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Tales from Stones, Travels through Time: Narrative and Vision in the Casket from the Vatican

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The Vatican pilgrim casket (sometimes referred to as the Sancta Sanctorum pilgrim box), containing relics from the Holy Land, reveals important changes in the history of devotional art. In revisiting the increasing use since late antiquity of a linear narrative in Christian decorations,¹ the author relates the three modes of representation in and on the pilgrim casket to three concepts of time—history, memory, and vision—testifying to the establishment of a new pictorial and iconographic Christian tradition, shaped by visionary experiences at holy sites, favoring narrative scenes. Beginning in the sixth century, pilgrims' reliquaries increasingly showed events from the holy sites from which the relics came, images that gained impact as a medium in themselves, as an aid to memory and/or to meditation. The author demonstrates how the visionary experiences that took place at holy sites, recorded in early pilgrim accounts, shaped these iconographic traditions.

The Vatican casket contains stones and relics collected by a pilgrim from sacred sites in the Holy Land.² The box's contents are covered by a lid with paintings on both sides. The outside of the lid shows a cross at the center, surrounded by a mandorla and placed atop a hill (fig. 1). Inscribed in the mandorla is a Greek cross; in the upper corners the monogram of Christ, [I]C-XC (*Iesus Christos*), is shown; and the lower corners are decorated with A (*alpha*) and Ω (*omega*). Opening the box, the beholder encounters a sequence of five events painted on the inside of the lid, forming a narrative account whose spatial placement puts the crucifixion at its core (fig. 2). I argue that one can read the scenes on the casket as a testimony to the establishment of a new pictorial and iconographic Christian tradition, favoring the depiction of narrative scenes instead of single symbols or saints and combining these scenes into pictorial cycles constituting linear narratives.



Fig. 1

Vatican casket, late 6th or early 7th century, view of outer lid. Tempera on wood; 24 × 18.4 × 4 cm. Museo Sacro, Vatican. © Museo Sacro, Vatican.



Fig. 2
Vatican casket, interior lid.
© Museo Sacro, Vatican.

I. Picturing the Past: The Rise of Linear Narratives

Ancient works of art, for example on Trajan's Column, already used linear narrative structures, chronologically linking the scenes of a large pictorial cycle. This tradition was continued in late antiquity in large-scale works such as the third-century cycle at Dura-Europos with scenes from the Old Testament,³ the mosaic decorations at Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, at the beginning of the fifth century, and Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna in the sixth century.⁴ Art historian Wolfgang Kemp describes how the telling of stories in pictorial cycles decorating church walls gained a new importance with the rise of Christianity.⁵ In his analysis of the narrative structures in early Christian and medieval art, Kemp suggests that this important shift is related to the development of Christian eschatological concepts of time.⁶ Christian theologians writing in the sixth century and around the turn to the seventh century show evidence of major changes in attitudes toward eschatology.⁷ Kemp proposes that the two modes—symbols/single figures versus narrative "*historiae*"—can be related to two concepts of time, which coexisted at first.⁸ According to Kemp, the linear conception of history contrasts with the cyclical conception found in the world where the first Christians lived. Jaś Elsner's comparison of the innovations on early Christian sarcophagi (breaking with Roman and Hellenistic traditions) with the Brescia lipsanoteca has demonstrated that the display of scenes on the sarcophagi is rooted in the Roman visual culture that relies on the idea of the "cyclical passing of time, setting their respective imagery in a broader universalizing picture of natural change." Elsner interprets the Bassus sarcophagus (Vatican, 359 CE) as

an eloquent visual plea concerning the rise of the new faith and its relations to the hallowed past. . . . The Brescia Lipsanoteca [Brescia, late 4th century?] effectively employs an extremely complex version of the framing strategy we have encountered in the Bassus sarcophagus, but this time with no hint of a traditional polytheistic cultural context, no genuflection as it were to Hellenism. Instead the larger registers . . . emphasise the Christian dispensation, while Jewish imagery is chosen for the smaller bands both to prefigure the Christian message typologically and to be surpassed by it in both size and visual emphasis.⁹

Early Christian caskets decorated with narrative scenes, such as the Brescia casket or the San Nazaro casket (late 4th century), show scenes from the Old and New Testaments, but not in a linear chronological sequence.¹⁰ The later Vatican casket is one of the oldest caskets on which the individual scenes are arranged chronologically.

Herbert Kessler describes the significance of applying a narrative structure within large monumental pictorial cycles and the reception of such church decorations during the later Middle Ages. He has been able to show that the decorative scheme of Italian churches, involving a linear narrative with scenes from the Old to the New Testament and often ending with the vision of the Last Judgment above the main entrance on the western wall, was repeated again and again.¹¹ A visitor to one of the large basilicas built after the fourth century could

follow, scene by scene, a linear sequence from Genesis, followed by the main stories from the Old Testament, and then, either on the opposite wall of the nave or lower down on the same wall, the life and passion of Christ; in other words, in walking through the nave, one could follow the linear development of historical time. In the apse and on the western wall, meanwhile, a beholder would encounter depictions that did not fit into the linear sequence. In the apses one could see Christ or God, Mary, a saint, or an allegorical representation, following a different mode of representation. Especially in the medieval period, a beholder leaving the church would encounter a “visionary” representation of the Last Judgment decorating the interior western wall.

The importance of this development for the visual culture of that time, especially for objects on a smaller scale, has so far not been addressed. The pictorial linear narrative can be connected to the presence of both the viewer of the casket and the user of the casket, to temporal and geographical experiences of that which is far away, to the end of time, and to the holy sites of the Holy Land, bringing that which is distant close, into the presence of viewership.

II. Memory: Stone Collection, Pilgrimage, and the Absent Past

The memory of the sites visited during a pilgrimage, the iconography on objects brought home from the Holy Land, and the narrative modes in which the stories are combined not only bring home these innovative moments that took place abroad, in distant regions, but also translate the experience of imagining the now-absent scenes into a presence, via the depiction, of the historical events. The custom of collecting stones and taking them home for their status as *eulogia* (blessings) has been described in an account by the famous Spanish female ascetic Egeria, who undertook a pilgrimage to the Holy Land at the end of the fourth century (381–84),¹² and by Arculf, who wrote about dust from the site of the Ascension, which he visited around 680.¹³ While Egeria brought home fruit, twigs, and a copy of King Abgar’s letter,¹⁴ by the sixth century the repertoire of holy souvenirs had become more “standardized”; by then pilgrims were bringing home—among other items—oil, earth, rocks, and water.¹⁵

Some of the stones in the Vatican casket carry partially legible inscriptions referring to their origins (fig. 3). These inscriptions, according to Franchi de Cavalieri, can be dated to no later than the eighth century.¹⁶ This suggests a *terminus ante quem*, fitting with Weitzmann’s observation that the depiction of the cupola of the Holy Sepulchre on the lid of the Vatican casket shows it resembling the structure of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built by Constantine in the fourth century and damaged by fire in a Persian invasion led by Chosroes II in 614. (At the same time, it bears a resemblance to the structure of the ciborium inside.)¹⁷ Weitzmann has also noted similarities between the depiction here and a depiction of the same scene on a manuscript leaf, probably from a Greek gospel book that was later inserted into a Syriac gospel illuminated in 586 at the monastery of Zagba in northern Mesopotamia, the Rabbula Gospel.¹⁸ A close relationship has also been observed between the painted scenes on the inner lid of the casket and pilgrim ampullas from the sixth and seventh centuries;¹⁹ these



Fig. 3
 Vatican casket, contents:
 a hardened mass of yellow
 sand containing stones and
 fragments of wood, some of
 them with inscriptions.
 © Museo Sacro, Vatican.

parallels are the basis for the most common dating of the casket to the late sixth or early seventh century.²⁰

The inscriptions on the stones in the casket legitimize and authenticate the stones.²¹ At the center of the collection is the stone from the site of the Resurrection;²¹ to the right is a stone from Mount Zion; slightly above, and pointing to the right upper edge, is a piece of wood from Bethlehem, where Christ was born; and above that is a stone from the Mount of Olives.²² The stones were part of their original sites, composed of the same matter as those sacred places, or *loca sancta*; they can therefore be considered relics, and the box as a reliquary. Even removed from their original context, they are part of an imagined sacred topography that can be visualized inside the box and even made evident when

the box is closed and only the empty cross on the lid is visible. Bruno Reudenbach has suggested speaking of them as “site relics.”²³ In the act of imagination and/or the activation of the pilgrim’s memory, the sacred topography of the stones is connected with the narrative of the scenes on the inner side of the lid; of those scenes, the lower left shows the Nativity, the lower right Jesus’s baptism; the Crucifixion is at the center, the Marys at the tomb are on the upper left, and the Ascension is on the upper right. One could relate this connection of the invisible distant past or distant sites with visible content in a casket filled with a pilgrim’s personal treasure to an observation by Cynthia Hahn about the nature of treasures: she argues that the treasury is always incomplete and fragmentary because it consists of relics whose power derives from a constant referral to what is physically absent.²⁴

The five scenes depicted on the lid also refer to specific churches in or close to Jerusalem and can be related to feasts of the liturgical church year.²⁵ Reudenbach has argued that the individual scenes also support this oscillation between the biblical past and the liturgical present, such as in the depiction of an altar below the canopy of the Holy Sepulchre.²⁶

Scholars in the first half of the twentieth century attempted to make systematic descriptions of reliquaries according to their shape and content, often paying little attention to the manifoldness and diversity of the practices related to the veneration of relics or to the reliquaries’ roots in early Christianity and thus also close ties to Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures.²⁷ Relics were differentiated based on whether they consisted of the physical remains of saints or of materials that had “only” had physical contact with sacred sites, relics, or their reliquaries. The contents of the Vatican casket would accordingly be considered secondary or even tertiary relics, in a rectangular, boxlike reliquary.²⁸ The most widely used historical Latin and Greek terms, however, are not a good match for the Vatican casket. Defining it as an *encolpion*, a *phylacterion* (a common term in Greek sources),²⁹ or a *Chrismarium* would emphasize the protective function of the enclosed relic(s), but would not include other important aspects of the stones’ functions—as souvenirs or as an invitation to a mental pilgrimage to the Holy Land.³⁰ The term *phylacterion* does highlight the continuity between the Greco-Roman, Jewish, and early Christian traditions. *Phylacteria* within all these cultures were capsules carried around the neck or somewhere else on the body as a repellent against witchcraft or other kinds of mischief—reliquaries of sorts that suggest multiple purposes involving both religious and secular needs.³¹ The other Greek terms for reliquaries emphasize the storage function: *λάρναξ* (*larnax*: a box, coffin, coffer), *κιβωτίδιον* (*kibōtidion*: a small box or chest), *θήκη* (*thēkē*: a case, chest, or tomb), *δίσκος* (*diskos*: a dish, disk, or mirror), and *σορός* (*soros*: a casket or coffin originally for human remains, but eventually used especially for relics of the Virgin).

The visionary experience of the beholder at holy sites and abroad helped shape iconographical traditions as well as the distribution of the objects that contributed to the establishment of those traditions. First, around the year 600, there is a significant increase in narrative scenes adorning containers that are closely connected to the sacred content of the containers.³² The vessels in which

pilgrims kept oils, stones, or other materials that had been in touch with sacred sites are increasingly decorated with scenes showing the events that happened there. These images not only refer to and reveal the origin of the contained relic but also gain increased impact as a medium themselves, serving the memory and/or the practice of meditation. Second, the use of the enclosed sacred matter often combines various functions, from souvenir, medicine, or talisman to tactile or visual “proof” of the historical event.

This casket not only stores relics of the Holy Land, however, but also represents a translation of those relics in multiple regards: the casket takes actual stones and wood from the holy sites—small pieces of wood or cloth that were in contact with the actual sites where Christ lived and suffered—and conserves and transfers the memories, the stories, and especially the sacred power that these materials absorbed in the Holy Land. I argue that the pictorial decoration—as seen against the re-reading of two pilgrim accounts—also adds another important aspect: it can be seen as a record of the historical situation and the customs practiced at the sacred sites.

When we compare the pilgrimage account written by Egeria with the later accounts by an anonymous pilgrim from Piacenza and by Arculf, a third development becomes evident. Egeria mentions changes to the sacred sites, such as churches, altars, gardens, and several splendid caves:

In Capernaum, the house of the prince of the apostles has been made into a church, with its original walls still standing. . . . Not far from there are some stone steps where the Lord stood. And in the same place by the sea is a grassy field with plenty of hay and many palm trees. . . . And this is the field where the Lord fed the people with the five loaves and the two fishes. In fact the stone on which the Lord placed the bread has now been made into an altar. People who go there take away small pieces of the stone to bring them prosperity, and they are very effective.³³

Egeria’s text highlights the rarity of the few remaining steps, stones, or walls, as well as her dependence on local guides to point out these sites. The anonymous pilgrim from Piacenza who wrote a later account, in the 570s, elaborates upon the practice of engagement with the sites, mentioning the precious adornments that have been added.³⁴ The stone upon which Christ stood near the porch of Solomon “is adorned with gold and silver.” A portrait that was said to be painted “during His lifetime . . . and placed in the Praetorium, shows a beautiful, small, delicate foot, a person of ordinary height, a handsome face, hair inclined to curl, a beautiful head with long fingers.” It is not the picture, however, but the stone that had evident healing powers: “For men take the measure of His footprints, and bind them upon their bodies for various diseases, and are healed.”³⁵

In Arculf’s account, the visible evidence of a historical incident imprinted in a marble column is approached in an act of physical “mimesis.” He describes how he inserted his fingers into the handprints of an attacker that were embedded in

a marble column that bore the likeness of St. George.³⁶ The tangible evidence is combined with visible traces of the blood of the horse that died in the attack:

Marvellous to say, the marks of his twice five fingers appear down to the present day inserted up to the roots in the marble column; and the sainted Arculf inserted in their place his own ten fingers, which similarly entered up to the roots. Further, the blood of that fellow's horse, the haunch of which, as it fell dead on the pavement, was broken in two, cannot be washed out or removed by any means, but that horse's blood remains indelible on the pavement of the house down to our times.³⁷

In these miracles, the stone object provides the opportunity to "access" the power and take it home, while visual memory is ignited by pictures present at the sacred sites. Whereas Egeria speaks mostly of stones, steps, caves, and dust, and often remarks on what has become invisible in her time, the Piacenza pilgrim's account reveals how the decoration and embellishments at the sacred sites had an impact on the decoration of the reliquaries in which the relics taken home were kept.³⁸ The accounts by the Piacenza pilgrim and by Arculf, taken together with Egeria's descriptions, reveal the circumstances that contributed to the decoration and use of reliquaries after the turn to the seventh century. In the basilica on Mount Zion, the pilgrim from Piacenza is overwhelmed both by the wonders happening during his visit and by the sheer number of relics and sacred sites that still bear sensory traces (whether visible or audible) of Christ:

In that very church is the pillar upon which our Lord was scourged, upon which pillar is the following mark: when He embraced it, His breast imprinted itself upon the very stone; and His two hands with both their palms and fingers are to be seen upon the stone, so that a measure is taken from thence for various weaknesses, and those who wear it round their necks are healed. Upon the pillar itself is the horn with which the kings and David were anointed. There is likewise the crown of thorns, with which our Lord was crowned and the spear which was thrust into His side and many stones with which St. Stephen was stoned. There is also a pillar upon which the cross of the blessed Peter, upon which he was crucified at Rome, was placed. There, too, is the chalice of the Apostles, with which, after our Lord's resurrection, they used to celebrate mass; and many other relics which I have forgotten.³⁹

This overwhelming effect is enhanced by the experience of the suspension of time. The pilgrim describes a stone that he lifted with his hands in the church as identical to the cornerstone of the house of St. James lifted by Christ; the anonymous pilgrim of Piacenza places his "ear upon the corner itself, and there will be a sound in your ears like the voices of many men."⁴⁰ The beholder of the Vatican casket might have had a similar experience handling the box, sliding the lid open and closed. In both cases there is a close link between touching and handling, revelation and proof. The presence of physical traces of Christ imprinted into stone invites touching, measuring, and immersing oneself in the past. The healing miracles that happen at the site provide evidence of sacred power, and the relics taken home are a combination of souvenir, medicine, and proof.

The temporal collapse that occurs in the interactions with the stones and in taking them home as possessions aligns with the production of new narratives, narratives that form a chain of testimonies whose temporal reference points, the times that they narrate, can be assembled into a linear experience of progressing time and eschatology. In the Piacenza pilgrim's description of the relics, time moves from the Old Testament (David) to Christ's lifetime and then on to the apostles (Stephen and Peter) and the chalice used to celebrate communion after Christ's resurrection. This movement in itself already establishes a chain of testimonies, starting with eyewitnesses, then moving on to the first Christians who provided us with written accounts, and progressing toward the time of the martyrs, followers of Christ through imitation. This shift is significant for the change in how historical events are translated for later epochs.

In Arculf's account, the progressive movement of time is even more evident. In one passage, the narrative reverses the linear progression to move it backward in time, as if the miraculous evidence were guiding the reader back into the past, from Arculf's testimony of the miracle backward to the time of Christ, and even back to the time of the Psalmist. The reporter of Arculf's account, Abbot Adamnan, describes how Arculf told him about the image in Constantinople that was stolen by a Jew and that has, since its return, miraculously been producing sacred oil:

Marvellous to say, there always distils from the wood of that picture of Blessed Mary a true boiling oil, which, as Arculf used to say, he saw with his own eyes. This marvellous oil proves the honour of Mary the mother of Jesus, of whom the Father says, "In My holy oil, have I anointed Him." The same Psalmist says to the Son of God Himself, "The Lord Thy God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows."

The author emphasizes on multiple occasions the accuracy and reliability of Arculf's description: "Arculf, who has been so often mentioned, gave us an accurate account, obtained from some well-informed witnesses in the city of Constantinople. . . . This narrative, which we have written about the situation and the foundation of Constantinople, . . . we learned carefully from the mouth of the saintep [*sic*] priest, Arculf."⁴¹

The increase in narrative scenes around the year 600, which is the same period in which Gregory the Great raises his voice to define the nature of images and their use,⁴² is evident on objects contemporary with the casket: bronze censers, ivory plaques, and manuscript illuminations are increasingly decorated with pictorial cycles telling the stories of Christ that happened centuries earlier. Because decorations at the sacred sites play a crucial role in the production of sanctity and in its translation to the homes of pilgrims, a closer look at some contemporary objects that show the same scenes (and sites) as does the Vatican casket will provide us with further important observations about these moments of translation of sacredness and the act of mimetic inscription by the beholder. Derek Krueger has noted that collections of objects such as Theolinda's pilgrim ampullae translated the holy sites into an assemblage of *loca sancta*.⁴³

Fig. 4
Bronze censer from
Palestine, ca. 600.
© National Museum,
Baghdad.



Comparing the iconography of the scene that includes Christ's baptism with further parallel scenes, beyond the Rabbula Gospels, reveals another unique detail.⁴⁴ Starting in the sixth century, bronze censers from Syria or Palestine, ivory plaques, and pilgrim ampullae bore a combination of several narrative scenes from the life of Christ, which later went on to become a trend in the iconography of Christian art.⁴⁵ On the lid of the Vatican casket, Christ is accompanied not only by John and two angels but also by two other saints. These two figures probably represent two of John's disciples who joined Jesus (only mentioned in John 1:35–37 and not in any of the other gospels). The two angels can be found in other places as well, including on the Syrian bronze censer today preserved in Baghdad (fig. 4).⁴⁶ Several of these examples also show a river god, and one of them adds Sol and Luna, a reference to the fact that both are visible at the same time, as mentioned in liturgical texts. Most, however, show only John, Christ, and at most one angel. None other shows two saints and two angels, as the Vatican casket does.⁴⁷

Another group of objects that has not yet been considered in this context is terra-cotta oil lamps brought home by pilgrims that can be found all over the Mediterranean and northern Europe, which originated in holy sites in the Holy Land and in North Africa, for example, the oil lamps with the depiction of a *crux gemmata* and Daniel and the three men refusing to venerate the idol of Nebuchadnezzar (figs. 5a and 5b) that are preserved in France.⁴⁸ Narrative scenes can be found, enriched again with Sol and Luna, on oil lamps starting in the fifth century.⁴⁹ Oil was a medium that seemed particularly apt for carrying sacred power; as the Syrian St. Ephraim puts it, "The oil is the sweet unguent with which those who are baptized are signed, being clothed in the armaments of the Holy Spirit."⁵⁰ The burning of oil and the perception of its light, related to the sacred oil collected at the holy site, stimulates the memory and aids in the conflation of time and space in the visionary experience.

We can draw two conclusions here: first, that a firm iconographical tradition had not yet developed for the scene of Christ's baptism (as can be seen by the inclusion of Sol and Luna on the aforementioned ivory plaque); and second, that the Vatican casket, as one can see through the construction of a "testimonial chain," demonstrates an important take on the addition of historical events into Christian religious narratives and religious practices.

We have not addressed thus far how this object and these scenes were perceived and how they relate to the image culture of the time. One can read the scenes on the casket as a testimony to the establishment of a pictorial and iconographical tradition in which a narrative of the faraway both transfers the viewer to the faraway site and, at the same time, brings the distant site closer, into the presence of the viewer. In other words, the memory of the sites of the (historical) events and the depiction of these events on objects brought home from the Holy Land, along with the narrative modes in which the stories are combined, not only transport the viewer back to those innovative moments experienced abroad in distant regions, but also translate the experience of imagining the scenes into a presence of the historical events depicted, and establish a linear narrative. The beholder can relate to the past and read his or her own time into a linear progression of the experience of elapsing time. The sequential mode of arranging the scenes into a linear narrative offers the distant beholder a chance to inscribe herself or himself into a timeline that starts in biblical time and moves toward the end of time. Derek Krueger's analysis of liturgical texts has shown how "additions to the liturgy emphasized the immediacy of biblical events" and positions "the rise of pilgrimage and the iconography of reliquaries among the emergent conceptions of liturgical time."⁵¹

Linear pictorial sequences such as that on the Vatican casket (which begins with the birth of Christ and points to a promised future and eternal life in heaven) were not invented by Christian artists, but their use increases significantly around the turn to the seventh century.⁵² Narrative allows an individual to inscribe himself or herself and supports an "immersion" of the beholder into a kind of middle zone or time between the evidence from the past, which includes traces of Christ, and the elapsing of time in the future, until the Last Judgment.



Fig. 5a (left)
Oil lamp from Tunisia, showing Daniel and the three men refusing to venerate the idol of Nebuchadnezzar, 6th century. Terra-cotta, 14 × 8.3 × 3.2 cm. Collection Rivel. © Collection J.-C. Rivel.

Fig. 5b (right)
Oil lamp from North Africa, found at Saint-Mitre-les-Remparts, Saint-Blaise, showing crux gemmata, 6th century. 11 cm long. Dépôt archéologique de Saint-Rémy-de-Provence. © Musée Archéologique, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence.

Studies comparing the concepts of time in the writings of Augustine, Boethius, and Gregory the Great, with particular emphasis on their interest in defining eternity and the eventual ending of time, have indicated an increasing interest, in the sixth century, in interpreting events as signs of impending divine judgment.⁵³ “What then is time?” asks Augustine, the fourth-century bishop of Hippo. “If no one asks me, I know, but if I wish to explain it, I do not know.”⁵⁴ Augustine identifies past, present, and future with the presence of past things, the presence of present things, and the presence of future things. On this basis, in a second step, he connects these categories with memory, intuition, and expectation.⁵⁵ For him, time is related to movement in space, which can be differentiated from the context of its appearance. Time can only be measured when it is extending and evolving,⁵⁶ and this is only possible in the present: “But we measure times as they are passing, by perceiving them; but past, which now are not, or the future, which are not yet, who can measure? unless a man shall presume to say, that can be measured, which is not. When then time is passing, it may be perceived and measured; but when it is past, it cannot, because it is not.”⁵⁷ A few years before the pilgrim casket was made, Boethius goes a step further. According to Boethius, time is experienced by humans during their being not synchronically but as an insuperable difference, enabling the differentiation in time and eternity.⁵⁸ These positions touch on the essential problems for Christians: the contemporary past and eternal presence of Christ; the importance of the Apocalypse; and the closeness to the end of time and eternity. In these two centuries (the fifth and sixth), Christian ideas of time and eternity crystallized. In the process, older ideas (such as Plotinus’s concept of eternity) were adjusted and absorbed. This complex process is reflected not only in written testimonies but also in the visual culture of this time, so that the change just observed for the turn from the sixth to the seventh century, especially in smaller objects such as pilgrim ampullae, pilgrim’s caskets, oil lamps, and incense burners, reflects the described concepts of time and their impact on the relationship between past, present, and future, or memory, experience, and expectation.

III. Vision: The Outer Lid and the End of Elapsing Time

On a functional level, the outer side of the lid of the pilgrim’s casket provides important clues about its contents (see fig. 1). The vertical bar of the cross, standing on a hill and surrounded by a mandorla, still bears the remains of several smaller branches that were cut off from the limb. An abbreviated reference to Christ’s name ([I]C-XC) is written across the two upper corners of the lid, and the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, alpha and omega, are shown in the left and right lower corners, emphasizing the idea that Christ is the beginning and the end. The rays that emanate from the central meeting point of the vertical debranched beam and the straight horizontal bar, in combination with the shape of the mandorla, could be read as a visual rendering of a standard acrostic of Christ’s name (ἰχθῶς [fish] — Iesòus Christòs Theòu Yiòs Sotèr).⁵⁹ Another reference to Christ’s name, the Chi-Rho, is represented inside the box, in the setting of the stones; Golgotha is at the center, once as the cross of Sacrifice, then as the forerunner of the Second Coming.

The unique choice of motifs on the outside of the lid can be explained in two ways: the first involves going back to precursors in early Christian iconography, while the second has to do with a contemporary depiction of the Transfiguration in the apse of St. Catherine's Monastery, in the Sinai.

With respect to the precursors, the empty cross goes back to a motif that places particular emphasis on the present absence and the Second Coming of Christ, his future presence, either by having soldiers sitting next to the cross, as seen, for example, in the panel from a lidless Roman sarcophagus of the "Passion type"⁶⁰ and on the sarcophagus from Lyon,⁶¹ or else by using scenes of the Resurrection, as in the sarcophagus from Jerusalem.⁶² The combination with the [I]C-XC (Jesus Christ) in the upper and the A-Ω (Alpha-Omega) in the lower corners of the lid puts particular emphasis to the fact that Christ is the beginning and the end. A comparison between the symbolic representation of the Resurrection on the sarcophagus from the Museo Pio Cristiano at the Vatican (fig. 6) and the painting on the lid of the casket demonstrates that presence is created through absence. Christ is absent, his body dead, but his absence refers to the promise of eternal life and is a reference to resurrection.⁶³

As we continue to consider the empty cross and the absence of Christ, let us return to the inscribed viewer. The suggestion of an inscribed viewer leads to the difficult question of how the Vatican casket was used and how ways of experiencing it were different from reading an illuminated gospel or visiting the actual sacred sites in the Holy Land. The first view of the box provides the beholder with a type of vision fundamentally different from the experience of a pilgrim in the Holy Land. Furthermore, the beholder who then opens the box and looks inside, following the scenes in the order of the historical events, moves along horizontal and vertical lines: the field is divided as though by two overlapping wooden beams forming a cross, and the way the linear narrative



Fig. 6
Anastasis, symbolic representation of the resurrection of Christ.
Panel from a lidless Roman sarcophagus of the "Passion type," ca. 350. From the excavations of the Duchess of Chablais at Tor Marancia, 1817–21; Museo Pio Cristiano, Vatican.
© Marie-Lan Nguyen.

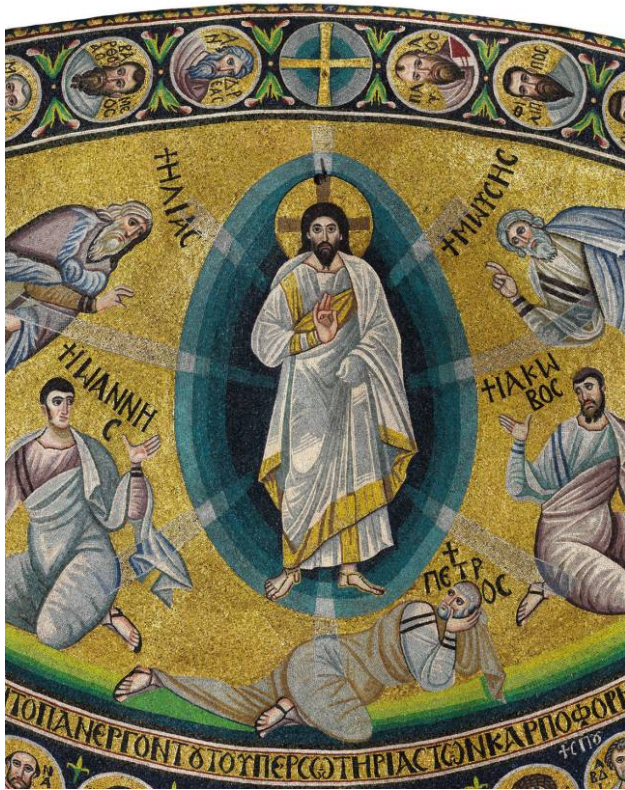


Fig. 7
 Apse mosaic, 6th century.
 St. Catherine's Monastery,
 Sinai. © Roberto Nardi.

moves through the panel resembles a Ξ or a cross (\dagger), with the middle arm showing the Crucifixion. The same movement could be repeated with the stones, this time following the Chi-Rho lines and again ending up with crossing lines meeting at the core, which symbolizes the life-giving Resurrection.

Reudenbach emphasizes the cosmological interpretations of the cross in patristic sources and argues that the stones inside form an ideal topography of the renewed world, which was formed by the power of Christ the Savior in the sign of the cross.⁶⁴ The center of this redeemed world is Golgotha, from which the cross reaches into the four cardinal directions. Cyril of Jerusalem combines these two ideas with the cross as a life-giving sign in his *Catechesis* 13:28:

He stretched out His hands on the Cross, that He might embrace the ends of the world; for this Golgotha is the very center of the earth. It is not my word, but it is a prophet who has said, you have wrought salvation in the midst of the earth. He stretched forth human hands, who by His spiritual hands had established the heaven; and they were fastened with nails, that His manhood, which bore the sins of men, having been nailed to the tree, and having died, sin might die with it, and we might rise again in righteousness. For since by one man came death, by One Man came also life; by One Man, the Savior, dying of His own accord: for remember what He said, I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again.⁶⁵

The similarity between the words chosen for the inscription on the stone at the center of the stones in the box (*ἀναστάσεως* [*anastaseōs*: to cause to stand] and *ζωοποιέω* [*zōopoiēō*: to bring alive]) and the words chosen by Cyril of Jerusalem (*ἀναστῶμεν* [*anastōmen*: to cause to stand up] and *ζῶη* [*zōē*: live]) is as striking as the similarities between the contents of Cyril's text and the outside of the casket's lid.

In the case of the Vatican casket, one could even argue that the emptiness of the cross on the outside of the lid emphasizes the evidence that remained after the Crucifixion—the cross, the nails, and the soil—and invites the beholder to touch the matter inside and imagine the actual sites of the events, a process of beholding that is further enhanced by the images on the inside of the lid. The touching and seeing of actual material evidence, which contains the power of the past, along with the seeing of pictorial testimonies to the historical event, merge into an experience of presence during the beholder's immersion in the sequence of the scenes.

This is not a “reality more or less seen and experienced on the spot, but wherein the dramatis personae, the bishop and clergy, are subsumed beneath their typological equivalents,”⁶⁶ nor just a conflation of the biblical narrative with the pilgrim's experience through the “complex liturgical agglomeration of biblical past, holy place, and liturgical celebration.”⁶⁷ It is, rather, a creation of presence through absence—absence made evident through the casket's outer lid, the bare matter, the naked stones, and the process of being inscribed into the Christian concept of eschatology based on a linear, but elapsing, idea of time.⁶⁸

As for the second explanation for the decoration of the outer lid, involving the mandorla, which normally surrounds a heavenly appearance, we return to a point touched on earlier in this article. In the apse of Saint Catherine's Monastery, the radiating light emanating from behind Christ is bundled into seven beams, which divide the mandorla in a way that is similar to the division on the casket (fig. 7). Yet each of these depictions, the casket and the mosaic, is unique.

Saint Catherine's Monastery is located at the foot of two holy mountains, Mount Sinai and Mount Horeb—mountains where, according to tradition, Moses, Elijah, and other prophets spoke with God. These two prophets from the Old Testament are, in turn, the ones who also speak to Christ in the scene of the transfiguration, which itself is per se already an assemblage of temporalities. The scene of the Transfiguration combines different layers of time. The beholder living in the present views an encounter that, according to the gospels, happened during Christ's lifetime: Christ is elevated and disappears in radiating light while meeting the two prophets from the Old Testament. The three apostles can hear Christ and the two prophets speaking but cannot see them, while the beholder sees both groups; the mandorla depicting the radiating light marks the threshold of the two different perspectives (of the prophets and of the apostles), and only the audience in front of the picture can combine the two. Visitors to Saint Catherine's can also see the Transfiguration itself from two perspectives: they can either raise their eyes, inside the church, and look up into the apse mosaic, as though looking at a heavenly opening or a window into the past, or they can

climb the mountain and visit the actual site of the Transfiguration, Mount Tabor. A beholder of the apse mosaic in Sinai showing the scene of the Transfiguration and a beholder of the pilgrim's casket, then, both see an assemblage of temporal and virtual realities. One could even add one more layer: this beholder can inscribe himself or herself in the space between the sacred past and the promised resurrection, as well as in the gap between the spatial dimension of the Holy Land and the presence of the sacred matter, the site relics.

In the case of the casket (see figs. 1–3), multiple possible readings coexist. One set of possible ways of seeing it is based on references to the Resurrection in the past, while another set relies on references to the promise of salvation in the future. Furthermore, the painting on the lid refers to the contents inside the box, to the power of the site relics to activate the memory of the pilgrim or even the imagination of someone looking at the casket who was never at the holy site: the painting addresses both these audiences. In the process, absence creates presence: the events become present through an act of imagination enhanced by chains of testimonies that include the actual matter (stones, wood) from the site, the testimonies depicted, and testimonies from memory. The decoration of the pilgrim casket in the Vatican reveals not only this change in the culture of images but also a meaningful object that reveals how the decoration at the holy sites contributes to how they are remembered, how the containers of the site relics were decorated, and how the stories of the Holy Land were translated.

Finally, the linear narrative of the paintings inside provides the beholder with the possibility of being inscribed into a chain of testimonies that reaches from the actual event to the present of the beholder by storing the power in the relic and then translating it into the time of the beholder, who is positioned somewhere between the origin of elapsing time and its end, in the expectation of the Last Judgment.

■

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¹ Wolfgang Kemp, *Christliche Kunst: Ihre Anfänge, ihre Strukturen* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1994).

² It was found with a collection of other treasures in the Sancta Sanctorum in 1905. For an (incomplete) bibliography, see Martina Bagnoli et al., eds., *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); not mentioned there is Alexander Demandt and Josef Engemann, eds., *Imperator Caesar Flavius Constantinus: Konstantin der*

- Grosse (Trier: von Zabern, 2007), 257. On the explorations of the Lateran treasure, see Kirsten Noreen, "Opening the Holy of Holies: Early Twentieth-Century Explorations of the Sancta Sanctorum (Rome)," *Church History* 80, no. 3 (2011): 520–46; for its context, see Lucas Burkart, *Das Blut der Märtyrer: Genese, Bedeutung und Funktion mittelalterlicher Schätze* (Köln [u.a.]: Böhlau, 2009).
- 3 Joseph Gutmann, "The Dura Europos Synagogue Paintings and Their Influence on Later Christian and Jewish Art," *Artibus et historiae* 9 (1988): 25–99; Kurt Weitzmann, *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990); Hans Ramis, *Ein frühes christliches Bildprogramm im Taufraum der Hauskirche von Dura Europos (um 230) als Zeugnis des typologischen und allegorischen Schriftverständnisses* (Munich: Schnell & Steiner, 2003); Reinhard von Bendemann, "Lebensgeist kam in sie . . .": Der Ezechielzyklus von Dura Europos und die Rezeption von Ez 37 in der Apk des Johannes. Ein Beitrag zum Verhältnisproblem von Ikonizität und Narrativität," in Weissenrieder et al., eds., *Picturing the New Testament: Studies in Ancient Visual Images* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 253–86.
- 4 Angelika Geyer, "Bibleepik und frühchristliche Bildzyklen: Die Mosaiken von Santa Maria Maggiore in Rom," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 112 (2005/2006): 293–321; Silvana Casartelli Novelli, "I 'programmi' decorativi ed gli edifici di culto," in Ermini et al., eds., *La comunità cristiana di Roma: La sua vita e la sua cultura dalle origini all'alto Medio Evo* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000), 269–326; Beat Brenk, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken in S. Maria Maggiore zu Rom* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1975); Johannes G. Deckers, *Der alttestamentliche Zyklus von S. Maria Maggiore in Rom: Studien zur Bildgeschichte* (Bonn: Habelt, 1976); Wolfgang Kemp, "Frühchristliche Mosaiken," *Kunsthistorische Arbeitsblätter* 1 (2003): 5–16.
- 5 Wolfgang Kemp, *Christliche Kunst: Ihre Anfänge, ihre Strukturen* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1994); and Herbert Kessler, "Caput et speculum omnium ecclesiarum": Old St. Peter's and Church Decoration in Medieval Latium," in William Tronzo, ed., *Italian Church Decoration of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance* (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Ed., 1989), 109–46.
- 6 Kemp, *Christliche Kunst*, 260–61.
- 7 For an overview of the major changes in positions expressed by theologians contemporary to the casket, see Brian E. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 205–15.
- 8 Kemp, *Christliche Kunst*, 260–61.
- 9 Jás Elsner, "Framing the Objects We Study: Three Boxes from Late Roman Italy," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 71 (2008): 21–38, here 30–32. Based on a comparative analysis of the changes in late antique poetry and art, Michael Roberts has observed that the "regularity of structure, patterning by enumerative sequence, the schematic and thematic relationship of compositional units . . . all are characteristics of late antique poetry, derived from the rhetorical ecphrasis. In art, though sporadically present earlier, these characteristics rise to prominence in the reigns of the Tetrarchs and Constantine." Michael Roberts, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 78.
- 10 Verena Alborino, *Das Silberkästchen von San Nazaro in Mailand* (Bonn: Habelts Dissertationsdrucke, 1981); and Helmut Buschhausen, *Die spätromischen Metallschreine und frühchristlichen Reliquiare* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1971).
- 11 Herbert L. Kessler, *Old St. Peter's and Church Decoration in Medieval Italy* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2002).
- 12 John Wilkinson, ed. and trans., *Egeria's Travels: Newly Translated with Supporting Documents and Notes* (Warminster, UK: Aris & Phillips, 1999). For the most recent critical edition with an extensive bibliography, see Georg Röwekamp, ed. and commentary, *Itinerarium/Egeria* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2000); for a concordance, see D. R. Blackman and G. G. Betts, eds., *Concordantia in Itinerarium Egeriae* (Hildesheim/New York: Olms-Weidmann, 1999). For further scholarship on her account of her pilgrimage, see Maria Kazaku, ed., *Egeria: Mediterranean Medieval Places of Pilgrimage; Network for the Documentation, Preservation and Enhancement of Monuments in the Euromediterranean Area* (Athens: Hellenistic Ministry of Culture, 2008).
- 13 James Rose Macpherson, ed. and annotator, *Pilgrimage of Arculfus in the Holy Land about the Year A.D. 670* (London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 1895), ch. XXIII:
- And, moreover, the mark of the dust that was trodden by the Lord is so lasting that the impression of the footsteps may be perceived. . . . Further, as the sainted Arculf, who carefully visited this spot, relates, a brass hollow cylinder of large circumference, flattened on the top, has been placed here. . . . In the centre of it is an opening of some size, through which the uncovered marks of the feet of the Lord are plainly and clearly seen from above, impressed in the dust. In that cylinder there is, in the western side, as it were, a door; so that any entering by it can easily approach the place of the sacred dust, and through the open hole in the wheel may take up in their outstretched hands some particles of the sacred dust.
- See also "Piacenza Pilgrim," in Paul Geyer and Otto Cuntz, eds., *Antonini Placentini Itinerarium, Itineraria* (Augsburg: Gymnasium St. Anna, 1892), 127–74.
- 14 Blake Leyerle, "Pilgrim Eulogiae and Domestic Rituals," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 10 (2008): 223–37.

15 This has been noted by Derek Krueger, "Liturgical Time and Holy Land Reliquaries in Early Byzantium," in Holger Klein and Cynthia Hahn, eds., *Saints and Sacred Matter: The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, forthcoming).

16 Quoted in Mauro della Valle, "Reliquario con scene della vita di Cristo," in *Splendori di Bisanzio: Testimonianze e riflessi d'arte e cultura bizantina nelle chiese d'Italia* (Milan: Fabbri, 1990), 140. The suggested datings range from the 6th to the 11th century. Ninth century: Grisar; 10th to 11th century: Lauer; 6th century: Morey, Pantanella, Utro, and M. della Valle; 8th to 9th century: Volbach; 7th century: Cecchelli; 9th century: von Matt; 6th to 7th century: Mietke and Curzi. See Hartmann Grisar, *Die römische Kapelle Sancta Sanctorum und ihr Schatz. Meine Entdeckungen und Studien in der Palastkapelle der Mittelalterlichen Päpste. Mit einer Abhandlung von M. Dreger über die figurirten Seidenstoffe des Schatzes* (Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 1908); Philippe Lauer, *Le trésor du Sancta Sanctorum* (Paris: Leroux, 1906); Charles R. Morey, "The Painted Panel from the Sancta Sanctorum," in Worringer et al., eds., *Festschrift zum sechzigsten Geburtstag von Paul Clemen* (Bonn: Cohen, 1926), 151–67; Wolfgang F. Volbach, *Il tesoro della cappella Sancta Sanctorum* (Vatican City: Museo Sacro, 1941); Carlo Cecchelli, *La vita di Roma nel Medio Evo*, vol. 1.1: *Le arte minori* (Rome: Palombi, 1951); Leonard von Matt, *Die Kunstsammlungen der Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Rom* (Cologne: DuMont, 1969); Cristina Pantanella, "Reliquary Box with Stones from the Holy Land," in Bagnoli et al., *Treasures of Heaven*, 36; Umberto Utro, "Coperchio di reliquario," in *Deomene: L'immagine dell'orante fra Oriente e Occidente* (Milan: Electa, 2001), 216–17; Gabriele Mietke, "Wundertätige Pilgerandenken, Reliquien und ihr Bildschmuck," in Michael Brandt and Arne Effenberg, eds., *Byzanz: Die Macht der Bilder* (exh. cat.) (Hildesheim, 1998), 40–55; Gaetano Curzi, "Reliquario con scene della vita di Cristo," in Boris Ulianich, ed., *La croce: Dalle origini agli inizi del secolo XVI* (Naples: Electa, 2000), 71.

17 Kurt Weitzmann, "Loca Sancta and the Representational Arts of Palestine," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 28 (1974): 31–55, here 41; Mietke, "Wundertätige Pilgerandenken," 27; and for the analogy of the ciborium, Bruno Reudenbach, "Loca sancta: Zur materiellen Übertragung der heiligen Stätten," in Reudenbach, ed., *Jerusalem, die Schöne: Vorstellungen und Bilder einer heiligen Stadt* (Bern: Lang, 2009), 31.

18 Fol. 13 recto shows the Crucifixion above and the scene with the women at the empty tomb below; the reverse shows the Ascension. Massimo Bernabò has suggested that the first twelve folios and folio 14 stem from a Syriac gospel, while folio 13 comes from a Greek gospel. Massimo Bernabò, *Il tetraevangelo di Rabbula: Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut 1,56. L'illustrazione del Nuovo Testamento nella Siria del VI secolo* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2008), 10, 19–21, and 105–10. See also Weitzmann, "Loca Sancta"; John Lowden, "The Beginnings of Biblical Illustration," in John W. Williams, ed., *Imagining the Early Medieval Bible* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 26–30; Reiner Sörries, *Christlich-Antike Buchmalerei im Überblick* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1993), 94–100; Marlia M. Mango, "Where Was Beth Zagba?," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1983): 405–30; Mietke, "Wundertätige Pilgerandenken," 43–44.

19 Lily Arad, "The Holy Land Ampulla of Sant Pere de Casseres: A Liturgical and Art-Historical Interpretation," in *Miscellània Litúrgica Catalana* 15 (2007): 59–86.

20 Mietke, "Wundertätige Pilgerandenken," 43. Another *terminus ante quem* is mentioned by Giovanni Morello: "One and a half parchment folios (today: Vat. Lat. 10696) were reused in the seventh or eighth century to enclose and wrap seven relics from the Holy Land. The pages contain works by Titus Livius written in an elegant uncial in the 4th/5th century." Giovanni Morello, "Il Tesoro del Sancta Sanctorum," in Carlo Pietrangeli, ed., *Palazzo Apostolico Lateranense* (Florence: Nardini, 1991), 91–106, here 92.

21 Hedwig Röckelein has analyzed the use of rhetoric to authenticate relics and argues convincingly that the rhetoric of hagiographic texts "wraps" relics, relating this rhetoric to the textiles and authentic materials that physically wrap the relics. In looking for metaphors of weaving in Greek and Latin hagiographic texts, she finds striking analogies between the functions and characteristics of hagiographic texts and those of textile wrappings. Cf. Hedwig Röckelein, "Die Hüllen der Heiligen: Zur Materialität des hagiographischen Mediums," in Bruno Reudenbach and Gia Toussaint, eds., *Reliquiare im Mittelalter* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005) (Hamburger Forschungen zur Kunstgeschichte; 5), 75–88; for the Sancta Sanctorum relics, see Bruno Galland, *Les authentiques de reliques du Sancta Sanctorum* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2004); and Julia M. H. Smith, "Portable Christianity: Relics in the Medieval West (700–1200)," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 181 (2012): 143–67.

22 Judging from the additional filling material that surrounds the two highest stones in the center, I believe that the setting of the stones is original and that the height of the two stones, which impedes the lid from being able to lie completely flat and close the casket, results from material added below them in later repairs.

23 Reudenbach, "Loca sancta."

24 Cynthia Hahn, "The Meaning of Early Medieval Treasures," in *Reliquiare im Mittelalter*, 1–20; and Hahn, *Strange Beauty: Issues in the Making and Meaning of Reliquaries, 400–circa 1204* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012). In my study on the statue of St. Foy at Conques, I argue that a key element of the appearance of many treasure objects is bricolage, contributing to the openness of the work and enhancing its ability to invite further donations, which result in changes in the object's appearance. Beate Fricke, *Ecce Fides: Die Statue von Conques, Götzendienst, und Bildkultur im Westen* (Paderborn: Fink, 2007).

- 25 Georg Kretschmar, "Festkalender und Memorialstätten Jerusalems in altkirchlicher Zeit," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 87 (1971): 167–205, here 177.
- 26 Reudenbach, "Loca sancta."
- 27 Joseph Braun, *Die Reliquiare des christlichen Kultes und ihre Entwicklung* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1940). The younger scholarship on relics continues to follow the formal categories he established for reliquaries: Buschhausen, *Die spätromischen Metallscriinia*; Galit Noga-Banai, *The Trophies of the Martyrs: An Art Historical Study of Early Christian Silver Reliquaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Bagnoli et al., *Treasures of Heaven*; Hahn, *Strange Beauty*.
- 28 Joseph Braun describes the Vatican casket as a "rechteckiges Kästchenreliquiar." Braun, *Reliquiare*, 149.
- 29 The Latinized version *philacterium/flacterium* was a term that had already appeared in the West by the time the Vatican casket was made; it can be found in a letter by Gregory the Great, and was frequently used up until the 12th century. See Gregorius Magnus, *Registrum Epistularum 8–14*, ed. Dag Norberg (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982), XI, 10.
- 30 Braun, *Reliquiare*, 23.
- 31 Matthew uses the term *phylacterion* referring to the tefillin, little parchment strips with passages from Exodus and Deuteronomy, which were carried as a reminder of the Law and its promises, for protection and during the prayer. Matthew 23:5.
- 32 Mietke, "Wundertätige Pilgerandenken"; Josef Engemann, "Palästinensische Pilgerampullen im F. J. Dölger-Institut in Bonn," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 16 (1973): 5–27; Noël Duval, ed., *Naissance des arts chrétiens: Atlas des monuments paléochrétiens de la France* (Paris: Impr. Nationale, 1991).
- 33 Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, 97–98; for an overview of early accounts of pilgrims to the Holy Land and their reception, see Ekkehart Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen: Das okzidentale Araberbild und seine Entstehung im Frühmittelalter* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986), 9–42.
- 34 Charles William Wilson, trans., *Of the Holy Places Visited by Antoninus Martyr (circ. 560–570 A.D.)* (London: Palestine Pilgrim's Text Society, 1896), 20; for a more recent translation, see "Antonini Placenti Itinerarium," trans. John Wilkinson, in Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Aris & Phillips, 2002), 127–53, here 129–51. For versions of his pilgrimage accounts, see Ora Limor, *Holy Land Travels: Christian Pilgrims in Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem, 1998), 209–46; for a critical edition, see Celestina Milano, ed., *Itinerarium Antonini Placentini: Un viaggio in Terra Santa del 560–570 d.C.* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1977).
- 35 Wilson, *Of the Holy Places*, 20. Theodorus (d. 530) mentions that the Church of St. Sophia occupied the site of the Praetorium. A footprint is now shown in the Al Aqsa Mosque. For the sanctity of measurements, see Zur Shalev, "Christian Pilgrimage and Ritual Measurement in Jerusalem," *La misura*, *Micrologus* 19 (2011): 132.
- 36 Arculf, on the marble column of George the Confessor in Diospolis, to which, during a time of persecution, he was bound while he was scourged, and on which his likeness is impressed. The traces of the hands of an incredulous attacker were imprinted into the stone. Arculf's account was written down by Abbot Adomnan; for a critical edition, see L. Bieler, ed., *Adomnani de locis sanctis* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975), CCL, 175–234. For the textual traditions and the suggestion that Arculf was "invented" by Adomnan, see Thomas O'Loughlin, *Adomnán and the Holy Places: The Perceptions of an Insular Monk on the Location of the Biblical Drama* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007).
- 37 Macpherson, *Pilgrimage of Arculfus*, ch. IV.
- 38 Wilson, *Of the Holy Places Visited by Antoninus Martyr*, 19.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 19.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 18.
- 41 Macpherson, *Pilgrimage of Arculfus*, ch. V.
- 42 Fricke, *Ecce Fides*, 69–72.
- 43 Krueger, "Liturgical Time."
- 44 *Rabbula Gospels*, Cod. Plut. I. 56, fol. 13r, *Crucifixion and Resurrection and Martyrs at the Tomb*, text written c. 586 (Florence: Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana).
- 45 Ilse Richter-Siebels, *Die palästinensischen Weihrauchgefäße mit Reliefszenen aus dem Leben Christi*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Zentrale Universitätsdruckerei, 1990).
- 46 Richter-Siebels, *Weihrauchgefäße*, no. 118.
- 47 This claim is based on a comparison of the baptismal scene on the Vatican casket with the baptismal scenes on an ivory plaque on the throne of Maximian, dated to 545–53 (two angels and a river god); a fifth-century ivory relief from Berlin and the sixth-century Rabbula Gospels (with no angels, river gods, Sol, or Luna in either scene); the necklace with a medallion showing the baptism preserved at Dumbarton Oaks (which includes two angels); and a sixth-century ivory plaque from Lyon (including Sol, Luna, and a river god).
- 48 Duval, *Naissance des arts chrétiens*, 316. See also Fernand de Cadaillac, *De quelques lampes antiques découvertes dans l'Afrique du nord* (Tarbes: Lesbordes, 1922); Maria Teresa Paleani, *Le lucerne paleocristiane* (Rome, 1993); Judith Perlzweig, "Lamps of the Roman Period: First to Seventh Century after Christ," *The Athenian Agora* 7 (1961): 1–240; and Jean Bussièrre, *Lampes tardives et lampes chrétiennes* (Montagnac: Mercogil, 2007).
- 49 Jutta Dresken-Weiland, "Lampe mit Schafräger und alttestamentlichen Szenen," in *Credo: Christianisierung Europas im Mittelalter*, vol. 2: *Katalog*, ed. Christoph Stiegemann, Martin Kroker, and Wolfgang Walter (Petersberg: Imhof, 2013), 53; and Paul Post, "Conculcabis leonem . . . : Some

Iconographic and Iconologic Notes on an Early Christian Terracotta-Lamp with an Anastasis-Scene," *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 58 (1982): 147–76.

50 Stephen Evodius Assemani and Peter Benedictus, ed. and trans., *The Works of St. Ephrem the Syrian: "On Joel 2:24," Commentaries on Sacred Scripture*, vol. 2 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 252.

51 Krueger, "Liturgical Time." See also Krueger, *Liturgical Subjects: Christian Ritual, Biblical Narrative, and the Formation of the Self in Byzantium* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

52 Famous examples on the monumental scale include Trajan's Column, to name a Roman example, and the mosaic decoration in Santa Maria Maggiore, to name a Christian example. Several sarcophagi from late antiquity show scenes from the life of Christ in a sequence. The scenes on the Brescia casket, however, do not display the scenes in a linear sequence.

53 Hans Wilhelm Schmidt, *Zeit und Ewigkeit: Die letzten Voraussetzungen der dialektischen Theologie* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1927); Karl Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1986), vol. I/2, § 14.1, and vol. II/1, § 31.3; Franz von Baader, "Über den Begriff von Zeit," in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 2, ed. Franz Hoffmann (Aalen: Scientia, 1963), 47–94; R. A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Keven Hester, *Eschatology and Pain in St. Gregory the Great* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 2007). The most relevant primary sources are Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Edward B. Pusey (Fairfield, IA: First World Library, 2006); Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae*; and Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*.

54 Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.14.17: "Quid est ergo tempus? Si nemo ex me quaerat, scio; si quaerenti explicare uelim, nescio."

55 *Ibid.*, 11.20.26.

56 *Ibid.*, 11.26.33.

57 *Ibid.*, 11.16. Augustine Aurelius, *The Confessions of S. Augustine*, trans. Edward B. Pusey (Oxford: Parker, 1840), 216.

58 Tomas Kiauka, "Zeit und Theologie," diss., Heidelberg University.

59 I am grateful to Jörg Bölling for this suggestion.

60 Ca. 350 CE. From the excavations of the Duchess of Chablais at Tor Marancia, 1817–21, Museo Pio Cristiano, Vatican. Giuseppe Bovini and Hugo Brandenburg, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*, 3 vols. (Mainz: Zabern, 1967–2003), here 1:3 (1996).

61 Lyon, Musée de la civilisation gallo-romaine, Inv. Nr. 1964–67, marble, 0.55 m × 1.73 m × 0.6 m.

62 Bovini and Brandenburg, *Repertorium*.

63 Though for Christians, Christ is always present: Augustine, *De praesentia Dei ad Dardanum liber unus* (Ep. 187).

64 Reudenbach, "Loca Sancta." See also Reudenbach, "Holy Places and Their Relics," in *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, ed. Bianca Kühnel, Galit Noga-Banai, and Hanna Vorholt (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 197–206.

65 Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis* 13:28.

66 Gary Vikan, "Pilgrims in Magi's Clothing: The Impact of Mimesis on Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art," in Robert G. Ousterhout, ed., *The Blessings of Pilgrimage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 102.

67 Krueger follows the observation by Gerard Rouwhorst that the iconography for the inserted page in the Rabbula Gospels "bears a resemblance to the scene as described in fourth-century hymns of Ephrem the Syrian on the crucifixion that had become canonical for recitation in northern Mesopotamia." He further points out that "Vikan has perhaps underestimated the power and purview of the liturgical, for the liturgically informed viewer of such an image sees neither a place in the past nor a place in the recent present. Rather the viewer sees Pascha, or Easter, a complex liturgical agglomeration of biblical past, holy place, and liturgical celebration. Significant to our purposes, on the Dumbarton Oaks flask, the scene of the tomb does not merely depict a holy place on the pilgrim's itinerary: it bears a liturgical inscription: 'ΑΝΕΣΤΙ Ο ΚΥΡΙΟΣ,' 'The Lord is Risen,' the central declaration of the Easter service. It was in the liturgy that the pilgrim first experienced the resurrection of Christ."

68 This fits well with Krueger's analysis of liturgical texts that assemble a similar choice of scenes and add details that are not part of the biblical account but are part of depictions of the scenes. The analogous details are the shining of both the sun and the moon together, the reed used to mock Christ, the hill at Golgotha, the plaque above the cross identifying Christ's title, the purple robe, the tomb in a garden, and the lance. See Krueger, with reference to Rouwhorst, "The Liturgical Background of the So-Called Crucifixion Scene of the Rabbula Codes: An Example of the Relatedness between Liturgy and Iconography," in Rouwhorst, *Les hymnes pascales d'Ephrem de Nisibe* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 1:22–36. See also Ephrem, *On the Crucifixion* 3 and 8; editions: E. Beck, ed. and trans., *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Paschahymnen*, 2 vols., CSCO 248–49, Ser. Syr. 108–9 (Louvain: Corpus Christianorum, 1964), 49–55, 72–77; Ephrem de Nisibe, *Hymnes pascales*, ed. and trans. François Cassingena-Trévedy, SC 502 (Paris: Éd. du Cerf, 2006), 207–14, 259–78.