



Mapping Holy Land Pilgrimage Souvenirs: Production, Movement, Function

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This paper presents computer (GIS) models based on a database compilation of 5th–7th century pilgrimage souvenirs, specifically Asia Minor–style flasks, Menas flasks, Symeon tokens, and glass pilgrimage vessels of known excavation provenance, known purchase provenance, and museum location. The patterns that emerge from modelling the distribution of pilgrimage souvenirs are then compared to the distribution of other late antique ceramics and known travel routes to illuminate distinctive aspects of the movement of late antique pilgrimage souvenirs and estimate the economic impact of the production and circulation of such objects. Literary sources for pilgrimage are often frustratingly silent concerning the costs of travelling and what pilgrims paid (if anything) for souvenirs and other materials they purchased or consumed during pilgrimage. Such silences present challenges for measuring the economic impact of pilgrimage in late antiquity. The economic impact of pilgrimage is visible, however, in pilgrimage–related building and material culture, in particular the production of pilgrimage souvenirs that sometimes travelled far from their place of origin (Vikan 2011). While scholars have often bemoaned the fact that most pilgrimage souvenirs in museums were purchased on the antiquities market and are of unknown provenance (Metzger 1981), a significant number excavated in the last several decades are of known provenance and archaeological context (Anderson 2004). This paper argues that the patterns that emerge from the mapping of pilgrimage souvenirs can inform our understanding of the economic impact of pilgrimage and reveal variations in the primary and secondary uses of objects associated with pilgrimage.