

# Reliquary crosses from Middle Byzantine Aphrodisias: intimacy and archaeology

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## Abstract

Worn constantly on the chest, reliquary crosses were intimately implicated in the lives of medieval people. Previous studies of such crosses have tended to consider them as tools through which people achieved specific ends, either as prophylactics against disease or as signifiers of hierarchical status. An alternative and complementary interpretation would emphasise intimacy: the prolonged rapport of particular crosses with particular bodies. This paper assembles and publishes 14 reliquary crosses from Aphrodisias in Caria, presented with commentary in an appendix. The body of the article addresses the archaeological contexts in which these crosses were found and explores the funerary use of reliquary crosses across Middle Byzantine Asia Minor from this novel perspective.

## Özet

Her zaman göğüs bölgesine takılan röliker haçlar ortaçağ insanlarının hayatlarında özel bir yere sahipti. Daha önceleri yapılmış araştırmalarda bu tip haçların hastalıklardan korunmak için veya hiyerarşik statü göstergesi olarak, yani bir amaç doğrultusunda kullanıldığı düşünülmekteydi. Alternatif olarak veya önceki düşünceye ek olarak sunulabilecek bir bakış açısı, bu haçların bireyler için özel eşyalar olduğunu, belli haçların belli vücutlarda uzun yıllar boyunca taşındığı konusunu vurgular. Bu çalışmada Karia bölgesinde bulunan Aphrodisias'ta ele geçmiş 14 adet röliker haç bir araya getirilmiş ve yayınlanmıştır. Haçlar ek bölümde açıklama ve yorumlarıyla beraber sunulmuştur. Makalenin ana kısmında ise bu haçların buldukları kontekstler irdelenmekte ve Orta Bizans döneminde Anadolu'da röliker haçların cenaze ile ilişkili kullanımları yukarıda bahsedilen yeni bakış açısı ile incelenmektedir.

Copper-alloy reliquary crosses were produced in vast numbers across the territories of the Middle Byzantine Empire, ca AD 850–1200 (Pitarakis 2006). These were hollow cruciform boxes comprising two symmetrical lids rivetted at the top and bottom of the vertical arm. A complete reliquary cross might weigh in the region of 100g; worn constantly on a cord around the neck, usually beneath clothing, they were often imperceptible to all but their possessor, to whom the weight and feel of the small metal box on their chest may have been intimately familiar (Pitarakis 2006: 30; Drpić 2018: 202).

Today such crosses are generally encountered behind the glass of a museum display case. Selected for aesthetic merit, their inscriptions and iconography easily legible, the reliquaries chosen for the covers of archaeological publications likewise tend to be the most pristine of examples

(Pülz 2017). These stand apart from the mass of broken, battered and worn-out pectoral crosses that comprise the majority of the extant corpus; compare figure 1 to no. 4, illustrated in the appendix below. Archaeologists are well accustomed to dealing with fragments. It is often implicitly assumed that differential preservation is a distortion of a pristine record – an archaeological challenge to be overcome. And yet, many of these bruised and battered crosses are discovered in archaeological contexts indicative of deep significance, placed on the chest or even in the hand of the deceased. Such discoveries suggest that we err in overlooking the significance of old and broken things.

This article presents a series of copper-alloy reliquary crosses from Aphrodisias in southwest Asia Minor. Aphrodisias is a site best known for the quantity and quality of its ancient marble sculpture, having flourished



*Fig. 1. A reliquary cross with a representation of the Virgin Orans and portraits of the Evangelists (views onto a single object, showing obverse, reverse and hinge mechanism), Ephesos Museum Inv. 1/32/90.*

as a monumental city from the first through seventh centuries AD. The medieval settlement inherited the grand ecclesiastical architecture of its Late Antique predecessor, now situated within a ruralised village and episcopal outpost (Nesbitt 1983; Cormack 1981; 1990a; 1990b; Roueché 2004; 2007; Dalgıç 2012; Jeffery 2019). The corpus of reliquary crosses from the site is in most respects entirely typical, with regard to both formal characteristics and find contexts. It therefore provides a good springboard from which to reconsider the role of reliquary crosses in the lives of ordinary men and women living in rural settlements across Byzantine Asia Minor.

Previous archaeological studies of Byzantine cross pendants have tended to favour an instrumental approach, considering the pendants as fungible tools through which medieval populations sought to effect particular outcomes (Vorderstrasse 2016; Cleymans, Talloen 2018). The crosses are situated at the intersection of magic, medicine and adornment: charms that ensured bodily integrity against maleficent beings and the pestilences in which they were manifest. These studies have illuminated new facets of medieval Byzantine culture, but a different and complementary approach is taken here. The present discussion centres patina, understood metaphorically as an acquired and legible quality of wear and age (cf. Charpy 2013). In doing so, it frames the crosses as heirlooms through which medieval people came to understand their place in their world. Far from being an obstacle to interpretation, this patina allows us to approach an archaeology of intimacy.

In this respect, I build upon incisive essays by Maria Parani (2007) and Ivan Drpić (2018). Parani's contribution, addressing 'The personal lives of objects in medieval Byzantium', analyses legal documents in order to explore how medieval writers represented affective bonds between themselves and particular objects. Drpić concentrates upon the representation of Christian pendants in Greek prose literature of the 11th through 15th centuries and analyses metrical epigrams composed for inscription on the pendants of the Byzantine elite. I argue that the archaeological evidence for the humbler reliquary crosses, in particular the funerary evidence, can be fruitfully read according to a similar interpretive framework.

### Archaeological intimacy

Intimacy is a bold term which calls for precise definition. Fundamental to the following analysis are the concepts of life course, heirloom and self, which together justify the central theme of intimacy.

The life course is a concept that I borrow from Mary Harlow and Ray Laurence's study of ancient Rome and Roberta Gilchrist's more recent discussion of the material culture of later medieval Britain (Harlow, Laurence 2002;

Gilchrist 2014). It is primarily a heuristic device: a scale of historical and archaeological analysis through which to explore the social and biological processes of aging (Laslett 1995). The life course therefore considers the role of material culture in the construction and citation of ideal categories pertaining to life stages alongside the ritual practices employed to create and maintain life. The approach draws attention to the ways in which a subjective relationship to time is inculcated through material practice, with particular attention given to practices of, affecting or relating to the human body (Mayer 2009: 414–15).

Implicit in the concept of the heirloom is the recognition that a different scale of analysis is required for the 'lives' of things (Appadurai 1986). An heirloom is a possession the significance of which is dependent on historic associations with particular persons (Kopytoff 1986: 80; Lillios 1999). Much like a monument or souvenir, an heirloom is a material prompt for memory. Participation in the rites marking transitions in the life stage, such as baptism, marriage or inheritance, inserts the heirloom into particular historical narratives, sometimes described metaphorically as an 'object biography' (Hoskins 1998; Martin 2012). These narratives often pertain to biological family, though other chains of succession are of course possible. The heirloom privileges specificity over abstraction: this particular thing rather than any thing of this particular type. This negation of fungibility can be considered the reverse of commodification, as heirlooms are generally removed from impersonal market circulation and considered to some degree inalienable (Weiner 1992).

Particularity brings us to perhaps the most complex of the analytical concepts deployed here, that of self: the object of an intending subject's reflexive consciousness. The single human agent is often considered beyond the reach of archaeological enquiry. Indeed, it is sometimes posited that the individual intending subject is a product of Western modernity and that to project this individual onto the deep past is in essence narcissistic (Thomas 2004: 147). By invoking the self, I do not mean to imply that past subjects strove towards an individualist self-realisation beyond social relations. No self can exist prior to or outside of the relations in which it is situated, and culturally contingent concepts of personhood may well be located precisely in these relations rather than in contained interiority (Mauss [1938] 1985; Fowler 2004; 2016). I mean only to acknowledge the capacity of past people for intentionality and reflection dependent upon psychological continuity: the recognition that the same being will persist in different times and places (Ortner 2006: 129–53). Memory and anticipation, inscribed in the body and articulated through material practice, are therefore at the core of this concept.

These ideas coalesce in the relational quality of intimacy. The relationships addressed here are of course those between people and things; I retain an anthropocentric perspective. Drawing upon the conceptual and material connotations of the term, intimacy here denotes both ongoing interaction with the body and that the particular interacting parties may not be casually substituted for another entity of the same abstract type. The first of these conditions requires both spatial proximity and diachronic longevity. The second recalls the privileging of the specific over the abstract that is so characteristic of the heirloom. Intimacy so defined does not imply any particular emotional state or appeal. That is not because intimate relations between people and things in the past were devoid of emotional content, but rather because the precise emotional qualities of intimate relations are beyond the epistemological reach of archaeological research (*pace* Tarlow 2012).

A great many marriage rings of the Byzantine elite, produced between the fourth and eighth centuries AD, have survived to the present day (Kantorowicz 1960; Kitzinger 1988: 68 n. 71; Vikan 1990; Walker 2001; 2002). Many depict the married couple on their bezels, either in portrait or abbreviated to two joined hands, the gesture of *dextrarum iunctio* (fig. 2). The names of the bride and groom are frequently inscribed. Scholarly debate surrounding the rings has principally concerned their magical efficacy, whether it should be understood as primarily medical or directed towards the guarantee of marital concord (Walker 2002: 59). In either case, the relationship between such a ring and its owner should quite easily meet the threshold for the above definition of intimacy. As a dress accessory participating in and subsequently connoting a major event in the life of its owner, the ring would have held particular significance, and its frequent interaction with the hand would surely have contributed to its wearer's sense of personhood. Were these memories comforting or traumatic? Did the emotional significance of the ring shift over time? We cannot possibly know. The emotional quality of this intimate relationship is archaeologically illegible.

The reliquary crosses uncovered at Aphrodisias were likewise implicated in intimate relationships with medieval people. Recognition of this quality of intimacy recasts patina, those physical qualities acquired through age and use, as key rather than obstacle to interpretation. However, before exploring the funerary evidence upon which this argument rests, it will be helpful to review the various types of Middle Byzantine cruciform pendant and to survey the Middle Byzantine settlement at Aphrodisias.

### Pendant and reliquary crosses

Pectoral crosses produced in the Middle Byzantine period conform to two broad types. The first type encompasses smaller, flat crosses around 1 to 4 cm in height.



Fig. 2. Marriage ring (sixth-century) depicting the *dextrarum iunctio*, The Walters Art Museum. Licenced under Creative Commons CC0.

Cleymans and Talloen (2018) have devised a chronologically secure typology for the pendant crosses of medieval Asia Minor. The primary material derives from their own excavations at Sagalassos, with many comparanda drawn from the site-specific studies of small finds in Böhlendorf-Arslan and Ricci 2012. The second type takes the form of a cruciform box around 6 to 12 cm in height, comprising two symmetrical lids hinged and riveted at the top and bottom of the vertical arm. The study of reliquary crosses was set on a firm footing by Brigitte Pitarakis' monograph study (2006). Although modern archaeological scholarship terms the first type the pendant cross and the second type the reliquary cross, to their Byzantine owners, both would be classified as *encolpia* (Vinson 1995). The *encolpion* (ἐγκόλιον) is a capacious category. While most *encolpia* were cruciform, other kinds of explicitly Christian medallion or miniature icon would also have met the definition. Literally translating as 'that which is positioned over the chest', *encolpia* are defined by their relationship to the body rather than any formal characteristics (Drpić 2018: 198). Moreover, archaeological evidence demonstrates that there was no neat boundary between pendant and reliquary crosses. In practice, the detached lid of a reliquary cross might serve perfectly well as a large pendant *encolpion*.

It should be mentioned that Pülz has advanced a diametrically opposed view, according to which reliquary crosses were in fact rarely worn on the person (Pülz 2019: 198). He suggests that the crosses were too large and too heavy, and that when worn on the chest their figural imagery would be obscured. But reliquary crosses were not designed for comfort, and a modicum of discomfort would arguably be helpful in reminding the wearer to attend to their *encolpion*.

Moreover, as discussed below, figural iconography was not so central to the functioning of the crosses as one might assume.

Cruciform *encolpia* were manufactured in gold, silver and copper alloy. Examples in precious metals are relatively scarce; financial value mitigated against funerary deposition and in favour of the recycling of material. Though the reliquary crosses in precious metals are far more sophisticated in their enamel and niello decoration, in terms of basic structure and iconography they are remarkably little different from the copper-alloy examples that are frequently found in the course of archaeological excavations and are a staple of the private antiquities market (Evans, Wixom 1997: 170–72).

The crosses were generally produced from moulds in clay, lead or stone, the latter materials being preferred for those more complex moulds that would impart figural decoration in low relief (Pitarakis 2006: 42–47). Additional inscriptions and figural iconography could then be incised using a sharp implement. The result is that all pendants with iconography in low relief, and indeed many of the more linear compositions, were mechanically reproduced from the mould.

A Middle Byzantine jeweller’s mould in the possession of the Ödemiş Museum, around 60km inland from Ephesos, is cut with channels for a circular earring, two pins, a womb amulet and cruciform pendants of various sizes (Şeyhun et al. 2007: 257–58; Lafli, Seibt 2020: 34–

38). The juxtaposition of the amulet and cruciform *encolpia* with such mundane and simple pins should serve as a reminder that sacred pendants were bread-and-butter work for Byzantine coppersmiths. Even the more complex copper-alloy reliquary crosses were relatively inexpensive, the possessions of the rural peasantry rather than of ‘low level elites’ (pace Vorderstrasse 2016: 171). Moreover, since they tended to be worn beneath clothing, they would not have made for particularly effective signifiers of hierarchical status (Pitarakis 2006: 28–29).

### Middle Byzantine Aphrodisias

Located in the valley of the Morsynos, a tributary of the Maeander in southwest Asia Minor, the settlement at Aphrodisias was continuously occupied from the Chalcolithic through to the 20th century (fig. 3) (Erim 1986). Aphrodisias flourished as a monumental city from the first century BC to the seventh century AD. The City Wall, erected in the fourth century AD, encloses an area of around 73ha (de Staebler 2008). Only a fraction of this intramural area, concentrated on the higher ground to the north and east, was occupied in the Middle Byzantine period (Nesbitt 1983; Cormack 1981; 1990a; 1990b; Roueché 2004; 2007; Dalgıç 2012; Jeffery 2019). The grand basilica cathedral, erected in Late Antiquity, remained the focus of a medieval episcopal precinct (Cormack 1990a). The metropolitan bishop resided in a refurbished peristyle mansion immediately south of the

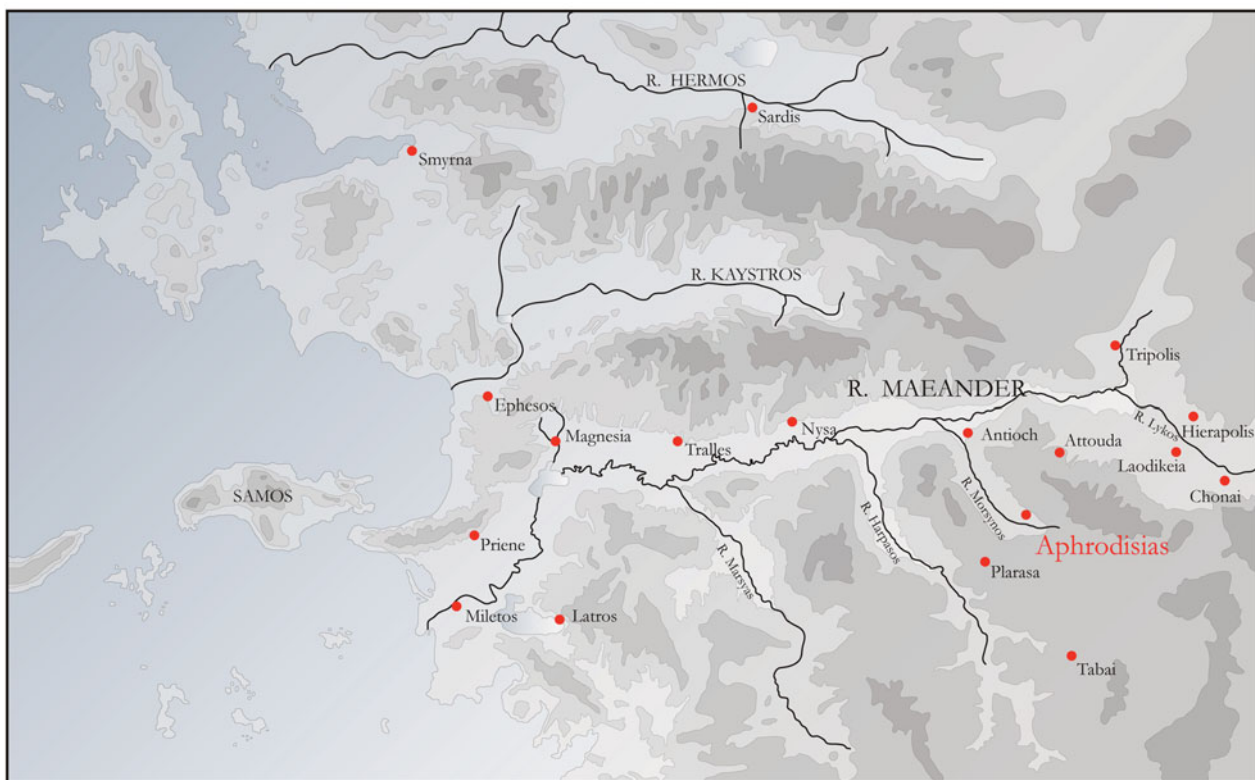


Fig. 3. Aphrodisias and the Maeander Valley. Reproduced with the permission of the Aphrodisias Excavations Project.

cathedral (Berenfeld 2019). At least two further churches have been identified: a domed basilica outside of the West Gate and a Triconch Church, possibly monastic, in the southwest district (Dalgıç 2012: 371; Cormack 1981: 114; 1990b: 34). Though this settlement was formally christened Stauropolis, the city of the cross, the toponym most frequently employed was Caria, an inheritance from the Late Antique province of which Aphrodisias had once been capital (Roueché 2007).

The western limit of the settlement is marked by a curtain of cemeteries, uncovered over the course of excavations in the 1960s through 1980s (fig. 4). The cemeteries extend from the surrounds of the cathedral in the north to the vicinity of the Triconch Church in the south. A detailed discussion of the funerary landscape of Middle Byzantine Aphrodisias is forthcoming in my monograph study of the medieval settlement. Thanks to Eric Ivison's thorough though unpublished research in the early 1990s, a small minority of graves may be securely dated through ceramics in associated fills (Smith, Ratté 1995: 50; Ivison 1996). But most can only be dated through coinage and small finds. Guy Sanders' research at Corinth has exposed the fragility of chronologies inferred from the mint-dates of copper coinage, which often circulated for generations (Sanders 2003). Moreover, the pectoral crosses feature prominently among the small finds associated with burials. It is therefore important to note the potential for circular argumentation regarding the dating of crosses and of graves at Aphrodisias. Nevertheless, the intramural cemeteries may be safely assigned to a broad period between the 10th and 13th centuries.

### Reliquary crosses in funerary contexts

The study of medieval cemeteries in Asia Minor remains an underdeveloped field. This is partly because the excavation of Middle Byzantine graves is usually incidental to the principal aims of archaeological projects; medieval burials have tended to be uncovered only where they cover the monuments of ancient cities or else occupy the uppermost strata of prehistoric höyük sites. For the past three decades, scholars have been largely dependent on the detailed discussion, catalogues and bibliography set out in Eric Ivison's unpublished doctoral thesis (Ivison 1993). Recent years have seen more detailed publication of medieval graves at both prehistoric mounds and ancient cities, but as yet there is no new detailed synthesis (Paine et al. 2007; Roodenberg 2009; Berti 2012; Ferrazzoli 2012; Moore 2013; Moore, Jackson 2014; Ivison 2017; Cleymans, Talloen 2018; Böhlendorf-Arslan 2019; Sezgin 2021; Güner, Aydın 2021).

A fundamental observation for the funerary archaeology of the Middle Byzantine period is that while the overwhelming majority of inhumation burials are entirely unfurnished, with no associated small finds, the minority

of burials that are furnished with small finds tend to deploy those artefacts according to remarkably consistent patterns. That is to say that even though unfurnished burials are the norm, one can still identify well-defined trends within the furnished minority. Three such trends pertaining to the use of reliquary crosses in funerary ritual are of significance for the present argument: the exclusive association of reliquary crosses with adult burials; the position of the pendant in relation to the body; and the age and condition of the pendant at the time of burial.

If one compares the use of small pendant crosses and larger reliquary crosses in funerary ritual, a clear pattern soon emerges. At Aphrodisias, the seven large reliquary crosses discovered in funerary contexts were all associated with adult burials. Of the nine pendant crosses, at least seven were interred with infants or children. One small pendant cross found in an adult burial is an exception to the rule. The other exception is a very large plate cross with dimensions similar to those of a reliquary cross, discovered in an adult burial alongside the detached lid of a reliquary cross. This second exception would appear to neatly prove the rule, namely that larger crosses are associated with larger bodies.

The pattern finds corroboration across western Asia Minor. The small pendant crosses uncovered at the medieval cemetery surrounding the ancient sanctuary of Apollo Klarios at Sagalassos were exclusively associated with burials of infants and children under the age of five (Cleymans, Talloen 2018: 293). Small pendant crosses were likewise found only with infant burials at the cemetery associated with the Middle Byzantine hamlet above the remains of the Hittite citadel of Hattusa (Böhlendorf-Arslan 2019: 74). At Barcın Höyük, Bythina, excavations in 2007 revealed a small Middle Byzantine graveyard atop the prehistoric mound. Here too, small pendant crosses were associated exclusively with burials of infants and children, while a reliquary cross was found in association with the skeleton of a young man (Roodenberg 2009; Moore 2013: 180; Vorderstrasse 2016). At the basilica recently excavated at Tlos, Lycia, small copper-alloy pendant crosses were found in association with Middle Byzantine infant burials inserted into the aisles and transepts (Sezgin 2021; Güner, Aydın 2021). In the southern transept, at least four individuals were successively interred in two layers within a large tomb. The uppermost layer consisted of the skeletons of two infants: a copper-alloy pendant cross was found upon the neck of the first; a small cruciform pendant in bone near the skull of the second. On the lower layer, the third skeleton was likewise that of an infant. The fourth skeleton, for which the tomb was first constructed, was that of an adolescent (fig. 5). She was interred with a glass bracelet upon her left arm, a dress accessory which, in contemporary visual representations, is always worn by women (Parani



Fig. 4. The intramural cemeteries of Aphrodisias (author, adapted from original plan by H. Mark 2005). Reproduced with the permission of the Aphrodisias Excavations Project.

2005: 152). A reliquary cross was found in close association with the left hand, which was folded above the chest. A smaller pendant cross was also uncovered in this lowest stratum of the grave, close to the left pelvis of the adolescent (Korkut 2014: 640).

There are a few scattered examples of small pendant crosses placed in adult burials: at Amorium, for example, and within the grounds of the Alanya castle (Lightfoot et al. 2009: 134; Arik 2005: 220). But I have been unable to locate a single example from Asia Minor of a reliquary



Fig. 5. Tlos Central Basilica, Tomb 5 Skeleton 4. Reproduced with the permission of Taner Korkut on behalf of the Tlos Excavation Project.

cross interred alongside an infant. This should perhaps be qualified by the observation that preliminary reports often omit age estimates when noting the discovery of reliquary crosses from funerary contexts (Faydali 1992: 257). At Troy, the lid of a reliquary cross was discovered in the 13th-century burial of a young adult (Rose 1998: 102; 2014: 275; pers. comm. May 2021; Kiesewetter 1999). A reliquary cross was found on the chest of an adult burial inserted within the shell of the basilica of the Apostle Philip at Hierapolis, ruined by an earthquake in the tenth century (Caggia 2014: 151). Similarly, an adult skeleton in an annexe to the church of St. Nicholas at Myra was excavated with the lid of a reliquary cross close to the head (Bulgurlu 2006: 167–68).

The association of small pendant crosses with infant burials is central to the interpretation offered by Cleymans and Talloen, who consider such small crosses as part of the material culture of Byzantine childhood. They note the high levels of infant mortality evident at Middle Byzantine cemeteries and observe that infant burials are far more frequently ornamented than adult burials. Cleymans and Talloen suggest that the occurrence of pendant crosses correlates with the period of weaning, during which infants were particularly susceptible to

disease (Cleymans, Talloen 2018: 292–95). It might be better to distinguish between the extraordinary incidence of elaborate dress accessories in infant graves and the use of cruciform *encolpia*. While I find Cleymans and Talloen's reading of the elaborate ornamentation of infant burials as a response to high rates of infant mortality persuasive, with respect to cruciform *encolpia* their interpretation does not account for the full picture. Across Middle Byzantine Asia Minor, cruciform *encolpia* were employed in both infant and adult burials. Deceased infants were interred with small crosses, while adult burials tended to be equipped with much larger crosses.

The pattern speaks to the intimate relationship between the cross and the human body. As an abridged representation of an instrument of torture that fixed and framed the body, the cross is always a latently anthropomorphic sign (Hurtado 2006: 135–54). Through the *orans* gesture of prayer – arms extended, palms raised – the worshiper would reproduce the posture of the crucified Christ (Peers 2004: 30). The anthropomorphic character of the sign is especially pronounced when it is worn upon the chest, the miniature cross establishing an iconic relationship to the limbs of the wearer. Peers notes how the reliquary crosses depicting saints in the *orans*



posture establish a chain of iconic relationships: *orans* saint, cruciform frame, the body of the worshipper (2004: 32). I submit that this latent anthropomorphism likely informs the Byzantine assumption, implicit in the funerary record, that a larger pectoral cross should be appropriate for a larger body. Moreover, if Cleymans and Talloen are justified in framing small cross pendants within a material culture of Byzantine childhood, it follows that reliquary crosses are implicated in the material culture of Byzantine adolescence and adulthood. We have here an unexpected insight into the Byzantine life course.

The body in the grave, whether adult or infant, was articulated according to common conventions. The deceased was interred upon their back, head to the west and feet to the east, in order that they might rise to meet the return of Christ. The hands were most often crossed over the ribcage, less frequently over the lower spine or pelvis. Metaphors of sleeping pervade the depiction of death in Byzantine literature and likely also inform the articulation of the body in funerary ritual (Constas 2001; Marinis 2017: 88).

There were two principal positions in which a reliquary cross might be introduced into the funerary assemblage: either on the chest of the deceased or in the hand. The former is more common. In the cemetery around the Cathedral of Aphrodisias, two reliquary crosses (appendix nos. 5 and 6) were recorded as having been found by the ribcage and close to the top of the spinal column. Within the Triconch Church, the detached lid of a reliquary cross was discovered within a cist grave containing the articulated skeleton of a woman estimated to have been around 30 years of age (appendix no. 2). The lid was found in the region of the lower spine, though as several ribs had been stained green, it must have originally been positioned on the chest of the deceased woman.

Copper staining is likewise a helpful indicator of the original location of another reliquary cross interred in the cemetery within the Triconch Church (appendix no. 3). The cist grave contained the remains of a single adult. The precise location of the cross in the grave is not recorded. A finger on the left hand was stained green on account of two rings, one of twisted gold and the other copper. Several fingers on the right hand were likewise stained, suggesting that the reliquary cross had been placed in the grasp of the deceased individual. At the *kastron* of Chrisis, near Edessa in the modern administrative region of Pella, Greece, excavations in 1985 partially revealed a cemetery around an extramural chapel. Against the exterior north wall, a simple grave contained the skeletal remains of an adult individual. A small iron cross was positioned on the chest, while a copper-alloy reliquary cross was held in the hand

(Evgenidou 1986: 161). We may recall also the adolescent interred within the central basilica of Tlos; a reliquary cross was placed in her left hand, folded across the chest (Korkut 2014: 640).

The placing of sacred matter in the hands of the deceased is a recurrent phenomenon in Byzantine funerary culture. The act likely occurred during the *prothesis*, the stage of the funerary rite in which the body of the deceased was displayed in the home as it would be articulated in the grave (head to the west, arms crossed). In this state, various holy artefacts, including icons, psalters or eucharistic bread, might be displayed in the hands (Kyriakakis 1974). Archaeologically, it is not uncommon to find coins, especially those imprinted with Christian iconography, clasped in the hand of the skeleton. At Aphrodisias, an anonymous *folles* bearing the image of Christ Pantokrator, minted around the turn of the millennium, was found within the clenched right hand of an individual interred to the north of the Cathedral. Similar finds have been made at Corinth, at Hagios Archilleios on Lake Prespa, and at the Parapotamos tumulus in Epiros (Iverson 1993: 225; Preka 1997: 175–76). Within the Middle Byzantine medieval monastic complex at the Roman Stoa of Sparta, a young man was buried with a hen's egg, alluding to resurrection and the renewal of life, placed carefully in his right hand (Waywell, Wilkes 1994: 388). Such finds speak to the importance of tactile, haptic devotion in Byzantine material culture. Byzantine worshippers touched, kissed and rubbed their holy matter (Marinis 2014: 326–29; Ashbrook Harvey, Mullet 2017). These simple actions, fundamental to daily religious practice, were occasionally staged in the grave.

Only two of the seven reliquary crosses discovered in Aphrodisian graves were closed and intact. Iverson has drawn attention to a 12th-century burial within the Great Palace in Constantinople, in which the broken lid of a reliquary cross was suspended from the neck of the deceased within a linen bag. He suggests that similar improvised solutions were likely found for the great many detached lids in Middle and Late Byzantine graves (Stevenson 1947: 98; Iverson 1993: 203). A reliquary cross lid found in the extramural necropolis of Amorium was punctured with a hole for suspension at the top of the vertical arm (Lightfoot 2006: 272–73; 2017: 194; Schoolman 2010: 376; Yaman 2012). A broken lid found in a rubble collapse at Aphrodisias was likewise pierced for suspension (appendix no. 10). At Hierapolis, a reliquary cross was discovered in the uppermost stratigraphic unit within a large saddle-roofed tomb used for multiple burials from antiquity through to the 14th century AD (Ahrens, Brandt 2016: 406–9; Wenn in preparation). The cross shows clear evidence of repair, the original



*Fig. 6. A repaired reliquary cross from Hierapolis, after Selsvold, in prep. (F0144). Reproduced with the permission of Rasmus Brandt on behalf of the Italian Archaeological Mission at Hierapolis.*

suspension mechanism having been substituted for a simple copper-alloy loop (fig. 6) (Selsvold in preparation). Such improvised solutions attest to the longevity of the reliquary crosses.

Let us return to reliquary-cross lid no. 2, interred upon the chest of a deceased woman within the Triconch Church at Aphrodisias. The grave was made during a phase in which the church was in ruins and a dense cemetery was emerging within the dilapidated interior. A sondage excavated in 1993 revealed several more graves belonging to this phase or a little earlier; Ivison, who was then present at the site, dated associated ceramic sherds to the 13th century. It is therefore safe to infer that this Aphrodisian woman, aged around 30 at the time of her death, was born sometime in or after the final quarter of the 12th century.

Pitarakis dates this form of reliquary cross – large transverse arms with only minimal flare – to broadly between the second half of the 9th century and the 12th

century. She further argues that the iconography found on the series tends to suggest production prior to the 12th century (Pitarakis 2006: 73). The evidence would therefore admit two possible interpretations. If the iconographic *terminus ante quem* is accepted, finds in later archaeological contexts represent prolonged circulation. Alternatively, the archaeological find contexts might indicate prolonged production of iconographic types fossilised in the 11th century.

Current consensus favours the prolonged circulation interpretation (Pitarakis 2006: 31; Pülz 2019: 189). At Troy, the lid of a reliquary cross produced in the 11th or 12th century was found in a grave dating to the 13th century (Rose 1998: 102; 2014: 275). Ivison documented reliquary crosses of this type in 13th-century burials at Nicaea and Corinth, and even in tombs of the 14th and 15th centuries at Ravna in Serbia (Ivison 1993: 204). He suggested that such crosses had been inherited across

multiple generations. Drpić has since demonstrated that provisions for *encolpia* were frequently made in the wills of the Byzantine elite (Drpić 2018: 207). Reliquary cross lid no. 2 at Aphrodisias may well have been produced a century prior to its eventual deposition on the chest of a deceased woman in the ruins of the Triconch Church.

In her study of heirlooms and the life course in late medieval Britain, Gilchrist assumes a generation of 30 years and an average life expectancy, once a person had survived childhood, of 50 years (Gilchrist 2014: 239). This may be a little generous for Byzantium, a society in which very few reached the age of 50 (Talbot 1984; Laiou 1977: 296). Demirel finds that across the Middle Byzantine cemeteries of Asia Minor, the mean adult age of the deceased tends to be in the early 30s; the population consisted predominantly of young adults (Demirel 2017: 62, Table 4.2). It follows that an artefact aged around 40 years would likely have been owned by at least two people and that an artefact in circulation for a century had likely passed through the hands of at least four.

The iconographic content of cross no. 4 has been erased to such an extent that it is difficult to discern individual figures and impossible to distinguish diagnostic attributes of particular saintly persons. Without reference to standard iconographic types, it would be impossible to determine the identity of the Mother of God at centre and the medallion Evangelist portraits in the arms (Pitarakis 2006: nos. 107–71). Figural iconography and decoration often take centre stage in archaeological research. Such visual analysis is of course vital to any archaeological project, but visibility should not eclipse the more tactile qualities materials might possess (Hamilakis 2014: 34–56). The kind of passive vocabulary employed to describe ‘worn’ or ‘poorly preserved’ examples can sometimes imply that the ideal condition for the archaeological study of an artefact would be immediately subsequent to its creation; alteration to the fabric occurring on account of ritual use would be an impediment to interpretation. The assumption is unhelpful, since it is just this ritual use that ought to be the true object of study.

A comparable suspicion of damaged representations is occasionally found in the writings of Byzantine theologians (Parry 1989: 181 n. 105). Writing during the seventh century, the Cypriot bishop Leontius of Neapolis argued that once the icon no longer resembled its prototype, it ought to be completely destroyed (*Contra Iudeos*, PG 93: 1597C = Price [transl.] 2018: 292). But Byzantine material culture is replete with scrubbed pages, worn surfaces and illegible iconography. It is clear that such condemnations were rare and generally disregarded (Anagnostopoulos 2008: 37–39; Marinis 2014: 326).

Reliquary crosses are usually found with smoothed and abraded surfaces. Many different hypotheses could

explain the abrasion, from overused production moulds through to the overzealous removal of encrustation by modern conservators. However, it is submitted that the most plausible explanation is that the smoothed surfaces attest to repeated abrasive action performed by their medieval owners. Held in the palm of the hand, the cross was rubbed and polished, developing a lustrous sheen that obscured iconographic detail (Drpić 2018: 203). There is something almost self-perpetuating in such a surface; the act of polishing is indexed in the gleaming, levelled metal, and so the material legibility of the act encourages its repetition. There could be no ‘first time’ encounter with such a surface, liberated from memories of similar sensory engagements with similar materials (Hamilakis 2014: 118). The reliquary cross discovered in the hand of the individual interred outside the fortress of Chrisis is cast with iconography almost identical to that upon this Aphrodisian lid (Evgenidou 1986: pl. 118; Pitarakis 2006: no. 107). Faces and drapery are likewise polished beyond definition. Perhaps it was this legible patina that guided those assembling the *prothesis* to place the cross in the hand of the deceased.

Reprising the key conclusions of this brief survey, those initial themes of life course, heirlooms and intimacy are very much in evidence. Reliquary crosses are interred exclusively alongside the bodies of deceased adults, a pattern that contrasts with the tendency for small pendant crosses to be placed with the bodies of infants. The crosses tend to be very old at the moment of the funerary ritual and may justly be considered heirlooms. Moreover, their age and ritual use is legible in their acquired patina: broken hinges and flattened surfaces are common, more so in fact than complete and closed reliquaries. The veneration of a reliquary cross would persist even in the absence of any relics or legible iconography. The crosses are placed either on the chest or in the hand of the deceased. In both situations, the funeral stages the intimate relationship between the cross and the body in life.

### The literary representation of *encolpia*

In a recent essay, Ivan Drpić has explored the ways in which the *encolpion*, through its intimate rapport with the body of its owner, might be in some part constitutive of that owner’s reflexive sense of self (Drpić 2018). Drpić surveys references to *encolpia* in literary texts of the 11th through 15th centuries, as well as epigrams inscribed upon surviving *encolpia*. The literary representation of *encolpia* pertains to the pendants cherished among the uppermost echelons of Byzantine society. Yet the key themes that Drpić identifies resonate strongly with the funerary archaeology of the humbler population discussed above, and it is productive to read the contemporary archaeological and literary records according to a common paradigm.

Drpić argues that the intimate quality of the relationship between an *encolpion* and its possessor enabled the *encolpion* to function as a social surrogate for that person (Drpić 2018: 201). Delivered into the possession of another, an *encolpion* could serve as a pledge of future conduct. An *encolpion* could be used as security against a debt (Drpić 2018: 205). An accused criminal or political failure seeking clemency might request the *encolpion* of their victor as a guarantee of safe conduct (Anna Komnene, *Alexiad* II.5.6–7). By the Late Byzantine period, the exchange of *encolpia* was an essential element of the betrothal ritual (Kantakouzenos, *Histories* III.17). *Encolpia* were not casually commutable between persons; their transfer was always a deeply meaningful act that brought the exchanging parties into closer relationship.

A pertinent anecdote may be found in the account of the emperor and historian John VI Kantakouzenos (Drpić 2018: 205). In AD 1328, during the civil war between Andronikos III and his grandfather Andronikos II, Tsar Michael III of Bulgaria pledges his allegiance to the younger claimant. The Tsar, ‘pulling out’ (ἐξενεγκῶν) the pendants upon his chest (the participle perhaps suggesting pendants worn beneath clothing), presents the emissary of Andronikos III with a cross:

Do not wonder that I am sending none of the costly *encolpia*, of which, as you can see, I have many, but this cross made of cheap material [the cross was of bronze]. It is renowned among all Bulgars for its miracles; many miracles were performed by it already during the lifetime of my father, and many are performed still now, during my lifetime. So I send it as a trustworthy [pledge] of my loyalty (Kantakouzenos *Histories* I.58, transl. Drpić 2018: 205).

In narrative prose, a character’s retrieving, clutching, kissing or otherwise physically attending to their *encolpia* often serves to heighten the drama as a story approaches its climax, particularly when that character is in fear for their life. The historian Niketas Choniates narrates the moment in AD 1195 at which the emperor Isaac II Angelos learns of the coup launched by his brother Alexios:

Pulling out his pectoral icon of the Mother of God, he clasped it tightly, all the while confessing his sins and promising to make amends, and in anguish of heart he prayed to escape the impending evils’ (*Histories* 451.82–87, transl. Maguire 1984: 247 with modifications by Drpić 2018: 205).

Here, the ‘anguish of heart’ (2 Corinthians 2:4) plays upon the proximity of the *encolpion* to the chest. Drpić shows how epigrams composed for inscription upon *encolpia* frequently invoke the heart, the organ which according to contemporary medical understanding was the ultimate receptor of sensory experience and the conduit through which an individual encountered the divine (Drpić 2018: 213–16). The preoccupation with the heart and the hand in literary representations of *encolpia* finds an echo in the use of reliquary crosses in contemporary funerary ritual. The deceased were buried with their *encolpia* on their chest, in their hand, or sometimes in the hand crossed over the chest.

### Conclusions

In the opening sections of this essay, I proposed a working definition of the relational quality of intimacy in archaeology. The definition stipulated two conditions. The first was a prolonged and proximal engagement with the human body. The second was significance attached to the particular rather than to the generic. I adduced the example of a marriage ring as an artefact meeting this definition. I hope to have shown that, much like a marriage ring, a reliquary cross was not a commutable, casually alienable tool. A survey of the use of reliquary crosses in Middle Byzantine funerary ritual suggests quite the opposite: that even when bruised, battered and broken, particular reliquary crosses still mattered. I submit that they mattered not in spite of their age, but because they were old. In connoting adulthood, inheritance and repeated ritual gesture, the reliquary cross was deeply implicated in the life course of its possessor. Patina, acquired physical properties of wear and age, allowed the reliquary cross to function as a prompt for gesture, a reminder of departed friends and relatives, an anchor for personal identity.

### Acknowledgements

My sincere gratitude to all members of the research team at Aphrodisias, and especially to R.R.R. Smith for permission to publish. Ine Jacobs commented incisively on several drafts. The crosses were first recorded during research for my DPhil dissertation, generously funded by the AHRC. This publication arises from research funded by the John Fell Oxford University Press Research Fund. Figure 3 is adapted from a plan originally made by Harry Mark. Figures 17 and 18 are edited from photographs originally made by Ian Cartwright.

## Appendix. Reliquary crosses from Aphrodisias and its surrounding territory

The Aphrodisias inventory system assigns to each inventoried artefact a two-part numerical code (e.g. 62-049): a two digit reference to the year in which the find was made (1962) followed by a three digit number denoting the place of the find within that year's inventory sequence (49th inventoried artefact).

### *Excavated at the Archaeological Site*

#### 1. (Fig. 7)

**Inventory no.** 62-049. Found within a cist grave in the South Temenos of the Cathedral (Cath-6), likely dating to the 10th–12th centuries. Dimensions of the grave were not recorded. A ceramic pitcher (62-050) was also uncovered within the grave.

**Dimensions:** L. 6.3, W. 3.4, D. 0.8cm.

**Preservation:** Complete in two parts. No pins survive, and so the hinge mechanism is not fixed.

**Bibliographic references:** Pitarakis 2006 (Type I): nos. 235–302, 646, 642, 648.

Symmetrical lids of an undecorated reliquary cross. Both the field journal and inventory description report the survival of hair inside the cavity.

**Date:** 10th–12th century.

#### 2. (Fig. 8)

**Inventory no.** 62-236. Found within a 13th-century cist grave (TrCh-59, Ext. L. 1.63, W. 0.42m; MNI: 1) inserted into the narthex of the Triconch Church. Osteological records report the skeleton as female and estimate age at 30 years. The cross was found in the region of the lower spine, though as several ribs had been stained green it must originally have been worn on the chest of the deceased woman.

**Dimensions:** L. 5.6, W. 3.0, D. 0.4cm.

**Preservation:** Single lid, traces of engraved decoration.

**Bibliographic references:** Pitarakis 2006 (Type I): nos. 336, 337, 347, 403, 404, 649.

In the upper part of the vertical limb, it is just possible to discern the traces of an engraved standing figure. However, the copper alloy is heavily worn or polished, with the result that the iconography is all but erased.

**Date:** 10th–12th century.

#### 3. (Fig. 9)

**Inventory no.** 62-331. Found within a 13th-century cist grave made in the northern conch of the Triconch Church (TrCh-63, Ext. L. 1.95, W. 0.58m; MNI: 1). A finger on the left hand was stained green from two rings, one of twisted gold (not catalogued) and the other copper alloy (62-332). Fingers of the right hand were likewise stained, perhaps indicating that the cross was placed in the hand of the deceased.

**Dimensions:** L. 9.1, W. 6.3, D. 0.5cm.

**Preservation:** Single lid, low-relief decoration is worn smooth and indistinct from polishing.

**Bibliographic references:** Pitarakis 2006 (Type IX): nos. 173, 174, 179, 179, 180, 181.

The transverse arms of this single lid flare to semi-circular ends of similar radius to those of the longer vertical arm, which is not flared. Small protuberances are placed axially along the edges of both arms. Close parallels can be found in Pitarakis' type IX, the production of which she locates in Kiev and the northern Balkans from the 11th to the 13th centuries (Pitarakis 2006: 80). A comparable example has recently been uncovered at the Pontic site of Comana, and another published from the museum at Silifke on the Mediterranean coast of Asia Minor (Buyruk 2014: 507, no. 5; Acara Eser 2015: 172, no. 9). No. 8 below is also of this type. Future publications may well demonstrate that the type has a broader distribution in the eastern territories of the Byzantine Empire.

Within the vertical arm is a relief image of the Virgin Hodegetria, standing in profile and supporting the Christ child to her right. This example diverges from the standard iconography of the type only in that it does not feature bust images of the Evangelists in the arms.

**Date:** 11th–12th century.



Fig. 7. Reliquary Cross No. 1, Inventory Number: 62-049



Fig. 8. Reliquary Cross No. 2, Inventory Number: 62-236.

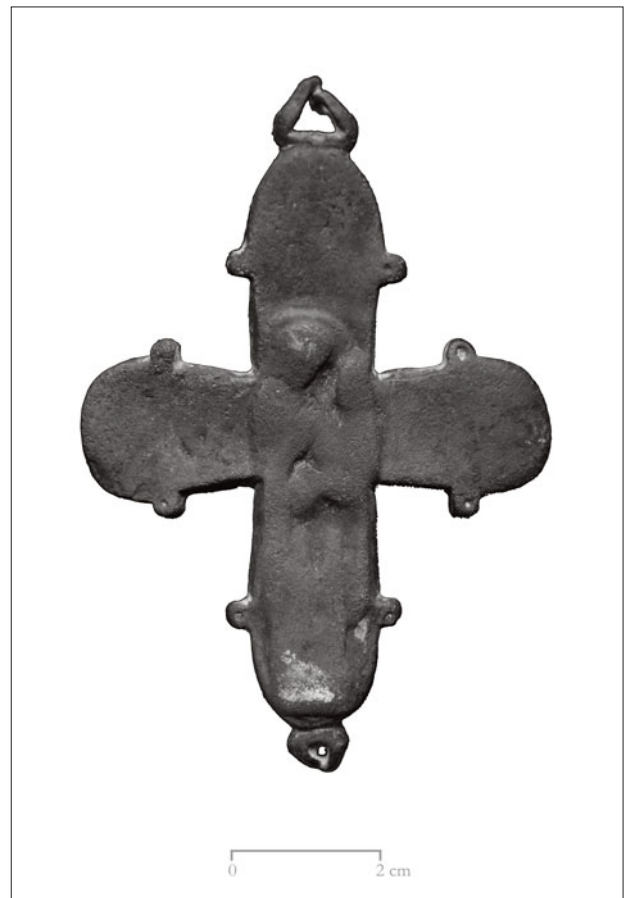


Fig. 9. Reliquary Cross No. 3, Inventory Number: 62-331.

**4. (Fig. 10)**

**Inventory no.** 65-084. Found within a cist grave in the East Temenos of the Cathedral (Cath-61, Ext. L. 1.70m; MNI: 1). Recovered in the same grave was a large copper-alloy pendant cross (65-083, H. 6.0, W. 4.0cm).

**Dimensions:** L. 8.5, W. 5.5, D. 0.5cm.

**Preservation:** Single lid. The face has been so polished as to bring the low relief motifs to a similar elevation as the background, and so the iconography is indistinct.

**Bibliographic references:** Pitarakis 2006 (Type I): nos. 19–55; Pülz 2017: nos. 50, 53, 54.

The reverse lid of a type produced in Constantinople and Asia Minor. The Virgin Orans is at centre, with medallion portraits of the four Evangelists in the extremities of the arms. The obverse would likely have depicted the Crucifixion.

**Date:** 10th–11th century.

**5. (Fig. 11)**

**Inventory no.** 65-184. Found within a cist grave in the East Temenos of the Cathedral (Cath-69; MNI: 1). The dimensions of the grave are not recorded, though the excavation notebook implies that the skeleton was that of an adult. The cross was discovered by the ribcage.

**Dimensions:** L. 8.3, W. 4.5, D. 0.3cm.

**Preservation:** Single lid, with smooth engraved surface.

**Bibliographic references:** Pitarakis 2006 (Type I): nos 501–21.

**Previously published:** Erim 1986: 155; Pitarakis 2006: 348, no. 511.

The obverse lid of a type commonly produced in Asia Minor and Constantinople. Although the cross itself is not depicted, the iconography is that of the Crucifixion with Christ's arms outstretched to each side. Christ wears a collobium with broad sleeves decorated with a widely spaced zigzag pattern. Above His head are the letters Η[ησοῦ]Σ Χ[ριστό]Σ, Jesus Christ.

**Date:** 11th century.

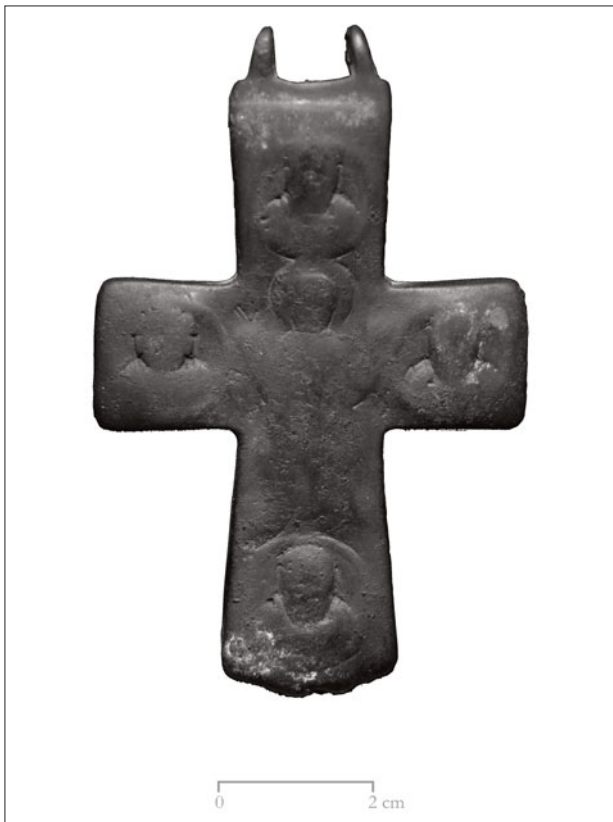


Fig. 10. Reliquary Cross No. 4, Inventory Number: 65-084.

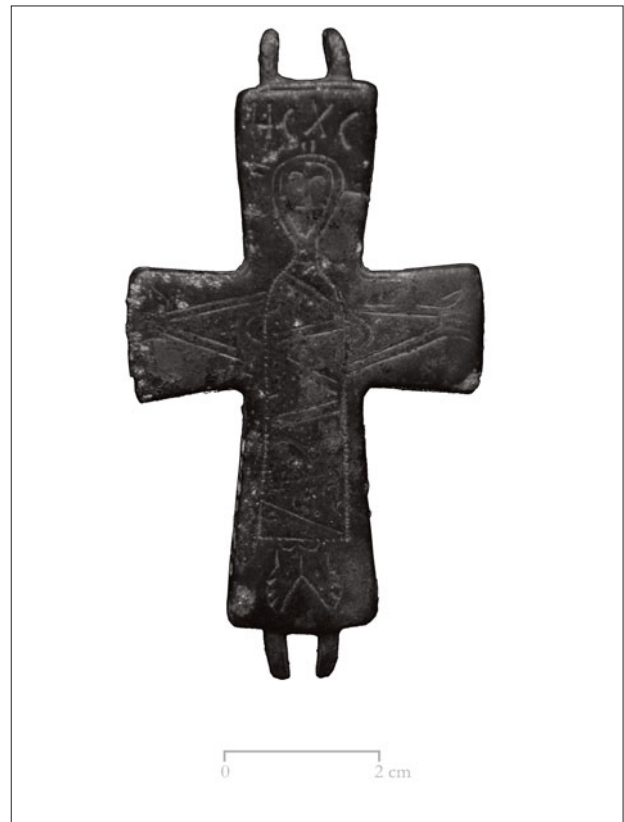


Fig. 11. Reliquary Cross No. 5, Inventory Number: 65-184.

**6. (Fig. 12)**

**Inventory no.** 69-397. Found within a cist grave in the South Temenos of the Cathedral (Cath-106; Ext. L. 2.00, W. 0.33m; MNI: 1). The cross was on the floor interface close to the top of the spinal column.

**Dimensions:** L. 10.0, W. 4.7, D. 1.0cm.

**Preservation:** Complete reliquary cross with two lids and hinge mechanism intact.

**Bibliographic references:** Pitarakis 2006 (Cross Type I, hinge mechanism Type III): nos. 235–85; Roodenberg 2009: 167, fig.14.

The cross is of a well-attested type with engraved iconography produced in Asia Minor and Constantinople. The cross is intact and has not been opened, since the pin of the rivet is corroded into place. It is therefore currently unknown what kind of relic, if any, is contained within the hollow cavity.

The obverse depicts the Crucifixion. Christ is bearded with a cruciform nimbus and is wearing a knee-length sleeveless collobium decorated with intersecting triangles. The transverse arms of Christ's cross are outlined, with the top of the vertical arm protruding above His nimbus. Flared arms protrude from this top-piece, forming a *tabula ansata* at the top of the composition. Beneath the transverse arms of the cross is the victorious formula I[ησοῦ]Σ X[ριστό]Σ NHKA, Jesus Christ Conquers (Walter 1997).

At centre of the reverse is the Virgin Orans, wearing the maphorion and a tunic tied at the waist with a belt. Below the belt this tunic parts into two sweeping folds, each represented by parallel vertical lines. Two small shoes are visible below the tunic. In the extremities of the transverse arms are palm branches.

At top is the invocation M[ητέ]P XP[ι]Σ[τού], Mother of Christ. This inscription is the only aspect of the decoration that is in any way unconventional, *Μητέρα Θεού*, Mother of God, being far more common (Kalavrezou 1990). Pitarakis documents only seven examples with the *Χριστού* variant, many of which may be placed in Asia Minor, to which we may also add another from Karahisar below (Pitarakis 2006: nos. 264 (Ephesus), 272 (Cappadocia), 284 (Nicaea), 349 (Attaleia), 470, 501, 548 (Stara Sagora, Bulgaria)). Balcarek suggests that the epithet Mother of Christ carries Nestorian overtones and is only found prior to the iconomachy. He therefore believes that those crosses bearing such inscriptions should be dated to a period earlier than that suggested by Pitarakis' typology (Balcarek 2009: 370–71). I have preferred to retain the typological dating.

**Date:** 10th–11th century.

**7. (Fig. 13)**

**Inventory no.** 84-237. Found within a cist grave in the East Temenos of the Cathedral (Cath.83.118).

**Dimensions:** L. 8.2, W. 4.5, D. 0.5cm.

**Preservation:** A single reverse lid. There is a very small break in the top of the right transverse arm.

**Bibliographic references:** Pitarakis 2006 (Type I), nos. 296–310.

The engraved iconography of this cross finds close parallels in a series produced across Asia Minor and at Constantinople. At centre is the Virgin Orans with the Christ Child suspended in front of her stomach. Faces are nimbate and almost triangular. The Child's tunic is decorated with thick bands dividing horizontal registers, whereas the Virgin's robe is left blank. This in itself is an unusual variant on the iconography, as it is usually the case that the Child's clothes are deliberately confused with those of His Mother. That in our case we can also see Christ's feet further breaks from the conventional ambiguity of their bodies below the level of Christ's head (cf. Pitarakis 2006: no. 296). The composition clearly alludes to the Incarnation.

In four lines, crammed above the Virgin's head, are the words:

ΠΑΝΑΓΗΑ/ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΕ/ ΜΗΤΡΕ ΜΑ/ΡΕΑ  
Παναγία Θεοτόκε Μήτρι Μαρία  
All-Holy God-Bearer, Mother Mary

The inscription is unusual in both its length and its vocabulary. Παναγία and Θεοτόκε are common invocational epithets on such crosses, though usually only one or the other will suffice. Μήτρι is more uncommon. References to the Virgin as mother tend to be found in the abbreviated formula M[ητέ]P Θ[εο]Υ. A reliquary cross in a French private collection published by Pitarakis likewise supplies Μήτρι, though using an iota for the final vowel rather than an eta as in the Aphrodisian example (Pitarakis 2006: no. 501; Vorderstrasse 2016: 187–90).

The use of Μαρία is likewise curious. A gold pendant cross from Palermo, dating to the seventh or eighth century, invokes Ἡ ἁγία Μαρία (Pitarakis 2006: 32, fig. 14). A later sixth- or seventh-century pendant medallion from Jerusalem gives the invocation Ἁγία Μαρία ἡ μήτηρ Ἰησοῦ Βοήθει, Holy Mary Mother of Jesus Help [Your Servant], perhaps





Fig. 12. Reliquary Cross No. 6, Inventory Number: 69-397.



Fig. 13. Reliquary Cross No. 7, Inventory Number: 84-237.

echoing Acts 1:14 (Kool 2013). The Virgin is likewise still *ἄγία Μαρία* on eighth-century icons at Sinai (Weitzmann 1976). But the use of the proper name becomes extremely scarce subsequent to the resolution of the iconomachy (Kalavrezou 1990: 171). A rare example may be found on a *nomisma* minted under Leo VI (AD 886–912), which captions the Virgin Orans both as +Μαρία+ and as Μ[ήτηρ] Π[ατρὸς] Θ[εοῦ] Υ[ίου] (DOC III: no. 1b.1). The present reliquary cross is therefore not entirely without Middle Byzantine parallel. Its use of unusual epithets seems to stem from a desire to multiply invocations rather than to make a theological statement.

**Date:** 11th century.

#### 8. (Fig. 14)

**Inventory no.** 86-133. Found in the South Portico of the Place of Palms.

**Dimensions:** L. 9.2, W. 6.9, D. 0.3cm.

**Preservation:** Single lid with extremely worn and polished iconography.

**Bibliographic references:** Pitarakis 2006 (Type IX): nos 174–85.

This cross is of the same type as no. 3 above, with small knobs protruding in symmetrical positions. It depicts in low relief the Crucifixion, with a clothed Christ standing on a rectangular base. At the top, left and right extremities are circular frames containing bust images, perhaps originally evangelists.

**Date:** 11th–12th century.

#### 9. (Fig. 15)

**Inventory no.** 07-014. Found alongside a large *pithos* in a likely medieval context in a test sondage conducted in preparation for the construction of the Sebasteion Gallery extension to the site museum.

**Dimensions:** L. 8.0, W. 5.9, D. 1.1cm.

**Preservation:** A complete cross. There are many tears in the delicate copper-alloy sheets, especially around joints. The lower arm is crushed on the reverse, and there is also a roughly circular hole on the upper arm on this face. A large hole at the centre of the front side may be an original feature.

**Bibliographic references:** Pitarakis 2006 (Type I): nos. 198–203; Kantincarov et al. 1989 : 275, fig. 321.

This cross is of an unusual type known from several excavations in Bulgaria and the northern Balkans (Pitarakis 2006: 247–48). Its closest parallel was found in a grave in the funerary chapel at the 11th and 12th-century necropolis at Djadovo (Kantincarov et al. 1989: 275, fig. 321).

A complete cross manufactured from thin sheets of copper alloy with decoration in copper-alloy wire. On the reverse, concentric arrangements of circles are found in each arm and at centre. The front face employs a similar composition but with hollow collets in place of the concentric circles. These would likely have been inlaid with glass paste or stones. At centre is a large hole in the copper-alloy sheet.

**Date:**

#### 10. (Fig. 16)

**Inventory no.** 17-034. Found in a deposit (S.Ag 17.1, SU 4416) at the southern limit of the Place of Palms, consisting of rubble and occupation debris from the settlement on the Theatre Hill.

**Dimensions:** 11.0, W. 6.8, D. 0.8cm.

**Preservation:** A single lid, with a smooth front. The upper vertical arm is detached from the cross, with some fabric missing between the two pieces. A small perforation at the end of the upper vertical arm attests to a secondary use, perhaps as a pendant.

**Bibliographic references:** Pitarakis 2006 (Type I), nos. 235–302, 646, 642, 648.

The slightly flaring arms show no indication of any engraved decoration.

**Date:** 10th–12th century.



Fig. 14. Reliquary Cross No. 8, Inventory Number: 86-133.



Fig. 15. Reliquary Cross No. 9, Inventory Number: 07-014.



Fig. 16. Reliquary Cross No. 10, Inventory Number: 17-034.

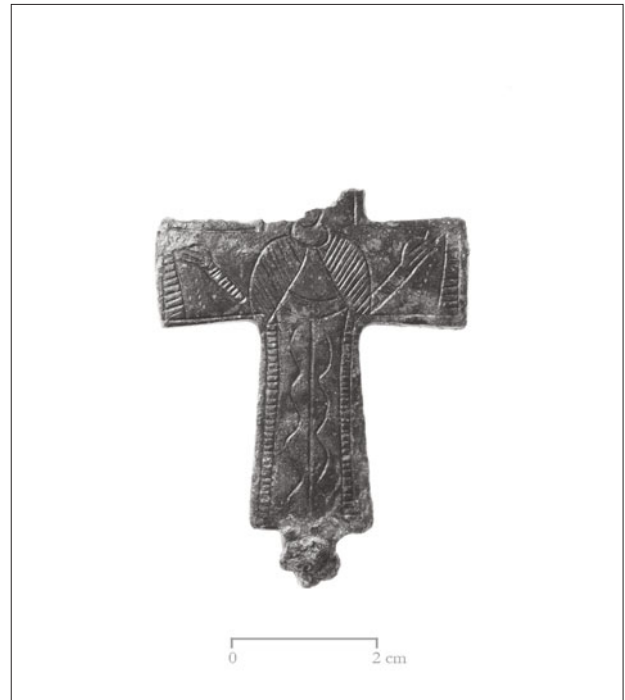


Fig. 17. Reliquary Cross No. 11, Inventory Number: 17-095.

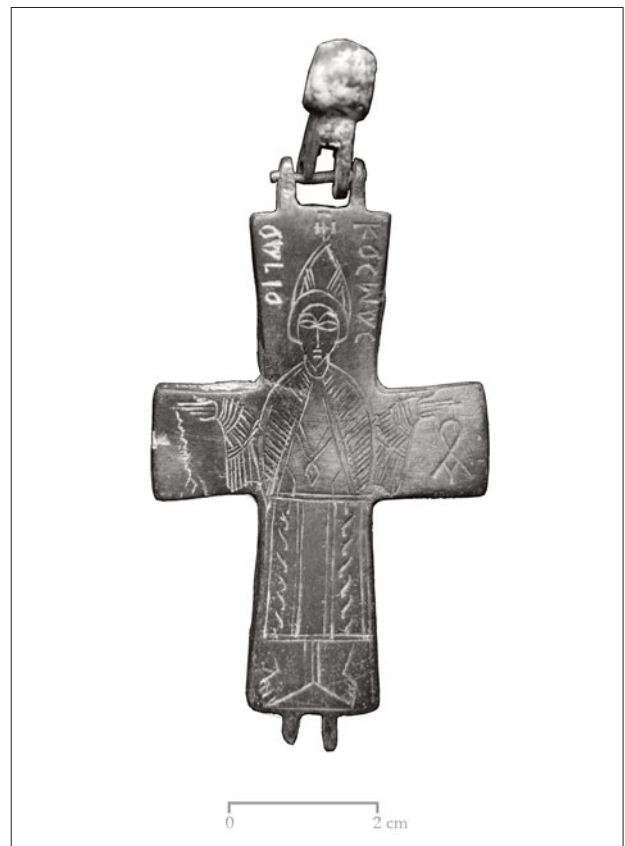


Fig. 18. Reliquary Cross No. 12, Museum Inventory Number: 5837.

### 11. (Fig. 17)

**Inventory no.** 17-095. A 1990 stray find from the area west of the West Gate. Cleaned and conserved in 2017.

**Dimensions:** L. 5.5, W. 4.5, D. 0.5cm.

**Preservation:** A single lid, missing the upper vertical arm.

**Bibliographic references:** Pitarakis 2006 (Type I), nos. 331–425, 536–70.

The lid preserves the engraved image of a male saint in the Orans position. The saint wears a cloak parted around the neck over a long, belted tunic, the lower part of which is decorated with two vertical undulating lines. The lower part of the tunic occupies the entirety of the lower arm of the cross. The saint's arms extend into the transverse arms. They are clad in striped sleeves, and dotted lines emanating from the hands may represent the chains of two censers. Only the chin of the figure survives, and any caption that might identify the saint would likely have been placed at the top of the missing vertical arm.

**Date:** 10th–11th century.

*Purchased by the Aphrodisias Museum from residents of the Dandalas Valley*

### 12. (Fig. 18)

**Museum inventory no.** 5837. Found in the vicinity of Karacasu.

**Dimensions:** L. 7.8, W. 4.4, D. 0.4cm.

**Preservation:** A single lid, with very smooth surface. The hinge mechanism is intact at the top of the vertical arm.

**Bibliographic references:** Pitarakis 2006 (Cross Type I, hinge mechanism Type VIII), nos. 331–425.

The cross is engraved with the image of St. Cosmas. The saint stands in the Orans position, all features symmetrical across the vertical axis. He wears a large, pointed hat surmounted by a small cross. His cloak is rendered using tightly packed parallel diagonal lines and fastened around the neck. It parts to each side of the chest, revealing a flat tunic tied by a belt around the waist. A rhomboid motif on the saint's chest is perhaps suspended from the neck: an *encolpion* in *mise-en-abyme*? His feet are unusually large and not covered by shoes. In the left transverse arm of the cross a censer on a chain trails from his right hand. The costume finds close parallels in a number of engraved depictions of saints on reliquary crosses, though the unusual hat may be unique.

In the right transverse arm is a ligature consisting of an omicron above an alpha that may be read *ο άγιος*. To the left of the head is again *ο άγιος*, while the name *Κοσμάς* is to the right.

Cosmas is not attested on any of the 299 reliquary crosses with images of named saints in Pitarakis' catalogue, and I have yet to come across another depiction of this saint in this medium. It is tempting to imagine that the missing lid of the cross would have borne the image of his twin Damian. This pairing of medical saints might imbue the cross with particularly prophylactic properties.

**Date:** 10th–11th century.

### 13. (Fig. 19)

**Museum inventory no.** 84/1/4145. Found in the vicinity of Karahisar.

**Dimensions:** L. 8.5, W. 4.8, D. 0.5cm.

**Preservation:** Single lid with engraved design, hooks for hinge mechanism intact at each end of the vertical arm. The surface is polished smooth to the extent that some lines, particularly at centre, are partially erased.

**Bibliographic references:** Pitarakis 2006 (Type I), nos. 235–85.

The cross belongs to the same type as no. 6 above. However, while the iconography is almost identical, the style in which it is executed could hardly be more different. The image here exhibits an extraordinarily elegant sense of line and proportion. The Virgin Orans wears a tunic, the folds of which are depicted in quickly incised parallel lines. Her head is an empty though well-proportioned oval. The hood of the maphorion is rendered in a few falling lines. In the left and right extremities of the transverse arms are leaf motifs.

Above the circular nimbus is the inscription M[ητέ]P X[ριστο]Y, Mother of Christ

**Date:** 10th–11th century.

14. (Fig. 20)

**Museum inventory no.** 4228. Found in the vicinity of Karahisar.

**Dimensions:** L. 5.4, W. 2.7, D. 0.9cm.

**Preservation:** Complete in two parts. One lid is missing its left transverse arm, and the hooks that would serve to attach it to the other lid have broken. The components have never been subject to conservation and are thus heavily encrusted.

**Bibliographic references:** Pitarakis 2006 (Type I).

No decoration is visible on this small reliquary cross.

**Date:** 9th–12th century.



Fig. 19. Reliquary Cross No. 13, Museum Inventory Number: 84/1/4145.



Fig. 20. Reliquary Cross No. 14, Museum Inventory Number: 4228.

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