution of the marriage.<sup>13</sup>

In Egypt during the first two centuries AD, the *parapherna* were listed separately to the main dowry portion in official documents, and usually consisted of the woman's most precious belongings (often handed down from one generation to the next) alongside objects of daily use, to ensure they could be easily recovered should the marriage end.<sup>14</sup> After AD 260-61, the inclusion of *parapherna* as a separately listed set of possessions ends, and these kinds of objects become included with the *phernê*, under the proviso that any gold jewellery was inalienable and must be returned to the wife.<sup>15</sup> It seems dowry items functioned as heirloom objects, passed down the female line of a family; a mid 2nd c. marriage document lists clothing and jewellery coming from her father as *phernê*, whilst similar objects coming from her mother are *parapherna*, suggesting their value as family chattels that pass from mother to daughter.<sup>16</sup> The reality of the way in which these objects remained close and specific to the bride is seen in a 1st c. document, in which a woman complains that a builder working in her home has stolen jewellery, presumably part of a dowry, which had been secreted in a box in the wall approximately 40 years earlier.<sup>17</sup>

Examples of possessions that formed a woman's dowry are easily found within the papyri, with jewellery of various types and styles being a very common feature. A mid 3rd c. marriage contract lists alongside various clothing the following jewellery as a dowry:

[...] the said giver contributes as the dowry of her said daughter the bride in common gold on the Oxyrhynchite standard a necklace of the kind called *maniaces*, having a stone and weighing apart from the stone 13 quarters, a brooch (?) with 5 stones set in gold, weighing apart from the stones 4 quarters, a pair of ear-rings with 10 pearls weighing apart from the pearls 3 quarters, a small ring weighing ½ quarter [...]<sup>18</sup>

The *maniaces* necklace is a specific type that appears in various sources of evidence across the period. The 2nd c. BC *Histories* of Polybius use the word to describe the torcs worn by barbarians, suggesting the necklace was formed of a solid collar of metal set with a gemstone.<sup>19</sup> The example in the contract weighed around 22 grams, and was a torc of gold wire, or a thin rod with a stone-set pendant.<sup>20</sup> Examples of what *maniaces* necklaces looked like include the necklace depicted in a 2nd-3rd c. mummy portrait from the Fayum in Egypt (fig. 2).<sup>21</sup> The mosaics of the church of San Vitale in Ravenna also show the bodyguards of Justinian wearing solid torc necklaces, emphasising the

---

<sup>12</sup> There are also connections between objects given as wedding gifts and their transformation into heirloom objects, which is discussed more fully in the next chapter.

<sup>13</sup> Yiftach-Firanko (2007) 129-49.

<sup>14</sup> Yiftach-Firanko (2007) 142.

<sup>15</sup> Yiftach-Firanko (2007) 144. This sentiment is echoed in the Digest of Justinian: 'Although the dowry is among the husband's possessions, it is the woman's [...]': *Dig.* 23.3.75 (transl. Watson (1985) 684).

<sup>16</sup> P.Oxy.49.3491. Yiftach-Firanko (2007) 147, n.184.

<sup>17</sup> Rowlandson (1998) 313; P.Ryl.2.125. Also quoted in Yiftach-Firanko (2007) 142.

<sup>18</sup> P.Oxy.10.1273.

<sup>19</sup> Polyb. 2.29.8.

<sup>20</sup> Ogden (1990) 192.

<sup>21</sup> See also Manchester Museum's painted linen funerary shroud (acc. no. 11309), late 3rd to mid 4th c. AD, Antioch Egypt, which features a heavy *maniaces* style neckpiece.



*maniaces'* association with military insignia.<sup>22</sup> The potential heirloom *maniaces* necklace in P.Oxy.10.1273 was therefore a standard and well-known type of personal adornment.

The jewellery is described in terms of weight as well as appearance, and it is clear that there are several levels of value to these objects. Firstly, there is the monetary value, which is based upon the materials used and the workmanship of the object. Additional value stems from the biography of the object and its association with the event of marriage. A link can also be established between the dowry object and the concept of family memory and identity, as the dowry originates from the family of the bride. These objects are transmitted from this social group to their daughter and new husband. They are therefore linked to the concept of family: both present and future. As previously mentioned, once given as a dowry, they either remain with the couple as part of the new branch of family created by the marriage, or are returned to the original family.<sup>23</sup> In either scenario, they accumulate a biography, associated with the concept of family and the progression of a family lineage.<sup>24</sup> They are therefore already functioning as heirlooms within the family, referring as they do, through their material history, to both their origins and anticipated future generations.

The personal value of dowry objects, and the link between them and family memory, can similarly be read in a 5th c. AD document, which lists the property that a father is trying to reclaim from his deceased daughter's husband. The items include rather mundane domestic objects, such as frying pans and tools, alongside more recognisable dowry items, such as clothing, a necklace and 'pendant earrings'.<sup>25</sup> It was usual for the family of the bride to reclaim their lost dowry on the bride's death; the Digest of Justinian states that this recovery by a father will provide him comfort, 'in order that he not feel the loss of both his deceased daughter and his money'.<sup>26</sup>

This document reveals a notable reversal of the usual transmission of family possessions between living and dead family members, prompted by the apparently untimely death of the woman in question. However, it is also likely that these objects had sentimental value as objects associated with the family, even more so after the loss of their daughter, and thus further fuelled their desire to reclaim them. That relatively small, personal possessions were specifically considered as female possessions can be found elsewhere in the late antique period. Certainly in Germanic societies, women were especially associated with moveable property through their ownership of dowries.<sup>27</sup>

Other sources of evidence further reinforce the association of heirloom jewellery with late antique marriage. The writer Claudian's description in AD 398 of the pre-nuptial gift given by the Emperor Honorius to Maria, daughter of Stilicho, further reveals their role:

Already he prepares gifts for his betrothed and selects to adorn her (though their beauty is less than hers) the jewels once worn by noble Livia of old and all the proud women of the imperial house.<sup>28</sup>

This heirloom jewellery is being given as a gift prior to marriage (a topic explored in more detail in chapter 2); as such the association between its meaning and the union of Honorius and Maria is significant. Heirlooms represent familial continuity, and such a

---

<sup>22</sup> See Walter (2001) for a discussion of the necklace in relation to depictions of Byzantine military saints.

<sup>23</sup> Both of these scenarios assume that the family does not sell or pawn the items of value, which would likely happen in times of financial hardship.

<sup>24</sup> Roman law held that marriage was a natural state, the purpose of which was to produce children and perpetuate their family line: *Dig.* 1.1.3, 50.16.220.3. See also Grubbs (2002) 81.

<sup>25</sup> P.Princ. 2.95. (transl. APIS <http://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.princ;2;95>; accessed 04.04.2018)

<sup>26</sup> *Dig.* 23.3.6.

<sup>27</sup> Wemple (1981) 46.

<sup>28</sup> Claudian, *Epithalamium* 10.10-15 (transl. Platnauer (1922) 243).

gift has powerful connotations of genealogical legitimisation, especially within an imperial marriage. Within Claudian's text, the jewels supposedly belonged to Livia, the famous and powerful wife of Emperor Augustus in the 1st c. BC- 1st c. AD; furthermore Claudian implies that they had subsequently been owned by a series of other imperial women. The act of passing the jewellery to his wife-to-be as a gift symbolises her future role as an imperial matriarch, referring to historical authority through the heirloom object to ensure the security of their future.

We of course do not know for certain whether Livia's jewellery was indeed gifted to Maria, or whether this jewellery did in fact once belong to earlier imperial women. Although details of the 16th c. excavation of Maria's imperial tomb in Rome record the presence of an abundance of precious jewellery, thought to have been her wedding gifts, almost all of it has since disappeared.<sup>29</sup> However, the authenticity of these gifts is, to a certain extent, not relevant; the inclusion of this description within Claudian's text demonstrates that such cultural practices were known and had a function within this period. Such overtly dynastic acts of inheritance on the occasion of marriage were likely present in unions in lower status families too, with heirloom objects holding an important role in the symbolism of the act.

The evidence relating to the movement of heirlooms through dowries and marriage strongly represents the role of women in such transactions. This is to be expected, as dowries were by their very nature linked to the bride and provided by her family. As such, it is not unexpected to see in the 3rd c. marriage contract P.Oxy.10.1273 the transmission of the typical dowry goods of clothing and jewellery from mother to daughter on the occasion of her marriage. Claudian's description of the gift to Maria of imperial heirloom jewellery is an interesting deviation from this pattern. The donation occurs before their wedding, therefore this act represents the movement of the heirloom beyond the family. However, the giving of the jewellery was done in anticipation of the incorporation of Maria's identity into the imperial family.

No doubt the expectation was that she would in turn pass the necklace on to her own heirs in due course, thus continuing the imperial line itself, represented by the heirloom object and its transmission to her. It changes Maria's identity from that of an outsider to a legitimate family member, comparing her with her female imperial predecessors who are invoked through their previous ownership of the object. Such behaviour represents a repetition and perpetuation of family events through the presence of the same objects at the same ceremony at different times; they symbolically represent and confirm the hope for continued generations. This evidence also reveals the potential for heirlooms to be given as gifts, and for gifts to become heirlooms—something reinforced by the inscription on the Sevso Treasure's Hunting Plate—and that these objects had both origins and destinations beyond the family lineage.

Aside from forming gift objects and dowries, heirloom jewellery was also worn, perhaps even during the wedding ceremony itself. As such, past generations can be seen as present on such important family occasions. The Hoxne Roman treasure, found in Britain in 1992, features a variety of gold jewellery. One specific example, the gold body chain (fig. 3), seems likely to have once formed either part of a dowry or have been originally intended as a wedding piece. British Museum curator Catherine Johns interprets this object as suitable for a bride: it has erotic associations when worn (by emphasising the breasts), and its small size suggests it was worn by an adolescent, as opposed to a mature, woman.<sup>30</sup> Such features would certainly correspond to a potential role as a wedding piece. Its connotations would be suitable for such an occasion, and its size corresponds to contemporary social practices, as the minimum age for girls at marriage was 12 and the majority of brides were young.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Lanciani (1892) 203-205.

<sup>30</sup> Johns (2010) 27.

<sup>31</sup> Nathan (2000) 16. *Dig.* 23.2.4.

The chain also features a coin, the mount of which (apparent under magnification) has been modified from an earlier setting of the 3rd c.<sup>32</sup> This early setting suggests that it originally held a coin earlier than the present solidus of Gratian, which was incorporated when the body chain as a whole was manufactured in the 4th c.<sup>33</sup> John's study of this object leads her to conclude that the chain was likely made to order, and that the modified mount represents the inclusion of an older piece of jewellery within the piece, rather than simply creating a new mount for a contemporary coin.<sup>34</sup> As such, the Hoxne body chain may represent the modification of an heirloom object for the occasion of a wedding.

This interpretation is supported by a study of numismatic jewellery, which shows that such objects were very common in the late antique period.<sup>35</sup> Coin set jewellery was passed down through families as heirlooms, as recorded by the 2nd c. jurist Pomponius, who stated that it was possible to bequeath such items as a legacy, and that such coins were often already of great age.<sup>36</sup> Coin-set jewellery functioned as heirlooms by referencing ancestors and familial identity within their biography as they are bequeathed and inherited. The nature of coins themselves also contributes to their suitability as heirlooms. Issues of coins relate to a specific period in time, in terms of their design and the emperor depicted upon them; this is the reason they are so useful to archaeologists as a dating tool. When worn as jewellery, they become a referent to this particular era, powerfully evoking the past through their material form. Specific examples of older coins that have been set into newer pieces of jewellery can be found in museum collections and excavation reports.<sup>37</sup> A coin-set finger ring, now in the British Museum is dated, based on style, to the 4th c., however the coin it features is an *aureus*, the standard Roman gold coin, from the reign of Alexander Severus, emperor from 222 to 235.<sup>38</sup> The coin was clearly of some significant age when it was set into the ring; this gap in time between the manufacture of the coin and the jewellery suggests it is an heirloom piece, as Pomponius described.

Several other examples support that this was common practice: from Abuqir, in Egypt, is a necklace dated to the late 3rd or 4th c., based on style, but features 12 gold *aurei*, the latest of which is from the reign of Gordian III (AD 238-44).<sup>39</sup> There is also the necklace from the Netherlands which features a coin pendant formed of an *aureus* of Victorinus (AD 268-70); whilst the coin dates from the 3rd c., it was mounted in the pendant much later, perhaps at the end of the 4th or during the 5th c.<sup>40</sup> Finally, there is the example from Grave 6.113 at Pessinus, central Anatolia, dating to the 4th c. AD; the burial included a late Roman gold pendant containing a much-worn Greek silver *drachma* coin, minted by Alexander III or Philipppus III of Macedonia during the second half of the 4th c. BC.<sup>41</sup>

In light of this evidence, the Hoxne body chain, with the inclusion of its antique coin setting, can be interpreted as a potential heirloom and functioning in a similar way to Livia's necklace. The chain's association with this important life event associates the object with memories of the occasion for the wearer. Such a biographical trajectory for

---

<sup>32</sup> Johns (2010) 28.

<sup>33</sup> Johns (2010) 28.

<sup>34</sup> Johns (2010) 28.

<sup>35</sup> Bruhn (1993) 2.

<sup>36</sup> Bruhn (1993) 1; *Dig.* 7.1.28. It should be noted that another interpretation of the Latin is that it refers to gold coins being used as raw materials for jewellery: see Ogden (1990) 197.

<sup>37</sup> Roman coins from the 4th c. are also attested in Anglo Saxon graves in Britain as part of female jewellery, signalling that these coins were either consciously kept from the Roman period, or were rediscovered at a later date and then reused: see Swift (2013) 100-101.

<sup>38</sup> Sas and Thoen (2002) 230.

<sup>39</sup> Vermeule (1975) 18-20.

<sup>40</sup> Sas and Thoen (2002) 231.

<sup>41</sup> Thoen (2003) 98.

this object is plausible since dress accessories, and jewellery in particular, are easily associated with specific members of a family before being inherited by the next generation.<sup>42</sup>

The wearing of coins also represents their function as magical amulets. Coins were considered to have supernatural powers, which were derived from the presence of the imperial portrait and the precious material from which they were made.<sup>43</sup> To own coin-set jewellery that functioned as an amulet would certainly provide an excellent reason for the owner to keep the object and pass it on for the use of future generations as an heirloom possession. Coins and coin-set jewellery were also kept and reused for more pragmatic reasons; for example, figurative imagery upon their surface transformed them into a decorative material. The presence of such items of jewellery in hoard and grave contexts suggests that these were indeed valued objects; it is likely that some represent treasured family heirlooms whereas others include coins reset by jewellers in response to their popularity in contemporary material culture. For example, there is a 1st to 2nd c. *aureus* of Trajan which was mounted for suspension in the 3rd c.; this coin was likely chosen because of the contemporary pertinence of its image of Trajan and his title PARTHICO, referring to his conquests in Parthia, against whom the empire was again battling in the 3rd c.<sup>44</sup> All items of jewellery, however, have the potential to be highly personal possessions, and they are intended to be worn on the body, as well as being stored within homes. They are therefore closely tied to their owners, and as heirlooms powerfully manifest the identities of their previous owners, regardless of any other messages the object might communicate.

Ruth Leader-Newby also refers to the non-financial attitudes towards coins present in the late antique period in light of work by the economic historian Michael Hendy. Coins can be interpreted as objects of display rather than tools of commerce; they are a means to circulate the imperial image and to display the wealth of the owner (or wearer in the case of coin-set jewellery).<sup>45</sup> During Late Antiquity, wealth was most commonly expressed through land, buildings, and luxury moveable possessions, such as jewellery, plate and clothing, whereas coinage could not so effectively express status or the possession of wealth.<sup>46</sup> As such, the incorporation of coins into jewellery can be seen as an attempt to rectify the 'undisplayability' of money, thereby transforming coins into the actual wealth that they represented.<sup>47</sup> Both of these extra-monetary schemes of value in coins give solid reasoning for not only the inclusion of coins within personal jewellery, but also their curation over long periods of time and potential status as heirloom objects.

As well as coins, engraved gems, found in late antique assemblages or set into late antique jewellery, often represent objects from an earlier period of time. The Thetford Treasure contains five 4th c. rings set with 1st to 3rd c. intaglios. This collection has been interpreted as a jewellers hoard intended for resale, and therefore it is unlikely that at the time of burial the gems were primarily heirloom objects; their dominant value in this context and the reason for their assemblage comes from their appealing colour and suitability for reuse, rather than any sentimental value or associations with family.<sup>48</sup> However, their inclusion in the hoard does not preclude their previous status as heirlooms for their former owners. Their age suggests curation, which could well be due to their role as heirlooms within a domestic sphere.

In the archaeological record, similar jewellery, featuring old engraved gems, is found in grave contexts. At the town of Xanten on the lower Rhine, a late 4th c. grave found

---

<sup>42</sup> Swift (2013) 109.

<sup>43</sup> Maguire (1997) 1039.

<sup>44</sup> Vermeule (1975) 10.

<sup>45</sup> Leader-Newby (2004) 26.

<sup>46</sup> Leader-Newby (2004) 26-27; Hendy (2008) 219.

<sup>47</sup> Leader-Newby (2004) 27.

<sup>48</sup> Platz-Horster (2011) 225.

under the cathedral of St Viktor contained a finger ring with a 1st c. AD carnelian gem depicting the goddess Nemesis.<sup>49</sup> Excavations at the Roman Eastern Cemetery in London reveal similar depositions. Grave B291 included a chalcedony intaglio engraved with a grazing cow or bull; thought to date from the 1st c. AD, it was buried in the 3rd or 4th c.<sup>50</sup> The excavators have interpreted this as a personal object of the kind that would be bequeathed from generation to generation, thus explaining the object's survival.<sup>51</sup> This in itself suggests that the item had a specific value to the people buried in the graves, but not necessarily that it was an heirloom.

The material worth of older items made them popular in times of uncertainty, especially on the frontiers and border regions of the empire.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, the skills required to engrave gems declined during the late antique period, meaning that older gems were reused in jewellery instead of new carvings being made.<sup>53</sup> However, the heirloom status of such objects would help to ensure the preservation via curation of older objects within the home, allowing their use life to be extended and making them available for reuse at a later date.

There is textual evidence that describes gems as heirlooms. The 6th c. civil servant John Lydus describes some heirloom objects that belonged to a high status local man of Philadelphia (Lydia), in his discussion of the corrupt behaviour of some imperial officials:

A certain Petronius in my Philadelphia [...] was the possessor of precious stones from his ancestors, which were numerous and at the same time kept from sight of private individuals because of their beauty and size.<sup>54</sup>

These stones were clearly valuable objects, notable not only for their apparent significance in terms of size and appearance, but also because of their identity as having belonged to the man's 'ancestors'. Their description suggests that these were gems of some kind, either semi-precious stones or engraved gems. Whilst their precise form is unclear, this reference nonetheless provides evidence of similar objects being inherited and valued as heirlooms within families. That this description includes reference to these precious objects not being on display—'kept from sight of private individuals'—means that their value in part stemmed from their biography and intrinsic worth. They were not displayed, therefore their value did not primarily arise from their use in domestic displays of status. Instead their value comes from not only their material worth, but also their identity as heirloom objects, which reference to the ancestors of the owner's family.

Discussions of jewellery provide an opportunity to think about the nature of materials and the relationship between them and different types of value. Precious materials such as gold, silver, gems and ivory, reflect the status of the symbolic or sentimental meanings of heirlooms, hence their common association with events such as births, marriages, and anniversaries.<sup>55</sup> Precious materials are used to represent the important but immaterial concepts represented by heirloom objects. Textual sources describe the ways in which certain materials were valued; Pliny in his discussion of gold, notes the metal's imperviousness to fire and rust, and its purity, malleability, and hard-

---

<sup>49</sup> Platz-Horster (2009) 159.

<sup>50</sup> Barber and Bowsher (2000) 165-66.

<sup>51</sup> Barber and Bowsher (2000) 168.

<sup>52</sup> Platz-Horster (2011) 226

<sup>53</sup> Sena Chiesa (2011) 229.

<sup>54</sup> Joh. Lydus, *Mag.* 3.59 (transl. Bandy (1983) 225-27).

<sup>55</sup> A modern example demonstrating the link between sentimental and intrinsic value in jewellery, is related by Catherine Johns. She describes a high street jewellers whose confession that their low prices reflected low quality gold and workmanship, led to a public outcry over the perceived devaluation of sentimental pieces of jewellery: Johns (1996) 6.

wearing nature.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the metal's scarcity meant it was designated an 'elite' substance, with connotations of power and prestige.<sup>57</sup> All of these factors contribute to the metal's suitability for important personal objects. To look at an example, the gold of dowry jewellery has a high economic value (underlined by the details of weight that accompany most late antique documentary descriptions); as such it is understood as something not only worthy of being passed down through the family, but also worthy of embodying the important meanings relating to family, identity, and memory.

Clothing is, like jewellery, closely tied to the identities of those who wore it, functioning as a material embodiment for accumulated memories as they are passed through families as heirlooms. These highly personal possessions are represented within the evidence as traditional heirloom objects. The 4th c. *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, a collection of biographies of Roman imperial figures, describes the bequest of family clothing as inheritance. It describes Junius Messalla's apparent squandering of family heirlooms by giving them to actors rather than his own heirs:

For he has cut off his natural heirs and bestowed his ancestral fortune on players, giving a tunic of his mother's to an actress and a cloak of his father's to an actor — and rightly so, I suppose, if a gold and purple mantle of his grandmother's could be used as a costume by a tragic actor! Indeed, the name of Messalla's wife is still embroidered on the violet mantle of a flute-player, who exults in it as the spoils of a noble house. Why, now, should I speak of those linen garments imported from Egypt? Why of those garments from Tyre and Sidon, so fine and transparent, of gleaming purple and famed for their embroidery-work? He has presented, besides, capes brought from the Atrabati and capes from Canusium and Africa, such splendour as never before was seen on the stage. All of this I have put into writing in order that future givers of spectacles may be touched by a sense of shame and so be deterred from cutting off their lawful heirs and squandering their inheritances on actors and mountebanks.<sup>58</sup>

The clothing is explicitly described as forming Messalla's ancestral fortune, giving great value to the objects the text describes. They are clearly high quality garments, notable not only for their superior colour, materials, and workmanship, but also their previous owners (and, by extension, age). Their proper role as heirloom objects and their rightful place within the family is underlined by the horror at his giving them to actors beyond the family, thus belittling their value and spurning his own heirs. Therefore, their evident value comes not only from the high status of these objects in material terms, but also their familial provenance, from which their importance as heirlooms arises. Similar behaviour is witnessed in modern times in the heirloom quilts of North America; these objects have sentimental value stemming from the memories tied to the pieces of cloth (often from clothing) that are preserved within the body of the quilt.<sup>59</sup> In the example of Messalla, the history of the clothing is literally inscribed upon the surface of the material, in the form of the embroidered name of Messalla's wife on the purple mantle.

In light of this, more ordinary clothing mentioned in the documentary papyri from Egypt, can also be interpreted as cherished heirloom objects. For example, a 4th c. receipt for some personal effects received by a woman from her deceased mother, includes a worn child's frock in the list.<sup>60</sup> Such an item can thus represent a tangible memento of the mother, from whom she inherits the garment, despite its apparent worn condition. This is supported by evidence from the literature of the early Christian monks

---

<sup>56</sup> Plin. *HN* 33.19.

<sup>57</sup> Janes (1998a) 19.

<sup>58</sup> SHA *Carus, Carinus, Numerian* 20.4 (transl. Magie (1961) 449-51).

<sup>59</sup> Gordon and Horton (2009) 96, 100-101.

<sup>60</sup> P.Oxy.14.1645.

(discussed further in chapter 4), in which a monk named Daniel inherits the leather tunic, hair shirt and sandals of an elderly monk.<sup>61</sup>

It is also worth noting that Messalla is described as owning clothing once possessed by mainly female relatives, including his wife, mother, and grandmother.<sup>62</sup> His ownership of the items thus appears to be safekeeping for the next generation, as he would not have worn the female clothing himself if their appearance was gender specific. Thus, when thinking about the functions of heirloom objects, it becomes apparent that not all family members would have been able to use certain examples. For instance, the primary function of clothing and jewellery is to cover, protect and adorn the body; however for gender specific items, their appearance meant that only certain individuals could have used them. As such, simply the ownership of heirlooms becomes of primary importance for those who cannot directly use the objects themselves, driven by an acknowledgement of the objects' significance as family heirlooms. This is especially true of objects that have a significant intrinsic worth, such as gold or silver possessions.

Textiles can also be added to this list of high value materials; during Late Antiquity they represented expensive possessions. The production of fabric and clothing was labour intensive, and as such represented serious investments of money for their owners.<sup>63</sup> An early 4th c. pawnbroker's account from Philadelphia consists largely of clothing, emphasising the economic value of such items.<sup>64</sup> Messalla's inherited clothing, described in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* as featuring the additional expensive materials of gold and purple, can therefore be understood as luxurious items in the extreme.<sup>65</sup> It also reinforces the idea that the clothing featured within the documentary lists of possessions of the recently dead, were more valuable than their worn description might initially imply, to modern eyes. Such curation of valuable possessions would ensure the transmission of these objects to future generations, regardless of contemporary use, and represents a way of providing for future family members. Such a provision would be in monetary terms for objects with significant economic value, but it would also safeguard family identity and memories through extended ownership.

## Death and Burial

Death is an important moment within the human life course, and one that, like marriage, corresponds with the creation or transmission of heirlooms. Wills represent one form of textual source that directly communicates the kinds of objects passed down through families as inheritance. An early 7th c. will from Merovingian Gaul extensively lists items of silverware bequeathed by a certain Ermintrude of Paris to named members of her family: her son received a silver pot and a silver goblet; her grandson received a silver pitcher; her granddaughter received a dish decorated with crosses.<sup>66</sup> The prestigious nature of these silver items correlates with the examples of high status heirlooms already discussed, such as the Sevso Treasure's Hunting Plate, and the Projecta Casket. The single items of treasure in Ermintrude's will also represent the bestowal of tokens of personal recognition, therefore not only were these items of relatively high social and economic value, but also personally valued objects of individual worth.<sup>67</sup>

Other wills from Late Antiquity provide a broader spectrum of possessions that were inherited, and thus had potential to become family heirlooms. The will of a centurion dated to AD 320 lists the possessions bequeathed to seven different heirs on the

---

<sup>61</sup> AP Arsenius 42 (transl. Ward (1984) 19). See chapter 4.

<sup>62</sup> SHA *Carus, Carinus, Numerian* 20.4.

<sup>63</sup> Croom (2010) 28.

<sup>64</sup> SB 8.9834b.

<sup>65</sup> SHA *Carus, Carinus, Numerian* 20.4.

<sup>66</sup> Ermintrude, *Testamentum*: Pardessus (1849) 255-56. Janes (1998b) 369-70.

<sup>67</sup> Janes (1998b) 370.

occasion of his death. Alongside various amounts of money, the items to be inherited include:

Horse...calf, 1; weapon, 1; pole, 1; *alabandicum*, 1; breastplate, 1; hatchet, 1; cloak, 1; another hatchet, ...1; sacks, haircloth, 2; *thallion*, likewise haircloth, 1; small saddlebag, haircloth, 1; saddlebag, leather, ...belt, likewise, 1; bronze table, 1; small measure, likewise bronze, 1 [...]<sup>68</sup>

The majority of the material contents of this will are of a distinctly everyday nature and formed of domestic furnishings and utilitarian objects, whilst the weapons and armour reflect his employment in the army. A 4th c. receipt recording the personal effects of a deceased woman as received by her daughter, lists, in addition to clothing, an amount of gold and silver and, '[...] a wooden bed, 2 small worn cushions, 2 worn mattresses, a partly worn undyed..., a lampstand, a small table, a worn child's frock [...]'.<sup>69</sup> We can see that the reality of objects left as inheritance were not exclusively the prestigious, high value objects that we might expect. Of course, not all of these rather ordinary sounding domestic objects would inevitably become what we consider to be 'heirlooms', with the value that accompanies such a status. Many items may not have been kept at all, depending on their condition. Other items might also be discarded or sold on if they had no relevant use for the new owners.

However, the biographies of these objects mean that any one of them has the potential for singularisation, and as such could be removed from the commodity sphere. As possessions of a close and recently deceased relative, it is likely that the heirs would keep some of these objects for sentimental reasons where possible, irrespective of the monetary value of the items. These objects function as mementoes of the dead person, containing memories through their material form that resonate with the new owner. They also represent the continuity of familial relationships that function through the inherited objects after the death of the previous owner. Such items are closely linked with the identity of the deceased (or perhaps even the family more broadly); in the case of the centurion this is his weaponry, which reflected his status and employment in life. Swords are known elsewhere in this period to be heirlooms and treasured objects, in particular within Germanic tribes in the northern reaches of the empire. In late Roman men's graves in northern Gaul, the presence of weapons as grave goods underlines the martial prowess of the deceased.<sup>70</sup> They were also often heirloom objects within Anglo-Saxon society.<sup>71</sup>

Within the sources on wills and inheritance, the movement of possessions is exclusively within families. In the *Testamentum* of Ermintrude, she bequeaths very specific items of silver to her son, grandson, and granddaughter on the occasion of her death. This represents the expected transmission of personal objects to younger generations of a family at the death of an elder relative. That such objects are identified singly within the will, suggests that they were recognisable and important family possessions familiar to those receiving them as an inheritance. However, they are in general of a higher quality than the objects mentioned within the wills and receipts found in the papyrological record.

The centurion's will from AD 320 (P.Col. 7.188) lists seven heirs who will receive his property at his death; his possessions were to be equally shared amongst his wife, daughter and five brothers and sisters. Again we see possessions broad in their scope,

---

<sup>68</sup> P.Col.7.188.

<sup>69</sup> P.Oxy.14.1645.

<sup>70</sup> Theuws and Alkemade (2000) 411.

<sup>71</sup> Most famously, Beowulf contains references to heirloom swords of great value (transl. Alexander (1973) lines 1455 and 1557). See also Härke (1990) for heirloom swords deposited in Anglo Saxon graves in Britain.



encompassing household objects, money, livestock and weaponry. In these records, a lower level of affluence is represented, or at least a broader range of objects. For example, the receipt from AD 308 described above, for the personal effects of a deceased woman, records the movement of various possessions from a dead mother to her daughter.<sup>72</sup> The objects range from items of gold and silver to household equipment, such as soft furnishings and furniture. These kinds of possessions echo those being reclaimed by the father of a recently deceased woman in the 5th c.<sup>73</sup> This list includes valuable objects of gold and bronze as well as household equipment and furnishings.

The relationship between death and heirlooms, and their involvement in funerary rituals, can be explored through archaeological evidence from grave contexts. Like hoards, grave goods also provide an opportunity to identify heirloom objects within a closed archaeological environment. In such circumstances, anomalous dates for artefacts in a burial assemblage can point to the presence of heirloom possessions. Often within both hoards and grave contexts, the older objects found are of a high quality or economic value. The problem with valuable objects is that it is difficult to distinguish between aged objects kept for intrinsic value and precious objects kept for sentimental reasons as heirlooms. For example, several highly ornate glass vessels have been excavated from graves in Germany. One was found in a 3rd c. grave context (no. 1782) at Krefeld-Gellep, but was seemingly already 200 years old when buried.<sup>74</sup> Archaeologist Renate Pirling, in discussing how such an object could have survived for this amount of time, states that it would have been nearly impossible for the object to be curated through inheritance due to the upheavals of the Migration Period. Instead it may have been removed from an earlier Roman grave after either accidental discovery or through the systematic searches of Roman ruins by the Church, which were common during this period.<sup>75</sup> The item might then have been kept and treasured for its unusual decoration.

However, an early 4th c. cage cup from Cologne (fig. 4), also found within a grave context, features missing parts that could not be found during the excavation, suggesting that the object had been damaged during the owner's life and the pieces lost.<sup>76</sup> The archaeologist Donald Harden suggested this means the piece had been in the deceased's possession for some time, and that gaps of one hundred years between manufacture and burial are plausible as such high-class vessels are likely to have been kept and treasured within the lifetime of the owner.<sup>77</sup> Certainly their age and fragility makes the gap between manufacture and deposition remarkable, and burial in earlier graves, before excavation and redeposition in Late Antiquity, would help to ensure the preservation of ornate glass vessels. However, the curation of such expensive and high quality items as part of the domestic material culture of a family, would surely be desirable because of the meaning of the object and the wealth it stored in material terms.<sup>78</sup>

The presence of low worth domestic possessions with some age within grave contexts can however hint that they were preserved for their personal value, as there would be few other reasons to keep such items. A figurine found within an early 4th c. grave at the cemetery at Baldock, Hertfordshire, represents the lower spectrum of economic worth. The clay figurine (fig. 5), interred within an infant's grave, represents the goddess Dea Nutrix, and was produced in central Gaul in the 2nd c. AD.<sup>79</sup> Despite the apparent cheapness of the figure in terms of material and manufacturing technique, its

---

<sup>72</sup> P.Oxy.14.1645.

<sup>73</sup> P.Princ. 2.95.

<sup>74</sup> Pirling (1974) 175.

<sup>75</sup> Pirling (1974) 175, after Krämer (1965) 327.

<sup>76</sup> Harden (1987) 241.

<sup>77</sup> Harden (1987) 198.

<sup>78</sup> In all likelihood, the meaning of such older objects within graves varies from case to case, however even if an object is not an heirloom, it can still represent an object of personal meaning. See the discussion in the concluding chapter of this book.

<sup>79</sup> Burleigh *et al.* (2006) 286.

age is suggestive of the value it had during its lifetime. As a fragile object, it had been curated within the home for more than one hundred years before its deposition. The excavating archaeologists suggest that it was a treasured object taken from its domestic shrine and buried with a beloved child, the object providing comfort through its accumulated biography and association with long-dead family members.<sup>80</sup> This is certainly likely; a domestic shrine is one context in the home in which a fairly low value object could be curated over successive generations. Its role in the shrine, combined with its heirloom status, would ensure preservation.

Furthermore, the heirloom's connotations of family, combined with the subject of the figure, make it a suitable grave good for a child. The Dea Nutrix, or the nursing goddess, was related to concepts of motherhood and caregiving, enhancing the role it would have in accompanying the child in death. The knowledge that such an important family object was with the deceased child would no doubt provide comfort to the surviving relatives during a distressing time for the family. Despite the high rate of childhood mortality during this period, parents would nonetheless form strong attachments to their offspring, and suffer grief much as we might expect today, with attempts at consolation made by the grief-stricken and their friends and family.<sup>81</sup> Behaviour such as the burial of a symbolic heirloom, such as the Dea Nutrix, fits such an explanation.

The placement of the heirloom Dea Nutrix in the child's grave from Roman Britain also reflects the 'natural' transmission of possessions from older to younger generations within a family. This is based upon the assumption that the figurine was deposited in the grave by the parents of the child, in their role as the organisers of the burial and choosers of grave goods. Not only does this act reflect the intention to give comfort to both the parents and deceased child, but also represents the adherence of the traditional movement of heirlooms between family members in death. The act echoes the tradition of transmitting special objects from parents to offspring, that has been frustrated by the early death of the child. Perhaps the inclusion of the Dea Nutrix in the burial represents the continuation of 'natural' social practices in the face of the 'unnatural' death of a child before that of its parents.

Beyond domestic shrines, more practical reasons for the curation of low status objects as heirlooms exist. Objects that have a specific use within the home can be used continuously over long periods of time, ensuring their preservation (excluding potential breakages). Such ordinary items appear in graves from the Eastern Cemetery in London, their age at burial requiring some explanation. Grave B184 contained a Nene Valley beaker, which was at least 50 years old when it was deposited, between AD 250 and 400.<sup>82</sup> Grave B326 at the same site contained a Cologne Coated-Ware beaker in an unbroken state, that seems to date to between AD 100 and 140; therefore it was at least 110 years old (and possibly as much as 300 years old) at the time of deposition, which was also between AD 250 and 400.<sup>83</sup> The report states that there is no obvious reason for the survival of the object, which, even if dated typologies are slightly inaccurate, nonetheless represents an object of significant age being included in a burial.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, it is possible that this object is an heirloom item, curated within a family until the burial with the deceased. The fact that the object is of relatively low material value, and seemingly anomalous, supports this theory; the 'value' of such objects is subjective and cannot always be identified through material clues.

Alternatively, such objects may have been excavated from other earlier graves and then reburied. This interpretation, based on the comparative site of Butt Road, Colchester, suggests gravediggers disinterred earlier pots from graves to make them

---

<sup>80</sup> Burleigh *et al.* (2006) 290.

<sup>81</sup> Talbot (2009) 291-98.

<sup>82</sup> Barber and Bowsher (2000) 151.

<sup>83</sup> Barber and Bowsher (2000) 175.

<sup>84</sup> Barber and Bowsher (2000) 175.

available for reuse.<sup>85</sup> It does seem unlikely that such everyday objects would have been heirlooms kept over long periods of time. Roles within the home such as storage, would involve a relatively immobile life for such vessels, therefore ensuring preservation over a long period of time. This durability may explain their presence rather than the objects representing heirlooms.<sup>86</sup>

However, this interpretation excludes the layers of meaning that such objects have. An object can be utilitarian but also have family associations. It might be curated in the home through its static storage role, but accumulate memories and heirloom status as a by-product of its semi-permanent place within the domestic material culture. Whilst it seems unlikely that such ordinary utilitarian objects functioned as heirlooms, we cannot say for sure. The reason we do not know the meaning of this object is because the memory of this information has been lost with the death of the owners.<sup>87</sup> This now absent meaning might have revealed their status as heirlooms and associations with successive generations of a family. In turn, this could have prompted their inclusion within the grave as a token of kinship, in a similar way to the *Dea Nutrix* figurine discussed above.

What is notable in many of the more ordinary heirlooms—for example the cooking wares mentioned in the wills discussed earlier and the pottery from the graves of Roman London—is that they are not primarily intended for display. They do not showcase wealth embodied by their material fabric or the skill of production, that might allude to the social standing and prestige of the owning family. Their meaning is accumulated as a by-product of continued ownership and use within the home. As such, their heirloom status can be considered a more private kind of value, one that only corresponds to the family members who are familiar with the object and know its biography.

More generally, the inclusion of heirlooms within funerary contexts requires discussion. When found within a grave, the intentional deposition of the object can be interpreted as marking an end of its use life. The meaning of an heirloom is reliant upon the continued curation of an object within a family, with its status dependent upon the knowledge of the object's history. Once removed from the closed sphere of exchange that is inheritance, heirloom objects no longer function as such. They can no longer contain memories of past generations or represent family identity in material form, as there is no interaction between the material object and the people for whom it has been invested with memories. Such interment might therefore be interpreted as the removal of the heirloom's significance, as future generations are denied access to it. More pragmatically, it might suggest that there are no future generations to whom the object can be bequeathed, although it seems likely that in such circumstances the more expensive items would be sold. However, their burial with their owner can also signal that they are particularly cherished objects and representative of the dead person's family identity. Such reasoning explains why they are chosen for inclusion in the grave to accompany the deceased. The inclusion of familiar heirloom objects in the grave could be intended to provide company and comfort to the dead. Such action can also provide comfort to the living relatives left behind; they are unable to accompany the deceased, however through the materiality of the object placed within the grave, part of the family will always be with them, providing a surrogate presence and a sense of ancestral continuity in the face of death.

Despite the discovery of such low value objects, the evidence shows that the most prominent heirlooms were high value items, either in terms of material worth, or the workmanship put into their creation. This might be partly due to the nature of the sources; such objects are easier to spot within the archaeological record, and are worthy

---

<sup>85</sup> Barber and Bowsher (2000) 122; Crummy *et al.* (1993) 49.

<sup>86</sup> Barber and Bowsher (2000) 122.

<sup>87</sup> Maines and Glynn (1993) 10-11.

of comment within contemporary textual sources. As well as personal meaning, high value possessions often speak of their owner's social status, a popular topic in current scholarship. Yet it is also unsurprising that heirlooms were often prestigious objects; their valuable materials or high status workmanship provided the impetus for the curation of an object in a domestic context. As we have already seen, household shrines provided such a place, creating a sense of continuity within the material culture of the home over time.

For example, an assemblage of statuettes depicting a range of classical pagan figures comes from the 4th c. house known as the Panayia Domus in Corinth. The collection was found within a small room thought to hold the domestic shrine, its contents sealed by a destruction layer, providing a *terminus ante quem* for the room's use of the 360s.<sup>88</sup> Important for this discussion is the fact that the collection represents statuettes from a broad range of periods, including a draped figurine of Europa dating to the 1st to 2nd c. AD, and a head of Pan, thought to also be from the 2nd c. AD.<sup>89</sup> Some of the statues are unfinished, and the range of dates suggest they were collected together quite late. Archaeologist Lea Stirling proposed that in earlier times these figurines were displayed in other rooms as a show of social standing, before the religious climate of the city of Corinth changed and made the owner uncomfortable displaying pagan images so publicly, and so moved them together elsewhere.<sup>90</sup>

The question is, therefore, whether we can define such objects as heirlooms. Objects of age have multiple trajectories that include possibilities other than a function as heirlooms. For example, older items might be acquired late in their life and be displayed within domestic space in order to communicate specific messages about the homeowner. Objects of age can therefore represent ideals that the owner wishes to display to others, or feels represents his or her own identity. The culture of the Roman period, and classicism as a cultural style, was a popular heritage in Late Antiquity. Classical objects from this earlier period, such as statues and miniature works of art, bridged cultural differences between the past and present, and allowed such antique items to be admired and emulated.<sup>91</sup> The late antique and Byzantine periods witnessed the self-identification of the state and its citizens as 'Roman', despite changes in terms of imperial leadership and state faith. Therefore the inclusion of older objects in domestic material culture seems entirely natural as a statement of cultural identity and social values. The reuse of older objects is certainly known from evidence beyond the domestic realm in Late Antiquity. Art historian Jaś Elsner discusses the use of spolia in the Arch of Constantine as a method by which the new imperial regime bolstered their authority through the use of the material culture of the past.<sup>92</sup> These relics of the past were adapted to contemporary needs by being placed into a new context, where their original significance sat alongside their new meaning.<sup>93</sup>

The late antique popularity of classical styles of material culture is also related to the concept of *paideia*. This was the traditional Greek education, and a sign of elite status, culture, and learning. Such schooling was based upon the values and virtues of the earlier Greek and Roman periods, and could be represented visually through a preference for classical-style objects, especially representations of pagan gods, antique objects, and mythological scenes.<sup>94</sup> Material culture displayed in the home would reflect such a background, and convey the education and status of the owner to onlookers. This is especially true for objects like statuary; whilst some examples of earlier Roman sculpture would represent heirloom objects curated by families, other items were likely

---

<sup>88</sup> Stirling (2008) 92.

<sup>89</sup> Stirling (2008) 94-96.

<sup>90</sup> Stirling (2008) 130, 138.

<sup>91</sup> Marinescu (1996) 285.

<sup>92</sup> Elsner (2000a) 155

<sup>93</sup> Elsner (2000a) 177

<sup>94</sup> Elsner (1998) 106-108.

purchased as antiques, reflecting the desirability of displaying such cultural items within the home.<sup>95</sup>

Another assemblage of statues provides a different perspective. Found in the city of Aquae Tarbellicae (modern Dax in France), the group represents a collection of heirloom statuettes in a 4th c. context. On the face of it these could be interpreted as family heirlooms from a household shrine or domestic collection, similar to those from the Panayia Domus, above. However, the key feature of this assemblage is that the bronze statuettes appear to be undergoing repair for resale.<sup>96</sup> This is suggested by the physical state of the statues and the inclusion of tools within the assemblage: these figurines were gathered as antiques to be restored and resold.<sup>97</sup> This reflects the popular interest in antique and classical style objects within Late Antiquity.

This is also the case for certain examples of Roman Samian Ware in Britain, a distinctive red-bodied type of pottery from Gaul. Colin Wallace discusses the presence of such ceramics as complete vessels in the 4th c. as survival through reuse; he refers to the famous Corbridge pottery assemblage that appears to be a shop selling Samian Ware of over 100 years of age for reuse.<sup>98</sup> This apparent second hand market in Samian would cater to patrons who wished to emulate their forebears through the use and display of antique objects, which communicated messages surrounding their education and heritage. It is important to note that such antiques could also fulfil more practical requirements. The presence of older objects in late antique homes might alternatively represent a scarcity of newer examples in contemporary society, representing reuse through necessity.

It therefore seems that the objects from Aquae Tarbellicae, whilst of significant age in the 4th c., were not heirloom objects at this stage of their life. However, this does not mean that prior to their inclusion in the assemblage, these statues did not form important objects within a home. Their survival into the 4th c., albeit damaged, suggests their intentional preservation by previous owners. These statues might well have been highly valued family heirlooms before being sold for a reason beyond our knowledge, perhaps due to the death of the owners, changes in fashion, disinterest by inheritors over their familial value, or the onset of financial hardship. The economic value of such objects would certainly make them an appealing asset to sell in times of need.

Furthermore, there is also evidence suggesting that older statues and busts were reused for reasons other than fashion and economic value. At Lullingstone Villa in Kent, the 2nd c. owner displayed two portrait busts, presumably of his ancestors, for veneration; 100 years later at the end of the 3rd c., the new owner of the house reused these busts in a similar display of veneration, despite them not representing his own ancestors.<sup>99</sup> Roman art historian Martin Henig suggests that this behaviour reflects a belief in the spirits of the house, which were to be worshipped as the domestic *lares* gods.<sup>100</sup> It might also reflect the acknowledgement of specific social norms relating to the usual presence of older objects within the home, and in the domestic shrine more specifically. This evidence provides an additional type of value that could be assigned to such reused domestic statuary.

## Texts

Much of the evidence discussed within this chapter has come from textual sources, in particular the documentary papyri. Whilst so far it has been the contents of these texts

---

<sup>95</sup> Stirling (2005) 220.

<sup>96</sup> Stirling (2005) 84.

<sup>97</sup> Santrot (1996) 323.

<sup>98</sup> Wallace (2006) 266. Ellen Swift's article on the reuse of objects in Britain during Late Antiquity also brings together an extensive range of further relevant evidence: Swift (2013).

<sup>99</sup> Henig (2005) 158.

<sup>100</sup> Henig (2005) 158.

that have been used as evidence, their role as objects, with the potential to become heirlooms themselves, also needs to be assessed.

When looking at the evidence of papyrological documents, the fact that many were found in rubbish dumps would seem to suggest that they were not considered to be valued possessions, hence their disposal. However, such an interpretation excludes the fact that these documents may well have been treasured domestic items for a period of time before they were thrown away. These discarded documents are sometimes found together with other texts from the same household, giving us an idea of the kinds of documents that were curated within the home. Usually official documents that related to the family and its financial and legal status were kept for a long time.<sup>101</sup> Such valuable documents were usually stored safely away from intruders in sheltered locations within the home, such as in jars, under stairs, beneath doorsteps, or in cellars.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, it seems that many documents experienced a period of time during which they were a semi-permanent part of domestic material culture.

Examples of family archives have been found across Egypt, and provide direct evidence of the inheritance of documents. Collections of documentary papyri were inherited and added to by subsequent generations of the family; for example, the 6th c. archive of Dioscorus contains several documents relating to Dioscorus' father Appollos.<sup>103</sup> As stated above, the majority of texts in such collections represent official or legal documents that have a value directly pertaining to the financial and social well-being of the household and its members. However, documents with potential sentimental value were also included in such family archives; there is evidence of more informal texts being preserved alongside official documents. Some examples that we have date from before the late antique period, however it is worth mentioning them in this context to underline the potential scope of valued texts in the home. The archive of Amenotnes dates from the 2nd c. BC and includes a list of the birthdays of his children, written in Demotic Greek.<sup>104</sup> Similarly, Ptolemaios kept the schoolwork of his younger brother Apollonios in an archive with more official documents, also in the 2nd c. BC.<sup>105</sup> Many examples of texts that have been interpreted as school exercises have been found from the late antique period. In fact a 6th c. document, the biography of the orator Isocrates, is thought to represent a school text, and was found within the archive of Dioscorus.<sup>106</sup> The archive also contains a number of poems, usually giving praise to official figures, which were written by Dioscorus himself, and might represent texts kept for sentimental reasons rather than because of any intrinsic value.<sup>107</sup>

There is also evidence from the reuse of papyri that suggests documents were kept for varying lengths of time. The letter of Nicanor dates from the late 2nd to 3rd c. and, through its reuse, provides evidence of the curation of documents.<sup>108</sup> The text is a letter requesting the recipient's help in recovering some lost items of clothing, and is written on the verso of the papyrus. On the recto, however, the remains of a column of accounts from the 2nd c. can be read. This would suggest the original document was kept for a period of around 100 years before it was reused. Additionally, the verso also has signs of reuse, including the earlier text's date of the 21st year of Commodus, the equivalent of around AD 180. Of course, we cannot know exactly why the document was kept before being reused; it might have been for sentimental reasons. However, given that the earliest text was a set of accounts, this argument seems unlikely. It could rather be that

---

<sup>101</sup> Bagnall (2011) 132.

<sup>102</sup> Vanderpe (2009) 219.

<sup>103</sup> MacCoull (1988) 20.

<sup>104</sup> P.Tor.Amen. 3.

<sup>105</sup> UPZ 1. 147.

<sup>106</sup> P.Cair.Masp. 2.67175.

<sup>107</sup> See for example P.Cair.Masp.1.67120v, written on the same piece of papyrus as a contract. The verses celebrate the family of the dux Callinicus.

<sup>108</sup> P.Oxy. 6.929.

the piece of papyrus was kept purely for its reuse value, something that the repeated recycling of the material itself suggests.

This was not an unusual practice; such palimpsest documents, where the papyrus or parchment is repeatedly cleansed of a previous text and reused, became more common in Late Antiquity when papyrus was expensive and often scarce.<sup>109</sup> So the reuse of a piece of papyrus does not necessarily indicate the curation of a document, rather perhaps the curation of a valued material. Furthermore, especially in the largely treeless landscapes of Egypt, papyrus made an effective fuel when burnt.<sup>110</sup> Therefore, a preserved cache of documents—such as those found in the storeroom known as the *Cantina dei Papyri* in Tebtunis, Egypt—can instead reflect their being saved for fuel or reuse, rather than being kept for their personal or documentary value.<sup>111</sup>

Overall, it seems possible that documents were preserved and passed on as heirlooms within families, although the evidence is not conclusive. In terms of correspondence, well-known literary figures are recorded as keeping copies of letters. For example in the 4th c., Libanius stored both his previous letters and speeches for copying.<sup>112</sup> The problem is that such evidence refers to literary letters copied by their authors in order to distribute the work more widely, rather than the more personal correspondence that is normally attested in the documentary papyri record. This means it is again unclear whether the latter documents would have been kept within the home. Personal texts can be identified and, through prosopography, recognised as belonging to earlier members of the same family. With regards to books and literary texts, however, it is difficult to distinguish between antiques and heirlooms within the home.

Texts of significant age can also represent material evocations of the past. In terms of palaeography, a reader may notice changes in writing style, and the use of archaic spelling and grammar. The contents of texts, especially the documentary texts found within the papyrological record, can also preserve moments from the past. Dated contracts or sets of accounts, and descriptions of past events within letters or petitions memorialise historical occurrences. They function to preserve the details of earlier times and emphasise their age and a sense of nostalgia by highlighting change and differences with the present. It is likely that documents, including private letters, were kept for all permutations of value, including their heirloom status. Therefore, such objects represent a transient but meaningful section of late antique domestic material culture.

The evidence for texts as heirlooms provides an interesting interjection in the discussion of value. Value is a relative concept. The most prized possession for a family of lesser economic means may not reflect the evidence for heirloom objects collated here. It does not however mean that heirloom objects were available to only a section of the population who could afford them. The meaning embodied by an heirloom stems primarily from its biography, therefore lower quality items—such as the clay *Dea Nutrix* figure—could also fulfil a role similar to the more expensive statuettes from the *Panayia Domus*.

Similar scales of value can be seen in a comparison between the *Hunting Plate* of the *Sevso Treasure* and the *Esquiline Treasure's Projecta Casket*. The items of the *Sevso Treasure* are notable for their large dimensions, weights, and variety of silver-working techniques in the plentiful decoration.<sup>113</sup> The *Projecta Casket*, despite its lavish gilding and silver work, seems to be of relatively unexceptional craftsmanship, considering the nature of the finished object, and is likely an imitation of court style rather than a truly

---

<sup>109</sup> Avrin (1991) 149.

<sup>110</sup> Bagnall (2011) 118.

<sup>111</sup> Gallazzi (1990) 284

<sup>112</sup> *Lib. Ep.* 744.5, 877.3, 1307, 1264. See also Norman (1960) 125.

<sup>113</sup> Mundell Mango (1994) 11.

aristocratic-level commission.<sup>114</sup> This demonstrates the differences in levels of quality between heirloom objects that initially seem on a par. In fact, according to Alan Cameron, silver may not even have been that valuable or exclusive a material.<sup>115</sup> Even if this is true, it was no doubt still beyond the means of a huge section of late antique society, hence the creations of imitations of silverware in glass (and likely other materials that have now perished) within the archaeological record.<sup>116</sup>

Documents have no real intrinsic value (other than the modest resale value of papyri for use in palimpsest texts), but when in the form of land ownership documents or lucrative contracts they simultaneously represent objects of very high economic worth. They are precious possessions because of the information they contain, which provides reason for their subsequent curation within the home, potentially across generations of the same family. However, it can be difficult to envisage such documents as acquiring the status of heirlooms (with the sentimental value that accompanies such a role) in the same way that other objects did. We need to consider why that might be. Firstly, these are pragmatic documents whose primary value stems from their recording of valuable information; as such they can be seen as similar to the pottery storage vessels mentioned above, as they are essentially a repository for information.

However, unlike those vessels, these documents were unlikely to be seen on a daily basis, and therefore would not have been part of the visible material culture of the home. Instead, textual archives were often kept within containers such as vessels, or hidden away in enclosed parts of the home.<sup>117</sup> As such, it is likely that members of the household did not consider themselves to have an active relationship with these possessions, meaning that it could be more difficult for memories and family identities to be associated with them as heirloom objects. These possessions can therefore be understood as passive rather than active: not all of these documents would be regularly seen or read by family members. All of these factors suggest that these possessions, whilst potentially curated over long periods of time within one family, were unlikely to possess the same sorts of meaning and value as other family heirlooms.

However, an alternative view also needs to be considered. It might conversely be the case that these kinds of documentary texts could become family heirlooms through their role within the narrative of the family's identity. Texts recording the acquisition of, for example, a family home, a family business or the freedom of a former slave, all represent significant moments within the life of a single family unit over successive generations. As such, these examples are indeed able to function as typical heirlooms, representing past and future generations and safeguarding a sense of ancestral continuity, despite the fact they were not always visible to members of the household. This echoes the evidence for other more typical heirlooms, for example the precious stones hidden away in the description from John Lydus. Similarly, the jewellery belonging to the Hoxne Hoard seems to have been removed from the active sphere of the household and stored safely away. This semi-retirement from the daily life of a household does not preclude the presence of sentimental meaning in any of the heirloom objects.<sup>118</sup>

These kinds of documents can also be contrasted with other types of private document. The papyrological record contains a significant number of texts that could easily accumulate sentimental value; an obvious example is the thousands of private letters from the period that have survived to today. Their value comes from the material association with the sender and the contents of the letter. Within the home, these texts might be considered as more active: available to be read and re-read as mementoes by the members of the household. Such actions elicit feelings of nostalgia or memories of a

---

<sup>114</sup> Elsner (2003) 24.

<sup>115</sup> Cameron (1992) 185.

<sup>116</sup> Fleming (1999) 109.

<sup>117</sup> Vanderpe (2009) 219.

<sup>118</sup> Johns (2010) 59.



person, place or event from the past. Similarly, literary texts would plausibly be read and re-read for pleasure, creating active relationships between the owner and possession. Such reinforcement of meaning through repeated behaviours can be extrapolated for the other examples of objects with explicit functions discussed within this chapter, such as in the use marks on the Hunting Plate, for example. Similar arguments can be made for items associated with toilet rituals, such as the Projecta Casket, or the wearing of heirloom clothing and jewellery, in which their physical use would strengthen the relationship between owner and possession, and maintain the heirloom status of the object.

## **Conclusion**

A range of evidence shows that both formal and informal structures of meaning relate to late antique heirlooms. Meaning could be created through intentional curation, or as a by-product of an object's long life within a single family. Objects of high economic worth seem to thus correspond to the formal creation of heirlooms and their accumulation of meaning and memories within the home. Such objects were either purchased explicitly as heirloom objects, or were passed down through families, as their value makes them suitable heirlooms and ensures their domestic curation. By this reasoning, lower value objects would therefore seem to correspond to the more informal creation of heirlooms discussed above.

In this way, many heirloom objects function as relics from the past, surviving over periods of time and accumulating memories relating to their successive owners from which their status and value is derived. They refer to old modes of living, reminding the viewer of familiar times in the distant (or not so distant) past. Over time, manufacturing techniques, styles of object and decorative subject matter change, as fashions and tastes alter. Furthermore, extended use may result in the physical deterioration of the objects.<sup>119</sup> As such, they are referents to the past in material form. They reinforce the memories with which they are attached, and preserve the identities of past owners through their biographical link with the past. It is this association with previous generations that is emphasised by such noticeable physical age, and which simultaneously preserves their relevance for current and future generations within a family. The value of heirloom objects comes from this ability to link the past with present and future family members.

---

<sup>119</sup> See also McCracken (1988) for his discussion of 'patina' and meaning in objects.

## Gifts in Late Antiquity

### Identifying Gift Objects

The way in which an object is acquired as a possession forms a key part of its biography, thus affecting its value and meaning. As well as inheritance as heirlooms, objects are given and received as gifts. The purpose of these gift exchanges is not predominantly economic; instead the movement of objects between people occurs for reasons of apparent affection, altruism, tradition, or social convention. A vast literature exists concerning gifts and their role within society. The well-known early 20th c. text of Marcel Mauss offers what has become the traditional anthropological view of gift giving, that the act creates an obligation between parties to exchange further gifts and counter gifts.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the giving of gifts forms ongoing links between donor and recipient: they are bound together by the social requirement of further exchange.<sup>2</sup> The result is that gifts are radically different from commodities, the exchange of which has no equivalent social effect.<sup>3</sup> Giving a gift creates a connection between two people, and the object exchanged thus traces this link. The continued exchange of gifts maintains this relationship.

This chapter discusses evidence for gift giving in Late Antiquity. Many studies of artefacts from this period focus on high status objects, often related to imperial or civic gift giving. These topics are considered in this chapter but in relation to the individual relationships between people and the gifts they receive, and how this relates to the connection between the donor and recipient. Evidence for the giving and receiving of gifts comes to us in a variety of forms. Documentary texts, such as private letters, record details of gifted objects such as appearance, function, price, weight, or origin. Contextual details are often also included, recording the donor, the recipient, and the occasion donated. These documents are invaluable for recording *ad hoc* donations of goods, which often accompanied the letter recording the details of the gift. Gifts are also described in literary texts, often in terms of specific occasions, such as marriage, or exchanges relating to imperial diplomacy and largesse. The 1st c. AD writer Martial makes extensive references within his books of epigrams to gift giving, as many of the short verses are intended to accompany fictional presents.<sup>4</sup> Despite the texts' early date, many of the details he gives are useful in providing an idea of gift giving traditions that are absent in late antique evidence.

From the archaeological record, clues on late antique objects themselves allow tentative identifications of the item as a gift. For example, imagery on domestic objects, such as marriage iconography, helps identify the occasion of a donation or the person to whom a gift was given. Many of the objects discussed—such as the Hunting Plate examined in the previous chapter—feature inscriptions which locate their biographical details materially upon them. Such an act transforms the information contained in the inscription into one of the dominant features of its history, and becomes a constant reminder of this when viewed. Inscriptions can also reference the donor, frequently seen in imperial gifts, which feature the image or name of the emperor from whom the object originates.

Biographical details, derived from textual and material evidence, describing how an object was acquired, govern the structure of this chapter. First, evidence for gift objects

---

<sup>1</sup> Mauss (1966) 10-11.

<sup>2</sup> See also Gregory (1982) 41.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas (1991) 15.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Mart. *Epigrams* 7.72; 7.86; 8.71.

associated with a donation on specific occasions is discussed; we will then turn to gifts that were predominantly associated with an identifiable donor.

### Wedding Gifts

Documentary texts demonstrate that gifts were given on the occasion of marriage. Whilst some items were perishable or consumable, and therefore distinguished by their impermanence, others became everyday household possessions. The existing tradition of giving gifts at weddings is underlined by this 2nd c. AD letter:

At your wedding the wife of my brother Diskas brought me 100 drachmas. Since now her son Nilos is going to get married, it is right that we make a return gift, even if little disputes are between us.<sup>5</sup>

This text demonstrates that the giving of gifts was a social convention to which it was necessary to adhere, at least within families.

The first specific example of a wedding gift discussed here is from the following late 4th to early 5th c. note that accompanied a present:

For the lucky day of the marriage of my lord son, Limenios, there has been allotted to you one flagon (of wine), equals 1 flagon.<sup>6</sup>

This is a gift of wine given from a father to a son on his wedding day. Wine was a suitable choice as feasting would have been an integral part of the marriage celebrations. In the 6th c., Dioscorus of Aphrodito emphasises the place of wine in wedding celebrations in his *epithalamium* poem, describing the drink as 'love's adornment'.<sup>7</sup> Of course, the wine itself is impermanent, it is to be consumed and not preserved or curated. However, a lack of material permanence does not mean that such items are inexpensive or valueless. Certain food types can be preserved, either before or after sending, whilst products such as wine can be kept for longer periods compared to fresh produce. There is also no reason why certain foods in the right conditions could not be kept as mementoes, as slices of wedding cake are preserved today. In addition, some types of food and drink were expensive to purchase, and therefore represent luxury goods. Certainly various kinds of wines were more expensive than others, as demonstrated by those listed in Diocletian's Price Edict.<sup>8</sup>

Yet, the flagon which contained the wine is as integral a part of the gift as the wine itself. The vessel is specifically described as a flagon (ὄμφακηρᾶ), which contrasts with the more usual description of jars or amphorae of wine in other papyrological texts of the period. *Omphakera* refers to a rounded grape-shaped vessel after the unripe grape from which the name derives.<sup>9</sup> Whilst the size or material of the flagon are unclear, it was likely much like a jug or pitcher, allowing the contents to be poured easily. There are examples from the period of such objects made in both glass and ceramic that have a recognisably globular 'grape' shape (fig. 6).<sup>10</sup> Glass however would have been especially

---

<sup>5</sup> P.Flor.3.332 (transl. Bagnall and Criore (2006) 147).

<sup>6</sup> SB 14 12077 (transl. Youtie (1976) 100).

<sup>7</sup> P.Cair.Masp.2.67179 (transl. MacCoull (1988) 89).

<sup>8</sup> For example, ordinary wine is priced at 8 denarii per pint, whereas wine of the 'first quality' is at 24 denarii per pint: *Ed. Diocl.* 2.8-10 (transl. Graser (1959) 321-22).

<sup>9</sup> Youtie (1976) 100.

<sup>10</sup> Moulded glass vessels in the form of bunches of grapes are also known in large numbers from the Roman period. The reason they are not included in this discussion is their small size (the bodies are usually less than 10 cm in height), which seems too small for vessels used to contain wine. See Stern (1995) 190-95. For another example of a globular shaped vessel, see the Late Roman Nile silt vessel in the Petrie Museum, London, UC67032.

suitable. Whilst pottery vessels provided the strength required for the bulk transport of commodities through trade, in contrast, glassware met the needs in the local populace for vessels to hold smaller quantities of liquids.<sup>11</sup> Such an object would have been reused, becoming a permanent or semi-permanent presence within Limenios' home, as many glass vessels became storage containers in a cycle of filling, use and recycling that gave them a potential use life of many decades.<sup>12</sup> It is one such vessel that seems to be described in the 6th to 7th c. letter below. The writer requests some fish sauce to be sent to her from her husband:

[...] Your lordship was requested—as I also asked in person—to send me a little mushroom and the small (jar of) oil and the garum in the omphalos bottle[...]<sup>13</sup>

The *omphalos* description refers to the type of decoration upon the vessel (protuberances like bellybuttons), a feature that makes the vessel identifiable and distinguishable from other containers within the couple's home. Such familiarity with a distinctive possession represents a permanence within the home likely associated with reuse. Thus, the gift of a flagon given to Limenios could also be incorporated into his home's material culture in a similar way.

Looking beyond the documentary papyri, there is further evidence for other sorts of wedding gifts. The Projecta Casket, the famous 4th c. silver chest forming part of the Esquiline Treasure (mentioned in the previous chapter) is one example (fig. 7). The casket features an inscription that reads *Secunde et Proiecta vivatis in Christo* or 'Secundus and Projecta, may you live in Christ'. In addition it has extensive decoration showing Venus at her toilet alongside an analogous representation of a woman, alluding to the Projecta named in the dedication. It also features a double portrait showing a man and woman depicted within an ornamental wreath. Shelton suggests the casket was a gift to the bride, with the imagery reflecting the ritual of the bride before her wedding.<sup>14</sup> The iconography—the double portrait of the man and woman, presumed to be the Projecta and Secundus of the inscription, the representation of Venus at her toilet, and the comparable image of Projecta at hers—is strongly associated with the concept of marriage and the contemporary ideals surrounding femininity.

As Elsner describes, these scenes depict Projecta as constructing her own image in anticipation of the late antique male, the Secundus of the inscription and portrait.<sup>15</sup> The imagery on the toilet casket is self-referential, and positions Projecta as both the intended user and subsequent 'product' of the casket, something reflected in the depiction of the process of beautification and the comparison with Venus on the casket's decoration.<sup>16</sup> The result of this process is the marital bliss depicted by the couple's portrait.<sup>17</sup> Of course, as Elsner argues, it is impossible to know whether the casket actually represents a gift given on the day of the wedding; however, a definite association between the iconography of the decoration and the union of Projecta and Secundus can be identified.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, whilst not necessarily given on the day of their wedding, this is nevertheless a gift object associated with this event in the minds of the owners.

Other examples of late antique silverware can also be interpreted as wedding gifts. The Sevso Treasure's Hunting Plate, again discussed in relation to heirlooms in the previous chapter, is a gift, implied by the donative tone of the object's inscription: 'May

---

<sup>11</sup> Fleming (1999) 62.

<sup>12</sup> Fleming (1999) 62-63.

<sup>13</sup> SB 18.13762 (transl. Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) 235-36).

<sup>14</sup> Shelton (1981) 28

<sup>15</sup> Elsner (2003) 30

<sup>16</sup> Elsner (2003) 31.

<sup>17</sup> Elsner (2003) 31.

<sup>18</sup> Elsner (2007) 204.

these little vessels, Sevso, last you for many ages, so that they may serve your descendants worthily'.<sup>19</sup> It seems certain that the object was presented to commemorate a significant event; the lack of donor name suggests an event within the family of Sevso.<sup>20</sup> That this event is a wedding is argued by Alan Cameron, who highlights the importance of the emphasis on Sevso's descendants—the natural product of a marriage—within the inscription.<sup>21</sup> Roman art historian Katherine Dunbabin also suggests that the presence of a female figure in the central picnic scene of the plate endorses the interpretation of the object as a wedding gift. The inclusion of these two central figures suggests they can be interpreted as Sevso and his wife enjoying their estate together; in reality a Roman woman would not be present on such a hunting expedition.<sup>22</sup>

Ausonius' 4th c. *epithalamium* poem on the subject of the marriage ceremony, also lists silver plate in a stanza detailing the gifts given to a bride and groom:

The boys advance and, all together before their parents' eyes, bring their gifts, a robe stiff with embroidery of gold, carrying as offerings talents of gold and ivory, a chair, a veil adorned with acanthus leaves in saffron, a great piece of plate for the table, for the neck a string of pearls, and a diadem of both gems and gold.<sup>23</sup>

There is a strong similarity between the heirlooms discussed in the previous chapter, and the objects found within the sources here, especially concerning objects of high economic value, such as silverware. As mentioned above, both Hendy and Leader-Newby emphasise how such objects simultaneously represented and embodied affluence, in comparison to coinage, which was not considered to have the same impact in terms of ability to display social status and personal wealth.<sup>24</sup> These signifiers of prosperity function, in part, as objects of display. To give a gift of this kind allows the communication of messages about not only the donor but also the recipient, when displayed in the home. These messages relate to personal prosperity, issues of taste, fashion, generosity and, as such, function to compliment the giver as much as the recipient. Considering that the giving of gifts is understood to create and maintain relationships, the prestige of the donated objects also relates to the perceived value of the connection being made.

Ausonius also refers to jewellery in his *epithalamium* poem, a common feature in other sources relating to wedding gifts. For example, one of the late 5th to early 6th c. homilies of Severus of Antioch describes the way in which women in his congregation gave gold jewellery to imperial brides visiting the city.<sup>25</sup> Late antique and Byzantine marriage jewellery has been widely studied and discussed by scholars.<sup>26</sup> It forms a discrete set of ornamentation that was explicitly linked with a significant biographical event, both in terms of the life of the object and the life of the owner. Such jewellery included marriage rings—which were worn by both men and women of the wealthy classes in the 4th and 5th c.—as well as necklaces, bracelets and belts.<sup>27</sup> Textual sources reveal that the exchange of jewellery between the betrothed couple on the occasion of marriage was common. The 5th-6th c. *Life of St Alexius* includes a description of how he gave a belt and ring as a gift to his bride in the chamber after the ceremony.<sup>28</sup> Therefore,

---

<sup>19</sup> Dunbabin (2003) 142.

<sup>20</sup> Dunbabin (2003) 143.

<sup>21</sup> Al. Cameron (1992) 185.

<sup>22</sup> Dunbabin (2003) 149.

<sup>23</sup> Auson. *Cent. nupt.* 17.5 (transl. Evelyn-White (1919) 383).

<sup>24</sup> See discussion in chapter 1. Leader-Newby (2004) 26-27; Hendy (2008) 219.

<sup>25</sup> Sev. Ant. *Homilies* 100 (transl. from the French in Leader-Newby (2004) 70; Guidi (1930) 248).

<sup>26</sup> See especially Vikan (1990). Also Walker (2002), and Ross *et al.* (2005).

<sup>27</sup> Vikan (1990) 146-47.

<sup>28</sup> *Life of Saint Alexius* 2.15.

not only were gifts given to the bride and groom on the occasion of their wedding, but also exchanged between the couple in a more private setting.<sup>29</sup>

Several marriage belts have survived to us today; the example in fig. 8 is made of gold roundels, or medallions, joined to form a chain. The medallions at the front depict a wedding ceremony, which Christ is overseeing. Art historian Alicia Walker argues that the presentation of such marriage jewellery in a private context suggests that the objects did not have a role within the ceremony, but rather were exchanged to fulfil a practical amuletic function.<sup>30</sup> The gold wedding belt illustrated here also features an inscription referring to harmony and concord, as many other examples of marriage jewellery also do. By stating EX ΘΕΟΥ ΟΜΟΝΥΑ ΧΑΠΙ ΥΓΙΑ ('from God harmony grace health'), the belt protects the wearer and their marital union from attacks, which were often invoked within pagan love spells and charms.<sup>31</sup> Inscriptions and iconography like that used on the marriage belt above help to identify jewellery associated with marriage. Other designs include a pair of clasped hands, which echo the moment known as the *iunctio dextrarum* when the bride and groom's hands were traditionally joined in the wedding ceremony (fig. 9); alternatively, the couple's heads can be shown facing each other in profile, as seen on imperial coinage.<sup>32</sup> By the 6th c., these motifs are almost exclusively replaced by paired frontal bust portraits, such as those on the Projecta Casket.<sup>33</sup>

'Marriage' iconography can also be found on objects other than jewellery. Gold glass roundels, the majority of which originally formed the bases of vessels before their walls were lost or removed, also feature such decorative motifs, suggesting that they were used to commemorate the event of marriage.<sup>34</sup> One example is the 4th c. AD glass base in fig. 10, which depicts a frontal bust portrait of a couple either side of a depiction of Hercules. It features an inscription within a border that reads ORFITVS.ET CONSTANTIA.IN NOMINE HERCVLIS, or 'Orfitus and Constantia, live happily in the name of Hercules'. There is also an additional inscription reading ACERENTINO FELICES BIBATIS, thought to translate as 'Enjoy the wine of Acerentia'. Harden interpreted this object as a wedding gift to a pagan couple, as the inscription exhorts the pair together by name to 'live happily', and the depiction of Hercules shows him carrying apples, which were his wedding present to Jupiter and Juno.<sup>35</sup> Such iconography thus makes the object suitable for a wedding gift. However, the inscription on the object also suggests that the context of the gift giving was slightly more complex.

It names the couple as Orfitus and Constantia. Alan Cameron identified Orfitus as Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus, a mid 4th c. prefect of Rome, and suggested that his wife Constantia was related to the imperial family, as implied by her name.<sup>36</sup> The inscription also contains the reference ACERENT; Cameron argued that this is the Roman town of Acerentia (modern day Acerenza), which, notably, was home to a cult of Hercules, whose image is represented on the vessel base.<sup>37</sup> Art historian Daniel Howells stated the vessel, of which now only the base survives, was likely a commission by the town of Acerentia and given as a gift to Orfitus, their patron.<sup>38</sup> Such an interpretation gives

---

<sup>29</sup> This echoes Emperor Honorius' pre-nuptial gift of heirloom jewellery to Maria, daughter of Stilicho, as described by Claudian, *Epithalamium* 10.10-15. See chapter 1 for full discussion.

<sup>30</sup> Walker (2002) 66.

<sup>31</sup> Walker (2002) 66.

<sup>32</sup> Vikan (1990) 148. An example of a ring with the couple in profile, is the gold 5th c. wedding ring in the British Museum (AF.304).

<sup>33</sup> Vikan (1990) 150.

<sup>34</sup> Al. Cameron (1996) 299.

<sup>35</sup> Harden (1987) 280.

<sup>36</sup> Al. Cameron (1996) 300-301.

<sup>37</sup> Al. Cameron (1996) 296-98.

<sup>38</sup> Howells (2010) 276; Al. Cameron (1996) 300. This object is discussed further in relation to souvenirs: see chapter 3.

several layers of meaning to the object. For Orfitus and Constantia, the vessel would not only be associated with Acerentia, the inhabitants of which are the donors of the gift, but would also refer to the social status of Orfitus and his role as patron of the town. The iconography used on the object also corresponds not only to the town from which the object originates, but also the union of Orfitus and his wife Constantia, whether the gift was given specifically to commemorate their wedding or not.

The majority of gold glass roundels have been found in the walls of the early Christian catacombs, as though marking or decorating the gravesites.<sup>39</sup> The vessel may therefore represent a different kind of gift altogether: one from high profile clients to their patrons.<sup>40</sup> The iconography therefore commemorates the union of Constantia and Orfitus, however the donation of the gift reinforces the relationship between patron and client. The catacomb interment of similar vessels also suggests that they had a long life within the household before the owner's death, likely as a bowl or drinking vessel. The original form that this artefact took is suggested by a late 4th to early 5th c. gold vessel now the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 11), which still has some of its vessel walls extant. The curvature of these walls suggests that the original vessel was a broad shallow dish or bowl, perhaps something similar in form to the 4th c. example shown in fig. 12, also now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>41</sup>

In Howells' study examining the gold glass roundels of the British Museum, he discusses in detail the use of the kind of double portrait imagery seen on the roundel depicting Orfitus and Constantia. He explains that the majority of the examples feature cut and incised gold leaf decoration, a technique that lends itself to the mass production of objects of generally unexceptional quality. Such manufacture meant that workshops could produce these generic vessels in large numbers for reasonable prices.<sup>42</sup> Gold glass vessels could therefore be purchased as ready-made gifts or with customised inscriptions suitable for weddings, but could also be given to married couples at any point in their lives. Such objects can thus be understood as generic gift objects, and not necessarily associated with or explicitly made for weddings, but produced to be suitable for a variety of contexts.<sup>43</sup> This is reinforced by the findspots of the objects in the tombs of patrons.

Glass vessels featuring gold decorative bases give the illusion of expense whilst actually using very little of the precious material. As discussed in relation to heirlooms in the previous chapter, value is a relative concept, and depends upon the economic status of the donor and recipient. At the other end of the spectrum to the gold glass vessel bases are the purpose made gold glass medallions featuring skilled and highly realistic portraits of individuals or small family groups (fig. 13). Unlike vessel bases, these medallions are stand-alone objects and were never originally part of a receptacle.<sup>44</sup> They depict individuals rather than generic images, and in addition never feature a complete family group; either an adult man is depicted alone, or an adult woman with one or more children is the subject of the portrait. As such, medallions depicting an individual male might have been possessed by women to evoke the presence of an absent father or son; similarly those depicting women and children may have been carried around by a father whilst away from home.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps these objects also formed gifts, given between family members on the occasion of parting, and thus may represent highly personal commissioned objects.

## Other Celebrations

---

<sup>39</sup> Al. Cameron (1996) 299.

<sup>40</sup> Al. Cameron (1996) 299; Grig (2004) 212.

<sup>41</sup> This conclusion is supported by Howells' analysis: Howells (2010) 76-77.

<sup>42</sup> Howells (2010) 276-77.

<sup>43</sup> Howells (2010) 277-78.

<sup>44</sup> Howells (2010) 274-75.

<sup>45</sup> Howells (2010) 275.

To modern eyes, birthdays seem an obvious occasion on which gifts should be given. There was certainly a tradition of celebrating birthdays within the Roman period; the day was known as the *dies natalis* and was celebrated by birthday feasts and gift giving.<sup>46</sup> Gifts listed within literary texts represent a range of objects; Martial describes Spanish frosted silver, good quality clothing, jewellery, antique works of art, and livestock as birthday presents.<sup>47</sup> The celebration of birthdays continued into the late antique period; in the 5th c., Sidonius Apollinaris refers to a feast celebrating a 16th birthday in his family.<sup>48</sup> In papyrological sources, a Theophanes is also recorded within his archival records as marking his daughter's birthday; what he spent his money on is not detailed, however historian John Matthews suggests it was a dedication in a temple.<sup>49</sup> The Digest of Justinian also makes reference to the giving of gifts from husband to wife on the occasion of her birthday.<sup>50</sup> The medievalist Gary Vikan suggests that on such occasions rings were given between married couples; certainly the objects discussed above that feature marriage iconography and related inscriptions would be suitable for birthday exchanges between couples.<sup>51</sup> Beyond this however, it is difficult to identify birthday gifts from existing artefacts. It is likely that the majority of such gifted objects had no obvious explicit connection with such an anniversary, as suggested by the items listed by Martial.

Festivals formed another type of event at which gifts were traditionally exchanged. Many of Martial's references in books 13 and 14 to gift giving relate to the winter festival of Saturnalia.<sup>52</sup> In the late antique period, the New Year's festival of Kalends appears frequently within the sources as an occasion at which gifts are exchanged. The 4th c. scholar Libanius describes such activity in his *Progymnasmata*: at the New Year Kalends, gifts are distributed throughout the city, with the exchange of gold coins especially prominent in his description.<sup>53</sup> This is echoed in the late 4th to early 5th c. Asterius of Amasea's work; Asterius makes clear that he disapproves of the traditional giving of gold coins, and the door-to-door distribution by children of fruit decorated with silver leaf.<sup>54</sup> This accords with Martial's 1st c. description of the offering of gilded dates as a gift on the Kalends of January.<sup>55</sup> The key feature of such consumables is that, generally speaking, they are non-permanent; they are either used up or physically degenerate over time, a factor that suggests they cannot become meaningful objects and have little material value.<sup>56</sup> Such gifts suggest that their value resides in the *act* of giving rather than the object exchanged, as it does not have the durability within the home to be a material reminder of the donor or context of donation. Their role within such transactions is therefore instead the creation and maintenance of a relationship, and the fulfilment of the social requirement of gift giving.

The donation of coins differs from other kinds of gifts, such as the silver plate and weddings gifts discussed above. Instead, coins are distinctive because of their uniformity. Whether meaning was assigned to such gifts, and whether gifted singular coins would have been kept, is unknown.<sup>57</sup> However, these items have a clear affinity

---

<sup>46</sup> Tab.Vindol.2.291 is a late 1st early 2nd c. invitation to the birthday party of Claudia Severa; Bowman (2003) 135.

<sup>47</sup> Mart. *Epigrams* 7.86, 10.87

<sup>48</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 17.

<sup>49</sup> P.Ryl. 627; Matthews (2006) 51.

<sup>50</sup> *Dig.* 24.1.31.8.

<sup>51</sup> Vikan (1990) 147, n.11.

<sup>52</sup> Mart. *Epigrams* 13-14.

<sup>53</sup> Lib. *Progymnasmata* 13.5-10.

<sup>54</sup> Asterius Amas. *Hom.* 4.

<sup>55</sup> Mart. *Epigrams* 13.27.

<sup>56</sup> Weiner (1992) 38.

<sup>57</sup> See chapter 1's discussion of coins as heirlooms.



with the giving of presents, as their uniformity of value lends itself to giving gifts to a number of people. By giving a coin to all recipients, as all the gifts are of equal value, there is no apparent favouritism; all the donated objects are essentially identical in both appearance and economic value. This is an idea discussed by Janes in relation to the choice of objects bequeathed through inheritances. He states that gifts of personal items (such as silver plate) after death represent a level of intimacy in the relationship between giver and recipient, whereas giving cash had the advantage of providing an equality of gifts amongst friends.<sup>58</sup>

Other than gilt fruits and money however, it is unclear whether other objects more domestic in nature were also exchanged at festivals. Presumably, individuals of means would give gifts similar to those seen at weddings and birthdays to those dear to them, namely silver plate, jewellery items, clothing and domestic furnishings. Certainly jewellery and clothing was suitable for the Kalends' festivities; Libanius describes how the event prompted people to wash their clothes or borrow some to wear, whilst other celebrants were 'resplendent with clothing that is mostly purple'.<sup>59</sup> A 4th-5th c. letter similarly records the emphasis on personal appearance: the female writer requests some leg ornaments for her to wear for the upcoming Kalends festival.<sup>60</sup>

Overall, the sources show that gift giving activity at the festival of Kalends was carried out by large numbers of people. In these circumstances, to not receive or give a gift would be noteworthy. The association between gifts and such events demonstrates that the impetus behind this behaviour was linked with the adherence to social conventions. Part of the traditions associated with the celebrations of weddings, birthdays or festivals was that gifts of various forms were exchanged. Therefore, the primary reason for such acts is that it is 'the right thing to do' rather than representing a spontaneous gesture of affection or generosity. This is certainly the sentiment in the 2nd c. letter quoted at the beginning of this chapter, which makes it clear that making a return wedding gift to unpopular relatives was the correct social behaviour.<sup>61</sup> For the exchange of multiple gifts at Kalends, to not participate would be breaking with the prevailing social convention, and distinguishing oneself through the absence of gifting behaviour. This would have been seen as a broadly negative thing, as lack of participation would demonstrate a lack of conformity and a departure from dominant social behaviours.

Beyond the Kalends, gift giving is found as a feature of the nascent festival of Easter within the Christian community, echoing existing traditions. The 4th c. cleric Gregory of Nyssa wrote a short text for Eusebius, Bishop of Chalcis, on the nature of Easter, as a gift for him on the occasion of the festival.<sup>62</sup> He also wrote *On The Making of Man* as an Easter gift to his brother.<sup>63</sup> The 4th c. Bishop of Constantinople, Gregory of Nazianzus, also sent a text as an Easter gift to Theodore of Tyana. The letter states, 'And we in return give you the greatest thing we have, our prayers, but that you may have some small thing to remember us by, we send you the volume of the Philocalia of Origen'.<sup>64</sup>

Whether such gifts would have been typical of the general Christian populace is more difficult to say. Gifts of religious texts or books may comment on the donor's position as a leading ecclesiastical figure, as well as the education of sender and recipient. Saint Jerome, in a letter of the late 4th c., records sending 'a manuscript containing Isaiah's ten most obscure visions which I have lately elucidated with a critical commentary' as a gift, along with haircloths, to the Spanish ascetic Lucinius.<sup>65</sup> Books can certainly be found as

---

<sup>58</sup> Janes (1998b) 366.

<sup>59</sup> Lib. *Progymnasmata* 5.2, 5.7 (transl. Gibson (2008) 439).

<sup>60</sup> The leg ornaments are named as περισκελίδια: SB 20.14226.

<sup>61</sup> P.Flor.3.332.

<sup>62</sup> Greg. Nyss. *Ep.* 4.

<sup>63</sup> Greg. Nyss. *De hominis opificio*.

<sup>64</sup> Greg. Naz. *Ep.* 115 (transl. Browne and Swallow (1894) 472).

<sup>65</sup> Jer. *Ep.* 71.7 (transl. Schaff and Wace (1893) 154).

gifts elsewhere in Late Antiquity. The famous Vienna Dioscorides codex, a medical compendium, was a gift in the early 6th c. to the imperial princess Anicia Juliana. It was given by the people of Honoratae, located on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus, in thanks for her building a church in their town.<sup>66</sup>

The contexts of gift exchange shown here demonstrate moments within systems of reciprocity. The formal events tied to the giving of gifts all occurred regularly; birthdays, festivals, and anniversaries are annual events. This creates a repetitive structure in which gifts are exchanged on a regular basis over a number of years, demonstrating the obligation between parties to exchange gifts that Mauss discusses.<sup>67</sup> By extension, this also provides a framework of behaviour upon which relationships between people can be built and maintained. Even events such as weddings, which have no formal schedule, occur relatively regularly within a family, as generations grow up, marry and have children of their own. This repetition of behaviour and reciprocity of donation is emphasised by P.Flor.3.332, quoted above, in which the writer states that it is right on the occasion of a wedding to make a 'return' gift to a relative, underlining the continued exchange between parties at such events over time.

At this point it is important to consider that, since all gifts represent a connection with their donor, there is simultaneously the potential for this connection to become an unwanted characteristic. It is easy to interpret gifts as possessions that would be treasured as material mementoes of such gift activity and as symbols of dear friends, family, and events. However, this is only one possible meaning that gift giving creates, and does not necessarily reflect the impetus nor the outcome of exchanging gifts. As discussed above, gift giving often occurred as a response to social pressures and as an adherence to traditional behaviours within late antique society. This is clearly evidenced in P.Flor.3.332, which includes the postscript referring to disagreements that occur between family members. We see that social convention is the impetus behind the gift giving, rather than a desire to provide objects in celebration of marriage or as a sign of affection to others.

Indeed, the example above reminds us that the desire to provide a material representation of the relationship between two individuals or as a sign of love, would not always have been the reason for the exchange of gifts, and that gifts would have been given between individuals who may have actively disliked each other and been in conflict. As such, to assume all gifts were later viewed with nostalgia and happily associated with the giver would be wrong; we cannot assume in all cases that the objects would have been treasured. In fact, the capacity of objects to hold memories means that it was just as likely to be a reminder of an awkward or unpleasant relationship. In such cases, the giving of money seems to be an even more suitable gift as it allows the purchase of other goods, and is more difficult to hold an affinity with the identity of the giver, as it is indistinguishable from other material currency in the owner's possession. In these cases, it is the act of giving and adherence to tradition that is more important than the actual objects donated.

### **Imperial Gifts**

The most substantial category of evidence for gifts specifically associated with an individual in Late Antiquity, is imperial gift giving. Imperial gifts were used as tools within diplomatic encounters with foreign forces. In fact the evidence suggests that the main role of imperial gifts was as political and military lubricants, serving to sweeten negotiations surrounding alliances, treaties, and commercial enterprises.<sup>68</sup> Literary sources are rich in references to gift giving between the emperor and the heads of

---

<sup>66</sup> Kiilerich (2001) 171.

<sup>67</sup> Mauss (1966) 10-11.

<sup>68</sup> Cutler (2008) 88.

foreign powers. Constantine the Great is recorded by Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, as receiving gifts from diplomatic visitors to demonstrate their service and alliance to the emperor. These items included gold crowns, jewelled diadems, gold cloth, horses, and weaponry, and Constantine reciprocated with material gifts of equal status, as well as official titles.<sup>69</sup>

Similarly, in the 6th c., John Malalas describes how Justinian won over Boa, the Queen of the Sabir Huns, with gifts of silver vessels and money to persuade her to capture two Hunnish kings in league with the Persians.<sup>70</sup> Gift giving in these examples is spurred on by the element of reciprocity within gift exchange, in order to achieve desired behaviours from another. Gifts in these circumstances create allegiances and a sense of favour, debt and the need for reciprocal action. As such, gift giving was a key tool in diplomatic engagements.

Literary sources also emphasise the importance of gift giving by the emperor to his military. Imperial gifts were a way to reward exceptional members of the empire's army. In the 6th c., the historian Agathias describes Rusticus, Justinian's pursebearer, as making reward payments on behalf of the emperor to soldiers who had distinguished themselves in battle.<sup>71</sup> Another figure, identified as John, is described similarly as being responsible for keeping the emperor informed with current events, and distributing the imperial largesse to those soldiers who distinguished themselves in the field.<sup>72</sup> As such, this gift giving functioned to set the person who receives the gift apart from other individuals. Their distinctiveness from their colleagues is both rewarded and reinforced by the act of gift giving. The implicit comparison is made between the recipient and all those who did not receive a gift, and by extension the reasons behind it.

The giving of precious gifts was also a method to pay the soldiers' wages; in the early 4th c. the salary of a soldier had not increased since AD 235.<sup>73</sup> To make up this shortfall, part of the army's wages were paid in kind, through imperial 'gifts' of coinage and objects of precious metal; these gifts were given on specific honorific occasions, and helped to round up the soldiers' income to the correct level.<sup>74</sup> The large gold medallion of Constantine from AD 310 in the Beaurains hoard is identified as belonging to a soldier. It bears on its surface a graffito reading VITALIANI PROTICTORIS, meaning 'Belonging to Vitalian, protector', *protector* being a military rank.<sup>75</sup> Another medallion from the same hoard, known as the Beaurains (or 'Arras') Medallion, is a 'money medallion', that is, it forms a multiple denomination of the standard gold coin of the day, and was gifted in commemoration of significant imperial events to senior army officers.<sup>76</sup>

Other imperial gifts are also significant for their monetary or bullion value. The well-studied *missoria*, or imperial commemorative plates, are thought to have been imperial gifts. The famous Missorium of Theodosius, dating to the late 4th c., represents the largest and heaviest example known today.<sup>77</sup> This plate depicts the Emperor Theodosius flanked by his two co-emperors Valentinian II and Arcadius; the reverse features an inscription reading ΠΟC ΛΙ ΜΕΤ, recording the plate's weight as 50 Roman pounds.<sup>78</sup> This underlines the object's importance not only as a meaningful commemorative object but also as representing a significant amount of money in bullion form. This creates a transparency in terms of economic value; with such information there could be no

---

<sup>69</sup> Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 4.7.1-3.

<sup>70</sup> Malalas 18.13.

<sup>71</sup> Agath. 3.2.4-5.

<sup>72</sup> Agath. 4.17.2-3.

<sup>73</sup> Duncan-Jones (1978) 549-50.

<sup>74</sup> Abdy (2006) 55.

<sup>75</sup> Abdy (2006) 54.

<sup>76</sup> Abdy (2006) 55.

<sup>77</sup> Leader-Newby (2004) 11. See Elsner (1998) fig. 56.

<sup>78</sup> Leader-Newby (2004) 14.

illusions over the worth of the objects being given, and comparisons between examples of *largitio* could be easily made.

This ties in well with the role of these objects as a form of supplementary income to soldiers' wages during this period. As such, these imperial gifts have an affinity with the gifts of gold coins recorded as given during the Kalends festival. When found, the Missorium of Theodosius was folded in two and bore signs of attempts to cut the plate up, presumably for scrap, suggesting that by this point the intrinsic value of the metal was more important than any associations it once had with the imperial donor.<sup>79</sup> However, such action could be further interpreted as a response to a dangerous or undesirable image that was no longer suitable for display because of its symbolic connection with the imperial court. The prominence of imagery relating to the donor and the relationship symbolised by the gift, means that should changes in personal or public opinion occur, the meaning the object has is also liable to change. The unpredictability of an emperor's popularity over successive reigns is known to result in practices such as *damnatio memoriae*, which affect material representations of disgraced emperors, as their image and names are expunged from public statuary and records.<sup>80</sup> In such circumstances the ownership or, at the very least, the public display of an object representing a connection between a person and the emperor, would not be viable. The damage inflicted to the Missorium of Theodosius might therefore also reflect the transience of meaning that such evocative imperial gifts can have.

Imperial gift giving was known to occur on significant occasions. The Munich Treasure, a hoard of silverware buried around AD 324 in the eastern Roman empire, includes a number of silver vessels featuring commemorative imperial inscriptions.<sup>81</sup> One of the pieces, a bowl, was given as a gift on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the accession of the Emperors Crispus and Constantine II; the inscription reads VOTIS X CAESS NN (*Votis decennialibus [duorum] Caesarum nostrorum*) / 'On the celebration of the tenth anniversary of our two junior emperors'.<sup>82</sup> As well as anniversaries, book four of Corippus' 6th c. panegyric *In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris* records the giving of gold and silver gifts on Justin II's accession to the imperial consulship.<sup>83</sup> These gift objects can thus be understood as material tools in which the memory of the event is given significance and a level of permanence. As previously discussed with heirlooms, the prestigious materials of silver and gold reflect the desired importance of the occasion, as well as the donor, recipient and the relationship constructed between them by the gift exchange.

The impetus behind the donation of imperial gifts was specifically related to pragmatic considerations on behalf of the emperor. Gift giving was a political and economic tool, as such, concepts such as sentimental value seem irrelevant in the face of the evidence above. However, the way in which these gifts were received and valued by the owners should still be considered; is there any room here for more personal scales of meaning? Considering the biographies of these imperial gifts, there certainly seems room for such investment of personal meaning. For members of the military, as well as providing a salary in economic terms, the receiving of gifts also reflects their own personal biography. The objects commemorate not only imperial events but also relate to the lives and careers of the recipients.

The graffito on the Beurains hoard medallion can be interpreted as evidence of this. Such an inscription is, of course, a practical measure; it ensures its ownership is clear to anyone encountering it, and makes it identifiable. However, this informal legend also

---

<sup>79</sup> See also the volume by Hunter and Painter (2013) which discusses the phenomenon of hacksilver, or cut up silver plate, more broadly, in relation to the Traprain Law hoard.

<sup>80</sup> See, for example, the famous destruction of the name and image of Geta, son of Septimius Severus, in the 3rd c. AD: Varner (2004) 170-84.

<sup>81</sup> Kent and Painter (1977) 20.

<sup>82</sup> Kent and Painter (1977) 22.

<sup>83</sup> Corippus, *Laud. Just.* 4.

makes Vitalian, the owner, a part of the object's own history, and associates the individual with the Emperor Constantine. As such, it emphasises not only the role of Constantine in the life of Vitalian, but also the role of Vitalian as *protector* in the life of Constantine. Similar inscriptions are found on objects belonging to the Kaiseraugst hoard; graffiti in the form of names (presumably the owners of the objects) is present on several pieces of the silverware within it. Archaeologist Martin Guggisberg argues that the presence of a graffito name on an object demonstrates that the object no longer belongs to that person, as the present owner would not need to write to whom it belonged; they would of course know that they are the owner.<sup>84</sup>

However, this seems an erroneous interpretation, especially in light of the Beaurains inscription. Surely if an object was acquired with another person's name on it, it would be logical to inscribe the new owner's name to avoid confusion and distinguish ownership. What is interesting is that several of the Kaiseraugst objects have multiple owner inscriptions. Platters 74 and 75 in the catalogue both bear the names of three different owners, suggesting that the accumulated biographies of these objects were a desirable feature.<sup>85</sup> The inclusion of the multiple owner names is extending the commemorative function of the objects, demonstrating in a material sense the history of the object, and those associated with both its ownership and the imperial donor. The meanings and value of these objects are therefore multiple in nature. As well as their intrinsic, economic value they also speak of prestige, status and imperial favour. These are attractive attributes for an owner, and reflect on his own social status. There is also the potential for personal value through the way the biography of the object intersects with that of the owner, especially in terms of military career.

It should also be noted that not all imperial gifts were high status objects of gold and silver though; similarly decorated plates and vessels were also manufactured in glass, and likewise distributed.<sup>86</sup> Such items relied upon the recognised form of luxury gift objects—in terms of object type, form, and iconography—to employ the same visual language. Imperial gifts also included smaller, personal items. One example is a ring set with a coin of Diocletian, alongside the inscription *VIRTUS MILITUM*, or 'military courage', on the reverse; this was likely given to a member of the Roman army as a gift.<sup>87</sup> Here the biography of the object is conveyed materially through the coin itself, which features a prominent imperial portrait, essentially an image of the donor. To wear such an object on the body is to also wear a visible symbol of the relationship between the owner and the emperor that the ring embodies.

The emperor was not the only governmental figure who distributed gifts. Consuls also gave gifts, the best-known being in the form of ivory diptychs. Diptychs appear from around AD 400 onwards, and represent gifts distributed on the accession to office of successive consuls.<sup>88</sup> They are formed of two hinged leaves of decoratively carved ivory, and usually depict the consul from whom the diptych originates, as on the diptych leaf of consul Areobindus from AD 506 (fig. 23, discussed further in chapter 3) for example. The giving of ivory diptychs provides an interesting consideration of the different scales of value present in gift objects. The material of ivory represents an expensive commodity. It could only be sourced from the edges of the empire, where the natural habitat of elephants was found. The use of this material therefore had connotations of imperial power and prestige, as it had to be obtained from so far away. The objects themselves also demonstrate a high level of skill, witnessed in the high relief carvings

---

<sup>84</sup> Guggisberg (2003) 301.

<sup>85</sup> Guggisberg (2003) 301.

<sup>86</sup> See Oliver (1975) 70 for the fragments of a glass plate decorated with imperial donative iconography.

<sup>87</sup> Kent and Painter (1977) 26-27. Now in the British Museum, accession no. 1917,0501.264.

<sup>88</sup> Weitzmann (1979) 5. Consular diptychs are discussed further, as souvenirs, in chapter 3.

often achieved in their decorations, which would take time to produce. The results are valuable and prestigious objects.

When associated with gift giving and the status of the consuls who distributed them, they gain additional value in terms of meaning. However, unlike silver plate, the carved ivory leaves of the consular diptychs do not have a bullion value, and therefore cannot be melted down and reused to make other objects. This is something discussed by art historian Antony Eastmond in relation to the consular diptychs of the 6th c. He highlights the fact that their value lies in the prestige of receiving the object as a gift, as in material terms the diptychs are essentially worthless to the recipient as there is no realizable value.<sup>89</sup> However this lack of realizable value in itself has worth, as the objects were consequently inflexible and thus inalienable, guaranteeing the preservation of the consul's memory.<sup>90</sup> This distinct form of material permanence afforded to the objects by the ivory means the objects are likely to have a relatively long life. Certainly the prestige of their material and biography means they are unlikely to have been discarded, therefore their form would remain relatively unchanged within the domestic environment. Their accumulation of memory and meaning would thus be better ensured, combatting the natural degeneration that humans experience over time and which inalienable objects seek to resist.<sup>91</sup> In addition, there are other plausible kinds of value also present in these gift objects. The combination of material, production technique, and subject matter also provoke a level of artistic appreciation and value that ensured their worth as artefacts to successive owners who had no direct link with the original gift-giving context. Certainly, this would explain the curation of such pieces to the present day.

In the late 4th c., the statesman and consul Quintus Aurelius Symmachus wrote a letter to accompany his ivory diptychs; he also sent small silver bowls as gifts to close friends and people of merit.<sup>92</sup> The silver bowls described in Symmachus' letter are of a significantly lighter weight than the other examples of imperial largesse discussed above: a mere two pounds. This is notable, and likely reflects a desire to distribute many gifts to large numbers of people, rather than a small number of higher quality objects.<sup>93</sup> As such, it seems that the importance of these gifts is linked to the relationships that are created by the exchange, rather than the bullion value of the objects. Again reciprocity in kind is the desired outcome of the transaction, as the donors use gifts as a material way to keep people 'on side'. To have such a tool to hand was invaluable, as it was easier and more effective to control others through persuasion rather than force.

Echoes of such behaviour can be seen in the actions of more ordinary people who also used gifts to gain support or persuade others to act in their favour. A late 5th to early 6th c. letter requests fair taxation on a shipment of wine, and was accompanied by unidentified gifts:

For I have written in reliance on your virtue and the friendship between us. For the holy God knows I have not written to protect another person, but the wine is being brought for myself. The most mean gifts which I have sent deign to accept as though they were much.<sup>94</sup>

In this case the gifts sent by the writer are similar to those given by consuls or even emperors in terms of intention; they function to create or strengthen relationships so

---

<sup>89</sup> Eastmond (2010) 750.

<sup>90</sup> Eastmond (2010) 751.

<sup>91</sup> Weiner (1992) 7.

<sup>92</sup> Symm. *Ep.* 7.76.

<sup>93</sup> Leader-Newby (2004) 42.

<sup>94</sup> P.Oxy.16.1872 (transl. Hunt and Edgar (1932) 390-391).

that the recipient will act on the donor's behalf. In this way, these gifts, whatever they are, are tools of persuasion, and help to oil the wheels of social action.

### Handmade Gifts

Another particular type of gift that occurs within the late antique evidence, and is therefore necessary to discuss here, is that of the handmade object. Often, the manufacturer and donor of a gift are one and the same. In such circumstances, the object is associated with the donor as it is an index of their labour and agency.<sup>95</sup> Evidence shows that many domestic possessions were made in the home. It is worth exploring whether the unique origin of these objects, in terms of their production, has any effect on the subsequent meaning of the objects for the owner.

When thinking about the meanings that could be embodied by objects with such specific biographies, the theoretical literature can be hard to navigate. Initially there is a problem in that much of the discussion surrounding what we would call handmade objects, is concerned with the concept of 'craft'. Craft is often defined by its juxtaposition with either fine art or industrialised manufacturing techniques. Clearly such distinctions are not useful within our source material; in the late antique period, societies were, of course, pre-industrial and therefore all man-made material culture was strictly 'handmade', despite the occurrence of large-scale mass production. Literature on actual craft production also tends to emphasise the specific techniques used in creating such objects, rather than their meanings or role within society.<sup>96</sup> A more useful distinction might therefore be between gifts made specifically for another, and gifts made of purchased objects or existing possessions.

The handmade object represents a choice made in the mind of the person, to use this time to make something not for themselves. In this sense, the making of such an object is a form of sacrifice, or a gift in itself. Labour is usually exchanged for money or subsistence; in the case of homemade gifts, this is labour expended for no apparent recompense if the gift exchange is posited as altruistic or agapic (whether it is in fact or not).<sup>97</sup> These objects are therefore not made for economic reasons, rather they are made to perform as social agents, creating and maintaining relationships between individuals, as we see above.

It seems that a number of household possessions were made explicitly for another family member, something particularly true of clothing and textiles. A 3rd to 4th c. letter gives instruction for the production of *dikarytida* and a face cloth, amongst other orders, for the purchase and distribution of a variety of domestic objects amongst the friends and family of the writer:<sup>98</sup>

So then, tell the sister of the wife of Dioskoros to say to Didyme, "As you said, if you are working on *dikarytida*, make them; if you're not doing it, on my father's purple (yarn) and tow." I greet Esther and your sister Susanna. As you said, lady, "I'm sending you some towels", send (them), and I'm sending you the Egyptian ones. [...] To my lord brother Theodoros, Tauris (sends) many greetings. Buy three towels for me, my lord brother, and the boots which you mentioned and three pairs of slippers for the baths. Take the half-pound of fine tow (?) which I gave you to use and make it into a facecloth, or bring the price of it.<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> Gell (1998) 23-24.

<sup>96</sup> For example, see Wild (1976).

<sup>97</sup> This is considered the "perfect" gift: see Belk (1996) 60.

<sup>98</sup> The meaning of *dikarytida* is unknown: Rowlandson (1998) 270.

<sup>99</sup> P.Oxy. 31.2599 (transl. Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) 400).

It seems that the facecloth at least is to be made for use within the family, listed as it is alongside three towels for use by the writer. It is to be made from 'tow', the low quality fluffy fibres that come from processed flax stalks, creating a coarse linen when spun and woven into cloth.<sup>100</sup> Tow is attested in a number of other letters of the period; this one below, from the 4th c., has the writer request some so that she may spin it into products she can sell to financially support her brother's orphaned children:

To lady my mother Faustina, Allous, greetings in the Lord. [...] [For the . . .] of my brother's orphaned children I, being a woman, cannot suffice. Therefore, if you have enough, send me via the letter-carrier two pounds of tow, so that I can spin and sell it for them. I greet you fondly. The little children greet you. I greet mother Kyriake. I pray for your good health.<sup>101</sup>

These two examples show that raw materials were purchased to make items within the home that could be both used within the family or sold on for a profit. Other examples demonstrate that more substantial belongings originated at the hands of family members. In a late 4th c. letter from Taesis to her husband Tiron, there is again the mention of the production of an item directly for her husband's use:

To my lord husband Tiron, Taesis, many greetings [...] And look, my lord, do not be neglectful because of what I wrote you: six mnas of purple (yarn) and a hanging lamp and a lamp stand and a good hand basin and two pounds of good incense and two cups, one small and one big. And look, I am weaving your cloak. [...] <sup>102</sup>

Here we see a wife acknowledge that she is weaving a cloak herself for her husband to wear. This is not an unusual occurrence, and similar references to women being engaged in the making of clothing for other family members are found in the papyrological record. The 3rd to 4th c. letter SB 16 12694 sees the writer request a cloak to be made for him by his mother. Another letter, from the 4th to 5th c., similarly sees a request for clothing to be made, but this time it is a female writer who wishes the recipient of the missive to make her a *himation*.<sup>103</sup> In a slightly earlier 3rd c. AD letter, the writer requests his wife (or sister; it is unclear) to finish the making of his tunic.<sup>104</sup> In those documents where it is a close family member making the object, such as the cloaks in SB 16.12694 and P.Oxy.56.3860, and the tunic in P.Oxy. 7.1069, there is the potential for additional value.

The fact that an object is made by a specific person alters its biography and creates meaning. Objects that have been created or altered by a person are made into a part of themselves by that process.<sup>105</sup> The object begins to represent and share the identity of the maker. This is suggested by Gell, who states that artefacts as manufactured objects specify (or are 'indexes' of) their maker.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton explain that objects can be considered to contain the residual energy of the person who invests time or effort into it, meaning that part of that person's life is now within the object.<sup>107</sup> Therefore, to give a homemade gift is to give someone a part of yourself, which they may or may not recognise.

---

<sup>100</sup> Cleland *et al.* (2007) 72.

<sup>101</sup> SB 14. 11881 (transl. Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) 357).

<sup>102</sup> P.Oxy. 56.3860 (transl. Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) 378).

<sup>103</sup> SB 20. 14226. The *himation* was a woman's dress: Bagnall (1993) 33.

<sup>104</sup> P.Oxy.7.1069. However, this example mentions wages for the job, therefore it could be that the wife/sister is simply overseeing the making and not participating herself.

<sup>105</sup> Belk (1988) 144.

<sup>106</sup> Gell (1998) 23-24.

<sup>107</sup> Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) 8.



These homemade objects are actively requested within the texts; the one letter where the maker states she is making a cloak for her husband sees the reference phrased in a way that suggests that he initiated the production process.<sup>108</sup> All of this implies that, for whatever reason, homemade clothing was desirable, likely stemming from cultural and economic factors. To have clothing made by a member of the family could represent a saving in money; cloth and clothing purchased from a commercial manufacturer was expensive, to the point where owning fine quality clothing was seen as a way to preserve money in material form.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, clothing was an expensive commodity because of the amount of work required to create garments, and as such it was considered valuable.<sup>110</sup> This is supported by the quote describing Messalla's valuable heirloom clothing, discussed in the previous chapter. Requesting a family member to make your clothing was therefore economically sound; this is suggested in the letter SB 16.12694, where the request for a cloak to be made by the writer's mother appears after a discussion of financial difficulty.

It is also noteworthy that the producers of cloth within the texts quoted above are all women. It has been much discussed in scholarship that spinning wool was thought to be the ideal feminine activity for women during Late Antiquity. John Chrysostom states that objects associated with spinning and weaving wool would be a sure sign of a woman's occupation of a house.<sup>111</sup> Therefore the production and display of such homemade textiles would embody messages of feminine domestic virtue. These positive connotations might also apply to the wearer. It is however unclear whether homemade garments would be distinguishable from professionally made clothing; dress specialist Faith Morgan discusses how the reuse, modification and repair of clothing was a common practice within Late Antiquity, and likely done both in the home and professionally.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, how noticeable such work was would depend on the skill of the person doing it. If visible, such garments might evoke thriftiness in the mind of the onlooker, however it is unlikely to have been seen in mainstream society as a virtuous or positive social message, as it could have connotations of poverty and hardship.

In terms of sentimental value, it is unlikely that this was a dominant factor in the decision to make clothing for another. However, it *is* likely that such production created this kind of value. The role of clothing as meaningful objects can be demonstrated by looking at the process involved in making garments. The activity of spinning fibres into thread was a common practice during Late Antiquity, and as an activity it absorbed a disproportionate amount of labour.<sup>113</sup> Borrowing from Marxist theory, we know value stems in part from the time and labour expended in the production of an object.<sup>114</sup> As a result, gifted handmade items that involve a lot of energy or resources in their creation, such as weaving cloth or making clothing, are more likely to be considered valuable by their recipient, and therefore prized as a thoughtful and precious item representative of the maker.

At this point it is interesting to include a slightly earlier example from the papyri in relation to homemade objects. Most of the references to homemade objects within the texts are impassive requests or statements of intent, however a 2nd c. AD text from a Maximos, concerning the recipient's pregnancy, includes the request: 'Send me leaves as for a small basket and I will make it for you'.<sup>115</sup> There is some confusion concerning the identity of the author due to the ambiguous original Greek; Maximos is a man's name

---

<sup>108</sup> P.Oxy. 56.3860.

<sup>109</sup> Bagnall (1993) 33, n.124.

<sup>110</sup> Croom (2010) 28.

<sup>111</sup> Joh. Chrys. *Instruction and Refutation Directed against Those Men Cohabiting with Virgins*, 9 (transl. Cox Miller (2005) 134).

<sup>112</sup> See chapter 4 of Morgan (2018)

<sup>113</sup> Wild (1976) 169.

<sup>114</sup> Marx (2000) 499.

<sup>115</sup> O.Florida 14.

but some of the grammar is feminine.<sup>116</sup> However, combined with the writer's declared intention to deliver the recipient's baby, the offer to make a basket as a gift seems like a gesture of kindness, contrasting with the requests seen in the other letters above relating to the making of clothing. Bagnall suggests that the basket could be a crib.<sup>117</sup> As such, this suggests that the making of things had an emotional impetus besides the creation of objects of necessity.

This evidence of gift giving could thus also be an observance of a more subtle social convention. The donation of homemade items, and even gift giving more broadly, also reflects the accepted gender role of women as the main caregivers within late antique society; if a woman was not to remain a virgin, then she should be a caring and dutiful wife and mother.<sup>118</sup> In SB 22.15453 Sarapios writes to Ammonios stating that, 'I shall send you a jar of fish sauce with the first donkeys. For I care as much about you as if you were my own father'.<sup>119</sup> Whether Sarapios' declaration of affection is true or not, it does demonstrate the use of material culture to show correct social behaviour through gift giving. It is also notable that many of the examples of this kind of behaviour come from the documentary papyri in the form of letters between individuals separated by distance. In such circumstances, material gifts, either in the forms of letters or other objects, are one of the only ways in which to maintain relationships and continue to provide comfort, assistance, and affection, whether this action was heartfelt or otherwise.

## Texts

There is a significant crossover between discussions of handmade gifts and the giving of texts as presents. Several of the texts discussed above in relation to Easter gifts—such as *On the Making of Man*—were actually written by the donor. Elsewhere, in the archive of Dioscorus of Aphrodito, are poems he wrote in celebration of the birthdays of a variety of individuals.<sup>120</sup> Even if they were not physically given as gifts to the subjects of the texts, they still represent the creation of texts for another. Therefore, they have all the associated layers of meaning that accompany the status of a handmade gift. These literary examples, however, represent very specific types of text, and as such likely correspond to the gifts of a small and highly educated section of society. Yet, more ordinary texts were extensively written and exchanged, in the form of private letters between individuals, throughout the late antique period.

Official letters were considered as gift items, something discussed by historian Andrew Gillett through the story of Theophilus, and the delivering of a letter to the emperor in Rome via his envoy Isidore, in AD 388.<sup>121</sup> In the story, the envoy is communicating in three forms: via Theophilus' written letters, via his own physical presence, and through the other material gifts that he delivers. This provides a mixture of written, oral, performative, and semiotic modes of expression that were interdependent in the late antique period.<sup>122</sup> Whilst parts of Isidore's communication were ephemeral, others—namely the letter and gifts—were firmly material. In this scenario, the materiality of the letter was essential as it provided authenticity to the message, and made it akin to a gift, thus assimilating it with the other tokens being presented to the emperor.<sup>123</sup> This specific story tells of a letter to an emperor, and

---

<sup>116</sup> Bagnall (1976) 51; see also Thomas (1978) 142-44.

<sup>117</sup> Bagnall (1976) 54.

<sup>118</sup> Nathan (2000) 150.

<sup>119</sup> SB 22. 15453 (transl. Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) 165).

<sup>120</sup> For example, *P.Cair.Masp.1. 67120 v.E*, directed to an unknown recipient.

<sup>121</sup> This story is told in the works of both Socrates and Sozomen: Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 6.2; Sozom. *Hist. eccl.* 8.2.

<sup>122</sup> Gillett (2012) 817-18.

<sup>123</sup> Gillett (2012) 818.

therefore represents official rather than informal communication. However, like in the story of Isidore and Theophilus, the letters of Late Antiquity often accompanied material gifts: food, clothing, or other objects. Furthermore, it was the material nature of letters that allowed them to be considered as a type of gift that could be kept and re-read.<sup>124</sup>

Letters are, by their material nature, written by hand, usually (although not always) by the person sending the communication. Depending on the proficiency of the writer, they can take a lot of energy and time to create. Scribes were available for illiterate letter senders, however the majority of people able to read and write would have written letters themselves.<sup>125</sup> A number of letters reveal through their handwriting the effort expended in writing a message, with the script often worsening towards the end of the text as the person tires.<sup>126</sup> A late 4th c. letter from a wife to her husband makes a point of describing the effort required for writing: 'Your guest Alexandros greets you, with his wife and children, and I Alexandros wore myself out writing you the letters. [...]'<sup>127</sup> Whilst the effort required in writing would naturally depend on the skill and practice of the writer, this specific example nonetheless gives an idea of the energy and time put into creating letters, especially ones of some length. A similar sentiment is communicated in the following extract from a Coptic letter dating from the 4th c.:

[...]... I am amazed how you (pl.) do not write concerning (any) letter you receive; even though a book was sent to you through Pishai, and another one sent through Pamour, with even...good eye-ointment (?). You (fem. Sg.) did not write that..., whatever he(?)...it. Indeed, write it well; do not make the letter short! [...]<sup>128</sup>

Here is a complaint over a lack of letters and the request for a reply, specifically one of length, which represents a significant outlay of effort. Consumer theorist Russell Belk stated that objects can become physical extensions of a person's identity, especially if that person has invested time, labour or money into the object.<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, texts featuring the handwriting of the donor provide physical proof of their presence within the object, in a similar way to the other kinds of handmade objects discussed above. The baskets and clothing mentioned within the documentary texts represent material manifestations of a person's labour, and their own agency to make and donate.

It seems that objects were therefore used to provide a surrogate presence in times of physical absence, an idea that the effort in letter-writing resonates with. Such a use of material culture allows the person, through their extended self, to do things that they would otherwise be incapable of.<sup>130</sup> Archaeologist Clive Gamble discussed a similar idea in his work on the Palaeolithic era, which he described as the "release from proximity". In this theory, he stated that networks of people expand over space and time, and the geographic separation of individuals allows objects to become personified, taking on the identities of people.<sup>131</sup> Therefore, it seems that as people become absent in the lives of others—either through death or geographical relocation—objects can instead take their place, providing a physical presence and comfort that the human actor is not capable of providing themselves. Therefore letters, as material objects, represent the writer of the message in physical form when otherwise impossible in reality.

Traditionally, letters were considered to provide company to the recipient. Cicero, in his letter of 22 BC to Atticus states, "Though I have nothing to say to you, I write all the

---

<sup>124</sup> Bagnall & Cribiore (2006) 12.

<sup>125</sup> See P.Köln 2. 111 (5th-6th c. AD) for an example of a scribe written letter.

<sup>126</sup> See, for example, SB 16. 12981 (2nd-3rd c. AD) where the letters increase in size as the writer continues. Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) 303.

<sup>127</sup> P.Oxy. 56.3860 (transl. Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) 378).

<sup>128</sup> P.Kell.Copt. 26 (transl. Gardner *et al.* (1999) 196).

<sup>129</sup> Belk (1988) 144.

<sup>130</sup> Belk (1988) 146.

<sup>131</sup> Gamble (1998) 443.

same, because I feel as though I were talking to you'.<sup>132</sup> Similarly, Seneca the Younger in the 1st c. AD, describes how letters provide physical traces of their writer and notes that, 'I never receive a letter from you without being in your company forthwith'.<sup>133</sup> The New Testament's Pauline Epistles behave in a similar way; in the 1st c., Paul sent letters to distant communities of Christians, such the Romans and Corinthians, in order to provide instructions and minister to the churches there as a replacement for his physical presence. The majority of letters mention Paul's intention to visit himself in person sometime in the foreseeable future, further emphasising the link between the letter's presence and Paul himself.<sup>134</sup>

Such evidence is also present in the late antique period. Jerome, in the 4th c., describes the ability of letters to make the absent writer present in physical form: 'I pray that distance may not sever those united in affection and that I may find my Lucinius present in absence through an interchange of letters'.<sup>135</sup> These kinds of references are also found within the letters of ordinary people from the papyrological record. A 5th to 6th c. letter includes a discussion about the receipt of a variety of practical-sounding objects, but then complains that, 'Since you left here, I am alone for a year, we have received nothing'.<sup>136</sup> The link between the absence of objects and the absence of company seems clear. To not receive objects or gifts is to be alone, and signifies an absence of people as well as possessions.

A missive from the 2nd to 3rd c. AD, provides an excellent example of how letters could function and were used by the sender: 'Ophelia to Theanous her mother, greetings. I greet you, mother, wishing to catch sight of you already through this letter [...]'.<sup>137</sup> In this text we see that Ophelia, separated from her mother, is using the letter as a means to 'see' her; something that in practical terms is only possible if the two are in physical proximity. As this is not possible, she is using the letter to bridge the physical distance dividing them, and restore the tangible nature of their relationship. The significance of letters as surrogate objects is also seen in a late 4th c. letter:

[...] And send us a jar of honey, and hurry to come to us quickly. And if you cannot come to us quickly, at least write to us when you are coming, so that we may be in good spirits. [...]<sup>138</sup>

The connection between objects, letters, and physical presence is apparent in a 4th c. Coptic letter (P.Benaki 4) written by a woman to a man (possibly her son), who is living in a monastic community. She states how she has returned quickly for his sake, then lists the foodstuffs she has sent him, along with detailed instructions of how to correctly prepare the items. Whilst the letter does not make it clear that the two are related—with 'holy son' perhaps referring to his status in the Church rather than a familial bond—it seems clear from the way in which the letter is written that there are strong overtones of maternal care.<sup>139</sup> This is especially true as she is sending food items; food and drink can both provide comfort physically and psychologically, especially since exchanged between individuals separated by some distance. This action allows the provision of physical contact and comfort in otherwise impossible circumstances. The two are clearly separated by some distance, therefore objects could be construed as a means to provide comfort and allow her to be with him through the objects that she

---

<sup>132</sup> Cic. *Att.* 12.53 (transl. Shackleton Bailey (1999) 25).

<sup>133</sup> Sen. *Ep.* 40.1 (transl. Gummere (1917) 263).

<sup>134</sup> See, for example, 1 Corinthians 16:5-7 (*Revised English Bible* edn.).

<sup>135</sup> Jer. *Ep.* 71.7 (transl. Schaff and Wace (1893) 154).

<sup>136</sup> P.Col.10.290.

<sup>137</sup> P.Oxy.6.963 (transl. Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) 333). The original Greek is "ἀσπάζομαί σε, μήτηρ, διὰ τῶν γραμμάτων τούτων ἐπιθυμοῦσα ἴδῃ θεάσασθαι...".

<sup>138</sup> P.Oxy. 56.3860 (transl. Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) 378).

<sup>139</sup> P.Benaki 4.

sends. This provision of a surrogate self through goods can be seen in earlier letters from the 2nd c. AD, suggesting that material gifts were traditionally an important social tool. In a letter from AD 108, Apollinarius describes his homesickness and how he misses his mother, followed by stating his intention to send her 'a gift of Tyrian wares'.<sup>140</sup> This underlines again the way in which gifts, here in the form of letters, were tools to provide a surrogate presence or extended self.

## Conclusion

That objects can have such a 'surrogate' role within the lives of their owners is representative of the kinds of relationships that people have with examples of material culture, especially those within the home. As sociologist Tim Dant explained, people form "quasi-social" relationships with objects, in which they act out abstract relationships they experience in wider society; in such a process, objects take the place of other social beings.<sup>141</sup> Therefore, it is understandable that domestic possessions can take on the identity of other people, and as such form relationships with their owners. Jean-Sebastien Marcoux gave an example of this phenomenon in his description of the down-sizing of a Mme Cabot; some of the possessions that she keeps after moving house are considered special as they represent people she has known during her life; the objects are thus acting as surrogates for absent people.<sup>142</sup> In this way, it seems possible that the interior world of the home can represent the wider social environment that the inhabitant experiences. The role of material culture within this process is crucial.

It is unsurprising then that archaeological evidence provides analogous examples of other kinds of objects providing a physical presence in lieu of the person the object personifies. For example, the individualised gold glass portrait medallions, discussed earlier in this chapter, feature partial family groups or individuals in order to evoke their presence to the absent member in possession of the object.<sup>143</sup> Imperial images were also imbued with the presence of the emperor and their power, and in the Christian period the images of Christ, members of the Holy Family, and saints on icons (and other objects) provided the venerator with their actual presence through the material form. As such, the conception of objects as surrogate individuals was already present within late antique society. In this way, it is unsurprising that other objects were instilled with the presence of an individual on a more personal level.

Some of these objects, such as the medallions above, are, however, high quality and expensive items, and thus unavailable to a large section of society. It should be considered, though, that other more mundane examples of material culture provided a similar surrogate presence. Certainly gifts, especially handmade examples, have been proven to embody their donor. The key biographical feature of these objects is their association with the giver, whose memory is embodied in the object's physical form. As such, gifts can represent people. Jerome states as much in his letter to a friend, which accompanied some small gifts: 'When you look upon these trifles call to mind the friend in whom you delight and hasten the voyage which you have for a time deferred'.<sup>144</sup>

---

<sup>140</sup> P.Mich.8.465. See also SB 22. 15453 (transl. Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) 165).

<sup>141</sup> Dant (1999) 2.

<sup>142</sup> Marcoux (2001) 72.

<sup>143</sup> Howells (2010) 275.

<sup>144</sup> Jer. *Ep.* 71.7 (transl. Schaff and Wace (1893) 154).

## Souvenirs in Late Antiquity

Souvenirs are mementoes of travels, visits, events and occasions. The meanings of souvenirs as possessions come from their association with a place or event; their material presence provokes memories of these dominant biographical features in the mind of their owner. However, souvenirs are not a modern concept, with evidence revealing their presence throughout antiquity. Most familiar are the early Christian pilgrim souvenirs that form a substantial corpus of material from the late antique period, and have been studied extensively. However, there is also clear evidence that souvenir objects existed beyond this narrow devotional context, but are often not discussed. This chapter focuses on souvenir objects from Late Antiquity in a holistic way, dealing with evidence for both sacred and lesser-known secular souvenirs. By bringing these two sets of evidence together, similarities and differences can be drawn out to allow the consideration of souvenirs from Late Antiquity as a whole, and reveal their role as meaningful personal possessions more broadly. However first, how we define souvenirs and their role as meaningful possessions must be explored further.

### Defining Souvenirs

The nature of the souvenir object means that it is metonymic: it is something taken from the event or location that through its part represents the original whole. They are a response to nostalgia for other and past places; they not only trace a person's route through the world but also allow places or actions to be revisited through their materiality.<sup>1</sup> In her study of everyday objects and experience, the poet and scholar Susan Stewart discusses at length the function and meanings of souvenir objects. According to her, there are two main types. Souvenirs of "exterior sights" are usually readymade objects, representational in nature, which are available for people to buy as souvenirs.<sup>2</sup> One need only think of the scores of figurines of the Eiffel Tower or representations of Rome's Colosseum to conjure up familiar examples of such souvenir objects (fig. 14). It is difficult to represent towns or cities visually because they are too large and manifold to be easily characterised; therefore such souvenirs rely on the representation of urban icons, like the Colosseum, which act as visual substitutes for this multifaceted whole.<sup>3</sup> Such icons allow the expression of the character of that place, and offer the owner of the souvenir a sense of possession of the place through their ownership of the object.<sup>4</sup>

The second type of souvenir Stewart describes is that of "individual experience"; the material "samples" of places or events mentioned above, which are not necessarily produced with the intention of becoming souvenirs.<sup>5</sup> Such samples are taken from experiences in the life of the owner, intertwining memory and biography in material form; for example, the preservation of a ticket from a concert or a pebble from a favourite beach. Souvenirs of individual experience are often associated with rites of passage, and when collected in bulk can be considered to form a material autobiography of their owner.<sup>6</sup> The main value of these souvenirs is therefore a subjective one, dependent as they are on personal experiences and the person's associated memory. That is not to say that the other, more conventional, souvenir objects (those of "exterior

---

<sup>1</sup> Digby (2006) 171.

<sup>2</sup> Stewart (1993) 138.

<sup>3</sup> Favro (2006) 20.

<sup>4</sup> Favro (2006) 21.

<sup>5</sup> Stewart (1993) 138.

<sup>6</sup> Stewart (1993) 139.

sights”) cannot also be personal objects. Souvenirs work to move public places or experiences into the realm of the private; in this way something shared or common is reframed in the context of a personal history.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, by purchasing a readymade souvenir—such as the Colosseum magnet in figure 14—it is turned into an individual private possession that reflects the owner and their own biography.<sup>8</sup>

The problem that souvenir objects seek to address is that one cannot hold on to an experience; it is fleeting and intangible. Memories of the experience immediately take the place of the experience itself. This intangibility of an authentic experience means it moves away from the body in a process of distancing. The memory of this experience is thus replaced by the memory created through the souvenir object, whose materiality allows it to stand outside of the self.<sup>9</sup> Souvenirs also speak of the importance of the experience; people do not require souvenirs of events that are repeatable, but rather ones that can exist only through the invention of a narrative, in which the souvenir object is involved.<sup>10</sup> The souvenir object thereby announces through its materiality not only the memory of the event for the owner, but also the importance and value assigned to it. It preserves rare occasions and important memories, and provides authenticity to the narrative of personal history.

These objects also reference the experience of travel, or the experience of visiting a place or event. Geographer Paul C. Adams has described how exploring a place on foot creates a memory of the location. The experience of a place consists of a person’s physical involvement with the specific environment through their bodily senses; this impression is then likely to be remembered with great fondness if it is a place that is loved.<sup>11</sup> This initial impression gained from a place is reliant upon the location’s ‘texture’, formed of the distinctive but superficial qualities that are experienced on the surface of location where subject and object are merged.<sup>12</sup> These distinctive qualities can be quite physical and echoed in the material nature of the souvenir. For example, the 2nd c. AD Rudge Cup (fig. 15), thought to come from Hadrian’s Wall, is decorated with a brickwork pattern, echoing the wall itself.<sup>13</sup> The bronze cup features geometric decoration that echoes the appearance and texture of the wall through squares and ‘crenellations’, accompanied by moulded text listing the names of the forts at the western end of Hadrian’s Wall from west to east.<sup>14</sup> Not only does the decorative pattern of the Rudge Cup echo the visual appearance of the wall through the brickwork pattern, it also reflects the location and the experience of travel along the wall through the listed forts and the order they are read in. The physical experience of visiting Hadrian’s Wall is therefore summoned through the materiality of the souvenir object. In this way, objects brought back from places or events, especially travels, are more than mementoes of time and place; they are also associated with the actual experience of travel.<sup>15</sup>

Such recognisability in the object in terms of its origin speaks not only to the souvenir owner of the place and their personal memories, but also to others who understand where the object is from when it is displayed. As such, the souvenir provides tangible proof of a person’s travels, authenticating the locations they have visited.<sup>16</sup> This last point makes clear that conventional souvenirs are not just reliant on an individual

---

<sup>7</sup> Stewart (1993) 138.

<sup>8</sup> Stewart (1993) 138.

<sup>9</sup> Stewart (1993) 133.

<sup>10</sup> Stewart (1993) 135.

<sup>11</sup> P.C. Adams (2001) 188.

<sup>12</sup> Adams *et al.* (2001) xiii.

<sup>13</sup> See Breeze (2012).

<sup>14</sup> Breeze (2012) 1-2. Above the decoration are inscribed the names of five forts at the western end of the wall: MAIS [Bowness-on-Solway] ABALLAVA [Burgh-by-Sands] VXELODUM [Stanwix] CAMBOGLANS [Castlesteads] BANNA [Birdoswald].

<sup>15</sup> Hitchcock (2000) 1.

<sup>16</sup> Hitchcock (2000) 2.

and personal memory of a place, rather the readymade souvenir relies on a memory that is outward and collective.<sup>17</sup> The production of such objects can therefore provide prefabricated and standardised memories of a location, even for those who have never visited in person.<sup>18</sup> As such, the authenticity that souvenirs convey does not necessarily have to relate to a personal experience or a specific memory; rather it can be based upon cultural memories and wider understandings of the meanings of different locations.

### **Secular Late Antique Souvenirs**

As a set of objects, in today's age of cheap travel and leisure, we are very familiar with secular souvenirs as the material tokens of a holiday, collected and carried home by travellers around the world.<sup>19</sup> Thus, a discussion of souvenirs from Late Antiquity can seem somewhat anachronistic. However, it is clear that the concept of travel and tourism for its own sake existed prior to Late Antiquity; it was encompassed by the Latin word *otium* which referred to leisure or productive free time, and was present in the established tourist routes around the Roman empire in the Augustan period, if not before.<sup>20</sup> People who had the means and opportunity would travel, visiting places and accumulating experiences and souvenirs. Pre- late antique evidence for the material culture of travel also exists, such as the Vicarello Goblets, which date from the 1st c. AD. These four silver beakers list more than 100 post stations on the route between Gades (modern day Cadiz in Spain) and Rome; their form represents mile markers, perhaps referring specifically to a monument in the city of Gades.<sup>21</sup> These objects served as useful travel cups and guides to the road, emphasising the length of the journey between the two cities.<sup>22</sup> They demonstrate not only the popularity of travel but also the desire of travellers to memorialise these experiences in material form, through souvenirs that functioned to remind them of their journeys.

Epigraphist Mark Handley's study of evidence for travellers within the late antique West further demonstrates how commonplace travel was, with a broad spectrum of travellers present on the routes around the empire.<sup>23</sup> Generally speaking, travel during Late Antiquity was polydirectional and both long and short distance, with destinations either representing short visits or new permanent homes.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, the papyrological evidence from Egypt shows that travel was common; in Egypt even the poor could manage to find the time and opportunity to make short journeys.<sup>25</sup> From Oxyrhynchus comes a letter dated to the 3rd to 4th c. in which the writer expresses a desire to get away for a while in order to escape the hot weather; this is clearly a trip made for pleasure rather than business.<sup>26</sup>

The motivations for travel were similarly as diverse as the travellers. Soldierly was one of the most common reasons for long distance travel, with members of the military from across the Roman provinces finding themselves stationed far away from their

---

<sup>17</sup> Benson (2004) 16.

<sup>18</sup> Benson (2004) 16.

<sup>19</sup> Much of our concept of recreational time and travel is linked to leisure, a notion commonly linked with the work of 19th c. theorists Thorstein Veblen and Karl Marx, and thus associated with industrialised capitalist societies of the modern period. See MacCannell (2013) for a discussion of leisure time and tourism in post-industrial society.

<sup>20</sup> Lomine (2005) 71.

<sup>21</sup> Elsner (2000b) 185.

<sup>22</sup> Shaya (2013) 105.

<sup>23</sup> Handley (2011) 51

<sup>24</sup> Handley (2011) 107-108.

<sup>25</sup> C. Adams (2001) 157.

<sup>26</sup> P.Oxy.34.2727.



original home.<sup>27</sup> This is clear from textual sources, such as the description from Ammianus Marcellinus recording how in AD 360 the Emperor Constantius II ordered troops sourced from Gaul to be sent to the East of the empire to repel the Persian forces there.<sup>28</sup> Trade and commercial endeavours also prompted travel and ensured that people accompanied produce and business transactions. A 4th c. *ostrakon* from Karanis records the transportation of ten donkeys of grain via the donkey driver Sotas.<sup>29</sup> Waterways as a means of transport were especially important in late antique Egypt; a 5th c. document reports the transportation of cargo from the port in Oxyrhynchus to Alexandria, no doubt via the Nile, which functioned as the main thoroughfare within the country.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, opportunities to visit well-known locations, conduct some sightseeing, and purchase souvenirs as mementoes were more frequent than one might initially think.

The first kind of souvenir to be discussed here is what might also be considered the most obvious type; one that depicts as decoration, or represents in physical form, the location it comes from and seeks to commemorate. These are the souvenirs of exterior sights discussed above.<sup>31</sup> Objects depicting famous monuments are found in the archaeological record. The renowned statue of the Tyche of Antioch, sculpted by a pupil of Lysippos, was copied for visitors to purchase as a souvenir; figure 16 is one extant version dating from the 1st to 2nd c. AD, now held in the Yale University Art Gallery. It copies the original statue in that it depicts the goddess Tyche seated on a rock; the original also had Tyche with one foot on a swimming youth, the personification of the river Orontes on which the city of Antioch sits (now missing from this example). Mould blown glass bottle representations of the statue were also available in the 2nd to 3rd c., such as the example in figure 17, also held in the Yale University Art Gallery. These bottles were produced in Antioch and bought as souvenirs by visitors, or for installation in a household shrine.<sup>32</sup> This specific representation is also found in the late 4th c. Esquiline Treasure hoard from Rome, in the form of a silver and gold statuette that functioned as a furniture mount. That this form of representation was still known in Late Antiquity is a sign of the continued production of souvenir imagery and their circulation in society.

Representations of famous landmarks appear as decoration on other domestic objects, again suggesting an explicit function as souvenirs. One candidate is the glass bottle found in a grave excavated near Poetovio, modern day Ptuj in Slovenia (fig. 18). It dates from between the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 4th c. AD.<sup>33</sup> This vessel depicts the Pharos lighthouse at Alexandria, recognisable due to its distinctive stepped architecture and the statue of Zeus Soter that sat atop the structure.<sup>34</sup> The bottle is missing its mouth and rim, however it features a broad handle for pouring the liquid contents of the vessel, suggesting a dining context for its use. The style of decoration on the vessel, combined with the inclusion of fish motifs, suggests it belongs to the 'contour groove group' of vessels, originating from high quality Egyptian workshops.<sup>35</sup> The fact

---

<sup>27</sup> Handley (2011) 57. Contact between Roman soldiers and native 'barbarian' peoples beyond the limits of the Roman empire, has been discussed via analyses of fragments of Roman military chainmail found in late Roman graves in the modern day Czech Republic and Slovakia. These have been interpreted as amuletic objects, or even souvenirs of the distant Roman provinces. See Czarnecka (1994).

<sup>28</sup> Amm. Marc. 20.4.1-11.

<sup>29</sup> O.Mich.1.546

<sup>30</sup> P.Wisc.2.65.

<sup>31</sup> Stewart (1993) 138.

<sup>32</sup> Matheson (1994) 115.

<sup>33</sup> Lazar (2009) 148.

<sup>34</sup> Lazar (2009) 150-51.

<sup>35</sup> Lazar (2009) 153-54.

that it was found in a grave in modern day Slovenia demonstrates how far this object had travelled, perhaps purchased by a visitor to the famous city of Alexandria.

Alexandria was a key seaport for trade and travel around the Mediterranean, and the lighthouse, a monument considered to be a wonder of the ancient world, would have greeted visitors as they entered the city by boat. The structure was substantial—slightly taller than the Statue of Liberty—and would no doubt have made a huge impression on visitors and Alexandrians alike, forming a key component of the city's topography.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, souvenir objects featuring the Pharos would naturally be popular with both vendors and visitors alike, representing a renowned and identifiable element of the city, in terms of both the physical and psychological topography of the urban environment. As a souvenir object, the decorated Pharos bottle relies on a form of collective memory, representing a well-known and easily recognisable element of Alexandria, familiar even to those who have not visited the monument in person. The image of the Alexandrian Pharos was certainly circulated on coins and depicted in mosaics, such as its 6th c. representation from Qasr-el-Lebia in Cyrene, modern day Libya.<sup>37</sup> The monument's depiction on the vessel from Poetovio also refers to the 'texture' of the city as experienced by visitors, in the way it suggests the experience of approaching the city by boat, and the initial physical impressions of the urban landscape.<sup>38</sup>

A group of objects originating from Puteoli and Baiae in the Bay of Naples are similarly associated through their form with a specific place. Instead of a miniature version of a famous monument, these souvenirs are glass flasks decorated with scenes of the cities they represent. These flasks, collectively known as the Puteoli-Baiae group, date from the late 3rd to 4th c. and feature architectural scenes, townscapes and identifying inscriptions (figs 19 and 20).<sup>39</sup> Not only have these flasks been found elsewhere in Italy, but also across the Roman empire, in modern Spain, Portugal, Germany, North Africa and Great Britain. Such a geographical spread supports their status as souvenir objects, taken from their place of origin and deposited in the homes of those who visited the towns.<sup>40</sup> Puteoli was one of the most important commercial and military harbours on the west coast of Italy, as well as being one of the most fashionable residential areas south of Rome, along with its close neighbour Baiae.<sup>41</sup> Both of these towns, Baiae in particular, were famed for their mineral-rich waters, and consequently attracted high numbers of visitors every year, allowing the towns to develop into high profile resorts, which focused on bathing, socialising, and leisure.<sup>42</sup> It is unsurprising then that such places had vendors catering to visitors and providing them with souvenirs as mementoes of their holidays.

Not only were these flasks sold as souvenirs to the many visitors to the towns, but were also likely used to drink the spa waters for which these resorts were lauded.<sup>43</sup> Certainly the rim of the Prague flask, one of the Puteoli-Baiae collection, is ground smooth, making it safe to drink from.<sup>44</sup> Certain examples also include inscriptions encouraging the owner of the vessel to 'drink', a common exhortation found on many vessels of the period.<sup>45</sup> Their decoration—namely the coastal scenes—also seem

---

<sup>36</sup> Haas (1997) 25-26.

<sup>37</sup> Price and Trell (1977) 180-82. The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus was also featured on coins: see Price and Trell (1977) 127-30.

<sup>38</sup> Adams *et al.* (2001) xiii.

<sup>39</sup> See Ostrow (1979) for a full discussion of depicted topography and identifying inscriptions on these vessels.

<sup>40</sup> Fujii (2009) 136.

<sup>41</sup> Painter (1975) 61.

<sup>42</sup> Jackson (1990) 5-6.

<sup>43</sup> Jackson (1990) 7.

<sup>44</sup> Fujii (2009) 136.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, the inscription of the Prague Flask which begins *Felix pie zesaes cum tuis* or 'Fortunate one, drink, so you may live happily with your (loved ones)'.

appropriate for vessels intended for holding liquids. However, the overview of the extant fragments conducted by Painter, shows that the vast majority of the vessels had constricted openings at the base of the necks.<sup>46</sup> This feature would impede the flow of liquid, like a dropper, suggesting that the object's use was medicinal or for one's toilet (as opposed to dining) as it facilitates the rationing of precious liquids. The drinking of spa waters was not an uncommon physical therapy; as an activity it is referred to through the imagery on the Otañes plate (fig. 21, discussed further below), which shows a seated figure being brought spring water in a cup-like vessel.<sup>47</sup>

These flasks of a round globular form, listed as no. 103 in the Isings glass catalogue, were decorated with wheel-cut imagery based upon the seaside location of the towns.<sup>48</sup> The features depicted on the flask are labelled with inscriptions and generally depict a coastal scene; for example, the Populonia flask (figs 19 and 20) includes a breakwater, labelled as "pilae". The Prague flask shows Puteoli, and includes the city's stadium, a temple, the harbour mole or breakwater, a *solarium* (either a sundial or a sun terrace), a *lararium*, amphitheatre, colonnades, *palaestra*, and docks.<sup>49</sup> Inscriptions are included to make completely clear what is depicted, something especially important for anyone viewing the object who had not visited themselves or were unfamiliar with the sights of the town.<sup>50</sup>

The number of fragments of these vessels found across the Mediterranean (and beyond), and the relative uniformity of decorative content and style, suggests that these souvenir flasks were produced in reasonably large numbers. It seems that a set number of decorative scenes were incised on the regular glass vessels to form ready-made and purchasable souvenirs for visitors to the towns. This use of similar schemes of decoration creates a discrete set of objects that all resemble each other. As such, these are objects which lack singularisation in terms of their appearance and origin, yet were acquired by visitors to reflect their own individual experiences. However, the homogeneity of these objects is where their desirability is in part derived. By looking alike, these objects convey a sense of authenticity, guaranteeing to potential owners that the souvenir did indeed come from a particular location. As such, the standardised souvenir becomes a distinctive product of that location and is recognisably associated with visits there. The Puteoli-Baiae flasks in particular feature around the upper parts of their bodies, just below the neck, inscriptions of varying sorts that were likely engraved at the specific request of the purchaser.<sup>51</sup> These inscriptions are similar to those we find on the wedding gifts discussed in the previous chapter, for example commemorative inscriptions or exhortations of different kinds. In this way, visitors to the towns could buy a pre-made souvenir that referred to the geographical location, but could also personalise it through adding inscriptions.

Bathing establishments were popular places to visit during this period, and other souvenir objects with these kinds of locations depicted on them have also been found. As briefly mentioned above, from Otañes in northern Spain comes a silver bowl

---

<sup>46</sup> Painter (1975) 54-60.

<sup>47</sup> Dvorjetski (2007) 112. Others have suggested that the prominent representation of a temple on some of the vessels hints to a role as ritual objects taken home by initiates to the cult of Isis and Serapis, who made their pilgrimage to the temple in Puteoli; Ostrow makes clear, however, that this is far from certain: Ostrow (1979) 89 and Tran Tam Tinh (1972) 26-27.

<sup>48</sup> Isings (1957) 121-22.

<sup>49</sup> Ostrow (1979) 93-97. Now held in the National Museum Prague.

<sup>50</sup> The full inscription on the Prague Flask reads: Felix pie zesaes cum tuis // stadiu(m) solariu(m) Lari strata pos() foru(m) Isiu(m) / Putioli // Pilae // pe/la/gu(m) // amp(h)itheat(rum) theatru(m) decatria // ordion pales C(a)esari Nimisia // ortesiana rip(a) / inpuriu(m) sacoma. This translates as 'Fortunate one, drink, so you may live happily with your (loved ones). Stadium; sundial; Lares; paved streets behind the forum; shrine of Isis; Puteoli; breakwater; open sea; amphitheatre; theatre; region of the thirteen gods; Hordionian region; palaestra; imperial shrine; Numisian region; Hortensian quay; harbour; weigh station; steps of god'.

<sup>51</sup> Ostrow (1979) 77.

featuring a series of vignettes depicting scenes from a spa (fig. 21). The decoration is accompanied by the inlaid gilt inscription SALVS UMERITANA, referring to Salus, the Roman god of health, alongside a reference to the previously unknown medicinal spring of Umeri, possibly located in the Pyrenees.<sup>52</sup> The decoration on this object, instead of referring to the physical appearance of Umeri as a location, instead focuses on the activities for which the resort was known. Visitors would attend primarily for the spa treatments and the water therapies available, hence the suitability of decoration showing spa routines as opposed to architectural detail. The focus on bathing activities is further enhanced by the reference to the Roman god of health in the inscription. For this reason it seems likely that the Otañes plate too was used as part of toilet ritual rather than with dining activity within the home. This would allow the continuation of behaviours exhibited during visits to spa resorts whilst at home, activities reinforced by their representation on the object itself. The materiality of these souvenirs creates an extension of the actual experience of the owners through the intended functions of the objects.

As demonstrated by this silver souvenir dish from the spa of Umeri, and the flasks from Puteoli and Baiae, the sense or identity of a place does not have to be communicated solely through imagery or physical form. Inscriptions as well as visual representations have an important role in communicating their origins, and the memories of a location. On the Hunting Plate of the Sevso Treasure discussed in earlier chapters, is an inscription naming a body of water as “Pelso”, the name for Lake Balaton in modern day Hungary. The presence of this inscription, and the depiction of the lake as part of the hunting scene, suggest some biographical connection between that location and the plate’s owner. The central figures in the scene have been interpreted as Sevso, his wife, and others, enjoying the fruits of the lands that form their estate.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, the inscription seems to locate this estate geographically by naming Lake Pelso. As a result, it seems highly unlikely that the plate represents a souvenir of the type discussed above. However, the imagery and inscription still allow the object to function as a memento of the owner’s experiences, referencing Sevso’s memories of his physical encounters with the estate.

Another inscribed object, also discussed in the previous chapter, is the gold glass vessel base depicting the busts of Orfitus and Constantius with the figure of Hercules. As already mentioned, the vessel base includes an inscription referencing the Roman town of Acerentia, home to a cult of Hercules, who is also depicted on the object’s decoration.<sup>54</sup> The naming of Orfitus and Constantius, alongside their portraits, demonstrates that this object was commissioned as a gift on a specific occasion; both Howells and Cameron believe it to have been commissioned by the townsfolk of Acerentia themselves.<sup>55</sup> However, the object still refers to the location of Acerentia, and therefore functions as a material memento of this location for Orfitus; perhaps this is associated with the experience of visiting the cult buildings of Hercules, which are referred to on the object as a key part of the town’s identity.

The vessels that these bases once formed a part of were relatively cheap and could be produced in plentiful quantities.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, objects similar to the Orfitus and Constantius glass could be manufactured on a reasonably large scale locally, and sold as souvenirs to those visiting the town or the cultic centre of Hercules. In this way, the identity of the object is inextricably tied to its geographical origin via the combination of inscription and decoration. Vessels with decorated gold bases were popular objects during the late antique period and featured a wide range of decorative schemes. Perhaps

---

<sup>52</sup> Jackson (1990) 12.

<sup>53</sup> Dunbabin (2003) 149.

<sup>54</sup> Cameron (1996) 296-98.

<sup>55</sup> Howells (2010) 276; Cameron (1996) 300.

<sup>56</sup> Howells (2010) 276-77.

this vessel base was once part of an object similar to the Puteoli – Baiae flasks, representing a specific type of object produced by a local workshop in relatively large quantities for visitors, but which could also be personalised by requesting specific imagery or inscriptions from the manufacturer.

### **Souvenirs and ‘Regional Specialities’**

All these ‘souvenirs of places’ feature an element within their appearance—either through decoration, physical form or inscription—that link the object explicitly to its place of origin. However, there are other kinds of objects that can be taken as souvenirs of a place that do not directly reference that location through their materiality. These are the ‘samples’ of a place, described at the beginning of this chapter, and they function to store personal memories of experiences associated with a specific trip or event.<sup>57</sup> These kinds of souvenirs are difficult to identify; as they are personal to the owner, they are less reliant on the ready-made souvenir tropes which depend upon collective memory and a common understanding of a place for their identity. As samples from a location, they need not even be purpose-made objects, but rather ordinary items that are typical of a culture or the individual’s experience; even natural items encountered during travels can be acquired as souvenirs.<sup>58</sup>

The well-known archive of Theophanes, whose journey from Egypt to Antioch was recorded in the 4th c. AD, preserves lists of accounts and expenses relating to the logistical aspect of such an expedition. Recorded in these documents is the purchase by Theophanes of a gilded statue of the emperor (presumably a miniature) whilst in Ascalon.<sup>59</sup> No price for the object survives, but it could well be an object bought for dedication in a temple.<sup>60</sup> It is interesting to note, however, that the purchase is listed alongside other expenses including entrance fees to the theatre, suggesting a day of recreation in Ascalon; perhaps this statuette was not a dedication but rather purchased as a souvenir of the trip? Furthermore, the archive records another purchase—a wine-jar in the form of Silenus bought whilst in Tyre—described by Matthews as “a typically tacky tourist’s purchase”, that, if excavated at Hermopolis Magna, the home of Theophanes and findspot of the archive, would likely be considered a local product.<sup>61</sup> This contrasts with the seemingly reasonable quality of objects we have already discussed, such as the wheel-cut decorations on the Puteoli-Baiae flasks and the Pharos jug.

However, Dionysian themes on decorative objects and furnishing became increasingly popular in Late Antiquity, with the image of the bald-headed Silenus appearing on various kinds of items, including domestic textiles (fig. 22).<sup>62</sup> Theophanes’ wine jar is also an object that has no clear association with Tyre, meaning that the only link between the souvenir and location is in the mind of Theophanes who knows the biography of the object and can remember the context of its acquisition. This represents a more personal kind of souvenir, one purchased as a memento of a journey, and functioning to remind the owner of his time spent in Tyre.

Other kinds of objects have associations with geographical locations, as products or regional ‘types’ originating from a specific place. In this way, such objects are ‘samples’ as they represent the material culture of a town, region, or country. The recipes of Apicius include foods associated with specific places, such as the Lucanian sausage,

---

<sup>57</sup> Stewart (1993) 138.

<sup>58</sup> See Digby (2006) for her discussion of found objects as souvenirs of places and experiences.

<sup>59</sup> P.Ryl. 627 v.i.214.

<sup>60</sup> Matthews (2006) 51.

<sup>61</sup> P.Ryl. 630; Matthews (2006) 125.

<sup>62</sup> Stauffer (1995) 20.

apparently hailing from Lucania in southern Italy.<sup>63</sup> Such names state an origin, or at least an aspect of the object's identity, associated with these locations. As such, they also evoke memories of places in much the same way as souvenir objects. In the documentary papyri from late antique Egypt, there are many references to items that are described specifically in terms of their place of origin, usually through their identifying name. However, whether these items were bought by their owner from their apparent source as souvenirs, or whether they represent a popular exported product available locally, is more difficult to ascertain. In addition, these names could also represent generic products, where the geographical place name refers only to an historical origin.

In the 4th c. centurion's will there is mention of a mysterious object called an *albandicum*; seemingly this is an object from the city of Alabanda in Caria, modern day Anatolia.<sup>64</sup> What this object was is unknown, but due to the context of the letter, it could be a weapon.<sup>65</sup> The extent to which soldiers travelled during this period has already been mentioned, therefore perhaps the centurion acquired this *albandicum* himself whilst deployed in Caria. As such it would not only reflect the material culture of the area, but also evoke memories of his time spent there. Furthermore, if the object is indeed a weapon, it represents the livelihood of the soldier in material form, and as such has close links to the way in which he used material culture to represent and form his identity. This would be the case even if the object were a locally purchased import.

Further objects are listed in the document of AD 481, which catalogues the items that should be given to a Theophilus as a settlement in a legal action.<sup>66</sup> Several items are described as coming from a place called Skinepeous: seven napkins and towels, a small mattress, a tablecloth, and a 'garment'.<sup>67</sup> Not much is known about Skinepeous, a small Egyptian town mentioned only in a few documentary papyri. However, the types of objects listed all suggest that the town had a textile industry of sorts, as these Skinepeous products are various kinds of household linens and domestic soft furnishings. They may well represent items brought back from Skinepeous after a visit by the claimant in the document. Alternatively they may have been gifts or simply purchases that reflect the high quality or special production of textiles from this place. In this sense, these objects too are samples of a location or experience, and as such represent the town in material form. Such specialist products represent a specific and unique quality that singularises these kinds of objects. As such, they would make suitable souvenirs of a visit to that location, functioning as they do as samples of that place's material culture. Such regional products provide a sense of authenticity, not only in terms of the quality of the product (confirmed by the geographical origin) but also to the memories and visit of the person bringing the object back.

Many references within written sources relate to foods described by their geographical source. For example, regional wines are known; a poem by the 5th c. Sidonius Apollinarius, describes them when referring to the celebration of a 16th birthday: 'As for wines, I have none of Gaza, no Chian or Falernian, none sent by the vines of Sarepta for you to drink'.<sup>68</sup> In the papyri, there is a 4th c. letter in which the

---

<sup>63</sup> Apicius, *De Re Coquinaria* 2.4. The ingredients of Lucanian sausage listed by Apicius include pepper, cumin, savory, parsley, laurel berries, and pork.

<sup>64</sup> P.Col. 7.188.

<sup>65</sup> Bagnall and Lewis (1979) 218.

<sup>66</sup> P.Princ. 2.82.

<sup>67</sup> P.Princ. 2.82 (transl. Dewing (1922) 122). The legal settlement document also contains other similar descriptions, namely of a Dalmatian cloak, a Damaskian shirt and an Egyptian cloak and cape. These are types of clothing that are attested reasonably frequently in other papyrological texts, and seem to be generic terms referring instead to a specific style or design of clothing, rather than the actual geographical origin of the garments.

<sup>68</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 2.17 (transl. Anderson (1936) 255). The papyri from late antique Egypt show that the packing vessels such wine were stored in also had names associating the objects with their

writer informs the recipient that she has dispatched a small basket of Syrian dates along with some *κωνωπικά*, translated as ‘Canopic’ cakes.<sup>69</sup> The main descriptive element of these cakes is their apparent geographical origin. Canopic might well relate to the Alexandrian suburb of Canopus, where the main cult temples of the city were traditionally located.<sup>70</sup> These cakes, also attested in P.Oxy.14.1774, are a type of muffin or scone made in the Canopic style, and different to the more usual *panis Alexandrinus*, although in what way we do not know.<sup>71</sup> This type of food appears to have been a regional speciality, although whether these exact specimens were bought within Canopus is unclear. It seems unlikely that these objects could therefore function as souvenirs from the suburb. Similarly the Syrian dates mentioned within the text seem unlikely to have been purchased first-hand by the letter writer from Syria; more likely is that these dates—perhaps singularised for their taste or quality—were imported and bought locally.

Despite the link between the identity of these foods and their geographical origin, such references in the documentary evidence do not represent souvenirs. Instead, they are regional specialities exported from their place of origin, or made locally to mimic these foreign products. Furthermore, it is difficult for food to have a souvenir function; its perishability, and therefore lack of permanence, means that it is unable to store memories over time.<sup>72</sup> However, a link between food and memory does exist, and the role of the senses in the construction and retrieval of memories has been explored by many scholars.<sup>73</sup> In the late 4th c., St Augustine wrote that taste, along with touch and smell, was one of the lowest senses in the hierarchy of perception.<sup>74</sup> Yet food is nonetheless a part of the material world, and as such can be related to people’s relationships with the past; in fact memory is embodied and recalled through the sensations of smell and taste.<sup>75</sup>

One needs only to think of Marcel Proust’s famous description of the memories and sense of nostalgia that were provoked by his eating of a madeleine cake, to understand this.<sup>76</sup> The point he makes is that the taste and smell of food has the power to provoke memories in the mind of the subject, and transport them to previous experiences, places, and people that have now passed. As such, a piece of food is unlikely to function as a souvenir or memento, as most edibles, except for preserved items, will either be consumed or decompose over a relatively short period of time. However, the smells, flavours and textures that the food provides on eating can be recreated by later incarnations of the dish in question. Therefore the Canopic cakes mentioned in P.Oxy.14.1774 might not come from Canopus, but can, through their appearance, aroma and texture, reference the experience of eating these cakes in the Alexandrian suburb itself, and by extension provoke associated contextual memories of this experience. The authenticity of these memories is provided not by the original food specimen but rather the sensory experience of eating that dish.

Furthermore, food behaves much as souvenirs do in referencing a ‘foreign’ place or culture through its geographical origin and combinations of flavour, texture, ingredient or cooking style that are considered regionally specific. In his work, *The Culinary Triangle*, Lévi Strauss contemplates the way in which food communicates information

---

geographical origin; for example, the Gaza jar (Γαζίτιον) in P.Oxy. 16.1924. For a full discussion, see Kruit and Worp (2000) 65-146.

<sup>69</sup> SB 8. 9746 = SB 3. 7243 (transl. Bagnall and Crihiore (2006) 196).

<sup>70</sup> Haas (1997) 146.

<sup>71</sup> Tandoi (1959) 199.

<sup>72</sup> Weiner (1992) 38.

<sup>73</sup> For an overview of scholarship on the senses, including its association with memory, see Stewart (2005).

<sup>74</sup> August, *De libero arbitrio* 2.14.38.147.

<sup>75</sup> Lupton (1998) 32.

<sup>76</sup> Proust (2006) 63.

about a culture through the transformations it undertakes at the hands of humans.<sup>77</sup> Culinary products and practices form and symbolise cultural identities and communities of people, helping to distinguish between different regions and nations.<sup>78</sup> In this way, foreign foods or regional specialities again can function as mementoes of other places.

### **Souvenirs of Events**

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, souvenirs can be mementoes of occasions or events, as well as travels and visits to places. Consular diptychs, discussed in chapter 2, represent objects that function to commemorate the accession to office of consuls. This is reflected in part through their functionality; these objects were conceived of as writing tablets, with a wax surface on their reverse onto which the names of consuls in chronological order would be listed, and the objects then kept for commemorative reasons.<sup>79</sup> The diptychs are therefore distributed as not only gifts but also souvenirs; they form a material embodiment of the memory of the event. Furthermore, an integral part of the role of consul was the provision of celebratory games and entertainments, at which the diptychs were distributed to the consul's senatorial peers.<sup>80</sup> The Areobindus diptych from AD 506 (fig. 23) references these occasions directly through the scenes of wild animals and acrobatic performers within an arena at the bottom of the ivory leaves. This imagery refers directly to the event at which the object was acquired, as well as concretising the memory of the consul's accession more broadly.

There is further evidence of souvenirs associated with games and public spectacle. Contorniate medallions survive to us today in large numbers, with many directly related to late antique games and spectacles. Dating mainly from the second half of the 4th c., their appearance is not unlike coins, however they are larger, heavier and have a characteristic deep groove on the inside of their rim (fig. 24).<sup>81</sup> Some depict scenes from staged events or the architectural features of stadia and hippodromes, along with the profile of various individuals (often emperors) who were closely associated with the provision of public games. The main study of these medallions was carried out by Andreas and Elisabeth Alföldi, who suggest that their manufacture and distribution was a pagan reaction to the Christianisation of the empire, and the growing disapproval of these traditionally pagan attractions.<sup>82</sup> However, there is little evidence that events such as public games ever became the focus for conflict between pagan and Christian groups in Late Antiquity; it is likely that the contorniates were actually distributed at the games as a form of traditional gift.<sup>83</sup>

Although given as gifts, these objects also functioned as souvenirs of the games events themselves, much as the diptychs discussed above do. Their iconography is self-reflexive, depicting the venue or activity at which the medallion was donated. The decorative scheme therefore refers directly to the event at which the owner acquired the object. The iconography on one set of contorniates depicts the story of the abduction of the Sabine women, an example again dating to the second half of the 4th c. These medallions were issued by Constantius II in 357 AD to commemorate his visit to Rome and the associated games celebrating the anniversary of his accession.<sup>84</sup> The choice of iconography—the abduction of the Sabine women—was linked during Late Antiquity to circus entertainment because of its popularity as a narrative, and the role that the first

---

<sup>77</sup> Lévi-Strauss (2008) 36-43.

<sup>78</sup> Lupton (1998) 25-26.

<sup>79</sup> Bowes (2001) 343.

<sup>80</sup> Bowes (2001) 338.

<sup>81</sup> Weitzmann (1979) 101.

<sup>82</sup> Alföldi and Alföldi (1990) 2. 25-34.

<sup>83</sup> Gwynn (2011) 149.

<sup>84</sup> Holden (2008) 122.



ever games had in the original story.<sup>85</sup> In fact, on the medallion shown in figure 24, the turning posts of a hippodrome can be seen in the background, placing the narrative within the circus setting. The explicit link between the iconography of the contorniate medallion and public games commemorates not only the giving of the medallion as a gift, but also the event at which the gift was given. The object therefore functions as a souvenir of the event, and is associated with the memories of this in the mind of the owner.

Contorniate medallions are not the only kind of souvenir object associated with public entertainments; other objects depict chariot racing and gladiatorial combat.<sup>86</sup> From the 3rd c. comes a gold glass vessel base depicting a victorious charioteer, identified by an inscription as Trasinicus, along with his horse Demeter (figs 25 and 26).<sup>87</sup> Art historian Kurt Weitzmann describes these objects as mementoes of a popular and victorious idol.<sup>88</sup> In addition, the representation includes specific colours within the decoration, denoting the circus faction with which the racer was affiliated (in this case, blue). Such objects, therefore, were souvenirs not only of a day at the races but also commemorate the victory of a specific competitor. Furthermore, the circus faction that the owner of the object supported was also celebrated. The popularity of these kinds of objects is confirmed by another vessel, featuring a different form of decoration but similar subject matter. Figures 27 and 28 are of a 4th c. glass beaker with an engraved scene depicting the triumphant charioteer Eutyches. Again the inclusion of an inscription identifying the charioteer and his four horses by name, identifies and commemorates a specific team and perhaps a specific triumph in the Hippodrome; thus the vessel functions as a souvenir from a particular event.<sup>89</sup>

Aside from chariot racing, gladiatorial events are also depicted on souvenir objects. Figure 29 is a gold glass vessel base that depicts a gladiator and features an inscription; dating to the late 4th c., it is a rare late example of this iconographical subject. The inscription on the vessel reads: STRA TO NICA EBEN EVIC ISTI/ VADEIN AVRE LI A/ PIE ZESE S. The first part of the inscription apparently relates to the town of Stratoniceia, meaning that the inscription translates as, 'You have conquered in Stratoniceia, go to Aurelia. Drink that you may live'.<sup>90</sup> This kind of iconography forms part of a broader trend, which saw gladiatorial imagery used as decoration in a variety of contexts, including mosaics.<sup>91</sup> The popularity of gladiators ensured that a whole branch of the art industry was dedicated to exploiting this subject matter, and allowed fans to take home souvenirs of their heroes.<sup>92</sup> Later, as the popularity of charioteers and race events within the hippodrome increased, souvenirs correspondingly depicted triumphant charioteers and race events.

Other events more personal in nature could also be commemorated through souvenir objects. The gold glass vessel bases discussed throughout this book often contain iconography and inscriptions that reflect personal occasions thought worthy of celebration and commemoration in Late Antiquity. In the previous chapter, gold glass vessels associated with weddings were discussed in relation to gift giving. Other glass bases suggest the commemoration of the New Year; the gilt message *anni boni* in the

---

<sup>85</sup> Holden (2008) 122.

<sup>86</sup> The Colchester Cup, dating from the 1st c. AD, is an early, yet famous, example of this, reinforcing the popularity not only of this kind of event, but also these activities as decorative motifs.

<sup>87</sup> The inscription reads DEMETER NICA or 'Demeter win!', and TRASINICVS identifying the victorious charioteer.

<sup>88</sup> Weitzmann (1979) 104.

<sup>89</sup> Weitzmann (1979) 99-100. The inscription reads EYTYX ΠΥΡΙΠΝΟΥC ΝΙΛΟC ΑΡΕΘΟΥC CΙΜΟC / 'Eutyches; Puripnous; Nilos; Arethous; Simos'.

<sup>90</sup> Howells (2010) 238-39.

<sup>91</sup> See, for example, the 4th c. mosaic in the National Archaeological Museum of Spain, which depicts a pair of gladiators, and identifies them by name, giving a commemorative aspect to the representation.

<sup>92</sup> Ewigleben (2000) 133.

bottom of one vessel translates as the equivalent of 'Happy New Year'.<sup>93</sup> Another depicts a father and son, with an inscription naming the boy as Fortunis.<sup>94</sup> The surviving iconography of the scene corresponds to the coming of age ceremony when a boy would receive his *toga virilis* from his father.<sup>95</sup> These objects thus functioned as souvenirs commissioned to commemorate such occasions.

### Sacred Souvenirs

This chapter now turns to the discussion of souvenir objects associated with religion and devotional practice. Pilgrimage was a major reason for people to travel during the late antique period, and Christians added to the ranks of existing Jewish and pagan travellers who visited holy sites and people across the empire. These pilgrimages, sometimes of great lengths, were taken by the faithful in order to visit temples, shrines, and other places considered holy through associations with sacred narratives. Various pilgrims left accounts of their travels, documenting not only their own journey and experiences en route, but also providing advice to others who wished to undertake similar trips; the main examples are the writings of Egeria, the anonymous Piacenza Pilgrim, and the *Itinerarium Burdigalense*.<sup>96</sup> Texts were also produced explicitly for travellers themselves; the remains of guidebooks reveal the kinds of locations that people visited and their motivations for doing so. From the early 6th c. comes the *Breviarius of Jerusalem*, which highlighted and guided readers to the holiest Christian relics within the city.<sup>97</sup>

Visits were also made to holy men and women, something that became increasingly popular with the advent of asceticism in the early Christian period. The traces of these religious journeys can be found in the archaeological record, in the form of architectural remains at the sites of religious centres, for example the remains of the huge pilgrim centre that developed around the column of St Symeon Stylites the Elder, in modern day Syria. From the archaeological record and descriptions of such journeys we find that not only did pilgrims leave objects as votive gifts but also took items away with them from sites as souvenirs.

Scholarship on pilgrimage in Late Antiquity is predominantly focused on the travels undertaken by faithful Christians, which can give the impression that this activity was exclusively associated with Christianity. However, pagan pilgrimage was not unknown. In the Classical period, the most famous destination was the Oracle at Delphi in Greece, which attracted visitors from the Greek Archaic age through to the Roman Imperial period, after which point its popularity significantly decreased.<sup>98</sup> Pilgrims also visited the temple complex of Artemis in Ephesus until its destruction in the second half of the 3rd c. Souvenirs were made at the site in the form of miniatures of the famous Artemis Ephesia statue which was displayed in the temple; fig. 30 is a moulded terracotta version, whilst other figurines in bronze are also known.<sup>99</sup> The centre at Ephesus produced these objects with the intention of their travel beyond the limits of the city.<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>93</sup> This 4th c. vessel base from Cologne is now in the British Museum (OA.858).

<sup>94</sup> The full inscription reads: [...] [CUM CON]IVGETVA. ETFORTVNIOFILIO TVO, translating to, '[...] with your wife and your son, Fortunis'.

<sup>95</sup> Howells (2010) 241. British Museum OA.867.

<sup>96</sup> For Egeria and the *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, see Wilkinson (1999); for the anonymous Piacenza Pilgrim see Wilkinson (1977).

<sup>97</sup> Known as the *Breviarium de Hierosolyma*.

<sup>98</sup> Arnush (2005) 97-98.

<sup>99</sup> See the 1st to 2nd c. AD bronze statuette in the British Museum, no. 1909,0620.2. Miniature silver models of the temple were also produced for visitors, as described by St Paul in Acts 19:24-27 (*Revised English Bible* edn.). Casson states that these silver shrines were purchased alongside cheaper terracotta versions, to be given as votive gifts to Artemis in the temple itself. He does not provide any evidence to back up this statement: Casson (1974) 287. Given the popularity of the temple, and the

These statuettes, along with engraved gems featuring the image of Artemis, have been found across Asia Minor, suggesting pilgrims were relatively local, and the objects—representative of the kinds of souvenirs generated by pagan cults—were kept within the homes of such pilgrims.<sup>101</sup> Terracotta and glass were plentiful materials, and their malleability made them ideal in the mass production of souvenirs. Furthermore, the cult association of the souvenirs of the Artemis Ephesia supports the idea of the purchase of souvenir miniatures as religious mementoes and objects suitable for domestic veneration. Such objects would function as souvenirs of their pilgrimage but also have a devotional or amuletic purpose, being incorporated into household shrines and domestic worship. Ephesus' Temple of Artemis was a very famous landmark—one of the seven wonders of the ancient world—which made it likely to attract large numbers of visitors. The purchasing of an iconic cityscape in the material form of a souvenir allowed ancient tourists to reinforce their mnemonic possession of the site of their visit.<sup>102</sup> Such mass-produced objects also provided an easy and accessible memento for tourists to the site to take home, to concretise their memories of the visit.

Alexandria was another important centre of pagan pilgrimage up until the Byzantine period. It was home to the famous Serapeum temple complex until its 4th c. destruction. A 2nd c. AD letter from Karanis in Egypt includes a request for a 'Marseilles flask' to be purchased in Alexandria on the writer's behalf, in order to give thanks to the god Serapis.<sup>103</sup> It seems that the Marseilles flask was to be left as an offering at the Serapeum, perhaps during a pilgrimage there. As an object it also prefigures later Christian pilgrim flasks, which became standardised souvenirs (something discussed more below).

Such cultic centres were also sites of ritual, such as incubation, where the faithful would sleep within the temple in order to receive a miracle, something we are familiar with from Christian pilgrimage.<sup>104</sup> Incubation by pilgrims was witnessed at the large Asklepieion, or the Temple of Asclepius complex, at Pergamon where the building for incubation was repeatedly enlarged to provide room for the increasing numbers of visiting pilgrims.<sup>105</sup> Alongside pagan travellers, Jewish pilgrims were also well-known throughout the antique period as they visited holy sites. Of particular importance was Jerusalem, which became a focus for this activity, as the Torah dictated that the city must be visited at least three times a year.<sup>106</sup> Objects, such as jars with Jewish symbols, were sold to pilgrims and manufactured in the same workshops as those that made similar Christian souvenirs (fig. 31).<sup>107</sup>

### ***Christian Souvenirs: Relics***

Christian pilgrim souvenirs from Late Antiquity take a variety of forms, and have multiple layers of meaning. Not only do they function as mementoes of the travels of their owners, provoking memories associated with that experience through their material form, but they are often in the form of samples of the religious sites from which they originate. This also provides the objects with a religious level of significance, as they are effectively portable pieces of holy locations.

---

distribution of other souvenirs from this site, it seems likely that such shrines could also have been purchased as souvenirs.

<sup>100</sup> Elsner (2007) 237.

<sup>101</sup> Elsner (2007) 240.

<sup>102</sup> Favro (2006) 21.

<sup>103</sup> P.Mich. 8.501/5638. The Marseilles flask is a reference to a container of wine from Marseilles (described in the letter as a λαγύνους Μασσαλιτανας), representing an earlier example of regional produce like those discussed above.

<sup>104</sup> Haas (1997) 327.

<sup>105</sup> Hoffmann (1998) 54.

<sup>106</sup> Exodus, 23:17 (*Revised English Bible* edn.); Joseph. *AJ* 4.203.

<sup>107</sup> Compare with the Christian mould-blown jug in fig. 35, to see similarities in style.

Relics were the ultimate souvenir from religious sites for the late antique pilgrim. As objects, their importance comes from their role in making the holy manifest, and they attest to the historical truth of the scriptures. The best-known kind is the bodily relic—a part of the body of a holy person—however these were prestigious and relatively rare. Objects associated with a sacred narrative or person were also considered relics, such as the baskets which had been used to hold the loaves and fishes at the feeding of the 5000, which were buried beneath Constantine's Column in the Forum of Constantine.<sup>108</sup> One other specific example is wood from the True Cross, on which Christ had been crucified. The mother of emperor Constantine, Helena, travelled extensively with the specific aim of locating and collecting the objects associated with the life of Jesus; the most notable of these was the True Cross. Fragments of wood from this relic were then distributed far and wide, becoming highly sought after objects.

The way that these relics function is in part based upon their fragmentary state. They are metonymic and represent the original complete whole. For example, a splinter of the True Cross—a popular relic in Late Antiquity—represents through its materiality the complete cross on which Jesus was crucified. This is described by St Jerome in his letter to Eustochium, where he describes the behaviour of Paula as she venerates the wood in Jerusalem: 'Before the Cross she threw herself down in adoration as though she beheld the Lord hanging upon it'.<sup>109</sup> That people desired such objects as souvenirs of their trip is witnessed by the description Egeria gives of another pilgrim who, when venerating the True Cross in Jerusalem, bit a piece off in order to keep some for themselves.<sup>110</sup> This is an extreme example, but does serve to testify as to the desirability of the fragmentary relics. Such tiny pieces were often stored in jewellery settings to ensure that they were constantly in close contact with the body of their faithful owner. Gregory of Nyssa, in his testimony of the Life of St Macrina, describes how after the saint's death, they found that she was wearing an iron ring which featured a compartment containing a particle of wood from the True Cross. This was hung around her neck so as to be constantly in contact with her heart.<sup>111</sup>

However, the urge to own a piece of the cross, and other similar relics, was more than simply desiring a souvenir commemorating the visit; relics originating from the Holy Land were treasured possessions because they had the power to stimulate the same reactions which the holy places themselves aroused.<sup>112</sup> This metonymic function allowed a fragment to behave as the original complete site or object, and also provided pilgrims with the opportunity of possessing the sacred. Therefore, to own a pilgrim souvenir was to own an object that was more than a material memento of a trip, although these objects could, and no doubt did, function in this way. They were samples of the places visited by the pilgrim, but also of past events, beyond the pilgrim's individual experience. They were material mementoes of the lives of the holy figures with which they were associated, and authenticated the scriptural stories through their physical presence. As seen in Jerome's description of Paula above, the pilgrim did not need to have experienced the biblical stories first hand for the relic objects to provoke memories of it.

The kinds of relic so far discussed were prestigious objects, and not available as souvenirs to the majority of pilgrims; instead, another form pushed the concept of souvenir 'samples' further. Some pilgrim souvenirs were made from intrinsically worthless, neutral substances, such as oil, water, or soil; these were cheap and ubiquitous materials, and very little skill was needed in their production. The basis for these kinds of pilgrim souvenirs is the late antique concept that divine power is

---

<sup>108</sup> James (2001) 128. *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikon*, 9 (transl. Cameron and Herrin (1984) 69)

<sup>109</sup> Jer. *Ep.* 108.9 (transl. Schaff and Wace (1893) 198-99).

<sup>110</sup> *Itinerarium Egeriae* 37.2.

<sup>111</sup> Greg. Nyss. *V. Macr.* 64-65.

<sup>112</sup> Hunt (1982) 129.

transferable through physical contact.<sup>113</sup> John of Damascus emphasises the role of physical contact in his description of the sacredness of the True Cross:

So, then, this same truly precious and august tree, on which Christ hath offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sakes, is to be worshipped as sanctified by contact with His holy body and blood.<sup>114</sup>

In other words, a neutral substance, such as earth, oil, water, or wood, can become blessed through contact with a holy place, person or object. As a souvenir, the object's materiality stores this sanctity and makes it portable, meaning that pilgrims can take a blessing from the place or person home with them. Examples of these kinds of souvenirs are described within several pilgrim texts.

The anonymous Piacenza Pilgrim in the 6th c., describes the creation of one such souvenir for pilgrims who visit Jerusalem to venerate the True Cross on which Jesus was crucified. He gives a description of oil being offered for blessing, which on contact with the wood of the cross, bubbles up and is sealed in vessels to be taken away by the pilgrims.<sup>115</sup> In addition to oil, earth or soil was used as a material means to convey the holiness of *loca sancta* via souvenirs for pilgrims. Again, the anonymous Piacenza Pilgrim describes how at Jerusalem, earth was brought into the tomb of Christ for pilgrims to take away as a blessing, the neutral earth being sanctified through its contact with the holy place.<sup>116</sup> The tomb itself was not a building for pilgrims; rather it was seen as a relic to be venerated.<sup>117</sup> In this way, not only are pilgrims taking away a material memento of their visit and a tangible holy blessing, they are also taking with them actual pieces of the Holy Land.

This is vividly illustrated by the reliquary box containing stones and soil from the Holy Land (fig. 32) from the Sancta Sanctorum in the Vatican Museums. Inside the box's lid are illustrations of five different scenes from Christian narratives based in the Holy Land; the images are arranged in order of spiritual hierarchy, with the most important at the top.<sup>118</sup> This object represents the journey of a pilgrim in material form, collecting together earth from a series of important sites associated with the biblical narrative, indicated by the accompanying illustrative decorations that adorn the interior of the reliquary box's lid. However the link between image and objects are only generic. The soils, some of which are labelled, do not all correspond to the locations in which the depicted narratives are set; instead the emphasis is on the causal link between the 'holy' events and the 'Holy' Land.<sup>119</sup> The contents of the box function as material souvenirs of a pilgrimage, whilst the images legitimise the status of the holy souvenirs. Such souvenirs also represent a possession of the Holy Land itself, in the form of a material sample of the locations.

Blessings formed of earth also took the shape of coin-like tokens. These objects were baked terracotta, made from the actual soil gathered from holy sites. The British Museum has a number of these from the popular pilgrimage centre of St Symeon the Elder at Qal'at Sem'an. Based in Syria the site was formed around the holy man's column, on which he had stood in the 5th c. in an act of ascetic faith, attracting visitors from far and wide in the process. These tokens, of which fig. 33 is one such example, were small, portable, and, significantly, made from the soil on which the column was set. As a Christian ascetic, Symeon the Elder sanctified the ground on which his column stood; again this physical contact ensures that the blessing obtained from the *loca*

---

<sup>113</sup> Vikan (1982) 5.

<sup>114</sup> Jo. D. *f.o.* 4.11 (transl. Watson and Pullan (1893) 80).

<sup>115</sup> *Placentini Itinerarium* 172.20.

<sup>116</sup> *Placentini Itinerarium* 171.18.

<sup>117</sup> Vikan (1982) 20.

<sup>118</sup> Vikan (1982) 18-19.

<sup>119</sup> Vikan (1982) 18-19.

*sancta* could be easily transported away by pilgrims to the site. Through these objects the pilgrim is not simply taking away memories of their visit, recorded in the materiality of the souvenir; these were *eulogia* or 'blessings', which formed portable pieces of sanctity that held and conveyed spiritual power to its owner.<sup>120</sup>

What is notable about these kinds of pilgrim souvenirs is that they are, in a very literal sense, the samples of which Susan Stewart speaks. *Eulogiae* made of earth or oil from the *loca sancta* allow visitors to physically take a part of that location home with them. It is more than prompting a memory, it is extending the experience of visiting. This is something emphasised by Elsner, who describes pilgrims as collectors of places through their acquisition of souvenirs. Sanctity is partly established through the possession of metonymic fragments from holy locations.<sup>121</sup> It was proof not only of the visit, but allowed the experience to be extended indefinitely; as long as they possessed their 'sample' souvenir, they were in contact with the Holy Land.

Pilgrim tokens were made using moulds and decorated with a variety of imagery, however they often referred directly to the location that the token came from. Figure 33 shows the Stylite saint's face, its shape echoing the pillar itself, reflecting the sight/site pilgrims would have seen, thus legitimising the sanctity of the token.<sup>122</sup> The manufacturing process gives a recognisable form to the abstract material of earth, allowing the 'sample' to be placed into a coherent frame of reference and meaning. The decoration on the Sancta Sanctorum box functions in the same way. As such, they are also souvenirs of external sights, as they refer to their place of origin explicitly through their decoration (for example through the depiction of the column on the token from the Shrine of Saint Symeon) or inscription (the labels on the samples in the Sancta Sanctorum box), and were thus purposefully transformed into souvenirs.<sup>123</sup>

Similarly, the placing of earth inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, as described by the Piacenza Pilgrim, in order for it to become *eulogiae*, can also be interpreted as a manufacturing technique, echoing the large-scale production of secular and sacred souvenirs already discussed.<sup>124</sup> The movement of earth is a purposeful act that transforms the substance, turning it into something that can be taken by visitors to the site. In this way, these objects are effectively purpose-made mementoes, made available in large numbers to a wide range of people who wished to take home an object that is biographically associated with their visit to a specific place.

As well as providing metonymic possession through the acquisition of sacred 'samples', pilgrim souvenirs can also be conceptualised as gifts as a part of a miraculous economy.<sup>125</sup> The distribution of *eulogiae* is part of an economy in which the gifts of God are redistributed as charity, an act for which the donor will receive further gifts from God.<sup>126</sup> As such, souvenirs are posited as a pure gift: one that requires no reciprocity.<sup>127</sup> Therefore, the objects taken as souvenirs during a pilgrimage not only function as souvenirs, but also as gifts. This is particularly interesting. As a result, it seems that souvenir *eulogiae* not only represent the site from which they came, but also the donor.<sup>128</sup> Therefore, the tokens from the shrine of St Symeon at Qal'at Sem'an can also be understood as gifts from the holy man, and an embodiment of his person as a result.

---

<sup>120</sup> Vikan (1982) 13.

<sup>121</sup> Elsner (1997) 117.

<sup>122</sup> See also the 6th – 7th c. AD Saint Symeon token in the British Museum, which depicts the saint standing on the column: accession number 1991,0601.1.

<sup>123</sup> Stewart (1993) 138.

<sup>124</sup> *Placentini Itinerarium* 171.18.

<sup>125</sup> This is discussed by Daniel Caner, building on the work of Vincent Déroche. See Caner (2006) and Déroche (1995).

<sup>126</sup> Caner (2006) 333.

<sup>127</sup> Caner (2006) 334.

<sup>128</sup> Mauss (1966) 10; Gregory (1982) 45.

### ***Christian Souvenirs: Containers***

Naturally, souvenirs like oil and water had to be contained in something in order to be safely carried home by pilgrims. The form these containers took depended on what they were to hold and where they originated from, and can be considered another type of sacred souvenir. Their presence within the archaeological record represents the associated manufacturing businesses that grew up alongside the increasingly popular late antique pilgrim trade. These vessels, whilst fulfilling a practical function in holding a blessed substance, also provided an additional surface on which decoration or inscriptions pertaining to their contents or geographical origins, were placed. Bare relics, especially if indistinct fragments or formless (like oil), do not carry any intrinsic signs of their meaning or importance; external imagery is therefore required to signal the relic's identity and authenticity.<sup>129</sup> As such, these souvenir containers became desirable objects in themselves, and provided another kind of material that pilgrims took from holy places. Such decoration makes them easy to identify within the archaeological record, however not all containers had decoration; many liquid blessings were stored in undecorated glass bottles, such as those which are kept in the treasury of the cathedral of San Giovane at Monza and the crypt of the Abbey of Bobbio, Italy alongside the famous decorated metal *ampullae* flasks discussed in more detail below.<sup>130</sup>

*Ampullae* were a kind of flask used to contain liquid *eulogiae*: usually oil or water. These were relatively small in size with two holes bored into the top to allow the vessel to be suspended within a domestic interior, or alternatively worn around the neck.<sup>131</sup> Some of the most famous *ampullae* are the mould-made clay examples from the 5th c. pilgrimage centre at Abu Mina, near Alexandria in Egypt, where the shrine of St Menas was located.<sup>132</sup> The site was located approximately one day's journey into the desert from the city of Alexandria, and was formed of a healing shrine, which, during the 5th and 6th c., developed into a city, with basilica, baptistery, episcopal offices, baths, and pilgrim hostels.<sup>133</sup> The flasks (fig. 34) contained oil sanctified in Abu Mina's Justinianic Tomb Church; oil was placed in an alabaster vessel located near the church's altar and became consecrated due to the liquid's proximity with the earth of the holy site.<sup>134</sup> People would then fill vessels with the sacred oil to take home with them. It is likely that holy water was also available from the pilgrimage site at Abu Mina, as the architectural remains there include grand cisterns, suggesting it was also a water shrine.<sup>135</sup>

The Menas flasks were locally produced souvenirs explicitly made for sale to pilgrims; it fulfilled the visitors' need for a container to hold their *eulogiae*, as well as providing a material memento commemorating their visit. Excavations at Kom el-Dikka, a late antique neighbourhood of Alexandria, have revealed nearly 150 late 6th c. pilgrim flasks featuring the iconography of St Menas. The number of these pilgrim souvenirs suggest that there was a workshop in the vicinity producing them, in addition to those produced outside of Alexandria at Abu Mina itself.<sup>136</sup> The pilgrim flasks are mould-formed and feature the saint in the *orans* position of prayer, with arms raised, looking directly at the viewer.

Homogenisation in the appearance of these flasks, as with the other mass produced souvenirs discussed within this chapter, is a significant feature. Even if souvenirs were not specifically manufactured at the site itself, such as those made in Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria rather than the shrine at Abu Mina itself, the standardised design allows them to be considered authentic products associated with that site. The clay from which

---

<sup>129</sup> Geary (1990) 5.

<sup>130</sup> Vikan (1982) 31.

<sup>131</sup> Anderson (2004) 79

<sup>132</sup> Anderson (2004) 81.

<sup>133</sup> Haas (1997) 38.

<sup>134</sup> Grossman (1998) 285.

<sup>135</sup> Vikan (1982) 16.

<sup>136</sup> Haas (1997) 193-94.

these flasks are made further reinforces this sense of authenticity; the evidence discussed in this chapter has shown that this cheap material was often used for lower status objects, especially in terms of pilgrim souvenirs. The material's common usage for religious souvenirs thus reflects the creation of a manufacturing tradition for pilgrim objects; clay was used precisely *because* it was a material associated with such souvenirs. Furthermore, the intrinsic qualities of clay associated it with the land and place of origin, something seen in the making of pilgrim tokens. Therefore, this material is an important part of the identity of pilgrim objects, and a sign of the authenticity of their role as souvenirs. Menas flasks were also found within domestic contexts at Kom el-Dikka; in House D flasks were found in the courtyard and the office.<sup>137</sup> This provides us with an insight into the place and function of pilgrim souvenirs after they have left their geographical place of origin. It also demonstrates that pilgrimages did not necessarily have to occur over long distances, but that visits to more local shrines were also popular.

Flasks of various kinds are known from other late antique pilgrimage sites. Late antique pilgrim *ampullae* found in Asia Minor feature a range of motifs on their surface as decoration, including human figures, animals, crosses, circles, architectural features, and other patterns.<sup>138</sup> They were also made from materials other than clay.

The flasks from Monza and Bobbio, briefly mentioned above, are made from silver metal in the same general shape as the Menas *ampullae*, and represent important examples of pilgrim souvenirs from the late antique period.<sup>139</sup> Dating to the 6th c., this group of vessels are Palestinian in origin; they were intended to contain *eulogiae* oil from a number of *loca sancta*, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, recorded by inscriptions referring to the wood of the True Cross and decoration depicting the tomb itself.<sup>140</sup> The *ampullae* were made by pouring molten metal into stone moulds, a cheap technique resulting in thin walled objects that could be produced in high numbers.<sup>141</sup> The Menas and Monza *ampullae* contrast with the secular souvenir vessels of the Puteoli-Baiae group which feature constricted necks; Grabar suggests the necks of the Monza flasks were once sealed with wax.<sup>142</sup> However, this absence of a design feature might represent their crudeness in terms of form and manufacture, rather than a different contextual function.

Mould-made souvenir objects recur throughout this chapter. The Artemis Ephesia statuette, the Menas *ampullae*, and St Symeon tokens are all clay objects shaped using a mould, whilst the statuette of the Antioch Tyche is an example of mould-blown glass. These techniques allowed the creation of high numbers of near identical objects relatively easily once the initial mould had been produced. That these souvenir objects are largely mould-made therefore alludes to their production on a large scale.<sup>143</sup> Such mass manufacturing in turn corresponds to a high demand for such objects, reflecting high volumes of visitors to the *loca sancta* of Late Antiquity. This is in turn proven by the evidence provided by the extant range of pilgrim travelogues and itineraries.

Similarly, it seems that pagan or secular sites, such as the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, also experienced high volumes of traffic, reflected in the high instances of mould-made glass and terracotta statuettes that originated there. By extension, these objects point to the desire of pilgrims and travellers to purchase souvenirs at such

---

<sup>137</sup> Kiss (1989) 16.

<sup>138</sup> Anderson (2004) 80.

<sup>139</sup> The key publications for these artefacts remain Grabar (1958) and Ainalov (1961).

<sup>140</sup> Grabar (1958) 13.

<sup>141</sup> Grabar (1958) 12.

<sup>142</sup> Grabar (1958) 11.

<sup>143</sup> This is likely the reason for the upside down decoration on the 6th to 7th c. glass pilgrim vessel now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (99.21.2). The error likely stemmed from the nature of large-scale manufacture in the workshop production. See also Vikan (1982) 34 for a similar error on a St Symeon pilgrim token.



sacred sites over an extended period in antiquity. Certainly, the acquisition of souvenirs—especially ones of a standardised form or decoration—is a behaviour integral to late antique pilgrimage and travel more broadly, and thus an expected behaviour of visitors. Thus, not only were souvenirs standardised, but so was the experience of travel itself.

This is especially true of pilgrims, whose collection of souvenirs in the form of *eulogiae* became an important component of the pilgrim experience. In addition to the material evidence, the Piacenza Pilgrim records the receiving of blessings throughout his journey, such as the naturally occurring ‘rock oil’ he takes whilst travelling through Egypt.<sup>144</sup> Such examples emphasise the close association between the act of visiting a place and the specific souvenirs that can be acquired there, meaning that, in fact all souvenir objects can be considered as samples. They are authentic representations of the material culture of a specific place, even if only on a very local scale.

Souvenir containers are also known in glass, with bottles and jars being used to store pilgrim *eulogiae*. Figure 35 is a glass mould-blown hexagonal jug dating from the 7th c., now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The decoration on the vessel is particularly interesting; it features a cross, which has distinctive steps up to it. This represents the cross erected by Emperor Theodosius II in AD 401 or 402 at Golgotha in Jerusalem, to memorialise the site of Jesus’ crucifixion.<sup>145</sup> This inclusion of an element of local geography on the souvenir jug echoes the secular souvenirs discussed above, such as the Pharos bottle from Alexandria, which reference their origin through imagery. A similar vessel is figure 36, dating from the mid 5th to 7th c.;<sup>146</sup> this also has Christian symbols as decoration, including a pillar featuring a figure at its top (see fig. 37 for a drawing of the decoration). This iconography is strongly reminiscent of that decorating the pilgrim tokens from the shrine of St Symeon the Stylite. Perhaps this vessel too came from Qal’at Sem’an, and was used to hold blessed oil or water.

These glass vessels provide an opportunity to consider the relative value of souvenir objects. The mould-based manufacturing process would have been reasonably inexpensive, as repeated mouldings could be done easily without a high level of skill. Mould-blown glass objects would thus likely have been reasonably cheap to purchase, as the decoration was created by the mould during the manufacturing process, and therefore would not need to be applied afterwards. In contrast, other glass souvenir objects that feature engraved or otherwise applied decoration, seem to represent souvenirs aimed at a higher class of customer; the Puteoli-Baiae flasks are not mould-made but do feature standardised wheel-cut decoration. All the Puteoli-Baiae vessel fragments found to date represent similar style designs featuring topographical city scenes. As such, they represent ready-made souvenirs produced in large quantities by their originating workshops. However, a certain level of skill would be required in planning and executing the decoration on the vessel’s surface. Similarly, the gold glass vessel from Acerentia represents a higher level of quality than mould-blown glass objects, yet the method of manufacture and the numbers of vessel bases surviving to us today suggest a reasonably large scale workshop production.

A review of these objects demonstrates that there was more variety in the quality of the souvenirs available to pilgrims than those offered to secular leisure travellers, which, if we also think of the Otañes silver dish and the glass Pharos bottle, were high quality products. This suggests that pilgrims were from more diverse backgrounds than those travelling purely for leisure, who, based on the material remains, were individuals of reasonably high status and economic means.

## Souvenirs at Home

---

<sup>144</sup> *Placentini Itinerarium* 188.42 (transl. Wilkinson (1977) 88).

<sup>145</sup> Ratliff and Evans (2012) 92.

<sup>146</sup> Harden (1987) 176.

The implicit assumption so far has been that these pilgrim souvenir objects were acquired at a holy site and then carried home, where they were kept within the domestic sphere. However, this is not the only potential trajectory for such objects; the metal flasks from Monza and Bobbio were installed within two religious establishments by the Lombard Queen Theodolinde, not long after they were produced.<sup>147</sup> At the Cathedral at Monza, they were preserved specifically within the altar of the church, as indicated by a document that records their transference from a box of wood into a box of marble.<sup>148</sup> Even if not visible, their location reinforces their importance and contribution to the building's spiritual prestige, providing the cathedral's congregation with access to the Holy Land. Such quasi-communal ownership made available the experience and meaning of pilgrimage to those who did not undertake the journey first hand. Such ready-made souvenir objects do not represent interior and personal memories but rather outward and collective ones, available to those who have never visited the site in question.<sup>149</sup> In terms of the pilgrim flasks of Monza, this allowed the personal experience of pilgrimage to become a communal one.

The relationship between communal and personal experiences can also be identified within secular evidence. Many of the images used on mass-produced souvenir or commemorative objects use generic imagery, for example the images of couples used on marriage jewellery. In such cases, the objects rely upon a communal understanding of the objects' meaning, which could then be reappropriated and invested with personal meaning by the owner. As such, they function less as personal mementoes of an individual's journey, but rather they are the souvenirs of a community, giving prestige to the cathedral and allowing the communal memories of the Holy Land's *loca sancta* to be shared in material form.

*Eulogiae*, as well as being conceived of as souvenirs, were also instruments of practical spiritual power and applied to a variety of situations. As discussed above, the material nature of these kinds of objects allowed divine power to be transportable. They therefore had an amuletic function, and became a valuable tool in the spiritual first aid kits of the faithful. In this way, there is no guarantee that *eulogiae* acquired on a pilgrimage would have a permanent place within domestic material culture. The pilgrim tokens made of earth from *loca sancta* had a variety of applications attested within textual sources. The *Syriac Life of Symeon* describes how two paralysed youths are brought to Symeon the Elder on his column and ask for healing; Symeon prayed and then instructed dust from his surroundings to be rubbed on their bodies, effecting a healing.<sup>150</sup> A similar story is described in the *Vita* of St Symeon the Younger. In it, a monk named Dorotheos uses his pilgrim token to quell a storm he encountered at sea on his return journey from the saint; by crumbling the token on the sea and the boat, the vessel was protected from the raging waters.<sup>151</sup> The blessed oil and water collected by pilgrims was used in similar ways. The 6th c. Cyril of Scythopolis described in his *Life of St Euthymius* how oil of the True Cross was used to exorcise evil spirits.<sup>152</sup> Therefore *eulogiae* were used outside of the home as a practical prophylactic.

However, this evidence also reflects the role that these souvenirs had within the home too. Their amuletic function resulted in their display, ensuring protection of the owner's domestic space. In the 22nd book of *City of God*, Augustine describes the use of soil blessed through contact with the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (a process described by the Piacenza Pilgrim: see above). The story relates how a Hesperius hung the earth

---

<sup>147</sup> Grabar (1958) 15. See also the description in Paulus, *HL* 4.21.

<sup>148</sup> Frisi (1794) 24.

<sup>149</sup> Benson (2004) 16.

<sup>150</sup> *Syriac Life of Symeon* 34.

<sup>151</sup> *V. Sym. Jun.* 235.

<sup>152</sup> Cyr. Scyth. *V. Euthymii* 26.

up in his bedroom 'to preserve himself from harm'; this successfully purged his home of demons, after which Hesperius buries the soil as his piety made him unwilling to keep it in his bedroom.<sup>153</sup> This gives us an idea of how these kinds of souvenirs were used within the home, and where was considered appropriate for display.

However, it seems that the disinclination of Hesperius to keep *eulogia* within his bedroom is an idiosyncratic example. In the 5th c., Theodoret describes how he keeps a flask of blessed oil over his bed as protection from demonic attack.<sup>154</sup> These post-acquisition trajectories for pilgrim souvenirs are mirrored in the confirmed placement of other pagan or secular examples within the domestic realm. The findspots of the statuettes of Artemis Ephesia across Asia Minor suggest that the objects were taken home by visitors to the temple.<sup>155</sup> Similarly, the movement of the Pharos bottle from a workshop in Alexandria to modern-day Serbia, and the range of locations for the Puteoli – Baiae flasks, might represent a similar final domestic destination.<sup>156</sup>

Other kinds of pilgrim souvenirs that featured imagery of the holy place or person from which they originated, were also displayed. One example refers to a display of images of Symeon the Elder within the entrances of shops in Rome.<sup>157</sup> Such behaviour seems to be echoed in the shops at Scythopolis; four early 6th c. *eulogia* tokens and two *ampullae* were found when these shops were excavated.<sup>158</sup> Such souvenirs were possibly displayed within shops for the same amuletic reasons seen in the evidence for domestic display in the textual sources. Another interpretation for the presence of these souvenirs in the archaeological record, is that these shops in Scythopolis catered to pilgrims who visited the Round Church on the city's acropolis, and who might have stopped in whilst passing to purchase such merchandise.<sup>159</sup> Therefore, the archaeological finds of these souvenirs in the retail context at Scythopolis might actually represent a point of sale rather than a permanent display of the objects.

Pagan souvenirs were also kept in the household shrine and used within rituals of domestic worship. Certainly, the miniature statuettes, such as those of Artemis Ephesia, are not dissimilar to the size and subject matter of the heirloom statuettes discussed in relation to domestic shrines in chapter 1, such as the Dea Nutrix. The ownership of Christian souvenirs and their curation within the home also represents a movement from pagan household shrines to Christian ones. In the late 4th c., private Christian shrines containing relics became popular in the homes of aristocratic families in Rome.<sup>160</sup> But since many souvenirs from Christian *loca sancta* were secondary relics, they were thus also suitable for inclusion in such areas of domestic Christian worship. They functioned as objects of veneration for poorer status families, for whom the more prestigious relics, displayed in the shrines of aristocratic homes, were beyond their means.

The earlier pagan household shrines also evolved into spaces of Christian worship through the domestic display of painted Christian images, eventually developing into the

---

<sup>153</sup> August. *De civ. D.* 22.8 (transl. Dods (1956) 487).

<sup>154</sup> Theod. *Hist. Rel.* 21.16.

<sup>155</sup> Elsner (2007) 240, after Fleischer (1973) 27-34.

<sup>156</sup> The sites where these flask fragments were found include Rome, Ostia, Spain, Portugal, Tunisia, Cologne, and York: Painter (1975) 54-60. This is, of course, only one interpretation of the find spots; they might also represent subsequent movement later in their biography, or be the result of the exporting of vessels via trade.

<sup>157</sup> 'It is superfluous to speak of Italy, for they say that he became so well-known in the great city of Rome that small portraits of him were set up on a column at the entrances of every shop to bring through that some protection and security to them': Theod. *Life of Symeon* 11 (transl. Doran (1992) 75).

<sup>158</sup> Khamis (2007) 451.

<sup>159</sup> Khamis (2007) 453

<sup>160</sup> Bowes (2008) 87-92. One of the examples she gives is of a shrine located on the landing of a stairway of a residence, on the site of the *titulus Pammachii*, now beneath Ss. Giovanni e Paolo on the Caelian Hill, Rome. See Steinby (1993-2000) vol.2, 105-106.

'icon corner' seen in Byzantine and even modern orthodox homes.<sup>161</sup> Pilgrim souvenirs would be displayed in such a context for domestic veneration; certainly much of the imagery used on such objects (such as the frontal pose of St Menas on the ampulla in fig. 34) are similar to the styles of more typical icons venerated in the later Byzantine period. The depiction of Menas in particular is significant as his prayer, or *orans*, pose reflects the ritual veneration of the souvenir's owner within the home. Considered in this light, souvenir objects from pilgrimages had an important place within the rituals of domestic Christian worship. Their presence within the home represents a continuation of traditions from the pagan into the Christian period, and shows their important role in the evolution of worship in domestic contexts.

The inclusion of decoration on souvenir objects underlines how on one level these items functioned as objects of display; they are material signs of travels that have been undertaken or events that have been attended by their owner.<sup>162</sup> In order to convey this meaning to viewers, souvenir objects are reliant upon being recognisable as originating from certain places or events through imagery, inscriptions, or form, as discussed above. Souvenirs made from samples of foreign material culture, however, can be more difficult for others to identify. Often, if not placed into a structure of meaning through the use of specific iconography (as seen with pilgrim tokens) the meaning of such souvenirs remains highly personal and invisible to others.

However, certain souvenir objects are recognisable through their contrast with examples of local material culture; that is they are notable for their visible 'exoticism'. Such items include produce linked with a specific region or location, such as the textiles of Skinepeous or the mysterious *albandicum*.<sup>163</sup> Recognisably exotic souvenirs are proof of the survival of the owner outside of his or her context of familiarity.<sup>164</sup> Therefore, to own an exotic souvenir is not only to prove that a foreign place has been visited, but also that the place visited was so drastically different to the home context that the souvenir object represents survival in an alien environment. With such an association comes prestige. The viewer's unfamiliarity with such exotic objects leads to a subsequent difficulty in interpretation of the objects, turning the owner of the souvenir into as much of a curiosity as the object itself.<sup>165</sup> As such, the display of souvenir objects within the home places them and the owner into a narrative of travel, and relates directly to their experiences; the objects function to incorporate the travel experience into the owner's identity in material form.<sup>166</sup>

The role of souvenirs as objects of display within the late antique home is intrinsically linked to the construction of identity within domestic space and the creation of a biographical narrative. Souvenirs associated with events, such as the glass vessels featuring scenes of chariot racing or the contorniates commemorating events in the hippodrome, confirm to viewers not only the owner's attendance at these events but also reflect information about the interests and allegiances of their owner. As such they too reflect the identity of the owner and how they wish to be seen. A notable example of this is the gold glass vessel base featuring a triumphant charioteer and the colour blue, thus associating the object and owner with the circus factions (fig. 25), which were an important part of the social identities of supporters.<sup>167</sup> The same is also true for other objects, such as the silver plate from Otañes featuring spa activities, and the flasks from Puteoli and Baiae, which were popular and fashionable resorts. Such souvenirs reflect information about their owner and the facets of their identity that they wished to communicate to others.

---

<sup>161</sup> Herrin (2013) 281-301.

<sup>162</sup> See the discussion of domestic space in the introduction of this book.

<sup>163</sup> P.Princ.2.82; P.Col.7.188.

<sup>164</sup> Stewart (1993) 148.

<sup>165</sup> Stewart (1993) 148.

<sup>166</sup> Wallendorf and Arnould (1988) 531. See also the discussion in the introduction of this book.

<sup>167</sup> Al. Cameron (1976) especially chapter 4.

This can also be applied to religious souvenirs. The display of pilgrim souvenirs within the home, as recorded by Augustine and Theodoret, ensures the prominent display of the belief system of the owner to all.<sup>168</sup> The use of standardised forms and explicit imagery is important for this; visitors viewing these objects would not require specific knowledge to identify them as souvenirs. These objects specifically denoted travel and pilgrimage, reflecting the dedication of the owner in travelling to these sites in person. In this way, they represent their owners' symbolic membership of a group of people who had conducted pilgrimage; these objects thus become badges of honour, distinguishing the owner from others, in much the same way as exotic souvenirs function. For other faiths, in particular Judaism, the display of such pilgrim souvenirs is even more significant as it demonstrated a correct adherence to fulfilling religious doctrine; in the Torah pilgrimages to Jerusalem were mandatory.<sup>169</sup> Therefore, their faith, piety and obedience would be communicated through the display of souvenirs, such as the glass flask in figure 31.

As well as evoking moments from the biography of the owner, souvenirs could also be personal objects that referred to more communal realms of experience. The motivations of the majority of pilgrims to undertake visits to the Holy Land and other sacred locations, came from a desire to understand the narrative provided in the Bible, and to view first-hand the places described within it.<sup>170</sup> Visiting the sites provided an authentic physical context for the reading of the text.<sup>171</sup> Their desire to travel corresponded not only to their own beliefs and experiences, but also to a worldview that they shared with other Christian devotees. Therefore, the accumulation of material souvenirs from these pilgrimages, especially to places associated with biblical narrative, lent a further level of authenticity in material form. Not only did souvenirs function as reminders of the trips their owners had taken, they also were the material embodiment of the biblical narrative and a sign of the veracity of the Christian scriptures. The meaning that such objects had was deeply personal, but also one that could be understood and shared by others. In this sense, pilgrim souvenirs are both personal and collective mementoes, and reflect a conflation of personal and public narratives.

---

<sup>168</sup> August. *De civ. D.* 22.8. Theod. *Hist. Rel.* 21.16.

<sup>169</sup> Exodus, 23:17 (*Revised English Bible* edn.); Joseph. *AJ* 4.203.

<sup>170</sup> Hunt (1982) 88.

<sup>171</sup> Hunt (1982) 88.

## Case Study: Baskets in Late Antiquity

### Introduction

This final chapter takes the form of a case study, focused upon one artefact type: the basket. Baskets are containers that have been woven out of fibres or strips of material without the use of a loom or any kind of frame; this is what distinguishes basketry from other woven materials such as textiles.<sup>1</sup> Basketry as a material was used to create a range of objects beyond 'baskets'. Basketry wrapping was used to cover and protect glass, and woven domestic furnishings such as mats have also been found in the archaeological record.<sup>2</sup> As a material it is present in archaeological, textual, and visual sources from Late Antiquity, and represents an extremely common example of material culture from this period. The focus of this chapter will remain on baskets as stand-alone vessels or containers to create a distinct object type. By applying the theoretical considerations explored in the previous chapters to one specific artefact type, this case-study seeks to reveal the role baskets had as meaningful objects within late antique society. Furthermore, this process will enable common themes and trends that have featured throughout this book to be drawn out and discussed further.

This chapter begins by outlining the presence of baskets within late antique sources of evidence, and the manner in which they have so far been discussed within scholarship. It then continues onto discussions of specific contexts in which baskets are shown to have meanings other than their function and practical utility. The case study then turns to address one specific type of evidence: the manufacture and use of baskets by the early Christian monasteries of late antique Egypt.

### Evidence and Scholarship

Baskets are most commonly made out of natural plant fibres, which decompose quickly when in the ground, meaning that they struggle to survive within the archaeological record. Specific conditions are required for their preservation; both dry, arid conditions, and wet, anaerobic environments allow the natural fibres of basketwork objects to survive and avoid the normal process of decay.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the finds of Roman and late antique basketry are normally restricted to specific regions of the late antique world. The dry desert landscapes of North Africa and the Near East provide the majority of extant baskets from the late antique period, such as those found at Qasr Ibrim in Upper Egypt, and at Berenike, a Roman trading port on the Red Sea coast.<sup>4</sup> Basketwork has also been found in the wetter northern regions of Europe; for example a late Roman willow twined basket was found in anaerobic waterlogged conditions at Marcham in Oxfordshire.<sup>5</sup> The result of these patterns of survival is that there are large absences of evidence for many regions. However, baskets were likely as ubiquitous throughout the

---

<sup>1</sup> Adovasio (2010) 1.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the small basketry bottle from 3rd c. Egypt: Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, 5351. See also the woven mat, from the Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes, of the 6th c.: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 14.1.221.

<sup>3</sup> Carbonisation through burning can also allow basketwork to survive in the archaeological record, as at Pompeii: Cullin-Mingaud (2010) 72, figs 86-87.

<sup>4</sup> Wendrich (1998) 253-64. See also the basket from Qasr Ibrim, Egypt, now in the British Museum: 1990,0127.82.

<sup>5</sup> Excavated during Oxford University's Vale and Ridgeway project. See Kamash *et al.* (2010) for the interim report.

empire as pottery and used in similar numbers, something often overlooked due to their poor survival in comparison to ceramics within the archaeological record.<sup>6</sup>

Where there are absences within the archaeological record, other sources of information provide a wealth of data and help to fill these voids. Baskets are easily recognisable objects within a wide variety of visual sources, such as the ivory pyxis in the British Museum which features a basket in the scene of St Menas' martyrdom.<sup>7</sup> Textual sources also reveal the role these objects had in daily life. Baskets are included in Ausonius' description of the marriage feast in his *epithalamium* poem: 'Servants bring water for their hands, load in baskets the gifts of hard-won Ceres'.<sup>8</sup> Documentary papyri are also valuable; in letters, inventories, and accounts, baskets of various kinds are regularly mentioned as stand-alone examples of material culture, or as containers for other objects of note.<sup>9</sup>

The evidence demonstrates that these objects should be considered an important part of the everyday material culture of late antique life. However, traditional scholarship published on domestic objects—for example catalogues of artefacts or archaeological reports—tend to show baskets as essentially utilitarian in nature, and references to them are generally sparse.<sup>10</sup> Focus remains on their intended uses, construction techniques and physical descriptions. More recently, studies led by French scholars have devoted entire volumes to basketry within the Roman period, especially evidence from the Roman West and North Africa.<sup>11</sup> Reference works also address the complexities of investigating the archaeological remains of basketry.<sup>12</sup> Yet, there is a general absence of scholarship that further analyses the role these objects held in everyday life. As such, these are objects represented as vessels in which only their contents carry significance; they are otherwise neutral, created only for utility, and were unchanging over time.

This chapter seeks to remedy this view by applying the same theoretical arguments and approaches used in the previous three chapters to this neglected field of evidence. Given their prominent position within everyday life, it is highly likely that baskets had a broad set of meanings within certain contexts, both domestic and beyond. At the same time, as has been demonstrated, any object has the potential for sentimental meaning and value, because of the nature of material culture and its ability to accumulate memories. This capacity is not specific to a certain class of object, and the biography of a basket can result in the creation of personal scales of meaning and value. Evidence from the late antique period demonstrates that in a number of specific contexts, baskets had meaningful roles and a value beyond solely their use function.

## Baskets and Late Antique Femininity

---

<sup>6</sup> Wendrich (1999) 1.

<sup>7</sup> Dated to 6th c. AD and thought to come from Alexandria, Egypt; accession no. 1879,1220.1. See also domestic furnishings, such as the decoration of the wall hanging with a basket design from Egypt: see fig. 42. Baskets are also present in church mosaic designs. For example, there is a vine scroll mosaic design, that features a vintager with a basket of grapes, a porter and a donkey carrying baskets, from the 6th c. Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo: Hachlili (2009) Pl. 6.11.

<sup>8</sup> Auson. *Cent. nupt.* 17.2 (transl. Evelyn White (1919) 383).

<sup>9</sup> See for example P.Ben.Mus.4. Also SB 14. 12080, which lists the objects sent from a husband to his wife including, 'two pounds of purple dye, six baskets, and two towels': transl. Youtie (1976) 103.

<sup>10</sup> For example, Winlock and Crum's 1926 report on the excavations at the Monastery of Epiphanius; the basketwork is described in terms of its size and construction, and that they "differ in no wise from modern ones.": Winlock and Crum (1926) 1.67. See also White (1975), who lists baskets associated with agriculture, and Gaitzsch (1986) for a brief overview of European archaeological finds of ancient basketry.

<sup>11</sup> Mingaud (1992); Blanc and Gury (1990); Barbier *et al.* (1999).

<sup>12</sup> Wendrich (1991); Wendrich (1999).

Evidence shows that there was a definite link between baskets and the late antique notion of femininity. One specific type of basket, the *kalathos*, was associated with women through its traditional use as a wool basket, in which women would keep the wool they worked when spinning. In chapter 2's discussion of handmade gifts, the cultural link between the 'virtuous' woman and the activities of spinning and weaving wool and other fibres was explored; the basket was an integral part of the material culture associated with this pursuit. Historically, baskets and weaving are linked in the work of Virgil, in which he described 'Minerva's basket' when contrasting the dutiful woman working wool with the warrior Camilla.<sup>13</sup> Wool baskets also traditionally had a role within the Roman marriage ceremony. Festus stated the ceremony featured a cry of *talassio* in reference to the original Roman wedding when Romulus and his men abducted the Sabine women. However, *talassio* in this context also referred to a wool working basket like the *kalathos* mentioned above.<sup>14</sup>

In the late antique period, John Chrysostom underlined the association between women and wool-working equipment, by stating its presence to be the sure sign of a woman's occupation of a house.<sup>15</sup> Visual sources also emphasise this link between women and wool baskets, as seen in the 2nd c. AD grave stela in figure 38, which features a basket and other wool working equipment alongside their female owner. The consequence is that, in the context of spinning and wool working, the basket is designated as a culturally female object. This is nowhere clearer than in images of the story of the Annunciation, the moment at which the Virgin Mary is told whilst spinning that she is to give birth to the Son of God; such images are common in the late antique period. Figure 39 is an early Christian resist dyed cloth decorated with this scene, recovered from a Christian burial. The Virgin, identifiable through the inscription MAPIA, is seen seated next to a large basket, into which the spun wool is deposited. Mary is presented as the ideal of womanhood, a concept reinforced by the activity of spinning, which is itself communicated through the inclusion of the basket in the scene.

Other depictions of this story also feature the wool-working basket. Figure 40 is a piece of embroidery from 6th–8th c. AD Egypt, depicting the Annunciation scene. The basket is again used as an iconographic device to represent the full material culture of spinning, the most suitable of feminine pursuits. The *kalathos* basket as an iconographic device—used time and again to represent the story of the Annunciation—symbolises not only the activity of spinning but also, by extension, the virtuous woman in Late Antiquity. Even in the simplest representations, the basket is always included, such as on a 6th to 7th c. pilgrim token from Qal'at Sem'an in Syria.<sup>16</sup> This is a relatively small and crude object, but the basket is still depicted; it testifies to the important cultural values it embodied as a domestic object.

### **Baskets as a Pagan Ritual Object**

Baskets are also found in the religious sphere as ritual objects, with significant roles within late antique pagan cults, specifically those described as 'mystery' religions. One of these was the Eleusinian Mysteries; its origins are from 6th c. BC Eleusis in mainland Greece, but the cult flourished and spread throughout the Mediterranean, surviving into the late antique period.<sup>17</sup> The followers of this cult venerated the goddess Demeter and her daughter Persephone (also known as Kore), and took part in initiation rituals that were shrouded in secrecy. Documentary sources record the presence of baskets in

---

<sup>13</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 7.805-7 (transl. Fairclough (1918) 58-59).

<sup>14</sup> Festus, *De verborum significatione* 18.

<sup>15</sup> Joh. Chrys., *Instruction and Refutation Against those Men Cohabiting with Virgins*, 9 (transl. Cox Miller (2005) 134).

<sup>16</sup> Now in the British Museum, accession no. 1973,0501.1.

<sup>17</sup> Burkert (1987) 2.



pagan rituals associated with Demeter. For example, a 3rd c. AD letter from Oxyrhynchus addresses a village priestess as 'basket-carrier' (*kalatephoros* in the text), and requests her attendance at the local shrine to conduct fertility rituals:

Please go to (the village of) Sinkepha, to the temple of Demeter, to perform the customary sacrifices for our lords the emperors and their victory, for the rise of the Nile and increase of crops, and for favourable conditions of climate.<sup>18</sup>

The popularity of the Eleusinian Mysteries continued in late antique Greece, with high profile adherents still being attracted in 4th c. Athens.<sup>19</sup> Even the Emperor Julian—known as the Apostate for instigating a brief imperial return to paganism—visited the holy site of Eleusis in the mid 4th c. to participate in the sacred rites.<sup>20</sup>

Clement of Alexandria described the verse recited by devotees in 1st to 2nd c. AD Egypt, which reveals the involvement of baskets in the cult's rituals:

I fasted;  
I drank the draught;  
I took from the chest [*kiste*];  
having done my task,  
I placed in the basket [*kalathos*],  
and from the basket into the chest.<sup>21</sup>

The *kalathos* refers to the wool-basket discussed earlier; the *kiste* (or *cista* in Latin) refers to a round-lidded woven basket.<sup>22</sup>

The *kiste* can also be identified in association with the cult of Isis. This religion originated in Egypt but spread along with the syncretic deity Serapis (a combination of the Greek Apis and the Egyptian Osiris) to elsewhere in the Roman empire. The cult travelled across the western parts of the empire, following trade routes from Alexandria to parts of Italy, Dalmatia, Hungary, Spain, France, Germany, Britain and North Africa.<sup>23</sup> Imagery and objects associated with the goddess and her rites are found in these same geographical areas, and also depict the *kiste* basket chest in a similar way to that seen in the Eleusinian Mysteries. Figure 41 is an early Roman terracotta statuette of Isis nursing Bes; the object depicts the goddess sat cross-legged on a wicker basket. The figurine originally was used as a container for perfume, however it may also have been placed in a wall niche for household worship and protection.<sup>24</sup> The seat on which she rests is the symbolic *kiste*, being recognisably of basketwork and circular in shape. Such iconography is also seen on a 2nd–3rd c. AD terracotta figurine showing Isis nursing Harpocrates whilst seated on a wicker *kiste* basket.<sup>25</sup>

Baskets were thus associated in visual terms with the goddess Isis, whose cult continued well into the late antique period. In Egypt she was venerated up to the mid 5th c., based upon epigraphic evidence from Philae.<sup>26</sup> There was therefore a late antique association between certain pagan cults and baskets as ritual objects. The emphasis on

---

<sup>18</sup> P.Oxy. 36.2782 (transl. Rowlandson (1998) 62).

<sup>19</sup> Saradi (2011) 266.

<sup>20</sup> Saradi (2011) 281.

<sup>21</sup> Clem. Al. *Protr.* 2.21 (transl. Butterworth (1919) 42-43)

<sup>22</sup> White (1975) 63-65. See also the depictions of the Eleusinian rites on the 2nd c. AD 'Torre Nova' sarcophagus (Demeter is seated on a *kiste* to the left of centre), Palazzo Spagna, Rome (see Mylonas (1974) fig. 84).

<sup>23</sup> Turcan (1997) 95-104.

<sup>24</sup> Friedman (1989) 182.

<sup>25</sup> From the Fayum, Egypt. Now in the Royal Ontario Museum, 910.108.364 (see Friedman (1989) 182).

<sup>26</sup> Dijkstra (2011) 425-30.

one specific form (the *kiste*) within representations of the cult and its activities, show it was closely identified with specific cultural and religious meanings.

### **Baskets as a Symbol of Plenty**

Elsewhere in late antique society, baskets were associated with ideas of agricultural plenty, fertility, and worldly abundance. The image of baskets of fruit and flowers, alongside various creatures and vegetal motifs, is found on a wide variety of domestic furnishings and objects. A tapestry fragment from Egypt (fig. 42), no doubt intended to adorn a domestic interior, has as its central motif a basket filled with flowers. A similar design is represented on a fragment of hanging or curtain (fig. 43), which depicts a bird next to a basket of grapes.<sup>27</sup> Mosaic designs also feature baskets within scenes of plenty. The late 4th c. Dominus Iulius mosaic from Carthage (fig. 44) shows the lady of the house receiving gifts from servants in the form of ducks, a lamb, and notably a basket of olives and a basket of roses. This has been interpreted as illustrating the prosperity of the house, and the ease and comfort of the inhabitants living there.<sup>28</sup> A similar use of the basket as an iconographic device is found in the 5th to 6th c. mosaic depiction of the personification of Egypt, from the Nile Festival Building in Sepphoris.<sup>29</sup> Here, Egypt is represented as a female figure, reclining on a basket filled with produce, whilst she holds a cornucopia in one hand. That images of baskets functioned as a visual shorthand for earthly bounty, is further underlined by its presence in combination with the cornucopia in this scene, a well-known symbol of abundance.

Art historian Henry Maguire has extensively discussed the kinds of images used to adorn domestic living spaces and material culture, demonstrating that representations of flora and fauna displayed within these contexts were considered to have a numinous power, both expressing and assuring abundance.<sup>30</sup> Beyond mere depictions, this imagery functioned as a charm to attract the plenty that it showed.<sup>31</sup> As seen from the brief selection of examples above, it is rare to find this sort of decorative scheme without the inclusion of baskets. This is significant, and reflects the importance of baskets as artefacts. As containers, they were used to collect, carry, and store the results of a successful harvest: these objects were a staple agricultural tool. There are various visual depictions of baskets being used in agriculture, especially the grape harvest. Stacks of baskets used in this way are seen on the stone relief at Sens, France, and vintaging scenes featuring labourers and donkeys carrying baskets of grapes are a common feature of the 'inhabited' vine scroll design of the 6th c. mosaic pavements of churches in Jordan.<sup>32</sup> Thus, their function is inextricably tied to the hopes of people throughout the agricultural year. Maguire's interpretation of the symbolic power of images of plenty can therefore be extended to images of the basket, as a visual shorthand for earthly abundance, fertility and plenty.

However, if we go further with Maguire's reading—which suggests a powerlessness over the natural world resulting in the need to attract prosperity through sympathetic magic—baskets can also conversely communicate power. Rather than being in thrall to the rhythms of nature, such images can instead communicate status and the power of humankind over their environment. The produce, collected in a basket, is depicted as the fruit of human labour, not the natural abundance of the earth. Archaeologist Ellen Swift, after Lambert Schneider, discussed the similar iconography on the late Roman

---

<sup>27</sup> This textile was also found in Egypt, however it was likely made in a textile centre elsewhere in the Mediterranean: Stauffer (1995) 21.

<sup>28</sup> Maguire (1999) 243.

<sup>29</sup> See Hachlili (2009) pl. 5.3 for image.

<sup>30</sup> Maguire (1999) 243.

<sup>31</sup> Maguire *et al.* (1989) 9.

<sup>32</sup> For the stone relief from Sens, see Barbier *et al.* (1999) fig. 3; for inhabited vine scroll mosaics, see Hachlili (2009) 111-47, esp. 141-42.

Graincourt silver dish (fig. 45), which depicts various foods and associated flora and fauna in the decorative rim.<sup>33</sup> These scenes do not depict a hope for a prosperous harvest from the benevolent earth; rather they depict nature as a “larder of goods for human consumption.”<sup>34</sup> Although the imagery in the case of the Graincourt dish is framed by the dining context in which the object would be used, it nonetheless illustrates the Roman power over the natural world, and the owner’s right to plunder such bounty.<sup>35</sup> The symbolism of baskets can be interpreted in the same way. They are manufactured objects, harnessing and increasing nature’s bounty through labour. They are thus not only symbols of plenty within decorative schemes, but also of agricultural prowess.

### **Baskets and Personal Meaning: Early Christian Monastic Evidence**

It is clear that baskets within late antique society had specific meanings dependent on their form and the context in which they were seen. Their integration into late antique life went beyond pure utility; they held significant roles within certain contexts and accumulated layers of meanings. Textual and archaeological evidence also reveal a close association between baskets and early Christian monks and anchorites in late antique Egypt and the surrounding regions. The existing evidence for basket making in late antique monastic settlements often reveals two aspects to this manual occupation: that it was both a spiritual and economic activity. Of particular interest is that not all baskets remained as monastic material culture; rather, the baskets, as a product of monastic labour, were often sold in marketplaces across the country. Therefore, these objects would likely have found their way into a variety of homes in late antique Egypt, and beyond. This discussion will now consider specific evidence for the sentimental meaning and value of baskets as personal possessions.

#### ***The Production Process***

Evidence for the production of baskets by early Christian monks reveals an emphasis on process, that suggests the making of baskets was as important as the finished objects. It appears that the manufacture of these objects had a significant effect on their subsequent meaning and value. The main sources of evidence for their manufacture are surviving archaeological examples and textual sources. In terms of textual evidence, there is a large body of literature about the lives of early Christian monastics.<sup>36</sup> Sources are generally in two forms: the ‘Lives’ or *Vitae* of key figures from the ascetic community during this period; and collections of sayings and guidance from the desert monastics. The ‘Lives’, such as those of Anthony and Pachomius, often include details on daily activities in these desert settlements.<sup>37</sup> The *Life of Anthony* states that the monk spent his time plaiting to make baskets to give to those who brought him provisions.<sup>38</sup> The collection of writings known as the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, or ‘Sayings of the Fathers’, also frequently mention basket making as part of their advice on correct monastic living.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Swift (2009) 129; Schneider (1983).

<sup>34</sup> Swift (2009) 129.

<sup>35</sup> Swift (2009) 129.

<sup>36</sup> Harmless (2004) provides a good overview of early monastic literature from Egypt.

<sup>37</sup> The *Life of Anthony* was written by Athanasius in the 4th c.: see White (1998). Various versions of the *Life of Pachomius* exist in Coptic, Greek, and Latin, with translations into the main modern European languages. See Harmless (2004) 148 for an overview of the relevant editions.

<sup>38</sup> Ath. *V. Ant.* 53.

<sup>39</sup> There are two main collections of the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. The ‘Alphabetical Collection’ collates the sayings alphabetically by author; quoted henceforth as AP, using the English translation by Ward (1984). The ‘Systematic Collection’ groups the sayings into topics; quoted henceforth as AP Sys, using the French translation by Guy (1993-2005).

The process of basket manufacture begins with collecting palm leaves from trees usually grown on or near the monastery site.<sup>40</sup> These leaves were split into strips of the desired width and length, after which they could be dried and stored until ready to use, like those found at the site of the Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes (fig. 46). These strips were then steeped in water to make them pliable.<sup>41</sup> The monk would then sit, plaiting these palm strips together to form a long braid, as described in the *Life of Anthony*.<sup>42</sup> Once one long plait had been made, it could be made into other objects; this would primarily be the basket, however other products mentioned in the texts include floor and sleeping mats, and even clothing.<sup>43</sup> Once the body of the basket was formed then handles could be fashioned and added.<sup>44</sup> The veracity of this process is supported by the manufacture of modern-day Egyptian plaited baskets, which echoes these same techniques and methods.<sup>45</sup>

The shape of the baskets is formed by coiling the plait around in a circular manner to create the base and sides, while sewing the parallel edges of the plait together as you work.<sup>46</sup> The thread used to sew the edges of the plaits was often made from thin strips of unspun palm leaf.<sup>47</sup> The result is a flexible, soft form basket, the remains of which have been found at several archaeological sites in the deserts of Egypt.<sup>48</sup> Other finds from the site also highlight the multiple stages of production involved in making sewn plait baskets. Along with the carefully cut strips of palm leaf (fig. 46), a five-strand plait, yet to be made into a basket, was also found at the Thebes site (fig. 47). The edges of the plait are of a SZ orientation, meaning that they are perpendicular rather than parallel to each other. This allows the plait to form a larger fabric, as seen in baskets and mats, as the edges are pulled together and interlock when sewn together.<sup>49</sup> The resultant appearance is one of a continuously plaited surface, as the hard edge of each braid is hidden beneath the surface of the plait it is connected to.<sup>50</sup> The tell-tale sign that these baskets are of sewn plaits, and not continuously plaited fabric, is the ridge that spirals around the body, indicating the edges of the braids and the location of the thread holding the plaited edges together.

### ***Basket Making as a Spiritual Activity***

Textual evidence reveals that basket-making was not considered a meaningless occupation by the early Christian monks of Egypt. Basketry was considered suitable

---

<sup>40</sup> The story of the initiation of new monks into monastic life includes the description of collecting palm leaves from trees growing in 'the marsh': AP Macarius the Great, 33 (transl. Ward (1984) 134).

<sup>41</sup> 'It was said of the same Abba Arsenius that he only changed the water for his palm leaves once a year; the rest of the time he simply added to it. One old man implored him in these words, "Why do you not change the water for these palm leaves when it smells bad?" He said to him, "Instead of the perfumes and aromatics which I used in the world I must bear this bad smell.": AP Arsenius 18: transl. Ward (1984) 11..

<sup>42</sup> '[...]someone pulled the plait or reed of the basket he was weaving.': Ath. V. *Ant.* 53 (transl. White (1998) 41).

<sup>43</sup> For example, Isaac describes Abba Pambo as wearing garments 'woven from palm fronds': AP Isaac 7 (transl. Ward (1984) 100).

<sup>44</sup> AP Sys 17.20: 'An elderly monk overhears his neighbour despairing that he has nothing to make handles out of for his baskets, so unfastens the handles from his finished baskets and gives them to his needy neighbour': transl. Guy (1993-2005) vol.3 (no.498) 22-23 (my translation from the French).

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, the video accompanying Wendrich (1999), which shows the process used to make plaited baskets in modern Egypt.

<sup>46</sup> Extensive references exist in the monastic texts to the sewing or stitching together of plaits to make baskets. For example, in AP Sys 4.5, describing a monk stitching palm leaves until the 6th hour (transl. Guy (1993-2005) vol.1 (no.387) 186-87).

<sup>47</sup> Wendrich (1999) 213.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, the remains of baskets from Grave 7, Monastery of Epiphanius, late 6th or early 7th c. AD Thebes, Egypt. Image in Winlock (1924) vol. 1 pl.19.

<sup>49</sup> Wendrich (1999) 210.

<sup>50</sup> Wendrich (1991) 61-63.

labour for monks as the repetitive nature of the work meant that it did not require too much concentration nor did it distract from prayers and spiritual meditation.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the perceived humility inherent in basket making did not endanger their inner tranquillity through raising ambitions or giving satisfaction.<sup>52</sup> The low level of skills required in the production of the baskets meant that it was a task available to all the monks. As such, it was a process that afforded equality to all monks in terms of access to work and humility in one's efforts, embodied within the fabric of the baskets.

These key points, all of which portray the weaving of baskets as a repetitive and ascetic practice, are ideas strongly present within early monastic literature. The goal of monasticism was achieving *hesychia*, defined as a quietness and inner stillness arising from living a solitary, spiritual desert life.<sup>53</sup> The risk to achieving *hesychia* was distraction, caused by both external factors and one's own thoughts.<sup>54</sup> This situation is all too easy to imagine occurring whilst alone in a desert cell. Therefore, the popularity of plaiting and basket making activities with monks was due to its compatibility with *hesychia*; it was not distracting, and also allowed the practice of unceasing prayer.

Praying unceasingly was an essential aspect of life as a solitary monk, based upon a biblical passage often quoted in desert literature on how to live a virtuous Christian lifestyle.<sup>55</sup> The link between basket making and unceasing prayer is also directly discussed within the *Alphabetical Collection's* sayings of Lucius. In one of the descriptions, the abbot Lucius at Enna chides a group of monks who do no manual work but claim to pray unceasingly, despite stopping to eat and sleep. He explains that by weaving with palm leaves, he can pray all day whilst working, then sell his work for money, which he then spends on both food and paying someone to pray for him whilst he eats and sleeps.<sup>56</sup> Elsewhere, other anecdotes or pieces of advice also emphasise basket weaving as an activity suited to spiritual meditation. In Book 11 of the *Systematic Collection*, the abbot John is described as weaving palm leaves intended for two baskets into one basket, and not realising until it reached the wall of his cell, so absorbed was he in spiritual contemplation.<sup>57</sup>

Basket-making was regarded as a 'mindless' activity, which was precisely where its value within the monastic community came from. In fact, the process of basket making was actively an aid to contemplation. Byzantine scholar John Wortley has discussed the role of the repetition of phrases in the meditation of early Christian monks.<sup>58</sup> Such a reliance on repetition can also be identified in the movements required for basket-making, which has a strongly rhythmic and meditative character.<sup>59</sup> A striking story from the *Lausiac History* by Palladius, describing the condition of an elderly monk, further suggests the importance of plaiting:

We found on arrival that he had fallen prey to the terrible ulcerous condition known as cancer. We found him under the care of a physician. He was working

---

<sup>51</sup> Wipszycka (2009) 477.

<sup>52</sup> Wipszycka (2009) 476. Shenoute's rules governing monastic life dictate that monks who misbehave have their duties set at the lowest level in the hierarchy, namely basket making: Shenoute, *Canons* 271 (transl. Layton (2014) 205). See also Layton (2007) 57.

<sup>53</sup> Harmless (2004) 228.

<sup>54</sup> Harmless (2004) 229.

<sup>55</sup> Harmless (2004) 62. The verse states 'pray without ceasing': 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (*Revised English Bible* edn.).

<sup>56</sup> AP Lucius 1 (transl. Ward (1984) 120-121).

<sup>57</sup> AP Sys 11.38 (transl. Guy (1993-2005) vol.2 (no.474) 152-53).

<sup>58</sup> Wortley (2006).

<sup>59</sup> Wendrich describes the movements of modern day basket makers in Egypt as "choreography": Wendrich (1999) 331. This reliance on repetition and rhythm is something I recognise from my own basket-making practice, undertaken during the course of this research. The movements required for plaiting are indeed repetitive, and after a short amount of time a rhythm is formed. With greater skill and experience, this would without doubt become more pronounced.

with his hands and weaving palm leaves and he conversed with us while his body was undergoing an operation. He acted as though it were someone else who was undergoing the knife. While his members were being cut away like locks of hair, he showed no sign whatsoever of pain, thanks to the superiority of his spiritual preparation.<sup>60</sup>

This story is reminiscent of modern tales of patients who undergo painful surgery without anaesthetic, instead relying on meditation and hypnosis.<sup>61</sup> Thus, the nature of basket making—the repeated cutting, plaiting and stitching movements that occupied the hands of the holy men undertaking such activity—aided their meditation and contemplation of God, and was a practical support in their pursuit of the ideal spiritual life.

Basket-making is represented in monastic literature as being specifically of psychological benefit. John Cassian, writing in the 4th c., described how it helped to banish “*accidie*”, a type of depression, the symptoms of which are boredom with one’s cell, a scornful and contemptuous attitude towards others, listlessness and inertia.<sup>62</sup> Cassian describes the life of the desert-dwelling Paul, who gathered palm leaves and worked them every day:

And when his cave would be filled with the work of a whole year, he would set fire to it, and burn each year the work so carefully wrought: and thereby he proved that without working with his hands a monk cannot endure to abide in his place, nor can he climb any nearer the summit of holiness: and though necessity of making a livelihood in no way demands it, let it be done for the sole purging of the heart, the steadying of thought, perseverance in the cell, and the conquest and final overthrow of *accidie* itself.<sup>63</sup>

Here it is the *activity* of weaving that is given importance and not the finished baskets, which end up being burnt. The act of weaving helps the monk in his solitary pursuit of piety, as it keeps him from the natural feelings of listlessness and malcontent that arise from his isolation in the desert. This story also accentuates the ascetic nature of basket making; the element of destruction of the monk’s handiwork emphasises the frugal nature of the monk’s life, and an abstemious lack of pride in one’s own labours. That weaving plaits and making baskets fits the image of a pious ascetic is why the emphasis on plaiting is so strong in the texts that discuss the lives of these early anchorites. This is certainly emphasised in the story of Abba Arsenius who refused to change the water for steeping his palm leaves, despite the smell.<sup>64</sup> Such an aroma, likely similar to the stench from a vase of flowers left too long in their water, would be especially unpleasant in the confined space of a monastic cell. We also hear of Macarius’ behaviour at the Monastery of Tabennisi during Lent:

Macarius moistened a great many palm leaves and he stood in a corner until the forty days were over and it was Easter. He ate no bread and drank no water, nor did he bend his knee or lie down. He partook of nothing but a few cabbage leaves, and that on Sunday, so that he might at least give the appearance of eating. Except for the prayer in his heart and the palm leaves in his hands, he did nothing.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 24.2 (transl. Meyer (1965) 83-84).

<sup>61</sup> Anon. (1999).

<sup>62</sup> John Cassian, *Collationes* 24.1 (transl. Waddell (1998) 163-66).

<sup>63</sup> John Cassian, *Collationes* 24.1 (transl. Waddell (1998) 166).

<sup>64</sup> AP Arsenius 18.

<sup>65</sup> Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 18.14-15 (transl. Meyer (1965) 62).

Extracts such as these highlight the affinity between the processes of basket making and the asceticism that the monks endeavoured to practice. In this light, the meaning and cultural image of basket making, as employed by the monks, takes the form of a propagandistic tool, emphasised within texts and their daily routines to enhance the status of monks, their pious virtue, and the way in which they were perceived by others outside the community. In reality, whilst basket making and the preliminary activity of plaiting palm leaves feature heavily in the texts, the inherent bias towards this activity means that it is unlikely to be representative of real everyday life within these communities, and has instead been emphasised to accentuate these virtues.<sup>66</sup>

Elsewhere we can see that monks were engaged in types of labour other than weaving baskets and plaiting fibre; this activity actually came bottom in the hierarchy of monastic jobs, with monks promoted to more skilled activities over time or through demonstration of suitability.<sup>67</sup> This creates an interesting disjuncture between the apparent cultural worth of these objects and the reality of basket making as a low status activity. That basket making was considered suitable for monks because of the low level of skill, concentration, and prestige associated with it, likely also made it, in reality, an often dull and thankless occupation, especially compared to other useful but more engaging tasks, such as cooking or carpentry.

Paradoxically therefore, the reason this task was unpopular also provides its value for promotion within the texts. The essentially ascetic and humble nature of basket making reveals a cultural cachet for baskets and their production. Embodied in the act of weaving palm leaves into plaits for baskets and mats, is a sense of extreme humility and renunciation of the trappings of the society beyond the limits of the desert. Thus, the baskets outwardly reflect values that the monks wished to emphasise, despite, in reality, the actual practice of basket making being considered a lowly activity. The completed baskets therefore functioned not only as symbols of the monks and their values, but also as tools to promote the ideal monastic identity. Furthermore, these baskets can be interpreted as tools that reinforce the idea of the monk as 'other', that is, as a figure outside of, and in direct contrast to, mainstream society. The first part of this chapter explained how, traditionally within late antique society, the basket had strong cultural associations with women and the gendered activities of spinning wool and weaving. Therefore, the emphasis placed by monks on their association with baskets is a further sign of their repudiation of worldly social roles, even in terms of their gendered identities.<sup>68</sup>

Archaeological evidence supports the interpretation of baskets as symbolic of the desert lifestyle; monks at the Monastery of Epiphanius in Thebes have been found buried with their woven baskets and sleeping mats.<sup>69</sup> Body no. 7 at the site, excavated in 1914, was found covered with a piece of matting and a split palm-leaf plaited basket over the head and upper body.<sup>70</sup> In a community where these men renounced their worldly possessions, these baskets, paradoxically, represented their ascetic lifestyle and the disavowal of the normal trappings of life in Late Antiquity through their material nature.<sup>71</sup> The fact that the basket is split open shows it was intended to form a covering,

---

<sup>66</sup> Wipszycka (2009) 485.

<sup>67</sup> Layton collates the references to different monastic occupations from the text of Shenoute's *Canons*; jobs include cooking, carpentry, and irrigation work: transl. Layton (2014) 66-67.

<sup>68</sup> Much has been written on the gender identities of both holy men and women living the ascetic lifestyle in the Early Christian period. For example, see McNamara (1976); Cloke (1995); Elm (1994). See also Upson Saia (2011) 80-83 for a comparative discussion of a group of 5th c. monks from Carthage, who modified their gender identity through sexual abstinence and the wearing of long hair.

<sup>69</sup> Winlock and Crum (1926) 1.50.

<sup>70</sup> Winlock and Crum (1926) 1.50; pl. 11B.

<sup>71</sup> Interestingly, sewn plait baskets were also found in the graves of monks at the monastery of Naqlun in Egypt, dating from the 12th to 13th c. AD. They were found placed on top of the coffins, and seem to

along with the mat (also woven by the monks) next to it, however this need not distract from the significance of the basket. It is the process of production undertaken by the monks that associates the basket with their lifestyle, not its function as a container, which would have been removed as soon as it was split open.<sup>72</sup>

Finally, too, in literary sources there are descriptions of baskets being represented as suitable symbols for monks and as reminders of their identity. The *Lausiaca History* sees the wealthy Melania describe the final actions of the monk Pambo before he died:

Shortly afterward this man of God fell asleep, not consumed by a fever or any sickness, but in the act of stitching a basket when he was seventy years old. He had sent for me, and when he was ready to make the last stitch and was on the point of departing, he said to me: 'Take this basket from my hands that you may remember me, for I have nothing else I might leave you.'<sup>73</sup>

Here a basket, woven by Pambo himself, is described as the only possession he has to give, and as a suitable token of his life. This basket is portrayed within the story as symbolic of the old man's life as a desert monk, representing as it does the time spent in spiritual contemplation as he performs menial and ascetic labour, having renounced his worldly possessions.

### ***Basket Making as an Economic Activity***

More than a spiritual activity, there were also economic benefits to making baskets. In fact the practice was as much about self-sufficiency, in terms of satisfying the monks' material needs, as it was about attaining a spiritual goal. Archaeological evidence shows that baskets were used within the monastic environment, as the examples from the Monastery of Epiphanius show. They are also mentioned regularly within the documentary texts from the same site; baskets were used for carrying wine jars, bread, offerings, and papyri.<sup>74</sup> However, there is often little trace in the archaeological record of the practice of basket making at excavated monastic sites. For example, at Esna in Upper Egypt, the location of several hermitage communities, very little archaeological evidence relating to handiwork was discovered, except for what seems to be evidence of leather working.<sup>75</sup> In terms of basketwork there is no trace left, with any remains that might have existed having been sold, blown away, stolen or destroyed in the intervening years.<sup>76</sup>

Textual evidence suggests much of the basketry produced at monastic sites was sold outside of these settlements. This is clear from the description of a visit to Abba Sisoës in the *Alphabetical Collection*:

Some brothers went to see Abba Sisoës to hear a word from him. But he did not speak to them saying, 'Excuse me.' Seeing his little baskets, the visitors asked his disciple Abraham, 'What do you do with these little baskets?' He said, 'We sell them here and there.' Hearing this the old man said, 'Even Sisoës eats now and then.'<sup>77</sup>

---

have had some role in the burial rites of the deceased. This could also be an example of baskets used as symbols of the monastic way of life: Łyżwa-Piber (2005) 242-43.

<sup>72</sup> The symbolism of the burial of baskets with the Epiphanius monks is echoed in their burial with their leather aprons, another symbol (this time in terms of their dress) of their identity as holy ascetics: Winlock and Crum (1926) 1.49-50. For more on monastic dress in Egypt, see Upson-Saia (2011) and Thomas (1990).

<sup>73</sup> Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 10.5 (transl. Meyer (1965) 45).

<sup>74</sup> Winlock and Crum (1926) 1.75.

<sup>75</sup> Sauneron (1972) 38.

<sup>76</sup> Sauneron (1972) 38.

<sup>77</sup> AP Sisoës 16 (transl. Ward (1984) 215-16). See also AP Megethios 1.



The industry of monks in these desert settlements was crucial as a means of supporting themselves, and maintaining a self-sufficient lifestyle, as well as also providing for visitors, of which there could be many.<sup>78</sup> The economic revenue that the monks obtained from making and selling baskets was as key to the maintenance of their lifestyle as any spiritual value the activity had. It was a means of providing for oneself without the danger of straying towards ostentation or personal pride in manual skills. The Abbot Pistamon is recorded as telling a monk that there is no harm that comes from selling his handiwork.<sup>79</sup> There are also documentary texts that show the selling of baskets outside of the monastery; a Coptic text from the 8th c. monastery of Apollo at Bawit records an order signed by Germanus authorising the sale of 'plaited work'.<sup>80</sup> The number of monks living in the desert communities had the potential to produce a significant amount of baskets, therefore their product had to be of a good quality in order to find buyers in the large cities of the Nile Delta and Alexandria.<sup>81</sup> But it seems that monks did indeed successfully sell their wares, and the evidence for an extensive transport and trading network within Egypt suggests that they had plenty of opportunity to find markets for their goods. This would have been necessary as there was no guarantee that the monks would find sufficient buyers in their local area; thus such goods had the potential to travel great distances from their place of origin.<sup>82</sup>

The literary sources describe monks selling their wares personally within markets in nearby towns and cities. Philagrius is described in the *Alphabetical Collection* as leaving the desert near Jerusalem to visit the city where he would stand 'in the market place to sell his manual work'.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, the *Lausiatic History* describes how a monk named Aphthonius the Good was sent from his monastery at Tabennesi to sell the monks' produce in the city of Alexandria, as he was the least likely to be led astray.<sup>84</sup> This monastery was founded on the banks of the River Nile, a location especially useful for communication with Alexandria and travel to and from the city.<sup>85</sup> In terms of geographical transportation links, the Nile would have been crucial for the monks to move their goods for trade elsewhere in Egypt. This example is also a reminder that not all monasteries were the isolated desert communities that are famous in early monastic literature.

Many of these stories of selling wares emphasise the danger of travelling to cities, and show the monks being led astray or dealing with temptation from the 'world'; for this reason they are likely to be exaggerated in order to make a comment on both monastic and worldly morality. Nonetheless, this emphasis on the danger of towns and cities does not mean that these trips were not taken. Indeed, amenities existed that allowed for the travel and transportation of goods; for example the *pandocheion*, a lower class hostelry establishment that is mentioned frequently as a stopping point for monks on their travels.<sup>86</sup> In the *Vitae Patrum* there is the story of the young monk Marinus who stops at a *pandocheion* en route between his monastery and the market where he is selling his goods.<sup>87</sup>

As well as the transport afforded by the Nile, there was also a network of canals and roads that the monks could have used.<sup>88</sup> Most of these routes eventually linked to

---

<sup>78</sup> Caner (2002) 43.

<sup>79</sup> AP Pistamon 1.

<sup>80</sup> P. Bawit Clackson 21 (transl. Clackson (2008) 56-57).

<sup>81</sup> Wipszycka (2009) 479.

<sup>82</sup> Wipszycka (2009) 479.

<sup>83</sup> AP Philagrius 1 (transl. Ward (1984) 242).

<sup>84</sup> Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 32.8.

<sup>85</sup> Meyer (1964) 92, n.270.

<sup>86</sup> Remie Constable (2004) 28.

<sup>87</sup> *Vita Sanctae Marinae*. PL 73.691.

<sup>88</sup> Adams (2007) 21-22.

Alexandria, the main Mediterranean port and trading link to the rest of the empire, however there were other road routes that were important for trade, such as the road linking Coptos on the Nile with Berenike on the Red Sea.<sup>89</sup> Berenike was a major trading post that linked the Roman empire with the East. Mediterranean and Egyptian goods were transferred into Nile ships, then transported by boat to Coptos, loaded onto camels and then went through the eastern desert to Berenike, to be transported by sea to India, Arabia, and Africa.<sup>90</sup>

It is clear from a range of evidence then that monastic baskets were important for both spiritual and economic reasons. We will now consider their wider cultural meanings and lives after manufacture. Continuing the themes from the previous three chapters, evidence for monastic baskets as gifts, heirlooms, and souvenirs will now be discussed.

### ***Baskets as Gifts***

The evidence discussed above has already revealed the giving of monastic baskets as gifts. Of particular note is the aforementioned description of Melania the Elder and Pambo's encounter, which is worth repeating in full:

For the blessed Melania told me this: "When I first came from Rome to Alexandria and heard about his virtue from the blessed Isidore, who showed me the way to him in the desert, I took him a silver coffer containing three hundred pounds of silver and invited him to share in my wealth. He was sitting weaving palm leaves, and he merely blessed me and said: 'May God reward you!' And he told his steward Origen: 'Take this and dispense it to all the brethren down in Libya and on the islands, for those monasteries are in greater need.' He gave him orders not to dispense any of it in Egypt because that country was better off." She continued: "I was standing by and expecting to be honoured or praised by him for my donation, but I heard nothing from him, and so I spoke up to him: 'So you may know, O lord, how much it is, there are three hundred pounds.' He did not so much as raise his head, but said: 'My child, He who measures the mountains knows better the amount of the silver. If you were giving it to me, you spoke well; but if you are giving it to God, who did not overlook the two obols, then be quiet.'" [...] "Shortly afterward this man of God fell asleep, not consumed by a fever or any sickness, but in the act of stitching a basket when he was seventy years old. He had sent for me, and when he was ready to make the last stitch and was on the point of departing, he said to me: 'Take this basket from my hands that you may remember me, for I have nothing else I might leave you.'" Then she prepared him for burial by winding his body in linen cloths. She buried him and then withdrew from the desert, and she kept the basket with her until her death.<sup>91</sup>

In this story Pambo gives Melania a gift in the form of a basket that he made himself. The text notes that she curated the object until her own death, reflecting its status as a treasured possession of sentimental value, something emphasised by the low economic value of the object.<sup>92</sup> Chapter 2 of this book discussed how gifts have the ability to represent their donors in material form.<sup>93</sup> As such, the basket received by Melania represents Pambo. That it is a handmade gift further enhances this fact; the investment

---

<sup>89</sup> Adams (2007) 23. For more on the archaeology of this route and the settlements along it, see Cuvigny (2003).

<sup>90</sup> Wendrich *et al.* (2003) 51.

<sup>91</sup> Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 10.2-5 (transl. Meyer (1965) 44-45).

<sup>92</sup> This would exclude the possibility of curation because of the basket's intrinsic worth. In Diocletian's Price Edict, woven baskets are given a maximum cost of 10 denarii: *Ed. Diocl.* 32.18.

<sup>93</sup> See also Mauss (1966) 10; Gregory (1982) 45.

of time and effort into the creation of the object results in the basket symbolising the identity of its maker.<sup>94</sup> It can also be seen as a memento of Pambo for other reasons. Firstly, as he states himself, Pambo is donating the basket specifically so that she has something to remember him by. As such, he is acknowledging the capacity of material objects to function as a means to preserve and evoke memories. Crucial to this is the context surrounding the gift exchange. The basket is given in the moments preceding Pambo's death, a significant and emotive event for Melania. As such, Melania would associate the object with that moment in the object's (and her own) life course, providing in part the source of the basket's evident sentimental value. Gifts function to create connections and relationships between the donor and recipient.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, possession of the object allows Melania to maintain her relationship with Pambo, represented by the basket, after his death, despite his absence.

In fact, this object represents Pambo more broadly in his role as monk, rather than solely as Pambo the individual. In light of the earlier discussion of baskets as symbolic of the monastic lifestyle, it is clear that the object is also a memento of Pambo's life as a monk and his rejection of the ordinary secular world. As such, it is the perfect gift to give to Melania. The fact that he says that he has no other possessions to give her, further emphasises the importance and appropriateness of the basket as a gift. Gifts are selected as representations of the giver's identity, therefore the basket is a potent symbol of the asceticism and monastic lifestyle of Pambo.<sup>96</sup>

The role of reciprocity must also be considered within this scene. Mauss stated that gift exchange creates systems of obligations in which counter-gifts are made.<sup>97</sup> Melania is visiting Pambo to give a gift of a large amount of silver to the Church, via the monk. Despite the gift not being intended for Pambo personally, the gift of the basket could be symptomatic of the perceived requirement of reciprocity in social gift exchange. However, adherence to such social conventions seems an unlikely act from a monk who renounced mainstream society to live as an ascetic, and so pointedly displayed a personal disinterest in the initial gift from Melania. Nonetheless, other extracts from the monastic texts demonstrate that reciprocity in terms of gift giving was a part of monastic behaviour. In the *Life of Anthony*, the monk is described as making baskets to give to those who bring him gifts and sustenance.<sup>98</sup> Therefore, Pambo may in fact be displaying conventional monastic behaviour. It is also a sign of the significance of the immediate event: his own death. The giving of the basket is an acknowledgment that he will not be able to be with her physically, and demonstrates a reliance on material culture in such contexts to provide comfort and physical company.

The encounter between Melania and Pambo is not the only evidence of gift giving by the desert monks within the texts. The *Systematic Collection* tells of three monks who visited the holy man Achilles, who was working in his cell. One of them asked Achilles to make him a fishing-net but Achilles said no; the second monk asked again, so that they might have something to remember the monk by when they returned to their own monastery. Again Achilles declined. The third monk had a bad reputation, and so when he asked Achilles to make him a fishing net, the elderly man agreed so as not to make him sorrowful.<sup>99</sup> The elements associated with the meaning of gifts discussed in relation to the story of Melania and Pambo, are also valid here. Again, the evidence presents an object acknowledged as having the capacity to become a memento of someone. The reason that the monk desires this object is because he wishes it to be a material reminder of Achilles after they leave him and return to their monastery. As such, it is

---

<sup>94</sup> Belk (1988) 144; Gell (1998) 23-24; Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) 8.

<sup>95</sup> Gregory (1982) 41.

<sup>96</sup> Sherry (1983) 159.

<sup>97</sup> Mauss (1966) 10-11.

<sup>98</sup> Ath. *V. Ant.* 53.

<sup>99</sup> AP Sys 10.18. This tale is also found in AP Achilles 1.

clear objects were understood to have this evocative capability. The third man does receive a handmade gift from the monk, which can therefore be considered to represent, in material form, the essence of the donor's identity.<sup>100</sup>

### ***Baskets as Souvenirs***

The story outlined above from the *Systematic Collection* discusses a net that would become a memento of the maker through gift-giving. However, the object would also function as a souvenir, reminding the owner of their time spent away visiting the monk Achilles, as well as representing a souvenir 'sample' of the local material culture.<sup>101</sup> The basket is also a sample of the local environment on an ecological level, representing the flora of this specific location, as they are objects physically made from a material found in the area of the monastery. The monks are often described within the *Apophthegmata Patrum* as going to nearby marshes to collect leaves from the palm trees located there.<sup>102</sup> Other extracts suggest areas of monasteries had small gardens in which palm trees were tended and leaves harvested.<sup>103</sup> As such, the material nature of the baskets provided the owner with a sample of their place of origin. Their physical form reflects their unseen biography, that is, the method and location of their manufacture, allowing these objects to function as sample souvenirs for anyone taking away a basket from these monasteries.

As well as a secular souvenir object, like the pilgrim souvenirs in chapter 3, the net in the above story (and monastic baskets more broadly) also functioned as a source of blessings or *eulogia*. Material blessings represent a physical means of conveying intangible spiritual power.<sup>104</sup> *Eulogiae*, such as pilgrim tokens, oil, and water, all become sanctified through their physical contact with a holy place or person. The same can be said for the objects produced by the desert monks. Like other mementoes, such as heirlooms or souvenirs, blessings or *eulogiae* communicate identity, (albeit it a holy one) through their materiality.

Assigned to this identity is a surplus value in the form of spiritual power, from which their significance as religious objects stems. Thus, in terms of the net made by Achilles, his identity and thus spiritual power is embodied by the object, allowing it to act not only as a reminder of the monk but also as a religious and amuletic object. Certainly, holy men and women are shown elsewhere in the texts to have the ability to perform miracles: a potent demonstration of their spiritual power.<sup>105</sup> As such, objects that have been touched by a monk would no doubt be considered as *eulogia*. For example, the *Alphabetical Collection* records a monk named Daniel as wearing the clothes of the late Abba Arsenius in order to receive a blessing.<sup>106</sup> The importance of the role of physical contact in communicating sanctity is clear from this.

Furthermore, baskets are not simply touched by the monks who made them, they were laboriously constructed as part of a religious lifestyle. The activity of producing the basket itself is presented in the texts as a spiritual activity and one conducted during prayer, therefore the holiness of such objects for the faithful was likely to be enhanced by the biography of the object. Melania's act of keeping the basket can thus be interpreted as the preservation of a material blessing from the hands of Pambo, in the same way as we see pilgrim souvenirs being curated within the home in the description of Hesperius by Augustine.<sup>107</sup> That such objects can function as blessings as well as

---

<sup>100</sup> See chapter 2 of this book for further discussion of the meaning of handmade gifts.

<sup>101</sup> See discussion in chapter 3. Also Stewart (1993) 138.

<sup>102</sup> AP Macarius the Great 1.

<sup>103</sup> AP Silvanus 4.

<sup>104</sup> See discussion in the introduction and chapter 3.

<sup>105</sup> For example, see the story of Abba Macarius curing the paralytic child: AP Macarius the Great 15.

<sup>106</sup> AP Arsenius 42.

<sup>107</sup> August. *De civ. D.* 22.8.

souvenirs, gifts, or heirlooms, further demonstrates the ability of material culture to have multiple identities and layers of significance simultaneously.

Documentary sources also show that many visitors attended the desert ascetics explicitly to receive a blessing in material form, or to effect a healing or other miracle. A 6th to 7th c. Coptic letter to three clergy, requests such a token:

Anuti, the least sinner, it is who writes to his beloved lord and holy father, Apa Makarios, and Apa Apollo, and my brother Joseph, saying: I greet you with my whole heart. [...] Be so good to your son and give a little water of the feet of holy men and a little blessing of our father and a little . . . . . in your blessing. Give them to Pamoute and he will bring them to me and they will be a healing to me. Verily I hang upon nothing of this world except your blessing. Salvation in the Lord!<sup>108</sup>

In this letter, the *eulogia* in question is based around the water with which the holy men have washed their feet. Just as with pilgrim tokens, the physical contact between the holy figure and the neutral material is what gives these gifts and souvenirs their power. Therefore other items, such as their handmade baskets, also functioned as *eulogiae*.

It also needs to be considered how these objects would have been acquired, and if this affects their status as souvenirs. The examples of baskets and other *eulogiae* that appear in the texts are given directly by the monks to their recipients. As such the biography of the objects—their provenance, and therefore authenticity—is known first hand by the new owner of the object. However, the evidence shows that many baskets made within monastic communities were sold to the wider community, and had the potential to travel further afield. Would *their* origin and method of manufacture create meaning for their subsequent owners? From this perspective, the value of monastic baskets comes from their biography; this is what singularises them as objects, and differentiates them from other baskets available for sale. However, the buyer/owner must know the biography of the object for this value to exist.

In terms of whether these objects could be identified as monastic baskets once outside of the monastery, it is difficult to say. With regards to their physical appearance, the sewn plaits technique was relatively common in the Roman period, and can be found archaeologically within Egypt from non-monastic sites, such as Qasr Ibrim , and also in visual media from elsewhere, such as the mosaics from the Great Palace in Constantinople (fig. 48). Yet, if the large quantities suggested by the literary sources were indeed being produced and traded by the monks in Egypt, then this type of basket could well have become associated with early Christian monks and monasteries, and identified by contemporaries as a specific object 'type'. It also depends on the circumstances of acquisition. For example, if a basket was bought directly from a monk who was visiting a market or city with his wares, as we have seen described within the monastic literature, then it is clear to the purchaser that the basket is a monastic product. Similarly, should the person acquire the object from the site of the monastery itself, again it is clear that the product has a monastic origin. We might even assume that if the baskets were sold through a third party, in locations far from their point of origin, they would still be identified as monastic objects as the retailer would be able to emphasise this point.

A contributing factor is the popularity that the early Christian monks and ascetics had within wider society. The *Lausiack History* describes the provision of a guesthouse at the monastery of Nitria, which provided accommodation for visitors who could stay for up to three years.<sup>109</sup> The holy men were popular with visitors, something further attested by the amount of graffiti found in cells at the Monastery of Epiphanius, left by

---

<sup>108</sup> P.Mich.Copt.8. (transl. Worrell (1942) 190).

<sup>109</sup> Pall. *Hist. Laus.*, 7.4.

people who came to see the holy men dwelling there.<sup>110</sup> This demonstrates that there would have been ample opportunity for the acquisition of objects such as baskets first-hand from monastic sites by travellers, tourists, and pilgrims.

It is possible that visitors to the monastery would have witnessed basket-making first-hand. The evidence of the practice in the archaeological record, combined with the emphasis within the textual sources, suggests that this would have been a promoted activity, perhaps highly visible but not extensively practised. In addition, the sight of monks selling these handmade objects would also implicitly refer to their process of creation; the baskets were an index of the monks' labours, therefore referring directly to the act of manufacture.<sup>111</sup> It can therefore be interpreted that basket making was also a socially expected behaviour that the monks were anticipated to display. The activity can thus be seen to have importance for both monks and those outside of the monastic environment as a sign of their authenticity as holy men.

Beyond the processes involved in the creation of baskets, their movement between individuals can also be interpreted as an expected action and behaviour. The habit of asking for both tangible and intangible blessings as sacred souvenirs during pilgrimages is clearly demonstrated by the descriptions provided by the Piacenza Pilgrim.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, monks were often asked for material blessings relating to their sanctity, as the letter requesting water used for foot washing shows.<sup>113</sup> Such behaviours become routine; consequently there existed both an expectation of creation, and a desire for acquisition, with regards to these objects. In this way, the giving and receiving of baskets inside and out of the monastic environment became a material communication between the monks and mainstream society. This action symbolised the relationship between two different modes of living, and ensured the creation of a connection based upon material means.

It also provided the monks with a way of representing themselves in material form to others; both the basket and the process of manufacture embodied the identity of the Christian ascetic. The material form of the basket allows the concepts associated with this to become tangible and portable, so that fleeting experiences, such as the process of manufacture, can be secured in a physical sense, and ideals such as asceticism and piety are given a physical form that can be communicated to others without the presence of the monks. This is something that is especially important given the nature of their lives and their locations, often separated from the main community. The baskets' agency thus allows for the transmission of ideas, alongside their own physical movement between individuals.

### ***Baskets as Heirlooms***

Heirlooms showcase the capacity for objects to retain memories; their movement across generations brings together disparate family members and evokes nostalgia for times past.<sup>114</sup> Looking to the story of Pambo and Melania, we see the basket functioning as a memento of the last moment shared by Melania and the elderly monk. It also represents the inheritance by Melania of Pambo's worldly possessions; he states that he has nothing else to give. Combined with the subsequent curation of the object by Melania, in this case the basket represents an heirloom object. However, we do not know what happened to the basket on the death of Melania. As with any possession, the potential trajectories are multiple. Perhaps the basket was inherited by her own children who, understanding its significance, curated it within the home. Alternatively, Melania may have left all of her possessions to the Church, in which case its biography would likely

---

<sup>110</sup> Winlock and Crum (1926) 1.13, 19.

<sup>111</sup> Thomas (1991) 16. See also the discussion of handmade gifts in chapter 2.

<sup>112</sup> *Placentini Itinerarium* 188.42.

<sup>113</sup> P.Mich.Copt.8.

<sup>114</sup> See discussion in chapter 1.

have ensured its value was appreciated. The fact that there was no visual sign of its biographical importance—unlike for example, the purpose-made heirlooms discussed in chapter 1—means that its significance, stemming from the story of Pambo, might have become detached from the object itself, surviving only via the written text. Of course, the other alternative is that the basket was discarded, either through indifference or mistake.

The distinctive feature of heirloom objects is that they are closely associated with family; they preserve the identity of past owners and keep genealogical memories alive.<sup>115</sup> However the giving of the basket to Melania demonstrates the movement of objects outside of a family unit on the death of an individual. This behaviour can therefore be interpreted as the giving of an object to symbolise membership of the 'monastic family'. Certainly, the texts posit the monastic community as a surrogate family unit, with monks renouncing their biological families to adopt the monastic lifestyle, and calling their fellow ascetics Father and Brother.<sup>116</sup> There is also textual evidence of the inheritance of objects between these monastic brothers. As briefly mentioned above, the *Alphabetical Collection* describes the inheritance by a monk named Daniel of the clothing of the elder Abba Arsenius: 'He left me his leather tunic, his white hair-shirt and his palm-leaf sandals. Although unworthy, I wear them, in order to gain his blessing'.<sup>117</sup> Therefore the act of bequeathing the basket to Melania provides her with a symbolic membership of the community. By extension, this action represents the esteem in which the monks held her, and their symbolic acknowledgement of her faith and piety.

The potential material longevity of these baskets also needs to be considered within a discussion of heirlooms. Weiner considers the need for inalienable objects to possess a level of permanence that ensures they can retain the memories they accumulate.<sup>118</sup> Other more formal *eulogiae* certainly have the features of inalienable possessions that would ensure their preservation over long periods of time within the home. However, would baskets be suitable objects as heirlooms? There is certainly no guarantee of their survival over a period of generations. With heavy use, as the evidence from Thebes shows, the material of basketry gets worn out and breaks down. Furthermore, their material destruction is more likely to occur over a period of time outside of the dry and arid desert regions. The nature of baskets means that they are made of organic material that over time will degenerate, therefore the monastic palm leaf baskets represent a less permanent object than the other more conventional heirlooms discussed in chapter 1, which are commonly made from metals or glass.

The basket given in the story of Pambo and Melania is newly made, however other such objects within the monastic environs had longer lives, potentially over several owners. Archaeological evidence from the Monastery of Epiphanius reveals the presence of an old basket featuring a patched bottom in Room 10 of the site, suggesting that it was subject to heavy use and may have been of some age, although exactly how old we are unsure.<sup>119</sup> If such items were considered precious possessions, it certainly did not prevent their use. This is not surprising; the ascetic lifestyle did not have a place for superfluous material possessions. This can be seen in the clothes inherited by Daniel; as well as providing him with a blessing through their constant physical contact with his body, they are also predominantly practical items, keeping him suitably clothed and warm. Therefore, baskets were likely kept, but as a side effect of continued use, as the patching demonstrates. Also, if high numbers of largely similar baskets were being

---

<sup>115</sup> See discussion in the introduction and chapter 1.

<sup>116</sup> See, for example, the story of Abba Poemen, who would turn away his family when they came to visit: AP Poemen 7.

<sup>117</sup> AP Arsenius 42 (transl. Ward (1984) 19).

<sup>118</sup> Weiner (1992) 38. See also the discussion in the introduction and chapter 3.

<sup>119</sup> Winlock and Crum (1926) 1.67.

produced in one place, it is unlikely that many of these objects would become singularised for those making them. However, like the clothing of Daniel, a basket that was made by, or once belonged to, a well-respected monk, could be saved for further use after his death. Again, the importance lies in the biography of specific objects for the creation of their meaning and value.

It should be emphasised though that, as demonstrated by the texts, the main value for the monastic brethren was located in the production of these objects, rather than the finished items. The process of manufacture held meaning for them in a way that the finished items did not. However, the act of giving these baskets to others acknowledges their understanding of the value of these objects for those beyond the monastery environment. In fact, this could well have been something that the monks utilised in the selling of their handmade wares. It is highly plausible that baskets either bought in markets or acquired directly from the monastic sites themselves, were curated and passed on within families as heirlooms.

### **Layers of Meaning**

This case study of monastic baskets explicitly demonstrates the way in which objects have layers of meaning and different kinds of value simultaneously. This is clearly seen in the different scales of value and meaning experienced by the monks themselves compared to laypeople, and the corresponding emphases on process versus completed object. Similarly, for each group of people there is the potential for the baskets to concurrently occupy differing statuses and modes of meaning. For the monastic creators of the object, we can see that meaning was embodied through process and the act of making. As outlined above, these objects came to represent the lives and identities of the monks, allowing the representation of themselves in physical form. However, of seemingly equal importance was the potential economic value of the finished objects, as it provided a means of financial support, and thus independence. As such, the finished objects did have a meaning for the monks, albeit one that was drastically different from those outside the monastery.

Layers of meaning also existed for the baskets owned by lay people beyond the monastery environs. Firstly, the basket has a value in a practical sense, inasmuch as they have a specific utility that is derived from their material nature. However, they can also represent objects of religious worth, occupying as they do the position of blessings or *eulogiae*. As such they can be seen to transform from a commodity to a holy object, or represent both simultaneously. In a secular sense, these objects also communicate geographical locations, as well as the context of their acquisition through reference to their place of origin, in not only material terms but also through their capacity to retain memories for the owner. They can therefore function as souvenirs and mementoes, and have a worth that is derived from their ability to evoke other places in space and time.

The key to these multiple scales of value and meaning is dependent upon the biographies of these objects, and which aspects are emphasised at different times. Context here is crucial; the meaning of a basket within a monk's cell compared to one within the ordinary domestic sphere would be very different. As such, it is clear that meaning and subsequent value is closely associated with the link between personal biography and the biographies of possessions. This allows a single object to represent a commodity, a utilitarian object, a secular souvenir, and a religious blessing.



## Conclusions

Interpreting material culture in terms of economic and political values, or issues of social status, represents only one aspect of the lives of domestic objects. This book represents a departure from this traditional kind of scholarship. By re-evaluating evidence for domestic possessions it provides a fresh perspective, and reveals objects in Late Antiquity in terms of personal and cultural meanings, illuminating the relationships between people and their possessions. This research consequently represents a step further towards a more nuanced and realistic comprehension of late antique material culture.

Through the application of object biography and other theoretical approaches tied to the understanding of heirlooms, gifts, and souvenirs, this book reveals the way in which personal meaning was created, and reveals the types of objects that fulfilled these roles. This focus allows for the consideration of lower status domestic and non-elite material culture, as such values are not specific to a certain class. Furthermore, it allows the meaning of objects throughout their lifespans to be drawn out and discussed. Overall, this research has placed an emphasis on the private meanings of objects that is often overlooked. Thus, through its unique approach, it provides an awareness of the full trajectories of possessions, considering both the 'before' and 'after' of an object's life, beyond the moment at which we encounter it within the evidence. This contrasts with the more usual interpretations based upon the 'single snapshots' of a moment in the life of the object that the evidence often provides, and allows for the appreciation of multiple meanings for personal possessions. Problems within contemporary scholarship, especially relating to unhelpful terminology or the anachronistic use of categories, have also been revealed. This is associated with the fact that, at present, there is no real framework in which to assess late antique evidence for personal scales of meaning and values, thus uncritical use of terms such as heirloom or souvenir, is common. This book therefore also represents a viable approach to the evidence in future investigations of this kind.

This concluding section will now summarise the key findings from each chapter. Discussion will then focus on what these results can tell us about life in late antique society more broadly, and the role of material culture within it. Common themes linking the four main chapters will be identified and considered, before the findings of this book are applied in an imaginative exercise in reconstructing the contents of a late antique home.

### Heirlooms

This study has shown that heirlooms in the late antique world could take almost any form, and that they were not restricted to one level of society. Despite the potential difficulties with the nature of the evidence, preliminary conclusions surrounding the lives of heirlooms within late antique society can be made. This book has shown that heirlooms were created in a number of distinct ways. This could firstly occur through the movement of objects between individuals within a family, often at significant and liminal social occasions, such as marriage and death.<sup>1</sup> Heirlooms, alternatively, could also be created via lengthy curation within a domestic context, which provided the opportunity for the accumulation of memories. For example, contexts within the home, such as storage or the domestic shrine, allowed the extended preservation and static use or display of domestic material culture, with meanings associated with family identity and memory collecting as a consequence.

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, the *maniaces* necklace given as a dowry in P.Oxy.10.1273, or the domestic objects bequeathed in the 4th c. centurion's will (P.Col.7.188).

The identification of such contexts also reveals that heirlooms represented a very broad spectrum in terms of value and use. This is because the existence of heirlooms is dependent on the capacity of material culture to store memories, and thus evoke previous owners and familial heritage.<sup>2</sup> This ability is common to all objects; therefore, by extension, any item of material culture can become redolent of past familial experiences and ancestors, and thus become an heirloom. Consequently, both objects explicitly intended to become heirlooms, and objects whose heirloom status has developed as a by-product of continued family ownership, can be identified within the evidence.

'Purpose-made' heirlooms, especially in the form of jewellery and dining ware, are particularly prominent; their heirloom status can often be identified through iconography or inscriptions.<sup>3</sup> Often there is a relationship between high value possessions and heirlooms. This is likely a reflection of a conscious, or otherwise, desire to connect an object's material value with the intangible worth of personal meanings that is inherent within heirlooms. However, the interpretation of lower value objects as heirlooms is also possible. Documentary evidence, such as wills and receipts from the papyri, record the transmission of more ordinary objects, all of which had the potential to function as heirlooms. For example, the domestic objects listed in the 4th c. receipt of a deceased's possessions are distinctly everyday in nature, however their biographies nevertheless mean they have the capacity to become heirloom objects.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, this book has revealed that heirlooms were not exclusively precious objects associated with the elite. In fact it seems that many heirloom objects were explicitly personal possessions closely connected with the identities of their previous owners, for example the clothing of Junius Messalla or the jewellery found in dowries. Whilst many of these examples are associated with high status individuals, they are, most significantly, wearable personal possessions, whose physical interaction with their owners enhances their evocative capabilities.<sup>5</sup> This creation and evocation of meaning and memory is relevant to all personal possessions, regardless of value or status. Similarly, this book has also revealed that texts of varying kinds, both documentary and literary, had the potential to behave as heirlooms, just as any other kind of material culture could. Private letters and important documents could be kept within household archives, like that of Dioscorus, travelling through generations of the same family and exhibiting a complex web of meanings and values.<sup>6</sup>

One of the main evidential problems that appears within the archaeological evidence is our (in)ability to positively identify older objects as heirlooms. This is especially true of potentially anomalous older objects in grave contexts. These are often items that represent unlikely material survivals due to their intrinsically fragile nature; see for example the glass and pottery objects discussed in chapter 1. Such occurrences have variously been interpreted as the disinterment of old objects from nearby graves which are then reburied, although in this book I have also argued for the potential curation of such items within specific domestic contexts, either through storage or because of their heirloom status.<sup>7</sup> However, perhaps the disinterment and reuse of older objects that were *not* heirlooms represents a broader understanding of the social value of ancestral possessions. To seek out older objects from outside the family's own domestic possessions to then bury as grave goods can be seen as an acknowledgment of the cultural suitability of heirlooms as grave items, and as a comment on contemporary

---

<sup>2</sup> See chapter 1.

<sup>3</sup> For example, the inscription on the Sevso Treasure's Hunting Plate is explicit about its heirloom status; the 'marriage' portrait on the Projecta Casket, combined with the variety of monograms, suggests an heirloom. See chapter 1.

<sup>4</sup> P.Oxy.14.1645.

<sup>5</sup> SHA *Carus, Carinus, Numerian* 20.4. P.Oxy.10.1273.

<sup>6</sup> See chapter 1. Also MacCoull (1988).

<sup>7</sup> See chapter 1.

practices relating to heirloom interment more broadly. The age of the acquired and reinterred objects represent the values embodied by heirlooms, even if the specific object is not in fact an heirloom of the deceased. Instead the found objects represent these meanings, usually conferred through the biography of an heirloom, via other means, such as the physical age of the item and its material appearance. As such, these older pseudo-heirloom objects still function to convey a sense of genealogical legitimacy in the form of a material symbol.

Such an interpretation links more broadly to the presence and popularity of antiques during this period.<sup>8</sup> This is something that has already been discussed within this book in relation to contemporary understandings of *paideia* and classical education.<sup>9</sup> However, it could also relate to the genealogical legitimacy that heirloom objects convey within the home. Therefore, the presence and display of antique objects, with noticeable signs of age or antiquated in style, might be favoured as communicators of the same sense of heritage and familial continuity as an authentic heirloom would. This certainly ties into contemporary cultural ideals associated with family lineage and ancestry. Issues surrounding genealogical authenticity can be identified culturally through traditional links to foundation myths such as Romulus and Remus, and the imperial tradition of tracing one's origins back through time to mythical progenitors.<sup>10</sup> Such practices are also emphasised within the Bible, where in both the Old and New Testaments, family trees and the family heritage of individuals, including Jesus himself, are listed.<sup>11</sup>

The importance placed upon the role of heirlooms in practices of inheritance is also emphasised within the sources; the description of Messalla's squandering of his heirlooms is tinged with outrage over the disinheritance of his heirs.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, it is telling that the story of the theft of heirloom gems is used to emphasise the horror at an official's behaviour in John Lydus.<sup>13</sup> Of course, all objects have a value, and such expressions likely reflect, to a certain extent, the loss of material wealth. However, they also reflect, more broadly, the desirability of the values embodied by heirlooms: heritage, genealogical legitimacy, personal and familial history.

Furthermore, in terms of object use, there is evidence for a traditional cultural emphasis on the evocation of ancestors through material culture. This can be identified through the continuation of traditions from the earlier Roman period. Homes, in particular those of the elite, were closely associated with family ancestry and the display of heritage and lineage.<sup>14</sup> Traditionally heirloom portrait busts displayed within Roman houses evoked the presence of ancestors, and affirmed the genealogical authenticity of the current inhabitants, being passed down through generations of aristocratic families into the late antique period.<sup>15</sup> Their existence is referred to in the 6th c. legal code of Justinian, and the writings of the 5th to 6th c. aristocrat Boethius.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the presence of objects representing past ancestors, and the heritage of a house's inhabitants, continued to be familiar aspects of domestic space during this period.

Other evidence also demonstrates that the home was considered the ideal place to advertise your personal lineage in Late Antiquity. Quintus Fabius Memmius Symmachus, son of the 4th c. orator, is recorded via an inscription as creating a gallery of ancestral

---

<sup>8</sup> See for example the Aquae Tarbellicae collection of antique statuettes: Santrot (1996).

<sup>9</sup> See chapter 1.

<sup>10</sup> For example, the Julian dynasty's ancestral association with Venus.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Genesis 5 (*Revised English Bible* edn.) for the descendants of Adam, and Matthew 1 (*Revised English Bible* edn.) for the genealogy of Jesus.

<sup>12</sup> SHA *Carus, Carinus, Numerian* 20.4.

<sup>13</sup> Joh. Lydus, *Mag.* 3.59.

<sup>14</sup> See Flower (1996) on the role of ancestor masks within Roman houses, and Hillner (2003) on the role of houses in late antique Roman senatorial families.

<sup>15</sup> Flower (1996) 264-69.

<sup>16</sup> Boeth. *Consol.* 1 prose 1.3. See also Flower (1996) 264-67.

statues to honour both his own and his wife's family.<sup>17</sup> On a smaller scale, such evidence can be compared to that investigated within this book to show similar practices: the Sevso Hunting Plate explicitly refers to ancestors through its inscription, and the portrait medallions discussed in chapter 2 similarly evoke the specific identities of past generations if inherited. Furthermore, the ability for objects to evoke memories and previous owners through their biography allows the identification of heirlooms outside of the elite social stratum. Thus jewellery, dining ware, and clothing can still be understood as evoking ancestors for those who have knowledge of the biography of the object.

This book has also considered evidence for the transmission of heirlooms between individuals within families. The majority of these behaviours involved small scale objects; many of these possessions were also associated with women, as were many of the contexts in which transmission between generations occurred. A link can therefore be determined more specifically between types of heirloom object and socially constructed gender roles. Within the sources, women feature prominently in the transmission of heirlooms within families (the natural bias of dowry and marriage documents has already been mentioned).<sup>18</sup> Notably however, none of the sources quoted in chapter 1 represent objects moving exclusively between men. The closest to such a scenario is the inheritance of the centurion's possessions by his brothers, but even these are not designated as exclusively theirs, but rather to be split equally between themselves and the female relatives.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps this evidence represents a difference in the kinds of objects passed between family members of different genders. The majority of the heirloom objects found within these sources are domestic in nature, and the home was traditionally the woman's realm. Furthermore, many of these objects can be interpreted as female possessions, and represent traditions of giving between women of the same family. This is especially the case for jewellery, which was deemed suitable for transmission between relatives as dowries, wedding gifts, and family heirlooms.

The kinds of possessions not represented within the texts relate to the ownership of houses, land, and slaves. Were these to be inherited by men? Property and land are immovable and as such can be difficult to divide up between relatives. In contrast, moveable property—such as domestic possessions and personal clothing and jewellery—can be distributed amongst a number of heirs relatively easily. The inheritance of such objects is also more suited to the traditional movements of women within late antique society. Families grow and change, with members joining and leaving the central unit through events such as birth, marriage and death. When a woman married, she usually left her family home to join her husband as they began their own family.<sup>20</sup> In such circumstances, moveable property, such as that listed in chapter 1, are the most suitable to give her to begin her new life. They are also symbolic of the continuation of the lineage she left in material form. As moveable property, heirlooms allowed for a continued presence of family members and genealogical heritage in new locations and sets of circumstances.

Problems, however, arise from the fact that, whilst heirlooms are by necessity curated over time, much of the evidence reflects only precise moments within the lives of objects. For example, references within texts to the inheritance of objects identifies the moment that meaning can be created, namely the moment of an object's transition from one generation to another within a family.<sup>21</sup> However, such primary sources often

---

<sup>17</sup> ILS 2947. See also Hillner (2003) 133.

<sup>18</sup> See chapter 1.

<sup>19</sup> P.Col.7.188.

<sup>20</sup> The movement of the bride to her husband-to-be's home on the day of marriage is emphasised in the Digest of Justinian: *Dig.* 23.2.5, 35.1.15.

<sup>21</sup> For example the centurion's will: P.Col.7.188.

lack information on the lives of objects before or after this action. The consequence of this is that it is impossible to be sure of the presence of heirlooms within a textual source unless the moment in which meaning is created is shown. The same is true for archaeological evidence. The identification of an older object within an excavation context is reliant upon the dependability of dating techniques, which may not always prove to be accurate.

Issues also exist with the identification of heirlooms by modern scholars. Although heirloom material may be recognised and identified within contemporary scholarship, a full consideration of the significance of this evidence, and what this status means in terms of the contemporary understandings of the object, is not always given. For example, Bruhn's study of numismatic jewellery does identify certain examples as containing coins older than their mount, and highlights the reference in the *Digest of Justinian* that ancient coins could be bequeathed as legacies within families.<sup>22</sup> However, despite this, the focus of discussion remains on the role of such jewellery as preserving the coins' bullion value, and its decorative function, rather than exploring the personal and cultural meanings of these heirlooms objects. By ignoring these important aspects of the possession, the full spectrum of reasons for the incorporation of coins into jewellery, and their role as heirlooms within families, are not considered, inevitably limiting the discussion.

## Gifts

This book has shown that gift giving was an extensive feature of life in late antique society, and that it occurred in a variety of contexts in all levels of society. Gifts were given on a range of occasions, or *ad hoc* as a general gesture of sociality. In terms of occasion, gift giving behaviour is recorded in the sources as coinciding with major life events, in particular marriage and birthdays, or alternatively at more communal occasions, specifically festivals. For personal occasions, gifts of high quality domestic objects are notable. For example, silverware especially associated with dining or the toilet feature in the evidence, along with jewellery and items of food and drink.<sup>23</sup> There is also a connection between the high value of the objects in material form, and the important meaning of occasions such as weddings, much in the same way as seen for high value heirlooms, discussed above. As such, the exchange of gifts and the objects themselves work to emphasise the significance of the events.

Similarly, imperial gift giving is found extensively within the source materials and often commemorates specific imperial anniversaries. This is much the same sort of behaviour as witnessed for gift giving on anniversaries, weddings, and other such occasions by ordinary people within the late antique period. The act of imperial gift giving, combined with the often high status gifts, such as silverware, similarly functions to distinguish the event and emphasise its importance. The high value of imperial gifts further functioned to honour the recipient, and also had a practical role in supplementing the wages of soldiers during this period.<sup>24</sup>

However, this book has demonstrated that for most events, lower value objects were also available as gifts, representing this behaviour outside of the social elites. Objects such as gold glass vessels with portrait busts were given as wedding gifts, and represent attractive, yet reasonably cheap, objects, as the amount of gold used was little and the decoration often crudely executed.<sup>25</sup> Even for imperial gifts, there were a range of levels of quality and value, with grand silver *missoria* being recreated in glass, and likely other

---

<sup>22</sup> Bruhn (1993) 1. *Dig.* 7.1.28.

<sup>23</sup> Several of these items feature as gifts in Ausonius' *epithalamium* poem: Auson. *Cent. nupt.* 17.5. See also wine as a wedding gift in SB 14. 12077.

<sup>24</sup> See discussion in chapter 2.

<sup>25</sup> For example, the vessel base in fig. 10, which is discussed in chapters 2 and 3 of this book.

materials too, to provide gifts of a cheaper value.<sup>26</sup> Gifts recorded in the sources as being exchanged at traditional festivals, such as the Kalends, were usually of a standard form, such as gold coins or gilded fruit. They represent a smaller financial outlay per gift object, although other more personalised and potentially higher value gifts would have been exchanged between closer individuals.<sup>27</sup> For other celebrations such as Easter, there is a definite correlation between the kind of object given (seemingly religious texts) and the event itself.<sup>28</sup> The evidence for festival gifts demonstrates that this common behaviour ensured the homogeneity of the community participating in the event. Furthermore, in cases such as gift exchange between geographically disparate Christians at Easter, it served to unite the community through material culture.

Thus it is clear that material culture was used, via gift giving, as a social tool within Late Antiquity; this book has demonstrated that material culture was used extensively to create and maintain relationships between individuals at all social levels. As such, this activity is both meaningful and pragmatic. This is certainly the case, in part, for imperial gifts, which were distributed to ensure diplomatic relationships were maintained.<sup>29</sup> Such uses also existed in the lower levels of society, for example in the papyrus letter that requests lenient taxation from a customs house and is accompanied by unidentified gifts to apparently sweeten the deal.<sup>30</sup> This use of gift objects is reliant upon a sense of necessary reciprocity, as discussed by the key gift theorists Mauss and Gregory.<sup>31</sup> When placed in this context, this book has shown that the act of giving gifts in the late antique period worked to create mutual obligations between individuals, often for political ends, and also demonstrated adherence to dominant social conventions. This is referred to directly in the source material: one papyri letter states that making return wedding gifts is the right thing to do.<sup>32</sup>

Gift giving is an essential part of social and political interaction in any society, and it was certainly a common practice in the earlier Roman period, where it was also used for maintaining connections and obligations between parties. Euergetism, or private donation for public benefit, was a feature of Greek and Roman society. It saw the most well-off fund civic projects for the benefit of society, in return for prestige, status and loyalty.<sup>33</sup> Many of these features are recognisable outcomes of the gift giving we witness in late antique sources. Furthermore, the patronage system, a key feature of earlier Roman society, which saw high status individuals support lower status clients through material means and social influence, was still active in the late antique period.<sup>34</sup>

A link can also be drawn between politically motivated gift exchange and its use in maintaining relationships within families and communities. The papyrological evidence reveals that gift giving on a low level and frequent scale was a naturalised behaviour within family groups. Private letters feature the movement of quite ordinary objects between individuals, especially in terms of food and drink, which can be interpreted as symbolising care and affection.<sup>35</sup> Gifted objects can embody their donor and maintain connections between giver and recipient, something that is enhanced should the gifts

---

<sup>26</sup> For example, the fragment of a large glass plate that features iconography found on other imperial platters: Oliver (1975) 70.

<sup>27</sup> See chapter 2 of this book.

<sup>28</sup> For example, Greg. Nyss. *Ep.* 4.

<sup>29</sup> Such as those between Justinian and the queen of the Sabir Huns: Malalas 18.13.

<sup>30</sup> P.Oxy.16.1872. See discussion in chapter 2.

<sup>31</sup> For full discussion, see chapter 2.

<sup>32</sup> P.Flor.3.332.

<sup>33</sup> Much has been written on this topic, notably by Veyne (1990), and Lomas and Cornell (2003).

<sup>34</sup> Both Bagnall and Brown discuss the role of patronage in late antique society. See Brown (1992) 35-70, and Bagnall (1993) 214-29.

<sup>35</sup> See for example P.Benaki 4.

also be handmade, as can be seen in relation to examples of clothing in the papyrological sources.<sup>36</sup>

The truth of such an interpretation is enhanced if we consider inheritance to also represent gift giving between generations of a family, and other contexts of gift exchange in Late Antiquity sought to create the same effect. Imperial donation provided a method to create a surrogate family in which the same kinds of loyalties and strength of ties was emulated. Such a practice was used to create networks and inculcate individuals into specific cultural traditions. For example, the sending of letters and the exchanging of gifts at Easter strengthened a Christian community that was geographically spread, something emphasised by Jerome's exhortation for the recipient to 'call to mind the friend in whom you delight'.<sup>37</sup> A focus on religious doctrine within the letters and gifted texts, emphasised the values of the community to which the recipients belonged.

The importance of letters as a material means of uniting separated individuals has been revealed during the course of this book. There was a clear reliance upon material culture in this form in connecting people in Late Antiquity; the evidence also shows that letters were considered as gifts by both senders and recipients. Letters, as a result, could evoke the presence and identity of their maker, enhanced by their 'handmade' nature as personal written texts. This is referred to explicitly within several extant letters from the period; for example Jerome in the 4th c., states he will find his friend, 'present in absence through an interchange of letters'.<sup>38</sup> Thus, letters also functioned to provide a proxy or surrogate presence for absent individuals, which in itself is relevant to late antique material culture more broadly, and will be explored further below.

This reliance upon gifts as maintaining relationships within late antique society is symptomatic of a period in which the movement of people was relatively common.<sup>39</sup> Certainly terms such as the 'Migration Period' suggest large-scale movements of people into the empire, a context in which the benefits of gift giving in securing community identities and loyalties seems clear. However, it is less clear whether movement during this period was as extensive as previous scholarship has suggested; in fact, arguments and interpretations of the so-called Migration Period remains a contentious issue in late antique studies.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, whilst perhaps not unique to this period, there is still extensive evidence revealing that travel in Late Antiquity was by no means uncommon.<sup>41</sup>

Changes within the administration of the empire also resulted in the movement of people both in the long and short term, that would necessitate the use of material culture to maintain relationships. During Late Antiquity, imperial administration became enormously centralised, with power and decision-making retained within the central nucleus of government.<sup>42</sup> This weakened many provincial cities both economically and culturally, in favour of the seat of central power at Constantinople.<sup>43</sup> Thus, in order to access officials within the imperial chain of command, late antique citizens would need to travel more often, and potentially further. Delegates from the provinces would visit the main administrative centres for audiences with the imperial inner circle, which required travel to access the true seat of power.<sup>44</sup> The archive of

---

<sup>36</sup> P.Oxy. 56.3860. Homemade gifts represent a specific form of meaning in which the identity of the maker is intrinsically tied to the object through the manufacturing process: see discussion in chapter 2.

<sup>37</sup> Jer. *Ep.* 71.7 (transl. Schaff and Wade (1893) 154).

<sup>38</sup> Jer. *Ep.* 71.7 (transl. Schaff and Wade (1893) 154).

<sup>39</sup> For a further discussion of travel in Late Antiquity, see chapter 3.

<sup>40</sup> A good overview of the relevant arguments and scholarship is provided by Maas (2012) 73-74.

<sup>41</sup> See chapter 3. Also Handley (2011).

<sup>42</sup> Brown (1992) 10; Jones (1986) vol.1, 403.

<sup>43</sup> Haldon (1999) 2.

<sup>44</sup> Brown (1992) 11.

Dioscorus records such behaviour, with documentary texts indicating that the lawyer travelled from Egypt to Constantinople for such an audience, in order to petition against changes in local tax collection.<sup>45</sup> Increased movement for official reasons such as this consequently led to an increased reliance upon methods of staying in contact with loved ones and communities, namely gift exchange.

Such governmental developments were also a factor in the level of imperial gifting witnessed in the source material. Whilst the emperor was positioned as sole ruler, in reality this vast power had to be mediated through his representatives, as he was almost always an impossible distance from the majority of his subjects.<sup>46</sup> Thus, the giving of imperial gifts was crucial in an environment where power relations were stretched to a maximum. It was only within the late antique period that a codified system of gifts featuring the image of the emperor, or associated inscriptions, began to develop; similarly consular gifts only appear during this period too.<sup>47</sup> This happened as a response to the centralisation of power; gifts were a necessary method of forging alliances with subjects through gift giving in an empire that covered such a large territory. The same interpretation can also be drawn for the local imperial representatives themselves. Certainly provincial governors were keen to make allies locally to support their positions, due to the tenuous connection between themselves and the emperor.<sup>48</sup> In this light, the smaller gifts by lesser officials, such as the *quaestor* diptychs and the bowls distributed by Symmachus, are a direct result of the changes in the dynamics and distribution of imperial power.<sup>49</sup>

Moreover, the use of gifts represents a movement towards reward-based loyalty, seen in the warring tribal societies on the edges of the empire such as the Goths and Huns, who flourished after the end of the Roman empire in the West. These bands of warriors were held together by trust, faith and loyalty to a single leader.<sup>50</sup> In such a system, gift giving provided an important method of retaining power and support from troops and subjects. It also reflects a similar emphasis on material culture and the evocation of family ties explored in relation to heirloom objects. This reliance on loyalty as the basis of power is closely associated with the decoration and design of many late antique gift objects, which function to distinguish both donors and recipients from other members of society. Imperial or consular gifts with recognisable iconography or inscriptions, such as the Missorium of Theodosius become symbolic objects; they are visible signs of the owner's membership of a group. In such circumstances, the donor is giving not only material gifts but also an identity to the recipient.

This is especially true in relation to highly visible objects, such as the belts, rings, and brooches that are similar to the ring inscribed with *VIRTUS MILITVM*.<sup>51</sup> These gifts become outward signs of belonging. Not only does the imperial donor create a loyalty-based community through the act of giving, but strengthens it through the lasting effect of the object itself. Objects of display linked with consuls or emperors communicate messages of allegiance to viewers, and promote the image of the emperor independently of his initial gifting action. This continued social action is thanks to the agency of the objects; their material form continues to communicate meaning after the initial exchange.

Evidence for gift-giving behaviour and artefacts, especially associated with elite and imperial gifts, has been extensively studied in previous research. However the expanded focus of this present study shows that similar behaviours existed throughout society; a range of material culture for gift giving was available to those of lesser financial means

---

<sup>45</sup> P.Cair.Masp.1. 67032; P. Cair.Masp.1. 67024-25. See also MacCoull (1988) 1, 10-11.

<sup>46</sup> Brown (1992) 9.

<sup>47</sup> Johansen (1994) 224.

<sup>48</sup> Brown (1992) 15.

<sup>49</sup> Symm. *Ep.* 7.76.

<sup>50</sup> Shaw (1999) 158.

<sup>51</sup> Johansen (1994). 4th c. AD ring featuring coin of Diocletian, British Museum 1917,0501.264.



as well. It confirms the role of gifted objects as political and social tools based on scales of reciprocity. Yet this study also reveals the reliance upon gift exchange in maintaining social relationships, and its importance in a society that experienced increased mobility and social change. Thus, the broad evidence for gifts discussed here—both in terms of elite and more ordinary objects—provide an excellent comparison with the other meaningful possessions within this book, revealing common trends in the use of material culture that defy categorisation and represent broader behavioural tendencies.

## Souvenirs

In contrast to previous studies that have focused solely on holy relics, this book has shown that both secular and religious souvenirs were produced and purchased throughout the period of Late Antiquity. The evidence reveals that souvenirs were either purpose-made objects intended to provoke memories of the place or event commemorated, or other more ordinary objects taken as personal mementoes. Purpose-made souvenirs often featured iconography, inscriptions or an implicit function or behaviour that represented their place of origin and the experience of the traveller. For example, the Pharos bottle (fig. 18) and the charioteer glass (fig. 25) represent objects that materially evoke a specific place or event through their decoration. However, Theophane's Silenus water jar and the mentions of textiles from Skinepeous in documentary papyri, represent examples of 'foreign' or regional material culture.<sup>52</sup>

This book has also shown that food could function as souvenirs; the aroma and textures of food have the ability to powerfully evoke memories associated with other places and experiences.<sup>53</sup> Regional specialities are certainly known and referred to within papyrological sources, such as the Canopic cakes, presumably associated with the town of Canopus near Alexandria.<sup>54</sup> Thus, despite Weiner's assertion that food represents an ineffectual inalienable object, its capacity to be replicated, in terms of the physical experience of eating, means that food and drink evoke other places and previous encounters through their materiality, as more conventional souvenirs do.<sup>55</sup>

Other objects that had no explicit external signifiers highlighting their place of origin could also be purchased as souvenirs; their association with this location would thus only be known to those familiar with the object's biography, thus their ability to evoke this information would be to a limited audience. This range of objects corresponds to Stewart's categories of souvenirs of either 'external sights', or 'samples'.<sup>56</sup> The same categorisations can be used for the religious souvenirs discussed within chapter 3. Certain objects were made explicitly to function as pilgrim souvenirs, evoking their place of origin and its spirituality through their material form. Examples of this would be the glass jug from Jerusalem depicting a monumental cross (fig. 35), and the Menas *ampullae* decorated with the image of the saint associated with the location (fig. 34). Other Christian souvenirs, however, were neutral, ephemeral substances or pieces of local material culture that would be unidentifiable to anyone who did not know their biography. Soil and water, for example, were popular as material blessings, seen in the earth taken from the Holy Sepulchre, or the foot washing water requested in a Coptic letter, discussed in chapter 3.<sup>57</sup>

There are other clear similarities between religious and secular souvenir objects. Both kinds when placed within formal structures of meaning rely upon collective memories of places and events. The Pharos jug (fig. 18) uses recognisable imagery to

---

<sup>52</sup> P.Ryl.630; P.Princ.2.82.

<sup>53</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>54</sup> SB 8.9746 = SB 3.7243.

<sup>55</sup> Weiner (1992) 38.

<sup>56</sup> Stewart (1993) 138. See also discussion in chapter 3.

<sup>57</sup> *Placentini Itinerarium* 171.18; P.Mich.Copt.8.

convey that location effectively, even to people who may not have seen it first-hand. Similarly, Christian souvenirs rely upon familiar iconography, such as scenes from the Bible (for example the Sancta Sanctorum box: fig. 32) in order to communicate their significance. As such, both of these kinds of souvenirs use communal knowledge of specific sights, stories and events to visually communicate their biographical origin.

Both Christian and secular souvenirs had metonymic functions, in which they represented a greater whole through their partial representation of their place or event of origin. For example, the depiction of the victorious charioteer Trasimachus and his horse (figs 25 and 26) represents the whole chariot-racing event for which the object was purchased. Similarly, the seafront scene of Baiae on the Populonia bottle (figs 19 and 20) represents the entire town at which the object was acquired. Likewise, with Christian souvenirs, the image of Theodosius' stepped cross on the small glass jug represents the entire holy site at Jerusalem (fig. 35), whilst the earth of the pilgrim token from Syria (fig. 33) symbolises the complete pilgrimage site from which it originates.

In terms of iconography used on souvenirs, at first sight it seems that depictions of physical places or monuments correspond to secular souvenirs—for example the seaside scenes from Puteoli and Baiae, and the image of the Pharos from Alexandria—whereas religious souvenirs depict people, narratives and symbols, for example the Jewish jug decorated with a menorah or the Menas *ampullae* featuring the saint in the *orans* position. However, this reflects more what we might expect to see, rather than what the evidence itself shows. The aforementioned glass jug from Jerusalem shows the stepped cross from Golgotha; certainly a religious symbol but also a monumental feature from a specific location. Similarly, the decoration on the Monza-Bobbio flasks feature such detailed representations of the buildings in Jerusalem that they relate to the reality of the architecture.<sup>58</sup>

Secular souvenirs also feature the kinds of iconography seen in 'typical' religious souvenirs. The glass vessel base of Orfitus and Constantius includes the figure of Hercules (fig. 10), potentially symbolising the town of Acerentia, which held a shrine to the god. The dish from Otañes features individuals enacting the bathing process (fig. 21), rather than depicting the site itself. As such, souvenirs draw on a wide ranging, but universal, visual language in order to convey their origin and significance as objects through material means. However, Christian souvenirs do often have an emphasis on visual narrative and individual characters. This is likely a reflection of the fact that much of Christian iconography from this period is drawn from a textual source, the Bible, meaning narrative depictions are common. The inclusion of other visual elements in these items, such as realistic architectural details, shows a lineage from other more conventional souvenir objects from the period.

By focusing on a comparison between Christian and secular souvenirs, there is naturally an emphasis on Christian evidence. There is also a significant bias within modern secondary sources towards Christian evidence. As such, the increase in evidence for souvenirs relating to Christianity in Late Antiquity can in part be associated with scholarly trends, rather than a representative view of all the evidence available. I acknowledge that this present research is guilty of the same bias, by focusing on Christian material culture in its attempt to compare different kinds of souvenirs from the same period. However, by comparing the familiar Christian evidence with less studied 'secular' souvenirs, we can see that, overall, the two groups had more in common than the distinctive categories they are assigned might suggest; they clearly have similar functions and capabilities. This in itself is an important thing to acknowledge, as it suggests that by ignoring other types of evidence, there is the creation and sustainment of artificial segregations between object types. Thus, this book

---

<sup>58</sup> Ainalov (1961) 240-42.

has presented the beginnings of a holistic approach to material souvenirs from Late Antiquity.

The increasing evidence for Christian souvenir objects within textual and archaeological sources is due to the increase in the development of *loca sancta* and Christian pilgrimage throughout Late Antiquity, which provided more opportunities for the acquisition of souvenirs. The creation of souvenirs in the late antique period was a continuation of traditions witnessed in the earlier Roman era though, identifiable through the presence in the archaeological record of objects such as the Rudge Cup and the miniature bottles depicting Artemis.<sup>59</sup> To understand this as a development simply into Christian and secular souvenirs though is misleading; Jewish souvenirs, for example, briefly mentioned in chapter 3, also existed. Furthermore, there continued to be pilgrimages to pagan temples, with textual sources revealing the purchase of objects at such sites. This is shown by the Archive of Theophanes, in which he is recorded as buying a gilded imperial statue for an apparent dedication in the temple at Ascalon.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, there are the late antique silver miniature shrines from Ephesus, mentioned first by St Paul.<sup>61</sup> Often these objects were dedicated as votive gifts within a temple; a ritual activity that is witnessed through huge deposits of intact votive lamps left by visitors at the destroyed site of the Temple of Asklepieion in Corinth up to the mid 6th c.<sup>62</sup>

This leaving of votive gifts provides a different trajectory for objects compared to the many Christian pilgrim souvenirs we see being taken home and curated within domestic space.<sup>63</sup> However, again, further interrogation of the evidence suggests similarities in the treatment of objects and behaviour that unite these supposedly disparate souvenir types. Certain pagan objects could be installed in the household shrine for domestic veneration, as likely happened with the figurines of Artemis from Ephesus (fig. 30). Secondly, Christians also left objects at holy sites, as votive gifts in hope of, or in thanks for, healing and as signs of devotion. This is clear from the Piacenza Pilgrim's description of the ornaments decorating the rock outside the Holy Sepulchre.<sup>64</sup>

In this light, the behaviours relating to souvenirs appear more homogenous, rather than distinct. The evidence of Christian souvenirs represents instead the continuation and modification of traditions witnessed within the practices of pagan worship, both in terms of the taking and leaving of material culture from holy sites. This accords with the continuation of other practices from earlier Roman times, such as pre-Christian pilgrimage and incubation at holy sites.<sup>65</sup> Thus, the material evidence of sacred souvenirs represents continuity in terms of behaviours and religious practices during times of religious change. Such cultural developments can be witnessed beyond the sphere of material culture; for example in late antique Alexandria traditional astrologers continued to practice, but within a Christianised context.<sup>66</sup> In this way, the continuation of practices relating to the use and meaning of material culture likely also continued, as demonstrated by the evidence of souvenirs, but within a Christianised structure of meaning.

There is, however, a definite focus in the late antique period on the materiality of souvenir objects, something clearly demonstrated by the emphasis on the senses in early Christian souvenirs. Souvenirs relating to Christian worship explicitly used their material nature to convey sanctity and concepts relating to the spiritual. Thus, *ampullae*

---

<sup>59</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>60</sup> P.Ryl.627, verso i, 214.

<sup>61</sup> Acts 19:24-27, (*Revised English Bible* edn). See chapter 3.

<sup>62</sup> Rothaus (2000) 48-49.

<sup>63</sup> August. *De civ. D.* 22.8.

<sup>64</sup> *Placentini Itinerarium* 18.

<sup>65</sup> For example, the Temple of Asclepius complex at Pergamon had a specific incubation building for pilgrims to sleep in: Hoffmann (1998) 54.

<sup>66</sup> Haas (1997) 152.

and reliquaries contained actual material substances from the *loca sancta* to communicate the intangible power of God through physical contact. The portability of such material objects allowed the experience of the pilgrim to continue away from the location, rather than relying upon the veneration at the specific site. This is of course in part the purpose of souvenirs: to evoke experiences and places in material form. However, this distinct increase in emphasis on physical experience in late antique Christianity, is represented by an increased focus on the role of the body in the perception and comprehension of the holy.<sup>67</sup> As such, these objects can be seen as symptomatic of the late antique period, and allows them to be placed within a broader context. The wearability of many of the late antique Christian souvenirs, particularly the handled *ampullae*, prefigure later Byzantine traditions of the wearing of relics and blessed substances within *enkolpia* and pectoral crosses. They also emphasise the importance placed upon the physical interaction between human bodies and sacred souvenir objects in the early Christian belief system.

By considering both sacred and secular souvenirs as one object group, this book has shown that material culture evoked places as effectively as it evoked individuals.<sup>68</sup> Thus, material culture functioned to make the world smaller, bringing places and people closer, and giving the owner of the object simultaneous ownership of the people or places evoked. These objects also show that the fact of having travelled—whether it be for business, pleasure, or religious reasons—was an important part of the souvenir owners' personal identity. As such, we can read these objects as representing pride, curiosity and a desire to prolong the experience embodied in the taking and display of souvenirs. This is as true for Christian objects as secular examples; they function outwardly to communicate to others, as well as reflecting a relationship between person and place, and person and object.

## Baskets

Baskets functioned as meaningful auxiliary objects as part of a broader visual and symbolic language during Late Antiquity. However baskets also had the ability to be standalone possessions that held specific meanings, and consequently values; for example, there is a definite connection between the *kalathos* style basket, the act of spinning, and notions of late antique femininity.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, the trend for their inclusion within decorative schemes is associated with images of plenty and agricultural success, as well as specific pagan deities, such as Isis.<sup>70</sup> Thus, baskets can be identified as both practical and culturally significant objects during this period. By focusing on the evidence of monastic baskets, this book has further underlined the way in which objects can embody multiple meanings, and move between statuses such as gift, heirloom, and souvenir during the late antique period. This case study provided a single context in which the themes and trends discussed elsewhere within this book, could be identified and discussed further. It also provided the opportunity for new interpretations of meaningful objects, and allowed significant features invisible in other sources of evidence to come to the fore, which will be summarised below.

The evidence from both the early monastic texts and the archaeological record in Egypt demonstrates that baskets were valuable objects in several ways. Firstly, their production provided an income for the monks of late antique Egypt, and thus represented a pragmatic commodity of economic worth.<sup>71</sup> Secondly, they also had a

---

<sup>67</sup> This feeds into a large area of scholarship on the role of materiality in Late Antiquity: see Riegl (1985); Onians (1980); Cox Miller (2009).

<sup>68</sup> The evocation of people by objects is discussed in chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4.

<sup>69</sup> See chapter 4.

<sup>70</sup> See chapter 4.

<sup>71</sup> Wipszycka (2009) 479. AP Sisoës 16.

practical function within the monastic environment, in terms of containing and carrying other objects.<sup>72</sup> Thirdly, they had a complex layering of meanings for both the monks themselves and those beyond their religious communities, something that this book explores in depth for the first time.

The baskets the monks made had meaning in terms of religious practice; they are recorded as aiding the monks' pursuit of spiritual contemplation and encouraging psychological strength throughout their ascetic lifestyles.<sup>73</sup> The emphasis here is on the value arising from the process of manufacture; it has been argued here that this results from the actions embodied by the creation of the basket itself. The nature of basket making means that there are many repetitions of bodily actions, which create rhythms of movement through the lengthy process. Such repetitive behaviour can be understood as an aid to prayer, helping to focus the mind. It can also aid the effectiveness of the working method itself, allowing it to take on a meditative quality.

Similarities can be found in other cultures that reinforce the role of rhythmic movement or behaviour in relation to manual labour.<sup>74</sup> The practical nature and aid of a rhythm whilst conducting repetitive tasks is discussed in relation to the British Isles in more modern times via the work songs that were a feature of small scale industry and homeworkers. Activities that involved work songs included spinning, weaving, sailing and agricultural tasks, amongst others.<sup>75</sup> Thus, there is a distinct relationship between repetitive rhythms, the process of manufacture, and the focusing of the mind, that lends itself to creating a distinct value in the process of making monastic baskets.

The process of making has not been considered before in terms of personal meaning and its effect on finished objects in Late Antiquity. In the anthropologist Tim Ingold's discussion of the 'textility' of making, he explains how our modern understanding of objects often focuses, incorrectly, on the external imposition of form by the craftsperson during the process of making.<sup>76</sup> In fact, in terms of basket making, the fibres that are woven to create the final object are involved in an active exchange with the movements and body of the maker, allowing the object to grow through the physical dialogue between the two agents.<sup>77</sup> It is not simply the monk who shapes the basket and determines the completed object's form.

In terms of meaning, we can therefore understand the meaning of the object as also stemming directly from the process of making, and the dialogue between material and maker. The activities of the monks conducted during the process of basket making, such as religious discussion, meditation or prayer, are a product of the activity itself, determined in part by the nature of the materials and the technique dictated by them. Therefore, their position as meaningful objects comes directly from the materiality of baskets and the agency of the material in determining the processes used. The material for baskets—the palm leaf strips—also dictates the length of time taken for manufacture of the basket, and the space required to conduct such an activity. All that is needed is a pile of the raw material, a pot for steeping leaves, and a needle for sewing the plaits; requirements that again stem directly from the nature of the basket-making material. These factors mean that it was not the monks who chose basket making as a suitable activity; the accessibility of palm leaves and the process of manufacture this material

---

<sup>72</sup> This also extended into contexts of reuse, seen in the splitting of baskets to be used as a covering for bodies during burial: Winlock and Crum (1926) 1. 50.

<sup>73</sup> The making of baskets allowed the act of continual prayer: see chapter 4: Basket Making as a Spiritual Activity. John Cassian describes manual labour as essential in avoiding *accidie*: John Cassian, *Collationes* 24.1 (transl. Waddell (1998) 165).

<sup>74</sup> I would like to express my thanks to the two commentators at TRAC 2015 who brought Orcadian work songs to my attention.

<sup>75</sup> Korczynski *et al.* (2013) 35-61. Many of the tasks are exclusively male or exclusively female, which could provide a model to further investigate the rhythms of work within Late Antiquity.

<sup>76</sup> Ingold (2010) 92.

<sup>77</sup> Ingold (2000) 341-42.

consequently dictated, instead stimulated the auxiliary activities of prayer, meditation and discussion. Subsequent meanings related to prayer and meditation thus stem from this, rather than the intentionality of the monks.

The process of making is an intrinsic part of the biography of the baskets, and is especially significant as it is referenced directly through the nature of the object's surface. The movements of the monks are visible in the plaited palm fibre, as the patterns are created by their physical actions. This visual sign of production emphasises the physical contact between the basket and the producer, something very important in the creation of material blessings or *eulogiae*. The literary and textual evidence further supports this idea, revealing that monastic products were desirable as pilgrim souvenirs or material blessings.<sup>78</sup> As material symbols, baskets came to represent the 'otherness' of the monastic lifestyle, with these objects' meanings understood by people beyond the monastic complexes, alongside the other cultural values held by baskets during this period.<sup>79</sup> However, the importance of baskets as symbolic of the alternative monastic lifestyle also stems from the fact that, in reality, distinctions between life in these religious communities and beyond in ordinary society was not as clearly drawn as the textual sources would suggest.

The eminent scholar of Late Antiquity, Peter Brown draws the distinction between the figure of the holy man in Syria and the early monks of Egypt. The identity of the early Christian holy man as archetype was not homogeneous, but rather one that held distinct roles in society depending upon the region these individuals lived in. Differences in landscape were the reason for differences between the holy monks of Egypt, who generally lived in organised communities of one form or another, and the holy men of Syria, who were often outlandish in their ascetic acts. This is epitomised by the story of Symeon the Stylite who lived on top of column, as an act of devotion and a highly visible enactment of his separateness from society. The extreme hostility of the Egyptian deserts meant that the monks who chose to live there had to adopt the more conventional lifestyles akin to ordinary Egyptian townsfolk, in terms of reliance on labour and habitable dwellings in order to survive in the harsh environment.<sup>80</sup>

Egypt beyond the Nile was mountainous and extremely dry with little vegetation, meaning that even the most ascetic of lifestyles had to be carefully planned and regulated in order to ensure basic survival. Therefore, the sense of 'monk as other' was not as distinct in terms of lifestyle when compared to the ordinary people of Egypt. The holy men of Syria could live more extreme lifestyles made possible because of the more habitable environment. Baskets provided a useful source of labour and income for monks within the harsh Egyptian environment. It also provided a method to distinguish themselves from the rest of the Egyptian population, which was similar in terms of their need for subsistence. Chapter 4 described the role of baskets as feminine objects, suggesting their appropriation by the early Christian monks was a way to mark themselves as outside of conventional society.<sup>81</sup> When viewed in this way, the role of baskets within monastic communities can be interpreted as an important means to further emphasise their difference from mainstream society, which was more difficult to display in their day-to-day lives in other ways.

Baskets were also symbols of monastic lives and identities in other ways. As handmade objects they are markers of the identities of their creators.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, these baskets relate directly to the manner in which: the monks lived (as a product of labour); their location (through origin of materials and location of manufacture); and their activities (the constant prayer conducted during manufacture). Baskets also

---

<sup>78</sup> P.Mich.Copt.8. Also AP Achilles 1.

<sup>79</sup> See discussion in chapter 4.

<sup>80</sup> Brown (1971) 83.

<sup>81</sup> See chapter 4.

<sup>82</sup> See chapter 2.

connect to broader Christian ideals in late antique society. Early Christianity positioned poverty, humility and the equality of men as prime virtues, and these are still recognisable in the modern day as key values of the religion. In the late antique period, this is explicitly discussed in John Chrysostom's *Homily 2 on Hebrews*, in which he states:

The Christian shines out in poverty rather than in riches. How? He will be less arrogant, more sober-minded, graver, more equitable, more considerate: but he that is in wealth, has many impediments to these things.<sup>83</sup>

There is a clear link between the ideals of poverty and the basket as a culturally significant object. Despite the time and effort required to make baskets, they were not considered valuable objects in terms of economic value.<sup>84</sup> Thus they were humble and yet universal possessions; their ubiquity within everyday life ensured everyone would recognise and would have been able to relate to them as objects. As objects they underlined the sentiment that you did not have to be rich in material goods to live a fulfilling Christian life. As such, they represented the opposite of elite material culture, by instead emphasising ideas of ease of availability, and thus equality. In a more specific sense, monastic objects represented the activities of the monks, and thus provided in material form an example for others to follow. Embodied in the fabric of the baskets are ideals associated with monastic values of poverty, humility, and hard work, in order to overcome sin and live a virtuous Christian lifestyle. All of these factors combine to create domestic objects that chime with the broader values of Christianity.

Chapter 4 therefore represents a brief, but important, assessment of this overlooked object type; in previous studies on baskets, the meanings embodied by these objects have been ignored. The analysis here draws upon a rich textual source that has not been fully exploited with regards to late antique material culture: namely early monastic literature. These texts provide a valuable counterpart to other pieces of evidence, allowing comparisons between distinct forms of everyday life. Whilst it is unclear whether the textual evidence provides a realistic representation of life in monastic sites, it does nonetheless demonstrate the reliance on objects as personal and cultural symbols. At the same time, the evidence it provides in relation to gifts, heirlooms and souvenirs compares favourably with the discussions in the earlier three chapters.

Having discussed the main findings from each individual chapter, this concluding section will now turn to explore common themes that can be identified across the book's main discussion.

### **Behaviours and Meaningful Material Culture**

An emphasis can be identified as to specific behaviours relating to the creation and maintenance of meaning and memories within domestic objects. One such example is the act of wearing meaningful objects. The evidence collated here demonstrates that certain gift, heirloom, and souvenir objects could be, and were, worn upon the body. Clothes, from the description of Junius Messalla, are defined as heirlooms, as are the garments worn by Daniel in the *Alphabetical Collection of the Apophthegmata Patrum*.<sup>85</sup> Jewellery too was inherited by successive generations of the same family. Souvenirs,

---

<sup>83</sup> Joh. Chrys. *Hom. 2 in Hebr.* 1.5 (transl. Gardiner (1889) 374).

<sup>84</sup> Diocletian's Price Edict lists baskets as 10 denarii according to weight, and various materials as between 6 and 10, though much of the information is missing from this section: *Ed. Diocl.* 32.15-26. Furthermore, the natural materials for basket making could potentially be free, if acquired from the plants themselves. The ubiquity of baskets is evidenced by their frequent reference in the papyri record, and their appearance in a range of visual media.

<sup>85</sup> SHA *Carus, Carinus, Numerian* 20.4. AP Arsenius 42.

such as the *ampullae* and flasks from Christian *loca sancta* were worn upon the body, suspended around the neck. This specific behaviour is explicitly connected to the types of meaning inherent within the objects. The wearing of heirlooms is a method of visually communicating the wearer's and object's history, associating the owner with values relating to their ancestry and legitimacy of heritage. It also had connotations of prestige and status.<sup>86</sup>

On a more personal level, the wearing of heirloom objects could provide comfort through the surrogate presence of the wearer's extended and ancestral family, and the reassurance of a familiar object in unpleasant or unfamiliar contexts. Similarly, the wearing of gifts represents a visible link between the donor and recipient, as well as alluding to their context of acquisition, for example a wedding, in material form. The wearing of souvenirs would likewise make a statement about the experiences of the wearer, since a visit to the place or event that the item evokes would be necessary for the object's acquisition. There can also be connotations of exoticism, fashion, and prestige.<sup>87</sup> In particular, pilgrim souvenirs were worn for their amuletic function. This stems directly from the belief in the physical communicability of the holy during this period through physical contact. The act of wearing a pilgrim souvenir, in particular those containing relics or samples of the holy land in material form, would mean the object was in constant contact with the body, ensuring maximum efficacy. The wearer would then be assured protection, healing or a blessing.

Heirlooms, such as jewellery or clothing, can also be repeatedly worn by their owners, on both specific occasions and events, and over generations within the same family. This physical action creates and reinforces meaning in these objects. The repeated behaviours echo and perpetuate the actions of earlier members of the family, and create a closeness between relatives, (some of whom may be absent) through the materiality of the objects. The same interpretation applies to the reading and rereading of texts and documents over generations within the same family.<sup>88</sup> All these repetitive behaviours elicit memories from the wearer, and those witnessing the action who are aware of the object's biography. Furthermore, the meanings associated with family and heritage that stem from those memories are reinforced, added to, and thus perpetuated by the repeated action. The role of repeated behaviours is also found in evidence relating to souvenir objects, as discussed in chapter 3. The functions of objects such as the glass flasks from Puteoli and Baiae, and the iconography on the dish from the spa at Otañes, encourages the replication of site specific behaviours, namely the drinking of spa waters and the practices associated with bathing.<sup>89</sup> These objects not only provide a memory of these activities in material form, they allow the replication and continuation of these behaviours away from their original locations, thereby extending the experiences of the owner and providing ownership of the location's identity.

This book has also shown that there is evidence relating to the re-enacting of behaviours over longer periods of time and across different families. This demonstrates an awareness of the functions and role of heirloom objects within society, if not a familiarity with the specific personal history and meaning of the object. For example, potential heirloom pottery has been interpreted as being disinterred from graves for reburial with other individuals at a later date at the Eastern Cemetery in London.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, the villa at Lullingstone shows evidence of the reuse of ancestor busts in a household shrine, despite there being no family connection between the objects and the new property owner.<sup>91</sup> These bits of evidence suggest that there was a social recognition

---

<sup>86</sup> See discussion in chapter 1.

<sup>87</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>88</sup> See chapter 1.

<sup>89</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>90</sup> Barber and Bowsher (2000) 122; Henig (2005) 158.

<sup>91</sup> See chapter 1.



of meaningful objects in late antique society, perhaps from their context, which could result in their appropriation for the re-enactment of rituals and behaviours. Such trends can be identified in the medieval period in relation to the veneration of relics, where they would periodically be lost and rediscovered by the church, thus revitalising them in terms of their spiritual meaning and cult following in the community.<sup>92</sup> Through this continuation of meaningful activities, the value of the objects is perpetuated.

The adherence to social conventions surrounding expected and desired behaviours, ensured that gift giving was a behaviour common throughout Late Antiquity on a variety of occasions. Such activity shows that there were established and approved uses and behaviours surrounding specific examples of material culture during this period. For example, the Theodosian Code, under a law issued by the Emperors Theodosius, Arcadius and Honorius, states that, '[n]o actresses of mimes shall wear gems, none shall wear silk adorned with figures or gilded textiles'.<sup>93</sup> Elsewhere behavioural conventions surrounding objects and materials were more associated with ingrained social mores. For example, in a story from the *Life of Porphyry*, sacred stones from the temple of Zeus Marnas in late antique Gaza are reused as paving stones. Despite the intention behind this action being the desecration of the stones that were forbidden to be walked upon, the inhabitants of the city continued to avoid them when passing along the street.<sup>94</sup> The exhibition of such behaviours, either imperially sanctioned or reflecting more broad cultural trends and values, suggests that there were also other more informal proscriptions for material culture more broadly within society which we may be unaware of today.

Furthermore, such rules and restrictions suggest that the treatment of materials was directly related to their meanings. The extract regarding clothing from the Theodosian Code, is essentially prohibiting the wearing of elite goods by lower class or improper individuals, thereby sustaining the meaning and value of the objects. Similarly, the movement of the sacred stones from the temple to the street where they can be walked upon, is an attempt, through behaviours surrounding these objects, to change or destroy the meaning inherent within them. All of this underlines the fact that in Late Antiquity, materials and their meanings could provide a basis for power. The adherence to social conventions surrounding the use of objects, for example in gift giving, can represent the acknowledgement of the power of objects more broadly in society.

Finally, this book has also shown that gifts, heirlooms, and souvenirs can all enact certain behaviours within late antique society, and move between places and people to create meaning. Such movement works to enhance their specific biographies. The letters of Late Antiquity in particular demonstrate a regular movement of material between people separated by distance. The movement of baskets between the monastery in which they were made and the outside world, also represents a means of communication and the creation of meaning. Thus, movement of objects signifies both a means to accumulate meaning and memories, but also a method to communicate this to others.

By bringing this perspective to examples of domestic objects, it becomes clear that meaning was created, sustained and understood in a physical sense through the interactions between owner and object. The consequence of this is that material culture can be understood as having no meaning independent of action; it requires involvement, within movements and behaviours, in order to accumulate significance. Thus, to undertake research on late antique material culture is to also study the personal and cultural behaviours of the owners, and other people associated with these objects through their biographies. As such, the movement of objects actually represents more than the simple accumulation and communication of meaning. The transmission of

---

<sup>92</sup> Geary (1986) 178.

<sup>93</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 15.7.11 (transl. Pharr (1952) 434).

<sup>94</sup> *V. Porph.* 76.

material culture built and maintained human relationships, evoked the ancestry and heritage of individuals, and reinforced and reflected personal identity, and more broadly cultural values. It thus actively helped to cement late antique society.

### **The Multiplicity of Meaningful Objects: Gift, Heirloom, or Souvenir?**

This book has clearly demonstrated that objects in late antique society held a number of different meanings, both personal and cultural, that could exist simultaneously or consecutively over the life span of the object.

The necklace given to Maria by Honorius before their wedding was an heirloom object, which then became a gift upon its movement from the emperor to his wife-to-be. The Dea Nutrix figurine was originally an object with a level of religious meaning that accumulated heirloom status over time. The contorniate medallions commemorating events at the hippodrome function as both gifts and souvenirs, as do some examples of consular diptychs. The baskets made by the Egyptian monks at Thebes similarly represent a number of simultaneous meanings. Their functional purpose coexists alongside their status as religious *eulogiae*. As these objects move between contexts, they transition between roles as commodities and symbolic possessions. This is in addition to their cultural connotations of femininity, fertility or pagan cultic activity, in wider society. Furthermore, the meanings they embody differ from individual to individual; for the early Christian monks, the significance of the basket is different from the person who buys it in the local market.<sup>95</sup> Meaning is therefore manifold and subjective. This is something referred to by archaeologist László Török in his discussion of pagan and Christian images; certain images, such as the Isis suckling Horus, can have both pagan and Christian readings within late antique Egypt, as this specific figure is also associated with the figure of *Maria lactans*.<sup>96</sup>

Importantly for us, the interpretation depends upon the viewer, as the image is ambiguous, and thus reliant upon the knowledge and belief systems brought to the object. The same is true for the understanding of meanings within objects, both personal and cultural. The meanings and values embodied by the examples of domestic material culture discussed within this book depend upon the understanding of the object's biography by the person experiencing it. As such, objects have layers of meaning that refer to specific places, people, and occasions, as well as broader cultural assignments. An acknowledgement of this, therefore, also acknowledges that our terminology for identifying objects is to a certain extent artificial, and represents unnatural divisions between these layers of accumulated meanings.

Labels such as souvenir or gift rather represent a value judgement outlining what 'we' consider the most important aspect of an object's biography to be. The same can be said for the information we gain from primary sources of evidence. The biographical aspects emphasised within texts, through the material nature of the object or the context in which the item was found, represents only one moment in the biography of an object, or emphasises the aspect that the maker or owner thought to be the most important. Such labels reflect a particular moment in time, and can ignore the full life of objects and the various meanings that they can embody. Of course, the focus on certain features of an object's biography can itself communicate a lot about the contexts that were considered important, and how specific items of material culture were employed within late antique life. However, as this book has shown, to acknowledge only these single meanings and values is to ignore the way in which objects moved, transformed, and became integrated into life in Late Antiquity.

### **Reconstruction of a Late Antique Home**

---

<sup>95</sup> See discussion in chapter 4.

<sup>96</sup> Török (2005) 272.

This book has revealed the roles and meanings of personal possessions within the late antique home. However the nature of scholarship means that they are still often discussed in a manner divorced from their everyday context. It is therefore suitable to conclude this book by returning these objects to their domestic environment. The purpose of this reconstruction is to apply the knowledge gained during the course of this book, in order to populate an imaginary late antique home with meaning-laden personal objects.

The nature of the evidence means that a precise model based in a specific location at a certain time cannot be produced. The evidence collated and discussed within this book has been necessarily broad to provide an overview and introduction to such an area of scholarship. Further work would be needed to provide a specific reconstruction in terms of date, geographical region, and economic status. However, as a first step in broadly reconstructing the more personal lives of domestic objects, the approach taken in this book nevertheless contributes to an enlightening and alternative model for the kinds of objects that would be within houses. The approach applied here also helps us elucidate the interactions between people, their domestic space, and their possessions.

The following reconstruction draws on the trends in terms of movement, use and meaning of material culture that have been identified within this research. However, to give the reconstruction some parameters, the following vignette broadly draws on evidence from the 4th to 5th c. AD. Furthermore, the house represents the home of a lower to middling class of inhabitant—the kind who would be clients rather than patrons within late antique society—and thus provides a much-needed departure in emphasis away from the elites and their material culture. The scene is related from the point of view of a married woman. Regarding location, the interior space has been very loosely based on the homes excavated in Karanis, Egypt, and many of the choices in terms of domestic material culture reflect this general location.<sup>97</sup>

Above the doorway to the home, a small clay *ampulla* is suspended from a hook mounted into the surround, ensuring all inhabitants and visitors pass close by to it when entering. The flask contains oil collected from the Shrine of Saint Menas, near Alexandria, but the contents are invisible from the exterior. The vessel depicts the saint in the *orans* pose, and is recognisable to all those who admire the flask and who inevitably ask the homeowners about their presumed pilgrimage to the site. Often visitors touch it, hoping to gain a blessing or protection from sacred contents. Inside the house there is a niche built into the wall, which would once have held the figurines of the household gods, but now only features a terracotta figure of Isis nursing Harpocrates. It is displayed mainly as decoration, and because it was in the house when the wife moved in with her husband; it has always been there and she is unsure of how old it must be. Her husband seems fond of it though.

The home is relatively small, consisting only of two rooms and a small cellar used for the storage of a range of household equipment. This cellar contains an eclectic mix of dining-wares; some are of local production and fairly non-descript, however there is also some glass and a couple of silver vessels. A moulded glass bottle, in the form of a Bacchic head, sits on a shelf and contains fish sauce. It originally came from Alexandria and contained wine; whenever the woman holds the vessel it reminds her of the rare trip she took, however now she takes it into her local *garum* seller to be refilled as necessary. The storage area also has several pots on the floor, one of which is visibly older than the others. When filled with dried lupines, the pot is difficult to move and represents an object both static yet in constant use within the home.<sup>98</sup> Several miles

---

<sup>97</sup> Gazda and Royer (1983) 19-31.

<sup>98</sup> The seeds of a variety of lupines could be cooked and eaten, usually by the poorer classes, along with a variety of other legumes: Bagnall (1993) 26. They are also attested within the papyri, for example the late 2nd c. AD account, P.Mich.18.786

away, the couple's daughter is in her new marital home. At this very moment, she is eating lupines bought from a stall on her way home from the market.<sup>99</sup> The taste of the cheap but filling street-food reminds her of her mother and the storage pot that was such a feature of her upbringing, and she resolves to send greetings to her mother in a letter.

Her mother and father already have several letters from their daughter, as well as some sent by their son in the army prior to his death two years ago. They are kept in a terracotta pot with other key documents relating to the father's labouring contract and the rental of their house. There are also some old accounts from the husband's father, one of which has been reused on the reverse. Nearby, kept safely within a locked cupboard, is a wooden box containing some of the wife's jewellery. One gold necklace is clearly old-fashioned in style and features a coin with a handsome portrait of an emperor now long dead. The clasp is broken. Some loose engraved gemstones, once set into rings, sit in the bottom of the casket along with a pair of pendant earrings that belonged to the woman's mother and formed part of her dowry.<sup>100</sup> This casket is rarely opened and has a layer of dust covering its lid. The hairpins and small items of jewellery that the wife has in current usage are in contrast kept within a carved bone box, or *pyxis*, which is decorated with a scene from the story of the Judgement of Paris, and was given to her as a gift at her wedding by one of her cousins.<sup>101</sup> To be honest, the wife does not really like her cousin—he owes her money—and as such feels rather indifferent to the object itself. However, it functions well enough and is quite attractive, and so remains in use.

At the back of the main room is the wife's wool-working equipment, including a *kalathos* style basket containing a spindle and distaff. She has recently finished weaving a cloak for her husband, which he put on this morning as he left. A large chest on which the wool basket sits contains further textiles; most prized are some high quality linens which her son brought back from Palestine as a gift after a tour with the army. Their foreign appearance fills her with admiration for her son, for travelling so far, but also sadness as she is reminded of her loss.

---

<sup>99</sup> Such a stall is described in Leontius' 6th c. *Life of Symeon the Fool*: Leont. N. v. *Sym.* 4.146.

<sup>100</sup> P.Princ. 2. 95.

<sup>101</sup> See, for example, the *pyxis* featuring the judgement of Paris: ivory, early 6th c. AD, 8.5 x 9.1 cm. Walters Art Museum 71.64. See also the discussion of wedding iconography in chapter 2.

## Bibliography

### Ancient Textual Editions and Inscriptions

I have worked in translation when undertaking this book, although I have sought to use translations based on respectable editions wherever possible. For the convenience of the reader, references to the ancient texts are provided. In the case of Loeb translations, Greek and Latin text is provided alongside the English.

- Agath. = J. D. Frendo ed. and transl., *Agathias. The Histories* (Berlin-New York 1975). G. B. Niebuhr ed. *Agathiae Myrinaei Historiarum libri quinque. Cum versione latina et annotationibus* (Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae 1) (Bonn 1828).
- Amm. Marc. = J. C. Rolfe transl., *Ammianus Marcellinus*, 3 vols. (Loeb Classical Library) (London-Cambridge, Mass. 1935-39). C. D. Yonge transl., *Ammianus Marcellinus, Roman History* (Bohn's Classical Library) (London 1862).
- AP = B. Ward transl., *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: the Alphabetical Collection* (Kalamazoo, rev. edn 1984). M. Chaîne ed. and transl. *Le manuscrit de la version copte en dialecte sahidique des 'Apophthegmata Patrum'* (Cairo 1960) (Coptic and French). PG 65. 71-440.
- AP Sys = J. C. Guy ed. and transl., *Les Apophthegmes des Pères: collection systématique*, 3 vols (SC 387, 474, 498) (Paris 1993-2005) (Greek and French).
- Apicius, *De Re Coquinaria* = B. Flower and E. Rosenbaum transl. *The Roman Cookery Book: a Critical Translation of The Art of Cooking by Apicius for Use in the Study and the Kitchen* (London-Toronto-Wellington-Sydney 1958). C. T. Schuch ed. *Apici Caeli De re coquinaria libri decem* (Heidelberg 1867).
- Asterius Amas. *Hom.* = G. Anderson and E. J. Goodspeed transl., *Asterius of Amasea, Sermons* (Ancient Sermons for Modern Times) (New York 1904). C. Datema ed., *Asterius of Amasea: Homilies I-XIV. Text, Introduction and Notes* (Leiden 1970). PG 40.163-478.
- Ath. *V. Ant* = C. White transl., "Life of Antony by Athanasius", in *Early Christian Lives*, ed. C. White (Penguin Classics) (London 1998) 3-70. G. J. M. Bartelink ed., *Athanase d'Alexandrie. Vie d'Antoine* (SC 400) (Paris 1994). PG 26. 835-976.
- August. *De civ. D.* = M. Dods transl., *The City of God* (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 2) (New York, new edn 1956). PL 41. 13-804.
- August, *De libero arbitrio* = P. King transl., *On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings* (Cambridge 2010). PL 32. 1221-1310.
- Auson. *Cent. nupt.* = H. G. Evelyn White transl. (1919) *Ausonius*, vol. 1 (Loeb Classical Library) (London-New York 1919) 371-93.

- Beowulf = M. Alexander transl., *Beowulf. A Verse Translation* (Penguin Classics) (London 1973).  
 J. Zupitza translit., *Beowulf: Reproduced in Facsimile from the Unique Manuscript, British Museum MS. Cotton Vitellius A. XV* (London 1959) (Old English).
- Bible = *The Revised English Bible* (Oxford and Cambridge 1990).
- Boeth. *Consol.* = J. C. Relihan transl., *Boethius: Consolation of Philosophy* (Indianapolis-Cambridge 2001). G. Weinberger ed., *Anicii Manlii Severini Boethii Philosophiae consolationis libri quinque* (CSEL 67) (New York-London 1964).
- Breviarium de Hierosolyma* = J. Wilkinson transl. *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Warminster 1977) 59-61. P. Geyer *et al.* ed., *Itineraria et alia geographica* (CCSL 175) (Turnhout 1965) 105-12
- Cic. *Att.* = D. R. Shackleton Bailey transl., *Cicero. Letters to Atticus*, 4 vols (Loeb Classical Library) (London-Cambridge, Mass. 1999)
- Claudian, *Epithalamium* = M. Platnauer ed. and transl., *Claudian*, vol. 1 (Loeb Classical Library) (London-Cambridge, Mass. 1922) 240-67.
- Clem. Al. *Protr.* = G. W. Butterworth transl. *Clement of Alexandria* (Loeb Classical Library) (London-New York 1919) 3-263.
- Cod. Theod.* = C. Pharr transl., *The Theodosian Code and Novels: and the Sirmondian Constitutions* (Princeton 1952). T. Mommsen and P. Meyer *et al.* edd. *Theodosiani Libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis*, vol. 2: *Leges Novellae ad Theodosianum Pertinentes* (Berlin 1905).
- Corippus, *Laud. Just.* = Av. Cameron ed. and transl. *In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris* (London 1976). A. Ramírez de Verger ed. and transl. *El Panegírico de Justino II. Flavio Cresconio Corippo* (Seville 1985) (Latin and Spanish).
- Cyr. Scyth. *V. Euthymii* = E. Schwarz ed., *Kyrrillos von Skythopolis* (Leipzig 1939) 3-84.
- Dig.* = A. Watson ed. and transl. *The Digest of Justinian*, 4 vols. (Philadelphia 1985). T. Mommsen ed., *Justinian Digesta seu Pandectae* (Berlin 1870).
- Ed. Diocl.* = E. R. Graser transl., "The Edict of Diocletian on maximum prices", in T. Frank, *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, vol. 5 (Baltimore 1959) 305-421.
- Ermintrude, *Testamentum* = J. M. Pardessus ed., *Diplomata, chartae, epistolae, leges aliaque instrumenta ad res Gallo-Francicas spectantia nunc nova ratione ordinate*, vol. 2 (Paris 1849) no. 451, 255-58.
- Euseb. *Vit. Const.* = A. Cameron and S. G. Hall transl., *Life of Constantine* (Oxford 1999). F. Winkelmann ed., *Die Textbezeugung der Vita Constantini des Eusebius von Caesarea* (Berlin 1962).
- Festus, *De verborum significatione* = M. A. Savagner transl., *Sextus Pompeius Festus. De La Signification des Mots* (Paris 1846). K. M. Müller ed., *Sexti Pompei Festi De verborum significatione quae supersunt: cum Pauli epitome* (Leipzig 1839).
- Greg. Naz. *Ep.* = C. G. Browne and J. E. Swallow transl., *S. Cyril of Jerusalem, S. Gregory Nazianzen* (Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers 2.7.) (New York 1894). PG 37. 21-388.
- Greg. Nyss. *De hominis opificio* = H. A. Wilson transl. *Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises* (Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers 2.5) (New York 1893) PG 44. 123-256.
- Greg. Nyss. *Ep.* = A. M. Silvas transl. *Gregory of Nyssa. The Letters* (Leiden 2007). P. Maraval ed., *Gregoire de Nyssse. Lettres* (SC 363) (Paris 1990). PG 46. 999-1108.
- Greg. Nyss. *V. Macr.* = K. Corrigan transl., *The Life of St Macrina by Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa* (Eugene, Oregon 2005). PG 46. 959-98.
- ILS = H. Dessau ed., *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, vol. 1 (Berlin 1892).
- Itinerarium Burdigalense* = J. Wilkinson transl. *Egeria's Travels* (Oxford, 3rd edn 1999) P. Geyer *et al.* ed., *Itineraria et alia geographica* (CCSL 175) (Turnhout 1965) 1-36.
- Itinerarium Egeriae* = J. Wilkinson transl. *Egeria's Travels* (Oxford, 3rd edn 1999) P. Geyer *et al.* ed., *Itineraria et alia geographica* (CCSL 175) (Turnhout 1965) 37-90.
- Jer. *Ep.* = P. Schaff and H. Wace edd. and transl., *Jerome, Letters and Select Works* (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, series 2.6) (New York 1893). I. Hilberg ed., *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, 4 vols (CSEL) (Vienna 1996).
- Jo. D. *fo.* = E. W. Watson and L. Pullan transl., *Hilary of Poitiers, John of Damascus*, (Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers 2.9) (New York 1893). PG 94.789-1228.
- Joh. Chrys. *Hom. 2 in Hebr.* = F. Gardiner transl., *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of St. John and Epistle to the Hebrews* (Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers 1.14) (New York 1889) PG 63. 19-28.

- Joh. Chrys. *Hom. ad pop. Ant.* = E. Budge transl., *The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Statues, or to the People of Antioch translated with notes and indices* (Oxford 1856). PG 49. 15-222.
- Joh. Chrys. *Instruction and Refutation Directed Against Those Men Cohabiting with Virgins* = P. Cox Miller transl., *Women in Early Christianity: Translations from Greek Texts* (Washington DC 2005) 123-38. PG 47. 495-514.
- Joh. Lydus, *Mag.* = A. C. Bandy transl., *On the Magistracies of the Roman State* (Philadelphia 1983). R. Wuensch ed. *Ioannis Lydi De magistratibus populi Romani libri tres* (Leipzig 1903).
- John Cassian, *Collationes* = H. Waddell transl., "Of Accidie: of mortification", in *The Desert Fathers*, ed. H. Waddell (New York 1998) 163-68. E. Pichery ed., *Jean Cassien. Conférences*, 3 vols (SC 42) (Paris 1955). PL 49. 477-1328.
- Joseph. *AJ* = H. St. J. Thackeray ed. and transl., *Jewish Antiquities, Books 1-3* (Loeb Classical Library) (London-Cambridge, Mass. 1930).
- Leont. N. v. *Sym.* = D. Krueger transl., *Symeon the Holy Fool: Leontius's Life and the Late Antique City* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1996). PG 93. 1669-1746.
- Lib. *Ep.* = R. Foerster ed., *Libanii Opera*, 12 vols. (Leipzig 1963).
- Lib. *Progymnasmata* = C. A. Gibson transl., *Libanius's Progymnasmata: Model Exercises in Greek Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Atlanta 2008). R. Foerster ed., *Libanii Opera*, vol. 8 (Leipzig 1963) 1-571.
- Life of Saint Alexius* = C. J. Odenkirchen ed. and transl., *The Life of St Alexius in the Old French Version of the Hildesheim Manuscript* (Brookline, Mass.-Leiden 1978) (Old French, Greek, Latin and English).
- Malalas = E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys, and R. Scott transl., *The Chronicle of John Malalas. A Translation* (Melbourne 1986). H. Thurn ed., *Ioannis Malalae chronographia* (Berlin 2000).
- Mart. *Epigrams* = D. R. Shackleton Bailey ed. and transl., *Martial. Epigrams*, 3 vols. (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, Mass. 1993).
- Pall. *Hist. Laus.* = R. T. Meyer transl., *Palladius. The Lausiaca History* (Ancient Christian Writers 34) (Westminster Maryland-London 1965). C. Butler ed., *The Lausiaca History of Palladius*, vol. 2 (Cambridge 1904).
- Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* = J. Herrin and A. Cameron edd. and transl., *Constantinople in the Early Eighth Century: The Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* (Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 10) (Leiden 1984) (Greek and English).
- Paulus, *HL* = W. D. Foulke transl. *History of the Langobards* (Philadelphia 1907). L. Bethman and G. Waitz edd. *MGH. Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum* (Hanover 1878) 45-187.
- Placentini Itinerarium* = J. Wilkinson transl., *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Warminster 1977) 79-89. P. Geyer et al. ed., *Itineraria et alia geographica* (CCSL 175) (Turnhout 1965) 129-74.
- Plin. *HN* = H. Rackham transl., *Pliny the Elder, Natural History, Volume III: Books 8-11* (Loeb Classical Library) (London-Cambridge, Mass. 1940).
- Polyb. = W. R. Paton transl., *Polybius, The Histories*, 6 vols (Loeb Classical Library) (Harvard 1922-27).
- Sen. *Ep.* = R. M. Gummere transl., *Seneca: Epistles, 1-65*, vol. 1 (Loeb Classical Library) (London-Cambridge, Mass. 1917).
- Sev. Ant. *Homilies* = I. Guidi ed. and transl., "Les Homiliae cathedrales de Sévère d'Antioche", in *PO 22* (Paris 1930) 207-302 (Syriac and French).
- SHA = D. Magie ed. and transl., *The Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, 3 vols (Loeb Classical Library) (London-New York 1922-32). E. Hohl ed., *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, 2 vols. (Leipzig 1927).
- Shenoute, *Canons* = B. Layton ed. and transl., *The Canons of Our Fathers: Monastic Rules of Shenoute* (Oxford 2014) (Coptic and English).
- Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* = W. B. Anderson transl. *Sidonius: Poems and Letters*, 2 vols (Loeb Classical Library) (London-Cambridge, Mass. 1936). P. Mohr ed., *C. Sollius Apollinaris Sidonius* (Teubner) (Leipzig 1895).
- Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* = P. Périchon and P. Maraval transl. *Socrates de Constantinople. Histoire Ecclésiastique* (SC 505) (Paris 2006). G. C. Hansen ed., *Kirchengeschichte. Socrates Scholasticus: Historia Ecclesiastica* (GCS new series 1) (Berlin 1995).
- Sozom. *Hist. eccl.* = A.-J. Festugière and B. Grillet transl., *Sozomène. Histoire Ecclésiastique* (SC 516) (Paris 2008). J. Bidez and G. C. Hansen edd., *Sozomenus: Kirchengeschichte* (GCS 50) (Berlin 1960).

- Symm. *Ep.* = J. P. Callu ed. and transl., *Symmaque. Lettres*, vol. 3 (Paris 1995) (Latin and French).
- Syriac Life of Symeon* = R. Doran transl., “The Syriac Life of Saint Symeon Stylites”, in *The Lives of Simeon Stylites* (Kalamazoo, Michigan 1992) 101-98. P. Bedjan ed., *Acta Martyrum Et Sanctorum*, vol. 4 (Hildesheim 1968) 507-644.
- Theod. *Hist. Rel.* = R. M. Price transl., *A History of the Monks of Syria by Theodoret of Cyrrhus* (Kalamazoo, Michigan 2008). P. Canivet and A. Leroy-Molinghen ed. and transl., *Theodoret de Cyr: Histoire des moines de Syrie*, vol. 2 (SC 257) (Paris 1979). PG 82. 1284-1496.
- Theod. *Life of Symeon* = R. Doran transl., (1992) “The Life of Saint Symeon Stylites by Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus”, in *The Lives of Simeon Stylites* (Kalamazoo, Michigan 1992) 69-84. P. Canivet and A. Leroy-Molinghen ed. and transl., *Theodoret de Cyr: Histoire des moines de Syrie*, vol. 2 (SC 257) (Paris 1979) (Greek and French).
- V. Porph.* = G. F. Hill transl., *The Life of Porphyry, Bishop of Gaza* (Oxford 1913). H. Grégoire and M.-A. Kugener ed., *Marc le Diacre. Vie de Porphyre, évêque de Gaza* (Paris 1930).
- V. Sym. Jun.* = P. Van den Ven ed. and transl., *La vie ancienne de s. Syméon le Jeune*, 2 vols (Brussels 1962-70). PG 86.2. 2987-3216.
- Verg. *Aen.* = H. Rushton Fairclough transl., *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I-VI* (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, Mass.-London 1918).
- Vita Sanctae Marinae* = PL 73. 691-96.

### Modern Sources

- Abdy R. (2006) “In the pay of the emperor: coins from the Beaurains (Arras) treasure”, in *Constantine the Great: York’s Roman Emperor*, edd. E. Hartley, J. Hawkes, M. Henig, and F. Mee (York 2006) 52-58.
- Adams C. (2007) *Land Transport in Roman Egypt* (Leiden 2007).
- (2001) “‘There and back again’: getting around in Roman Egypt”, in *Travel & Geography in the Roman Empire*, edd. C. Adams and R. Laurence (London-New York 2001) 138-66.
- Adams P. C. (2001) “Peripatetic imagery and peripatetic sense of place”, in *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies*, edd. P. C. Adams, S. Hoelscher and K. E. Till (Minneapolis-London 2001) 186-206.
- Adams P. C., Hoelscher S. and Till K. E. (2001) “Place in context: rethinking humanist geographies”, in *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies*, edd. P. C. Adams, S. Hoelscher and K. E. Till (Minneapolis-London 2001) xiii-xxxiii.
- Adovasio J. M. (2010) *Basketry Technology: a Guide to Identification and Analysis* (Walnut Creek, California, updated edn. 2010).
- Ainalov D. V. (1961) *The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Art* (transl. E. and S. Sobolevitch, ed C. Mango) (New Brunswick, New Jersey 1961).
- Aitchison N. B. (1988) “Roman wealth, native ritual: coin hoards within and beyond Roman Britain”, *WorldArch* 20(1988) 270-84.
- Alföldi A. and Alföldi E. (1990) *Die Kontorniat-Medaillons*, 2 vols (Berlin-New York 1990).
- Allison P. (2004) *Pompeian Households: an Analysis of Material Culture* (Los Angeles 2004).
- Anderson W. (2004) “An archaeology of late antique pilgrim flasks”, *AnatSt* 54 (2004) 79-93.
- Anon. (1999) “Health: hypnotising the pain away”, BBC News, 24/04/1999: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/326631.stm> (accessed 04/08/2017).
- Arnush M. (2005) “Pilgrimage to the oracle of Apollo at Delphi: patterns of public and private consultation”, in *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods*, edd. J. Elsner and I. Rutherford (Oxford 2005) 97-110.
- Ascher R. (1961) “Analogy in archaeological interpretation”, *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 17 (1961) 317-25.
- Avrin L. (1991) *Scribes, Script, and Books: The Book Arts from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Chicago 1991).
- Bagnall R. S. (2011) *Everyday Writing in the Graeco-Roman East* (Berkeley 2011).
- (1993) *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton 2011).
- (1976) *Florida Ostraka (O. Florida): Documents from the Roman Army in Upper Egypt* (Durham, North Carolina 1976).
- Bagnall R. S. and Cribiore R. (2006) *Women’s Letters from Ancient Egypt: 300 BC – AD 800* (Ann Arbor 2006).
- Bagnall R. S. and Lewis N. (1979) *Columbia Papyri VII: 4th c. Documents from Karanis* (Missoula, Montana, 1979).



- Baratte F. (1993) *La vaisselle d'argent en gaule dans l'antiquité tardive (IIIe-Ve siècles)* (Paris 1993).
- Barber B. and Bowsher D. (2000) *The Eastern Cemetery of Roman London Excavations 1983-1990* (Museum of London Archaeology Service Monograph 4) (London 2000).
- Barbier G., Blanc N., Coulon G., Gury F. and Pichonnet M. (1999) *La vannerie à l'époque gallo-romaine* (Saint-Marcel 1999).
- Belk, R.W. (1996) "The perfect gift", in *Gift Giving: a Research Anthology*, edd. C. Otnes and R. F. Beltramini (Bowling Green, Ohio) 59-84.
- (1988) "Possessions and the extended self", *Journal of Consumer Research* 15(1988) 139-68.
- Belting H. (1994) *Likeness and Presence: a History of the Image Before the Era of Art* (transl. E. Jephcott) (Chicago-London 1994).
- Bennett A. (1994) "Technical examination and conservation", in *The Sevso Treasure, Part One*, edd. M. Mundell Mango and A. Bennett (JRA Supplementary Series 12.1) (Ann Arbor 1994) 21-35.
- Benson S. (2004) "Reproduction, fragmentation, and collection: Rome and the origin of souvenirs", in *Architecture and Tourism: Perception, Performance and Place*, edd. D. Medina Lasansky and B. McLaren (Oxford-New York 2004) 15-36.
- Berry J. (1997) "Household artefacts: towards a re-interpretation of Roman domestic space", in *Domestic Space in the Roman World: Pompeii and Beyond*, edd. R. Laurence and A. F. Wallace-Hadrill (JRA Supplementary Series 22) (Portsmouth, Rhode Island) 183-96.
- Blanc N. and Gury F. (1990) "La vannerie, artisanat traditionnel, sur les mosaïques d'Afrique du Nord", *AfrRom* (1990) 199-212.
- Bowden W. (2003) "The construction of identities in post-Roman Albania", in *Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology*, edd. L. Lavan and W. Bowden (Late Antique Archaeology 1) (Leiden 2003) 57-78.
- Bowersock G. W., Brown P. and Grabar O. (1999) edd. *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World* (Cambridge, Mass.-London 1999).
- Bowes K. (2008) *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge 2008).
- (2001) "Ivory lists: consular diptychs, Christian appropriation and polemics of time in Late Antiquity", *Art History* 24 (2001) 338-57.
- Bowman A. K. (2003) *Life and Letters on the Roman Frontier: Vindolanda and its People* (London 2003).
- Breeze D. (2012) ed. *The First Souvenirs: Enamelled Vessels from Hadrian's Wall* (Kendal 2012).
- Brown P. (1992) *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison, Wisconsin 1992).
- (1987) "Late Antiquity", in *A History of Private Life I: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, ed. P. Veyne (transl. A. Goldhammer) (Cambridge, Mass.-London 1987) 237-311.
- (1971) "The rise and function of the holy man in Late Antiquity", *JRS* 61 (1971) 80-101.
- Bruhn J.-A. (1993) *Coins and Costume in Late Antiquity* (Washington, D.C. 1993).
- Burkert W. (1987) *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, Mass.-London 1987).
- Burleigh G. R., Fitzpatrick-Matthews K. J. and Alhouse-Green M. J. (2006) "A Dea Nutrix figurine from a Romano-British cemetery at Baldock, Hertfordshire", *Britannia* 37 (2006) 273-94.
- Cameron Al. (1996) "Orfitus and Constantius: a note on Roman gold-glasses", *JRA* 9 (1996) 295-301.
- (1992) "Observations on the distribution and ownership of late Roman silver plate", *JRA* 5 (1992) 178-85
- (1986) "Pagan ivories", in *Colloque genevois sur Symmaque, à l'occasion du mille six centième anniversaire du conflit de l'autel de la Victoire*, ed. F. Paschoud (Paris 1986) 41-64.
- (1985) "The date and owners of the Esquiline Treasure", *AJA* 89 (1985) 135-45.
- (1976) *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford 1976).
- Cameron Av. (2003) "Ideologies and agendas in late antique studies" in *Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology*, edd. L. Lavan and W. Bowden (Late Antique Archaeology 1) (Leiden 2003) 3-21.
- Caner D. (2006) "Towards a miraculous economy: Christian gifts and material 'blessings' in Late Antiquity", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14 (2006) 329-77.
- (2002) *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley-Los Angeles 2002).

- Casson L. (1974) *Travel in the Ancient World* (London 1974).
- Clackson S. J. (2008) *It is Our Father Who Writes: Orders from the Monastery of Apollo at Bawit* (Cincinnati 2008).
- Cleland L., Davies G. and Llewellyn-Jones L. (2007) *Greek and Roman Dress from A to Z* (Abingdon 2007).
- Cloke G. (1995) *This Female Man of God: Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age* (London-New York 1995).
- Cox Miller P. (2009) *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia 2009).
- Croom A. (2010) *Roman Clothing and Fashion* (Stroud 2010).
- Crummy N., Crummy P. and Crossan C. (1993) *Colchester Archaeological Report 9: Excavations of Roman and Later Cemeteries, Churches and Monastic Sites in Colchester, 1971-88* (Colchester 1993).
- Csikszentmihályi M. and Rochberg-Halton E. (1981) *The Meaning of Things: Domestic symbols and the Self* (Cambridge 1981).
- Cullin-Mingaud M. (2010) *La vannerie dans l'antiquité romaine: les ateliers de vanniers et les vanneries de Pompéi, Herculaneum et Oplontis* (Naples 2010).
- Cutler A. (2008) "Significant gifts: patterns of exchange in late antique, Byzantine, and Early Islamic diplomacy", *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38 (2008) 79-101.
- (1998) *Late Antique and Byzantine Ivory Carving* (Aldershot 1998).
- Cuvigny H. (2003) ed. *La route de Myos Hormos: l'armée romaine dans le désert oriental d'Égypte*, 2 vols (Cairo 2003).
- Czarnecka K. (1994) "The re-use of Roman military equipment in barbarian contexts. A chain-mail souvenir?" *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies* 5 (1994) 245-53.
- Dant T. (1999) *Material Culture in the Social World: Values, Activities, Lifestyles* (Buckingham 1999).
- Delbrueck R. (1932) *Antike Porphyrrwerke: Studien zur spätantiken Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin 1932).
- (1929) *Die Consulardiptychen und verwandte Denkmäler*, 2 vols (Berlin 1929).
- Déroche V. (1995) *Études sur Léontios de Néapolis* (Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 3) (Uppsala 1995).
- De Staebler P. D. (2016) "Excavations in the Atrium House, North Agora, and Northeast Sector (2006-7)", in *Aphrodisias Papers 5. Excavation and Research at Aphrodisias, 2006-2012*, edd. R. R. R. Smith, J. Lenaghan, A. Sokolicek, and K. Welch (JRA Supplementary Series 103) (Portsmouth, Rhode Island 2016) 136-50.
- Dewing H. B. (1922) "A dialysis of the fifth century A.D. in the Princeton collection of papyri", *TAPA* 53 (1922) 113-27.
- Digby S. (2006) "The casket of magic: home and identity from salvaged objects", *Home Cultures* 3 (2006) 169-90.
- Dijkstra J. H. F. (2011) "The fate of the temples in late antique Egypt", in *The Archaeology of Late Antique 'Paganism'*, edd. L. Lavan and M. Mulryan (Late Antique Archaeology 7) (Leiden 2011) 389-436.
- Drandaki A. (2013) "From centre to periphery and beyond: the diffusion of models in late antique metalware", in *Wonderful Things: Byzantium through its Art*, edd. A. Eastmond and L. James (Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies 16) (Farnham 2013) 163-84.
- Dunbabin K. (2003) *The Roman Banquet: Images of Conviviality* (Cambridge 2003).
- Duncan-Jones R. P. (1978) "Pay and numbers in Diocletian's army", *Chiron* 8 (1978) 541-60.
- Dvorjetski E. (2007) *Leisure, Pleasure, and Healing: Spa Culture and Medicine in Ancient Eastern Mediterranean* (Leiden-Boston 2007).
- Eastmond A. (2010) "Consular diptychs, rhetoric and the language of art in 6th-century Constantinople", *Art History* 33 (2010) 742-65.
- Eckardt H. and Crummy N. (2006) "'Roman' or 'native' bodies in Britain: the evidence of late Roman nail-cleaner strap-ends", *OJA* 25 (2006) 83-103.
- Ellis S. P. (2000) *Roman Housing* (London 2000).
- Elm S. (1994) *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 1994).
- Elsner J. (2007) *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton 2007).
- (2003) "Visualising women in late antique Rome: the Projecta casket", in *Through a Glass Brightly: Studies in Byzantine and Medieval Art and Archaeology Presented to David Buckton*, ed. C. Entwistle (Oxford 2003) 22-36.

- (2000a) "From the culture of spolia to the cult of relics: the Arch of Constantine and the genesis of late antique forms", *PBSR* 68 (2000) 149-84.
- (2000b) "The Itinerarium Burdigalense: politics and salvation in the geography of Constantine's empire", *JRS* 90 (2000) 181-95.
- (1998) *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph: the Art of the Roman Empire AD 100-450* (Oxford-New York 1998).
- (1997) "Replicating Palestine and reversing the Reformation: pilgrimage and collecting at Bobbio, Monza and Walsingham", *Journal of the History of Collections* 9 (1997) 117-30.
- Ewigleben C. (2000) "'What these women love is the sword': the performers and their audiences", in *Gladiators and Caesars: The Power of Spectacle in Ancient Rome*, edd. E. Köhne, C. Ewigleben, and R. Jackson (Berkeley-Los Angeles 2000).
- Favro D. (2006) "The iconiCITY of ancient Rome" *Urban History* 33 (2006) 20-38.
- Fleischer R. (1973) *Artemis von Ephesos und verwandte Kultstatuen aus Anatolien und Syrien* (Leiden 1973).
- Fleming S. J. (1999) *Roman Glass: Reflections on Cultural Change* (Philadelphia 1999).
- Flower H. I. (1996) *Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture* (Oxford 1996).
- Friedman F. D. (1989) *Beyond the Pharaohs: Egypt and the Copts in the 2nd to 7th centuries A.D.* (Providence: Rhode Island 1989).
- Frisi A. F. (1794) *Memorie storiche di Monza e sua corte*, vol. 1 (Milan 1794).
- Fujii Y. (2009) "Report on four Roman glass fragments from the Gorga Collection: attribution to the 'Puteoli-Baiae Group'", in *Annales of the 17th Congress of the International Association for the History of Glass 2006, Antwerp*, edd. K. Janssens, P. Degryse, P. Cosyns, J. Caen, and L. Van't dack (Antwerp 2009) 136-42.
- Gaitzsch W. (1986) *Antike Korb- und Seilerwaren* (Schriften des Limemuseums Aalen, no. 38) (Stuttgart 1986).
- Gallazzi C. (1990) "La 'Cantina dei Papiri' di Tebtynis e ciò che essa conteneva", *ZPE* 80 (1990) 283-88.
- Gamble C. (1998) "Palaeolithic society and the release from proximity: a network approach to intimate relations", *WorldArch* 29 (1998) 426-49.
- Gardner I., Alcock A., and Funk W.-P. (1999) *Coptic Documentary Texts from Kellis*, vol. 1 (Oxford 1999).
- Gazda E. K. (1983) ed. *Karanis: an Egyptian Town in Roman Times* (Ann Arbor 1983).
- Gazda E. K. and Royer J. (1983) "Domestic life", in *Karanis: an Egyptian Town in Roman Times*, ed. E. K. Gazda (Ann Arbor 1983) 19-31.
- Geary P. (1990) *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, revised edn 1990).
- (1986) "Sacred commodities: the circulation of medieval relics", in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. A. Appadurai (Cambridge 1986) 169-91.
- Gell A. (1998) *Art and Agency: an Anthropological Theory* (Oxford 1998).
- Gillett A. (2012) "Communication in Late Antiquity: use and reuse", in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. S. Fitzgerald Johnson (Oxford 2012) 815-46.
- Gordon B. and Horton L. (2009) "Turn-of-the-century quilts: embodied objects in a web of relationships", in *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles, 1750-1950*, edd. M. D. Goggin and B. F. Tobin (Farnham-Burlington 2009) 93-110.
- Gosden C. (2005) "What do objects want?", *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 12 (2005) 193-211.
- Gosden C. and Marshall Y. (1999) "The cultural biography of objects", *WorldArch* 31 (1999) 169-78.
- Grabar A. (1958) *Les ampoules de Terre Sainte. Monza, Bobbio* (Paris 1958).
- Graeber D. (2001) *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: the False Coin of Our Own Dreams* (New York 2001).
- Gregory C. A. (1982) *Gifts and Commodities* (London 1982).
- Grig L. (2004) "Portraits, pontiffs and the Christianization of 4th-century Rome", *PBSR* 71 (2004) 203-30.
- Grossman P. (1998) "The pilgrimage center of Abû Minâ", in *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt*, ed. D. Frankfurter (Leiden 1998) 281-302.
- Grubbs J. E. (2002) *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire* (London-New York 2002).
- Grünbart M. and Stathakopoulos D. (2002) "Sticks and stones: Byzantine material culture", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 26 (2002) 298-327.

- Guggisberg M. (2003) "Concluding remarks" in *Der spätrömische Silberschatz von Kaiseraugst: die neuen Funde*, edd. A. Kaufmann-Heinimann and M. Guggisberg (Augst 2003) 299-305.
- Gwynn D. M. (2011) "The 'end' of Roman senatorial paganism", in *The Archaeology of Late Antique 'Paganism'*, edd. L. Lavan and M. Mulryan (Late Antique Archaeology 7) (Leiden 2011) 135-61.
- Haas C. (1997) *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore 1997).
- Hachlili R. (2009) *Ancient Mosaic Pavements. Themes, Issues, and Trends: Selected Studies* (Leiden 2009).
- Haldon J. (1999) "The idea of the town in the Byzantine empire", in *The Idea and Ideal of the Town Between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, edd. G. P. Brogiolo and B. Ward-Perkins (Leiden 1999) 1-24.
- Handley M. (2011) *Dying on Foreign Shores: Travel and Mobility in the Late-Antique West* (JRA Supplementary Series 86) (Portsmouth, Rhode Island 2011).
- Harden D. B. (1987) *Glass of the Caesars* (Milan 1987).
- Härke H. (1990) "'Warrior graves'? The background of the Anglo-Saxon weapon burial rite", *PastPres* 126 (1990) 22-43.
- Harmless W. (2004) *Desert Christians: an Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford 2004).
- Heersmink R. (2017) "The narrative self, distributed memory, and evocative objects", *Philosophical Studies* (2017) 1-21.
- Hendy M. F. (2008) *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy c.300-1450* (Cambridge 2008).
- Henig M. (2005) *Religion in Roman Britain* (London 2005).
- Herrin J. (2013) *Unrivalled Influence: Women and Empire in Byzantium* (Princeton 2013).
- Hillner J. (2003) "Domus, family, and inheritance: the senatorial family house in late antique Rome", *JRS* 93 (2003) 129-45.
- Hitchcock M. (2000) "Introduction", in *Souvenirs: the Material Culture of Tourism*, edd. M. Hitchcock and K. Teague (Aldershot 2000) 1-17.
- Hobbs R. (2007) "Mine's bigger than yours: comparing values of late Roman hoards", in *Roman Finds: Context and Theory*, edd. R. Hingley and S. Willis (Oxford 2007) 77-85.
- Hodder I. (2012) *Entangled: an Archaeology of the Relationships Between Humans and Things* (Chichester 2012).
- (1987) ed. *Archaeology as Long-Term History* (Cambridge 1987).
- Hoffmann A. (1998) "The Roman remodeling of the Asklepieion", in *Pergamon, Citadel of the Gods. Archaeological Record, Literary Description and Religious Development*, ed. H. Koester (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 1998) 41-61.
- Holden A. (2008) "The abduction of the Sabine women in context: the iconography on late antique contorniate medallions", *AJA* 112 (2008) 121-42.
- Howells D. T. (2010) *Late Antique Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 2 vols (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Sussex 2010).
- Hunt A. S. and Edgar C. C. (1934) *Select Papyri II: Official Documents* (Cambridge 1934).
- (1932) edd. *Select Papyri I: Private Affairs* (Cambridge 1932).
- Hunt E. D. (1982) *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire AD 312-460* (Oxford 1982).
- Hunter F. and Painter K. (2013) edd. *Late Roman Silver: the Traprain Treasure in Context* (Edinburgh 2013).
- Ingold T. (2010) "The textility of making", *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34 (2010) 91-102.
- (2000) *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London 2000).
- Isings C. (1957) *Roman Glass from Dated Finds* (Groningen-Jakarta 1957).
- Jackson R. (1990) "Waters and spas in the classical world", *Medical History* 34 (1990) 1-13.
- James L. (2001) "Bearing gifts from the East: imperial relic hunters abroad", in *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium: Papers from the Thirty-third Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry, March 1999*, ed. A. Eastmond (Aldershot 2001) 119-32.
- (1996) "'Pray not fall into temptation and be on your guard': pagan statues in Christian Constantinople", *Gesta* 35 (1996) 12-20.
- Janes D. (1998a) *God and Gold in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge 1998).
- (1998b) "Treasure bequest: death and gift in the Early Middle Ages", in *The Community, the Family and the Saint: Patterns of Power in Early Medieval Europe*, edd. J. Hill and M. Swan (Turnhout 1998) 363-77.

- Johansen I. M. (1994) "Rings, fibulae and buckles with imperial portraits and inscriptions", *JRA* 7 (1994) 223-42.
- Johns C. (2010) *The Hoxne Late Roman Treasure: Gold Jewellery and Silver Plate* (London 2010).
- (1996) *The Jewellery of Roman Britain: Celtic and Classical Traditions* (Abingdon-New York 1996).
- Johns C. and Bland R. (1994) "The Hoxne late Roman treasure", *Britannia* 25 (1994) 165-73.
- Johns C. and Potter T. W. (1983) *The Thetford Treasure: Roman Jewellery and Silver* (London 1983).
- Jones A. H. M. (1986) *The Later Roman Empire 284-602: a Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, 2 vols (Baltimore 1986).
- Kamash Z., Gosden C. and Lock G. (2010) edd. *The Vale and Ridgeway Project. Excavations at Marcham/Frillford 2010: Interim Report* (Oxford 2010).
- Kent J. and Painter K. S. (1977) *Wealth of the Roman World: AD 300-700* (London 1977).
- Khamis E. (2007) "The shops of Scythopolis in context", in *Objects in Context, Objects in Use: Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity*, edd. L. Lavan, E. Swift, and T. Putzeys (Late Antique Archaeology 5) (Leiden 2007) 439-72.
- Kiilerich B. (2001) "The image of Anicia Juliana in the Vienna Dioscurides: flattery or appropriation of imperial imagery?", *SymbOslo* 76 (2001) 169-90.
- Kiss Z. (1989) *Les Ampoules de Saint Méneas découvertes à Kôm el-Dikka (1961-1981)* (Alexandrie 5) (Warsaw 1989).
- Kitzinger E. (1954) "The cult of images in the age before iconoclasm", *DOP* 8 (1954) 83-150.
- Knappett C. (2008) "The neglected networks of material agency: artefacts, pictures, texts", in *Material Agency. Towards a Non-anthropocentric Approach*, edd. C. Knappett and L. Malafouris (New York 2008) 139-56.
- Kopytoff I. (1986) "The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process", in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. A. Appadurai (Cambridge 1986) 64-91.
- Korczynski M., Pickering M. and Robertson E. (2013) *Rhythms of Labour: Music at Work in Britain* (Cambridge 2013).
- Krämer W. (1965) "Zur Wiederverwendung antiker Gefäße im frühen Mittelalter", *Germania* 43 (1965) 327-29.
- Kruit N. and Worp K. (2000) "Geographical jar names: towards a multi-disciplinary approach", *ArchPF* 46 (2000) 65-146.
- Lanciani R. (1892) *Pagan and Christian Rome* (Boston-New York 1892).
- Latour B. (2005) *Reassembling the Social: an Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford 2005).
- (1999) *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, Mass.-London 1999).
- Laurence R. (1994) *Roman Pompeii: Space and Society* (London-New York 1994).
- Layton B. (2007) "Rules, patterns, and the exercise of power in Shenoute's monastery: the problem of world replacement and identity maintenance", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15 (2007) 45-73.
- Lazar L. (2009) "La bottiglia di Poetovio con rappresentazione del Faro di Alessandria: un raffinato oggetto con decorazione incise proveniente dall'Egitto", *Quaderni Friulani di Archeologia* 14 (2009) 147-58.
- Leader-Newby R. E. (2004) *Silver and Society in Late Antiquity: Functions and Meanings of Silver Plate in the 4th to 7th Centuries* (Aldershot 2004).
- Lévi-Strauss C. (2008) "The culinary triangle", in *Food and Culture: a Reader*, edd. C. Counihan and P. Van Esterik (New York-Abingdon, 2nd edn. 2008) 36-43.
- Lockey I. (2016) "The Atrium House: the archaeology of a late-antique residence", in *Aphrodisias Papers 5. Excavation and Research at Aphrodisias, 2006-2012*, edd. R. R. R. Smith, J. Lenaghan, A. Sokolicek, and K. Welch (JRA Supplementary Series 103) (Portsmouth, Rhode Island 2016) 243-54.
- Lomas K. and Cornell T. (2003) edd. *'Bread and Circuses': Euergetism and Municipal Patronage in Roman Italy* (London-New York 2003).
- Lomine L. (2005) "Augustan tourism", in *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity, and Conflict*, ed. J. Walton (Clevedon 2005) 69-87.
- Lupton D. (1998) *Food, the Body and Self* (London 1998).

- Łyżwa-Piber A. (2005) "The basketry from excavations from Naqlun", in *Christianity and Monasticism in the Fayoum Oasis*, ed. G. Gabra (Cairo-New York 2005) 231-45.
- Maas M. (2012) "Barbarians: problems and approaches", in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. S. Fitzgerald (Oxford 2012) 60-91.
- MacCannell D. (2013) *The Tourist: a New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 2013).
- MacCoull L. S. B. (1988) *Dioscorus of Aphroditos: His Work and His World* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1988).
- Maguire E. D., Maguire H. P., and Duncan-Flowers M. J. (1989) *Art and Holy Powers in the Early Christian House* (Urbana, Illinois 1989).
- Maguire H. (1999) "The good life", in *Late Antiquity: a Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. G. W. Bowersock, P. Brown, and O. Grabar (Cambridge, Mass.-London 1999) 238-57.
- (1997) "Magic and money in the Early Middle Ages", *Speculum* 72 (1997) 1037-54.
- Maines R. P., and Glynn J. J. (1993) "Numinous objects", *The Public Historian* 15 (1993) 9-25.
- Marcoux J. (2001) "The refurbishment of memory", in *Home Possessions: Material Culture Behind Closed Doors*, ed. D. Miller (Oxford 2001) 69-86.
- Marinescu C. (1996) "Transformations: classical objects and their re-use during Late Antiquity", in *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, ed. R. W. Mathisen and H. S. Sivan (Aldershot 1996) 285-98.
- Marx K. (2000) "Capital: vol. 1", in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. D. McLellan (Oxford, 2nd edn 2000) 452-523.
- Matheson S. B. (1994) "Catalogue of the exhibition", in *An Obsession with Fortune: Tyche in Greek and Roman Art*, ed. S. B. Matheson (Yale Bull) (New Haven, Connecticut 1994) 106-18.
- Matthews J. (2006) *The Journey of Theophanes: Travel, Business, and Daily Life in the Roman East* (New Haven, Connecticut-London 2006).
- Mauss M. (1966) *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (transl. I. Cunnison) (London 1966).
- McCracken G. (1988) *Culture and Consumption* (Bloomington, Indiana 1988).
- McNamara J. (1976) "Sexual equality and the cult of virginity in early Christian thought", *Feminist Studies* 3 (1976) 145-58.
- Meskel L. (2005) "Introduction: object orientations", in *Archaeologies of Materiality*, ed. L. Meskel (Oxford 2005) 1-17.
- Michaelian K., and Sutton J. (2013) "Distributed cognition and memory research: history and current directions", *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 4 (2013) 1-24.
- Millett M. (1994) "Treasure: interpreting Roman hoards", in *TRAC 94: Proceedings of the 4th Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference*, ed. S. Cottam, D. Dungworth, S. Scott, and J. Taylor (Oxford 1994) 99-106.
- Mingaud M. (1992) "Artisans et centres de production de vannerie dans l'occident romain", *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 28 (1992) 37-64.
- Morgan F. (2018) *Dress and Personal Appearance in Late Antiquity: The Clothing of the Middle and Lower Classes* (Leiden 2018).
- Morrison W. A. (2013) "A fresh eye on familiar objects: rethinking toiletry sets in Roman Britain", *OJA* 32 (2013) 221-30.
- Mundell Mango M. (1994) "Introduction", in *The Sevso Treasure, Part One*, M. Mundell Mango and A. Bennett (JRA Supplementary Series 12.1) (Ann Arbor 1994) 11-20.
- Mundell Mango M. and Bennett A. (1994) *The Sevso Treasure, Part One* (JRA Supplementary Series 12.1) (Ann Arbor 1994).
- Munro J. H. (1983) "The medieval scarlet and the economics of sartorial splendour", in *Cloth and Clothing in Medieval Europe: Essays in Memory of Professor E. M. Carus-Wilson* (London 1983) 13-70.
- Mylonas G. E. (1974) *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton 1974).
- Nathan G. (2000) *The Family in Late Antiquity* (London 2000).
- Norman A. F. (1960) "The book trade in 4th c. Antioch", *JHS* 80 (1960) 122-26.
- Oates J. F., Bagnall R. S., Clackson S. J., O'Brien A. A., Sosin J. D., Wilfong T. G. and Worp K. A. (2011) *Checklist of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets*: <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/texts/clist.html> (last accessed 21/09/2017).
- Ogden J. M. (1990) *Gold Jewellery in Ptolemaic, Roman and Byzantine Egypt* (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Durham 1990).
- Oliver A. (1975) "Tapestry in glass", *JGS* 17 (1975) 68-70.

- Onians J. (1980) "Abstraction and imagination in Late Antiquity", *Art History* 3 (1980) 1-24.
- Ostrow S. (1979) "The topography of Puteoli and Baiae on the eight glass flasks", *Puteoli: Studi Storia Antica* 3 (1979) 77-140.
- Painter K. S. (1975) "Roman flasks with scenes of Baiae and Puteoli", *JGS* 17 (1975) 54-67.
- Palma R. L. (1991) "Ancient head lice on a wooden comb from Antinöe, Egypt", *JEA* 77 (1991) 194.
- Peacock D. and Maxfield V. A. (2007) *The Roman Imperial Quarries: Survey and Excavation at Mons Porphyrites, 1994-1998* (London 2007).
- Pirling R. (1974) *Das römisch-fränkische Gräberfeld von Krefeld-Gellep (1960-1963)*, 2 vols (Germanische Denkmäler der Völkerwanderungszeit 8) (Berlin 1974).
- Platz-Horster G. (2009) "Die antiken Gemmen aus Xanten, Teil III: Neufunde, Neuerwerbungen, Nachträge und Auswertung", in *Xantener Berichte. Grabung – Forschung – Präsentation*, ed. M. Müller (Xantener Berichte 15) (Mainz 2009) 129-82.
- (2011) "Seals in transition: their change of function and value in Late Antiquity", in *Gems of Heaven: Recent Research on Engraved Gemstones in Late Antiquity*, edd. C. Entwistle and N. Adams (London 2011) 221-28.
- Price M. J. and Trell B. L. (1977) *Coins and their Cities: Architecture on the Ancient Coins of Greece, Rome, and Palestine* (London 1977).
- Proust M. (2006) *Remembrance of Things Past*, vol. 1 (transl. C. K. Scott Moncrieff) (Ware, Herts. 2006).
- Putzeys T., Waelkens M., Poblome J., van Neer W., de Cupere B., van Thuyne T., and Kellens N. (2007) "Contextual analysis at Sagalassos", in *Objects in Context Objects in Use: Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity*, edd. L. Lavan, E. Swift, and T. Putzeys (Late Antique Archaeology 5) (Leiden 2007) 205-37.
- Ratliff B. and Evans H. C. (2012) *Byzantium and Islam: the Age of Transition, 7th to 9th Century* (New York 2012).
- Reese D. S. (1987) "Palaikastro shells and Bronze Age purple-dye production in the Mediterranean basin", *BSA* 82 (1987) 201-206.
- Reinhold M. (1970) *History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity* (Brussels 1970).
- Remie Constable O. (2004) *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World: Lodging, Trade and Travel in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge 2004).
- Riegl A. (1985) *Late Roman Art Industry* (Rome 1985).
- Ross M. C., Zwirn S. R. and Boyd S. A. (2005) *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Medieval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection: Jewelry, Enamels, and Art of the Migration Period*, vol. 2 (Washington 2005).
- Rothaus R. M. (2000) *Corinth: The First City of Greece. An Urban History of Late Antique Cult and Religion* (Leiden 2000).
- Roueché C. and Reynolds J. M. (1989) *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity: the Late Roman and Byzantine Inscriptions* (London 1989).
- Rowlandson J. (1998) ed. *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt. A Sourcebook* (Cambridge 1998).
- Santrot J. (1996) "Bronzes et fers de Dax, Landes: la cachette d'un 'antiquaire-restaurateur' au I<sup>ve</sup> s. après J.-C.", *Gallia* 53 (1996) 251-343.
- Saradi H. (2011) "Late paganism and Christianisation in Greece", in *The Archaeology of Late Antique 'Paganism'*, edd. L. Lavan and M. Mulryan (Late Antique Archaeology 7) (Leiden 2011) 263-309.
- Sas K. and Thoen H. (2002) edd. *Schone Schijn: romeinse juweelkunst in West-Europa / Brilliance et Prestige: la joaillerie romaine en Europe occidentale* (Leuven 2002).
- Sauneron S. (1972) *Les ermitages chretiens du desert d'Esna*, vol. 4 (Cairo 1972).
- Schneider L. (1983) *Die Domäne als Weltbild: Wirkungsstrukturen der spätantiken Bildersprache* (Wiesbaden 1983).
- Sena Chiesa G. (2011) "Myth revisited: the re-use of mythological cameos and intaglios in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages", in *Gems of Heaven: Recent Research in Engraved Gemstones in Late Antiquity c. AD 200-600*, edd. C. Entwistle and N. Adams (London 2011) 229-38.
- Shaw B. D. (1999) "War and violence", in *Late Antiquity: a Guide to the Postclassical World*, edd. G. W. Bowersock, P. Brown, and O. Grabar (Cambridge, Mass.-London 1999) 130-69.
- Shaya J. (2013) "The summi viri of the Forum of Augustus", *AJA* 117 (2013) 83-110.
- Shelton K. (1985) "The Esquiline Treasure: the nature of the evidence", *AJA* 89 (1985) 147-55.

- (1981) *The Esquiline Treasure* (London 1985).
- Sherry J. F. Jr (1983) "Gift giving in anthropological perspective", *Journal of Consumer Research* 10 (1983) 157-68.
- Smith R. R. R., Lenaghan J., Sokolicek A. and Welch K. (2016) edd. *Aphrodisias Papers 5: Excavation and Research at Aphrodisias, 2006-2012* (JRA Supplementary Series 103) (Portsmouth, Rhode Island 2016).
- Stauffer A. (1995) *Textiles of Late Antiquity* (New York 1995).
- Steinby E. M. (1993-2000) ed. *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, 6 vols (Rome 1993-2000).
- Stern E. M. (1995) *Roman Mold-blown Glass: the First through Sixth Centuries. Toledo Museum of Art* (Rome 1995).
- Stewart P. (2003) *Statues in Roman Society: Representation and Response* (Oxford 2003).
- Stewart S. (2005) "Remembering the senses", in *Empire of the Senses: the Sensual Culture Reader*, ed. D. Howes (Oxford-New York 2005) 59-69.
- (1993) *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham-London 1993).
- Stirling L. M. (2008) "Pagan statuettes in late antique Corinth: sculpture from the Panayia Domus", *Hesperia* 77 (2008) 89-161.
- (2005) *The Learned Collector: Mythological Statuettes and Classical Taste in Late Antique Gaul* (Ann Arbor 2005).
- Swift E. (2016) "The development of artefact studies", in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Britain*, edd. M. Millett, L. Revell, and A. Moore (Oxford 2016) 63-94.
- (2013) "The analysis of reused material culture for late antique studies", in *Field Methods and Post-Excavation Techniques in Late Antique Archaeology*, edd. L. Lavan and M. Mulryan (Late Antique Archaeology 9) (Leiden 2013) 91-119.
- (2009) *Style and Function in Roman Decoration* (Aldershot 2009).
- Talbot A.-M. (2009) "The death and commemoration of Byzantine children", in *Becoming Byzantine: Children and Childhood in Byzantium*, edd. A. Papaconstantinou and A.-M. Talbot (Washington D.C. 2009) 283-308.
- Tandoi V. (1959) "Il 'contrasto del cuoco e del fornaio': a proposito di una recente edizione", *AeR* 4 (1959) 198-215.
- Theuws F. and Alkemade M. (2000) "A kind of mirror for men: sword depositions in late antique northern Gaul", in *Rituals of Power: From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, edd. F. Theuws and J. Laughland Nelson (Leiden 2000) 401-76.
- Thoen H. (2003) "Burial goods" in Excavations in Pessinus: The So-called Acropolis, from Hellenistic and Roman Cemetery to Byzantine Castle, edd. J. Devreker, H. Thoen, and F. Vermeulen (Ghent 2003) 59-117.
- Thomas J. D. (1978) "O. Florida 14: man or woman?", *ChrÉg* 53 (1978) 142-44.
- Thomas N. (1991) *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge-London 1991).
- Thomas T. K. (2001) *Textiles from Karanis, Egypt in the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology: Artifacts of Everyday Life* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan).
- (1990) *Textiles from Medieval Egypt, A.D. 30-1300* (Pittsburgh 1990).
- Török L. (2005) *Transfigurations of Hellenism: Aspects of Late Antique Art in Egypt AD 250-700* (Leiden 2005).
- Tran Tam Tinh V. (1972) *Le culte des divinités orientales en Campanie: en dehors de Pompéi, de Stabies et d'Herculanum* (Leiden 1972).
- Turcan R. (1997) *The Cults of the Roman Empire* (transl. A. Nevill) (Oxford 1997).
- Upson-Saia K. (2011) *Early Christian Dress: Gender, Virtue, and Authority* (London-New York 2011).
- Vandorpe K. (2009) "Archives and dossiers" in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, ed. R. S. Bagnall (Oxford 2009) 216-55.
- Van Minnen P. (1994) "House-to-house enquiries: an interdisciplinary approach to Roman Karanis", *ZPE* 100 (1994) 227-51.
- Varner E. (2004) *Mutilation and Transformation: Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture* (Leiden 2004).
- Vermeule C. C. (1975) "Numismatics in antiquity: the preservation and display of coins in ancient Greece and Rome", *SNR* 54 (1975) 5-32.
- Veyne P. (1990) *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism* (London 1990).
- Vikan G. (1990) "Art and marriage in early Byzantium", *DOP* 44 (1990) 145-63.



- (1982) *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art* (Washington D.C. 1982).
- Vitelli K. D. (1982) "The lamps", in *Yassi Ada: a 7th-Century Byzantine Shipwreck*, edd. G. F. Bass and F. H. Van Doorninck (College Station, Texas 1982) 189-201.
- Walker A. (2002) "Myth and magic in early Byzantine marriage jewelry", in *The Material Culture of Sex, Procreation and Marriage in Premodern Europe*, edd. A. McClanan and K. Rosoff Encarnacion (New York 2002) 59-78.
- Wallace C. (2006) "Long-lived samian?", *Britannia* 37 (2006) 259-272.
- Wallendorf M., and Arnould E. J. (1988) "'My favorite things': a cross-cultural enquiry into object attachment, possessiveness, and social linkage", *Journal of Consumer Research* 14 (1988) 531-47.
- Walter C. (2001) "The maniakion or torc in Byzantine tradition", *REByz* 59 (2001) 179-92.
- Ward-Perkins B. (2005) *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization* (Oxford 2005).
- Weiner A. (1992) *Inalienable Possessions: the Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-Oxford 1992).
- Weitzmann K. (1979) ed. *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, 3rd to 7th c.* (New York 1979).
- Wemple S. F. (1981) *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister 500 to 900* (Philadelphia 1981).
- Wendrich W. (1999) *The World According to Basketry* (Leiden 1999).
- (1998) "Basketry and matting", in *Berenike '96: Report of the Excavations at Berenike (Egyptian Red Sea Coast) and the Survey of the Eastern Desert*, edd. S. Sidebotham and W. Wendrich (Leiden 1998) 253-64.
- (1991) *Who is Afraid of Basketry* (Leiden 1991).
- Wendrich W., Tomber R. S., Sidebotham S. E., Harrell J. A., Cappers R. T. J. and Bagnall R. S. (2003) "Berenike crossroads: the integration of information", *JESHO* 46 (2003) 46-87.
- White K. D. (1975) *Farm Equipment of the Roman World* (Cambridge 1975).
- Wild J. P. (1976) "Textiles", in *Roman Craft*, edd. D. Strong and D. Brown (London 1976) 167-77.
- Winlock H. E. and Crum W. E. (1926) *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes*, 2 vols (New York 1926).
- Wipszycka E. (2009) *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IVe-VIIIe siècles)* (JJurP Supplement 11) (Warsaw 2009).
- Worrell W. H. (1942) *Coptic Texts in the University of Michigan Collection* (Ann Arbor, Michigan-London 1942).
- Wortley J. (2006) "How the Desert Fathers 'meditated'", *GRBS* 46 (2006) 315-28.
- Yiftach-Firanko U. (2007) *Marriage and Marital Arrangements: a History of the Greek Marriage Document in Egypt. 4th century BCE - 4th century CE* (Munich 2007).
- Youtie H. C. (1976) "Ten short texts on papyri", *ZPE* 23 (1976) 99-109.