



## Pilgrimage to Healing Shrines: The Evidence of Miracle Accounts

Alice-Mary Talbot

*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 56. (2002), pp. 153-173.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0070-7546%282002%2956%3C153%3APHSTE%3E2.0.CO%3B2-D>

*Dumbarton Oaks Papers* is currently published by Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University.

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/doaks.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

---

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# Pilgrimage to Healing Shrines: The Evidence of Miracle Accounts

ALICE-MARY TALBOT

Throughout the ages mankind has sought healing for injuries, acute illness, and chronic disease, whether from academically trained physicians, from shamans, or at miraculous shrines. The doctors of the ancient Mediterranean world were steeped in the teachings of Hippocrates and Galen, but countless people afflicted with illness sought out instead, or in addition, the healing powers of the god Asklepios, at his shrines in Epidaurus, Athens, Corinth, Pergamon, Kos, Smyrna, and Rome, to name only some of the most famous. Pilgrims to the shrines of Asklepios normally engaged in the rite of incubation, in which they spent the night at the temple precinct and were visited in their dreams by the god or his attendants or by sacred snakes or a sacred dog. Upon awakening the pilgrims often found themselves cured of their afflictions; in gratitude they left behind ex-voto offerings and gave testimony to their healing in inscriptions placed on stelae.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to the primarily divine and supernatural healing that was a feature of the Asklepian precinct at Epidaurus, the complexes at Kos and Pergamon had medical facilities that played a major role in the healing of pilgrims.<sup>2</sup>

With the advent of Christianity similar phenomena developed in the late antique world, as pilgrims sought healing at both the *loca sancta* of the Holy Land and the churches of holy apostles and martyrs. John Wilkinson has remarked, "No pilgrims go to the Holy Land expressly for the purpose of healing as far as we are told,"<sup>3</sup> by which he must mean that none of the pilgrims who have left accounts give evidence of this motivation for their travels. And it makes sense that the pilgrims from Europe, who embarked on lengthy journeys, probably had to have been in relatively good health to survive the arduous trip. Yet their narratives, particularly that of the Piacenza Pilgrim ca. 570, provide abundant testimony that many of the *loca sancta* associated with both Old and New Testament figures were famed for their healing powers. To give only a few examples, lepers came for cleansing to the well of the Samaritan woman, the Baths of Elijah and Moses, and the waters of Siloam.<sup>4</sup> At the Baths of Elijah they underwent a type of incubation experience, sitting in

<sup>1</sup> On the private cult of Asklepios at Epidaurus, see, for example, R. A. Tomlinson, *Epidaurus* (Austin, Tex., 1983), 19–21.

<sup>2</sup> On this distinction between two traditions of healing at shrines of Asklepios, see H. C. Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World* (New Haven, Conn., 1983), 83–104.

<sup>3</sup> J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Warminster, 1977), 42 note 161.

<sup>4</sup> Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, 81–82, 84.

tanks of water all night long and being cured after seeing a vision. Hugeburc's narrative of the pilgrimage of the eighth-century saint Willibald describes how barren women and the sick were healed by bathing in the Jordan,<sup>5</sup> and Willibald himself was cured of blindness when he entered the church of Constantine in Jerusalem (at the church of the Holy Sepulcher).<sup>6</sup>

Also in late antiquity Christians in search of miraculous healing began to visit the shrines of saints, usually their tombs or another place where their relics were preserved. Examples are Abu Mina in Egypt, dedicated to the martyr St. Menas and functioning by the late fourth century; Sts. Abbakynos and John at Menouthis in Egypt, which flourished between the fifth and seventh centuries; the shrine of St. Thekla in Anatolian Seleukeia (Meriamlik), which is attested between the fourth and sixth centuries; the pilgrimage complex of Qal'at Sem'an near Antioch, at the column of St. Symeon the Stylite the Elder, which was particularly active in the late fifth and sixth centuries; and the shrine of his later homonym, Symeon the Stylite the Younger, at the Wondrous Mountain (6th–7th century).<sup>7</sup> These shrines are known through their extensive archaeological remains, through accounts of the posthumous miracles performed by the saints, and through pilgrimage artifacts or "souvenirs," such as ampullae, designed as containers for holy oil or water, and clay tokens made from the dust of a holy site.<sup>8</sup> After a period of intense activity in the fifth and sixth centuries, most of these Near Eastern shrines seem to have fallen into decline as a result of the tumultuous events of the first part of the seventh century, with the invasions of first the Persians and then the Arabs, and many of them disappear from the historical record.<sup>9</sup>

The healing shrines of the middle and late Byzantine periods can be divided into two groups: those of older saints, both apostles and martyrs, which continued in operation for many centuries (i.e., those of *longue durée*), and the shrines of new saints, many of which seem to have been short-lived.

Other studies in this volume describe some of the long-lived shrines: the church of the martyr St. Demetrios in Thessalonike and the basilica of the apostle St. John at Ephesos, which were both founded in late antiquity and remained active throughout the Byzantine era.<sup>10</sup> The cult of St. Eugenios, a fourth-century martyr, had a slow start but prospered be-

<sup>5</sup> Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, 129.

<sup>6</sup> Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, 131, chap. 25.

<sup>7</sup> On these late antique shrines the following basic bibliography should be consulted: for Menouthis and Abu Mina, see D. Montserrat, "Pilgrimage to the Shrine of SS Cyrus and John at Menouthis in Late Antiquity" and P. Grossmann, "The Pilgrimage Center of Abu Mina" in D. Frankfurter, ed., *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt* (Leiden, 1998), 257–79, 281–302; for Meriamlik, see E. Herzfeld and S. Guyer, *Meriamlik und Korykos*, *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua* 2 (Manchester, 1930), 1–89; S. Davis, *The Cult of Saint Thekla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2001), appeared too late to be consulted for this article. For Qal'at Sem'an, see *ODB* 3:1763; G. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord: Le Massif du Bélus à l'époque romaine*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1953), 205–76; for the Wondrous Mountain, see W. Djobadze, *Archeological Investigations in the Region West of Antioch-on-the-Orontes* (Stuttgart, 1986), 57–115.

<sup>8</sup> See G. Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art* (Washington, D.C., 1982).

<sup>9</sup> At Abu Mina, cult activity continued on a modest level until the 10th century (*ODB* 1:8); after cessation of activity at the two shrines of St. Symeon between the 7th and early 10th centuries, there was a revival in the later 10th and 11th centuries (*ODB* 3:1763 and 2204).

<sup>10</sup> On these two shrines, see the papers in this volume by C. Bakirtzis, "Pilgrimage to Thessalonike," and C. Foss, "Pilgrimage in Medieval Asia Minor."

tween the ninth and fourteenth centuries in Trebizond.<sup>11</sup> Two other shrines of this sort in Constantinople were the church of Sts. Kosmas and Damian (the Kosmidion) and the Theotokos tes Peges, both founded in the fifth century and continuing until the fall of the empire. For some of these shrines there survive abundant *miracula*, the accounts of miracles that occurred thanks to the healing powers of the saints or Virgin, although many of them date from a period earlier than the seventh century: for Sts. Kosmas and Damian there are the rich miracle collections of the sixth century and a small addendum from ca. 1300; for St. Demetrios, the well-known *miracula* of the archbishop John of the seventh century, with only a few scattered miracle narratives for the later period; for St. Eugenios, *miracula* documenting healings in the ninth, eleventh, and fourteenth centuries. For Pege there is an anonymous collection covering the fifth to tenth centuries, and another by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos dealing with the late thirteenth to early fourteenth century.<sup>12</sup> For Ephesos, on the other hand, to the best of my knowledge, no miracle texts are preserved.

Many of the richest miracle collections, however, are for cults of new saints, those whom a recent conference in Athens termed “The Heroes of Orthodoxy.”<sup>13</sup> Evidence is especially abundant for the saints of the ninth and tenth centuries, and it is on these middle Byzantine healing cults that I will focus, with some attention at the end, for comparative purposes, to a few Constantinopolitan healing shrines of the early Palaiologan period.

#### THE NATURE OF THE HAGIOGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE FOR *MIRACULA*

First, some remarks on the nature of the evidence for posthumous miracles in the middle Byzantine era. Thanks to the Dumbarton Oaks Hagiography Database, which includes the *vitae* of saints who lived in the eighth to tenth centuries,<sup>14</sup> it is relatively easy to survey the healing miracles performed by these holy men and women, both during their lifetimes and posthumously. The data I have generated (Appendix 1) indicate a remarkable shift in patterns of miraculous healing between the eighth and ninth centuries: only two posthumous miracles are attested for eighth-century saints, and they involved touching a holy man’s corpse during a funeral procession rather than visitation of a tomb and a cult of relics. In stark contrast, 142 posthumous miraculous cures are recorded for holy men and women of the ninth century. Even taking into account that only seventeen *vitae* survive for eighth-century saints, compared with forty-two for the ninth century, this is a notable difference. The twenty-four surviving *vitae* of tenth-century saints yield 120 posthumous miracles, also a very substantial number. I doubt that such a discrepancy

<sup>11</sup> See J. O. Rosenqvist, “Local Worshipers, Imperial Patrons: Pilgrimage to St. Eugenios of Trebizond,” in this volume.

<sup>12</sup> Kosmas and Damianos: L. Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian* (Leipzig–Berlin, 1907); Demetrios: P. Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des Miracles de s. Démétrius*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1978–80); Eugenios: J. O. Rosenqvist, *The Hagiographic Dossier of St. Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athous Dionysiou 154* (Uppsala, 1996); Pege, anonymous *miracula*: AASS Nov. 3:878–89; *Logos* by Xanthopoulos, ed. A. Pamperis, Νικηφόρου Καλλίστου τοῦ Ξανθοπούλου περὶ συστάσεως τοῦ σεβασμίου οἴκου τῆς ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Ζωοδόχου Πηγῆς καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ ὑπερφυῶς τελεσθέντων θαυμάτων ([Leipzig], 1802) (hereafter Xanthopoulos, *Logos*).

<sup>13</sup> “Heroes of the Orthodox Church: New Saints, 8th–16th c.,” symposium held at the Institute of Byzantine Research of the National Research Foundation, Athens, 25–28 November 1999.

<sup>14</sup> The Dumbarton Oaks Hagiography Database is available on the Internet at <http://www.doaks.org/hagio.html>.

between the eighth century, on the one hand, and the ninth and tenth centuries on the other is merely the result of loss of texts, and would suggest that the Byzantine world did indeed see an upsurge in the phenomenon of healing shrines in the ninth century.

Can we in fact date this shift more precisely? Let us look more carefully at the *vitae* of saints noted for healing miracles. Of the saints who died in the ninth century, fourteen had tombs that are reported to have performed three or more specific posthumous healing miracles (see Appendix 2), a sufficient number perhaps to postulate that their shrines did in fact attract pilgrims in search of miraculous cures. It is noteworthy that nine of these saints died in 840 or later, and that the accounts of all but one of the healing cults were written after 843.<sup>15</sup> It does not seem unreasonable, therefore, to suggest a connection between the restoration of icons and a resurgence of faith in the healing power of relics in the post-iconoclastic period.<sup>16</sup> The geographic concentration of these healing shrines may also be significant: six were in Constantinople, six in Bithynia (mostly in the vicinity of Mount Olympos), one in Thessalonike, and one on Aegina.

It is also important to note the rather brief time lapse between the death of a saint and the date of composition of the *vita* or separate *miracula* account that documents the healing miracles. In the case of the fourteen ninth-century saints with well-attested posthumous healing cures, all of the accounts seem to have been written within a few years or at most within a generation of the death of the holy man or woman. This is a significant finding, for it means that in many instances there is positive evidence for the duration of a posthumous healing cult for only about thirty years at the most. To the best of my knowledge, later healing cults are attested for only three ninth-century saints: Theodora of Thessalonike, Theophano, and Michael the Synkellos.<sup>17</sup> The same is true for most of the saints of the tenth century, the exceptions being St. Luke the Younger and St. Athanasios of Athos.<sup>18</sup> This does not necessarily mean of course that the cults of all these saints ceased

<sup>15</sup> The fourteen saints are, in alphabetical order: Athanasia of Aegina, Eustratios of Agauros, Euthymios of Sardis, Evaristos, Gregory of Dekapolis, Ignatios the patriarch, Ioannikios, Makarios of Pelekete, Niketas Patrikios, Peter of Atroa, Tarasios, Theodora of Thessalonike, Theodore of Stoudios, and Theophano. The *vita* of Euthymios, written in 832, is the exception with regard to its date of composition. It is also hard to prove a posthumous "cult of Euthymios," since his *vita* was written very soon after his death and attests to healing miracles only during the initial forty days following his demise.

<sup>16</sup> At the same time, it should be noted that recent scholarship has tended to downplay official antipathy toward relics during the iconoclastic era. Stephen Gero has assembled the evidence for the hostility of Constantine V toward relics as part of his attack on the cult of saints. He finds no evidence, however, for "leipsanoclasm" as an official policy of Leo III or the iconoclastic emperors of the 9th century; cf. his *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Constantine V* (Louvain, 1977), 152–65. The *horos* of 754 does not specifically mention relics. John Wortley ("Iconoclasm and Leipsanoclasm: Leo III, Constantine V, and the Relics," *ByzF* 8 [1982]: 253–79) goes even further in dismissing the skimpy evidence for destruction of relics during the iconoclastic period, although he suggests that they may have fallen out of favor during this period.

<sup>17</sup> The revival of the cult of Theodora in the Palaiologan period is attested by leaden oil flasks and by the testimony of Russian pilgrims; cf. A.-M. Talbot, ed., *Holy Women of Byzantium* (Washington, D.C., 1996), 162. For the cult of St. Theophano, see G. P. Majeska, "The Body of St. Theophano the Empress and the Convent of St. Constantine," *BSI* 38 (1977): 14–21, esp. 14–17; G. Dagrón, "Théophano, les Saints-Apôtres et l'église de Tous-les-Saints," *Symmeikta* 9 (1994): 201–8, esp. 201–5; her healing miracles are specifically mentioned by Gregoras; cf. E. Kurtz, *Zwei griechische Texte über die hl. Theophano die Gemahlin Kaisers Leo VI.* (St. Petersburg, 1898), chaps. 25–26, pp. 44–45. On the Palaiologan cult of Michael the Synkellos, see his *vita* by Nikephoros Gregoras, ed. F. I. Shmit, *Kakhrrie-džami [IRAIK 11]* (Sofia–Munich, 1906), 260–79, esp. 278.32–34.

<sup>18</sup> The cults of St. Luke and Athanasios continue to this day at their tombs in their monasteries at Hosios Loukas and on Mt. Athos.

to function after a brief period of activity, merely that we have no firm proof that pilgrims continued to come to these shrines in search of healing miracles. This suggests the possibility that many healing cults of new saints, which seem so important to us at first glance because of the vivid narrative accounts supplied by hagiographers, may in fact have been of relatively short duration and of much less prominence than the well-established shrines of *longue durée*.

## HEALING SHRINES OF THE NINTH AND TENTH CENTURIES

### 1. Which Holy Men and Women Developed Posthumous Healing Cults?

I now turn to an overview of some of the characteristics of Byzantine healing shrines, starting with those of the ninth and tenth centuries. First, which kinds of newly created saints tended to end up with healing cults? As analysis of information provided by the hagiography database makes clear, the performance of miracles was by no means essential for the attainment of sanctity.<sup>19</sup> Examples of saints for whom no miracles are attested are the ninth-century empress Theodora and the patriarchs Nikephoros and Methodios, all of whom were venerated for their defense of icons rather than for such supernatural qualities as clairvoyance or healing powers. Those holy men and women who were reported to have performed posthumous healing miracles were almost all monastics (among the exceptions are married laywomen, like Mary the Younger and Thomais of Lesbos), and virtually every saint of the ninth and tenth century with a healing cult had been laid to rest in a monastery, usually one in which he or she had resided or died.<sup>20</sup> Thus we can conclude that there was an intimate association between the deposition of a saint's relics in a monastery and the promotion by the resident monks or nuns of a cult and the attendant pilgrimage.

A posthumous cult was also often consciously supported by the family of a recently deceased holy man or woman, as can be seen particularly clearly in the case of St. Theodora of Thessalonike and St. Mary of Vizey. The development of a cult that would attract pilgrims might be promoted by publicizing the occurrence of miracles, by commissioning the painting of an icon and the composition of a *vita* of the saint, and where necessary by the transfer of the saint's relics to a location more accessible to worshipers. I have argued elsewhere that, although the sanctification of Theodora and Mary was opposed by the church hierarchy, their cults were promoted by their families, who may well have commissioned hagiographers to provide evidence of their relatives' holiness through accounts of the miraculous cures effected by their relics.<sup>21</sup>

It is harder to answer the question of why some other monks and nuns, revered during their lifetimes, are said to have performed healing miracles only while they were alive, and why no posthumous cult developed. Occasionally we can determine the reason, as

<sup>19</sup> On this subject see the Appendices at the end of this essay. See also the article by M. Kaplan, "Le miracle est-il nécessaire au saint byzantin?" in *Miracle et Karama: Hagiographies médiévales comparées*, ed. D. Aigle (Turnhout, 2000), 167–96.

<sup>20</sup> The one exception seems to be Theophano, originally buried at the church of the Holy Apostles, and only later moved to a convent; see note 17 above.

<sup>21</sup> See A.-M. Talbot, "Family Cults in Byzantium: The Case of St. Theodora of Thessalonike," in *AEIMON: Studies Presented to Lennart Rydén on His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. J. O. Rosenqvist (Uppsala, 1996), 49–69.

with the ninth-century Matthias of Aegina, who drowned in a shipwreck and thus left no relics.<sup>22</sup> In the case of other saints for whom no miracles at all are reported, the reason may be the overall paucity of information about the individual (as is true for Germanos of Kosinitza, Nikephoros of Sebaste, and Prokopios of Dekapolis), or by the genre of hagiographical composition, that is, when the source is a rhetorical funerary oration or panegyric rather than a fully developed *vita*, as in the case of Athanasios of Methone and Plato of Sakkoudion. Theoktiste of Lesbos was a hermitess on an uninhabited island, and thus had no contact with any human beings whom she could heal; and after her death her body mysteriously disappeared, so there could be no cult of her relics.<sup>23</sup> But why, for example, are no specific posthumous healing miracles recorded for the three brothers of Lesbos, David, Symeon, and George, nor for Irene of Chrysobalanton, whose family actively promoted her cult?<sup>24</sup>

## 2. Types of Afflictions Cured

I now turn to the kinds of afflictions for which ninth- and tenth-century pilgrims to saints' shrines sought cures.<sup>25</sup> The most common malady by far was demonic possession, which affected approximately one-third of the individuals seeking healing. The Byzantines apparently included in this category not only mental illness and its various aberrant manifestations, such as dementia, nymphomania, phobias, and obscene behavior, but also physical ills which may have had sudden onset with no obvious explanation and thus were blamed on demons; examples are epilepsy and stroke resulting in paralysis or aphasia. I would propose that certain chronic psychological disorders as well as hysterical afflictions or psychosomatic problems are most amenable to the power of suggestion or the placebo effect, and therefore logically account for such a high percentage of reportedly successful cures. The second most common complaint was paralysis at seventeen percent, while blindness or eye disease comes in third at around nine percent. Many other diseases or chronic problems are mentioned, including dropsy, hernia, leprosy, cancer, dysentery, fever and chills, sterility, and hemorrhage. There are no instances of heart attack, and very little respiratory disease. Fractured limbs are also exceedingly rare. As this enormous variety of illnesses and conditions suggests, most saints' shrines of the ninth and tenth centuries did not specialize in particular diseases, in contrast, for example, to the earlier Con-

<sup>22</sup> *Vita* of Athanasia of Aegina, ed. F. Halkin, *Six inédits d'hagiologie byzantine* (Brussels, 1987), 186.24–30, and L. Carras, "The Life of St. Athanasia of Aegina," in *Maistor: Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning*, ed. A. Moffatt (Canberra, 1984), chap. 16, p. 217.

<sup>23</sup> As an anonymous reader has observed, the patently literary focus of the *vita* of Theoktiste may have meant that description of her cult was not one of the purposes of its composition. For the scanty traces of a post-Byzantine cult of Theoktiste, see A. C. Hero's introduction to her translation of the *vita* in *Holy Women of Byzantium* (as above, note 17), 98–99.

<sup>24</sup> For the most recent study of Sts. David, Symeon, and George, see the annotated translation of their *vita* by D. Domingo Foraste and D. Abrahamse in *Byzantine Defenders of Images*, ed. A.-M. Talbot (Washington, D.C., 1998), 143–241. On Irene, see J. O. Rosenqvist, *The Life of St. Irene Abbess of Chrysobalanton* (Uppsala, 1986); the epilogue (p. 112.3–5) alludes very vaguely to pilgrims who come "in search of the cure of whatever his prayers include," but then goes on to give defendants in lawsuits as examples, so healing miracles are not specifically attested.

<sup>25</sup> The following data are derived from listings of posthumous healing miracles in the Dumbarton Oaks Hagiography Database.

stantinopolitan cult of St. Artemios in the seventh century, which was famed for its treatment of hernias.<sup>26</sup> Typical of a “mixed-practice” shrine was the holy spring at Pege whose waters attracted many patients with urinary problems and kidney stones, but helped pilgrims with other health problems as well.<sup>27</sup>

### 3. *Methods of Healing*

Classification of methods of healing indicates that the great majority of posthumous miracles (about 85%) involved some kind of contact with or proximity to the saint’s relics or substances associated with the relics. This large percentage highlights the importance of relics in the development of a saint’s cult and their role as the focal point of pilgrimage to a saint’s shrine. The emphasis on access to the saint’s physical remains also provides a rationale for the translation of relics, which took a variety of forms: the remains could be transferred from a communal monastic tomb to an individual sarcophagus with removable cover to permit viewing and touching of the relics (examples are Theodora of Thessalonike and Athanasia of Aegina);<sup>28</sup> the relics could be transferred to a different location that would serve more appropriately as a pilgrimage shrine (e.g., the grotto chapel at the monastery of St. Zacharias, to which the relics of Peter of Atroa were translated);<sup>29</sup> or the translation might involve a long-distance transfer, as when a holy man died in exile and his disciples wanted to restore his remains to his monastery (e.g., Theodore of Stoudios and Theophanes the Confessor).<sup>30</sup>

More than forty percent of the ninth-century posthumous healing miracles that I have documented are reported to have been effected as the result of the pilgrims’ touching of the relics themselves or the coffin that contained them, or by the mere proximity of the pilgrim to the coffin or relics. I am including in this category such practices as incubation, that is, spending the night in vigil or asleep within the precincts of the holy shrine. Another forty percent of the miraculous cures in my tabulation were accomplished when the pilgrim was anointed with or consumed a substance that had come into contact with the relics or was closely associated with the coffin. By far the most common such substance was oil from the lamp that normally hung above a saint’s coffin and burned continuously. For example, the hagiographer of Theodora of Thessalonike informs us that the oil in her coffin lamp never needed to be replenished and gushed forth so abundantly that it proved necessary to place a ceramic vessel beneath the lamp to catch the overflowing oil.<sup>31</sup> The pilgrim would rub this oil on the afflicted part of the body and would soon be healed. An-

<sup>26</sup> See V. S. Crisafulli and J. W. Nesbitt, *The Miracles of St. Artemius* (Leiden, 1997). See also the remarks of J. O. Rosenqvist in his article in this volume (p. 196), on the alleged specialization of the shrine of St. Eugenios in curing fever and convulsions.

<sup>27</sup> On Pege, see the texts cited in note 12 above.

<sup>28</sup> Theodora: S. Paschalides, ‘Ο βίος τῆς ὀσιομυροβλύτιδος Θεοδώρας τῆς ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ (Thessalonike, 1991), 194–204 (hereafter Paschalides, *Bios tes Theodoras*); Athanasia: Halkin, *Six inédits*, 191–92; Carras ed. in *Maistor* (as in note 22 above), chaps. 26–27, p. 221.

<sup>29</sup> V. Laurent, *La Vita Retractata et les Miracles Posthumes de Saint Pierre d’Atroa* (Brussels, 1958), 147–49, chap. 97. See further discussion in note 53 below.

<sup>30</sup> Theodore of Stoudios: see C. van de Vorst, “La translation de s. Théodore Studite et de s. Joseph de Thessalonique,” *AB* 32 (1913): 27–62; Theophanes: V. V. Latyshev, *Mefodiia patriarkha Konstantinopol’skogo Zhitie prep. Feofana Ispovednika* (St. Petersburg, 1918), 37–38, chaps. 57–58.

<sup>31</sup> Paschalides, *Bios tes Theodoras*, chaps. 47, 52–53.



other effective medium for transmitting the saint's holy powers was the *myron* or perfumed oil that exuded miraculously from the relics of certain saints: in the case of Peter of Atroa it usually flowed only on his commemoration day,<sup>32</sup> while the *myron* from the coffin of Theodora of Thessalonike apparently flowed more frequently.<sup>33</sup> A third, much rarer source of holy oil was an exudation from the icon of the saint, attested only for Theodora of Thessalonike. We are told that sweet-scented oil began to issue forth from the palm of her right hand in such quantities as to wash some of the paint from the icon. A lead receptacle was attached to the icon's base so the overflowing oil would not be lost.<sup>34</sup>

Still another method of posthumous healing was for the pilgrim to touch a piece of clothing or a personal possession of the saint. Thus healing was effected by the *maphorion* and the jasper finger-ring of the empress Theophano, the goat hair *sticharion* of Athanasia of Aegina, and the heavy iron rings worn by Evaristos to mortify his body.<sup>35</sup>

In many instances one can perceive a relationship between the affliction of the pilgrim and the method of healing. It is thus not surprising that anointing with oil was deemed an effective method of curing paralysis and external wounds or sores. Likewise, drinking of holy oil (usually from the coffin lamp), *myron*, or holy water was often the method of choice for internal problems such as kidney stones, food poisoning, or dropsy. But the categories are by no means rigid: demonic possession might be cured either by anointing with lamp oil or by drinking it, as were a chronic cough, high fever, liver problems, and hernia. Or an internal condition, such as severe sore throat with pus, might be cured by external anointing.<sup>36</sup>

Other factors that might determine the method of healing were the location of the saint's tomb and whether the cure was effected before or after burial. Obviously it was easier for pilgrims to touch the saint's corpse before burial while it was laid out on a bier or in the course of a funeral procession. Likewise the pilgrim could have direct physical contact with relics if they were displayed in a sarcophagus with removable cover. In the case of Theodore of Stoudios, who was buried in a family tomb together with his uncle Plato of Sakkoudion and his brother Joseph, pilgrims evidently had no direct access to his relics, so they drank or anointed themselves with oil from the coffin lamp, gazed at his icon hanging on a nearby column, or invoked his name.<sup>37</sup> In contrast, those who approached the open coffin of Athanasia of Aegina might place a paralyzed hand under her armpit or lay their head on the relics to cure grotesquely swollen eyes.<sup>38</sup>

Many posthumous miracles were effected at a distance from the shrine. Sometimes the afflicted individual had a dream vision of the saint and awoke healed. On other occasions, holy oil, *myron*, or water was brought to the patient at home, normally in ampullae, but in

<sup>32</sup> Laurent, *Vita Retractata*, 149, chaps. 97–98.

<sup>33</sup> Paschalides, *Bios tes Theodoras*, 196. 26–27.

<sup>34</sup> Paschalides, *Bios tes Theodoras*, 174–76, chap. 54.

<sup>35</sup> Theophano: *maphorion*, Kurtz, *Zwei griechische Texte*, 17–18, chap. 25; ring, 18, chap. 26.24–27; *sticharion* of Athanasia, Halkin, *Six inédits*, 194, chap. 18; Carras ed. in *Maistor*, chap. 32, p. 223; iron rings of Evaristos, C. van de Vorst, "La Vie de s. Evariste, higoumène à Constantinople," *AB* 41 (1923): 315, chap. 26.

<sup>36</sup> For such cures of quinsy, see the *vita* of Thomais, *AASS* Nov. 4:238, and *vita* A of Athanasios of Athos, ed. J. Noret, *Vitae duae antiquae sancti Athanasii Athonitae* (Turnhout, 1982), 119, chap. 247.42–52.

<sup>37</sup> Drinking and anointing with oil: *v. Theodori Stud.*, PG 99:313D–316A; gazing at icon, 313C; invocation of saint's name, 313C.

<sup>38</sup> *Vita* of Athanasia, ed. Halkin, *Six inédits*, 193, chap. 17; 194, chap. 18; Carras ed. in *Maistor*, chap. 30, p. 222, chap. 31, p. 223.

one instance in an oil-soaked piece of papyrus.<sup>39</sup> This was a useful method for those who were bedridden and unable to undertake a pilgrimage or for women who were sometimes denied access to a healing shrine in a male monastery.<sup>40</sup>

As Evelyne Patlagean has observed, the oil from lamp and relics was essential to the maintenance of a saint's cult.<sup>41</sup> This substance sanctified by contact with relics was a "renewable resource" that was constantly being replenished. If pilgrims did not have access to this oil or *myron* or to holy water sanctified by contact with the saint's bones, clothes, or possessions, they would be tempted to take pieces of the saint's body or clothing which could not be replaced.<sup>42</sup> Still on occasion the Church did sanction the cutting up of a saint's clothing for use as *eulogiai*, or pious souvenirs. The *miracula* of Theodora of Thessalonike tell how the priests who effected the transfer of her relics cut off little pieces of her funerary garb to take away with them as a kind of amulet.<sup>43</sup> Likewise, on the day of Patriarch Ignatios's funeral, his *peplos* was divided up into small pieces for distribution to the faithful. One of these fragments proved its miraculous power when it was applied to the womb of a woman experiencing a difficult labor. The baby had presented itself in breech position, and the desperate physicians were about to perform an embryotomy to save the mother's life. As soon as the *peplos* fragment touched the woman's abdomen, the baby turned head-first and the birth proceeded normally.<sup>44</sup>

#### 4. Eulogiai and Ex-voto Offerings

Ampullae of holy oil and water and pieces of a saint's clothing exemplify some of the types of souvenirs or *eulogiai* that pilgrims might take away from the shrine as pious mementos of their pilgrimage, as objects sanctified by the saint that they might themselves use in case of future need, or containers of holy substances that they could take to ailing friends and relatives forced to stay at home. All too few examples of such middle and late Byzantine pilgrimage artifacts have survived,<sup>45</sup> but there are sufficient allusions to them in

<sup>39</sup> Examples are the flask of holy oil sent from the shrine of Theodora of Thessalonike to a servant girl in Thebes (Paschalides, *Bios tes Theodoras*, 178, chap. 56) and two samples of oil from the tomb lamp of St. Luke the Younger sent to a young man with a hernia and to Nicholas of Rhastamitai (C. L. and W. R. Connor, *The Life and Miracles of St. Luke* [Brookline, Mass., 1994], 130–32, chap. 80; 138–40, chap. 84); Basil Apokaukos brought home *myron* from the tomb of Nikon ho Metanoieite with which he cured his servant Gregory (D. F. Sullivan, *The Life of Saint Nikon* [Brookline, Mass., 1987], 166–68, chap. 50). The papyrus is mentioned in the *vita* of Theodora (ed. Paschalides, *Bios tes Theodoras*, 210–12, chap. 11). J. Koder ("Problemwörter" im Eparchikon biblion," *Lexicographica byzantina*, ed. W. Hörandner and E. Trapp [Vienna, 1991], 188 note 12) has proposed the translation "wick" here for "papyrus," a suggestion accepted by J. O. Rosenqvist, *The Hagiographic Dossier of St. Eugenios*, p. 380 at line 449.

<sup>40</sup> For bedridden patients, see, e.g., the man with a cancerous ankle healed by lamp oil brought from the tomb of Peter of Atroa (Laurent, *Vita Retractata*, 141, chap. 93). For methods of healing for women denied access to a healing shrine, see discussion of the tomb of St. Elias Spelaiotes, below.

<sup>41</sup> E. Patlagean, "Theodora de Thessalonique: Une sainte moniale et un culte citadin (IXe–XXe siècle)," in *Culto dei santi, istituzioni e classi sociali in età preindustriale*, ed. S. B. Gajano and L. Sebastiani (Rome, 1984), 45–46.

<sup>42</sup> E.g., the *vita* of Evaristos of Agauros (ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 'Ανάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς Σταχυολογίας, vol. 4 [St. Petersburg, 1897], 393.23–26) states that after his death the people of Constantinople were frantically eager to secure pieces of his clothing or body or hairs from his head "as a *phylakterion*."

<sup>43</sup> Paschalides, *Bios tes Theodoras*, 204, chap. 7.

<sup>44</sup> *Vita Ignatii* in PG 105:564B–C.

<sup>45</sup> Note that virtually all the objects illustrated in Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art* are from the 5th–7th centuries. Among surviving later *eulogiai* are lead tokens of St. Symeon the Younger from ca. 1100 (P. Verdier, "A

the texts to assure us that the acquisition of such *eulogiai* was indeed an important part of the pilgrimage experience.

What, in turn, did the pilgrims leave behind as offerings to the saint in thanksgiving for their miraculous healing? The *vitae* of ninth- and tenth-century saints are strangely silent on this, as if the hagiographers were embarrassed to admit that pilgrims in fact made donations to what were supposed to be “free hospitals,” *amistha iatreia*.<sup>46</sup> The tenth-century *miracula* of the Constantinopolitan shrine of Pege, however, shed a little light on what must have been a common practice. They tell us, for example, that the empress Irene, after being healed of a hemorrhage by the waters of Pege, in gratitude presented to the church gold cloths and curtains, a crown, and eucharistic vessels adorned with pearls and gems, and had mosaics of herself and her son Constantine VI installed.<sup>47</sup> A monk from Chaldia who was healed of an unspecified disease by the Virgin of Pege gave the shrine three nomismata as an offering, and later, when his servant was healed as well, his monastery undertook to send five nomismata to Pege every year in thanksgiving.<sup>48</sup>

Further evidence of such ex-voto offerings is provided by the epigrams commissioned by donors to accompany the textiles, icon frames, and the like that they presented to a shrine in the aftermath of a miraculous cure. Valerie Nunn has collected a number of such epigrams of the eleventh and twelfth centuries from Marcius graecus 524, which demonstrate that woven hangings were a favorite sort of votive offering.<sup>49</sup> Also in the twelfth century, Manganeios Prodromos composed verses to accompany a *peplos* donated by the *sebastokratorissa* Irene to Pege in thanksgiving for the miraculous cure of her son John Komnenos, who had been struck in the eye during a jousting tournament.<sup>50</sup> Many more examples could be cited, but that would be the subject of another paper.<sup>51</sup>

### 5. Who Were the Pilgrims to Healing Shrines?

Analysis of miracle accounts shows that men, women, and children of all ages visited saints' shrines in search of healing. Of the pilgrims to the shrines of ninth-century saints

---

Medallion of Saint Symeon the Younger,” *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 67 [January 1980]: 17–27), Palaiologan ampullae from the shrines of St. Theodora and St. Demetrios in Thessalonike (C. Bakirtzi, “Byzantine Ampullae from Thessaloniki,” in *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. R. Ousterhout [Urbana–Chicago, Ill., 1990], 140–49), and small Palaiologan clay bowls impressed with the names of St. Demetrios and other saints (D. Papanikola-Bakirtzi, “The Palaeologan Glazed Pottery of Thessaloniki,” in *L'art de Thessalonique et des pays balkaniques et les courants spirituels au XIVe siècle. Recueil des rapports du IVe colloque serbe-grec* [Belgrade, 1987], 204, and eadem, *Byzantine Glazed Ceramics: The Art of Sgraffito* [Athens, 1999], figs. 6–7 on p. 22, and cat. nos. 88–89). The question of middle and late Byzantine *eulogiai* is a topic that would reward further investigation.

<sup>46</sup> One rare piece of evidence is found in the *vita* of Constantine the Jew, where an epileptic in search of a cure sets out for the tomb of St. Ioannikios bearing votive offerings of wax and incense (AASS Nov. 4:650c). It turned out, however, that the man was actually cured en route by Constantine the Jew who had sent him on this pilgrimage because he did not want to take credit for the miraculous healing.

<sup>47</sup> Anonymous *miracula* of the Pege, ed. AASS Nov. 3:880, chap. 8.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 886, chap. 30.

<sup>49</sup> V. Nunn, “The Encheirion as Adjunct to the Icon in the Middle Byzantine Period,” *BMGS* 10 (1986): 73–102.

<sup>50</sup> Ed. E. Miller, “Poésies inédites de Théodore Prodrome,” *Annuaire de l'association pour l'encouragement des études grecques en France* 17 (1883): 36–37.

<sup>51</sup> For examples of ex-voto offerings from the early Palaiologan period, attested by the epigrams of Manuel Philes, see A.-M. Talbot, “Epigrams of Manuel Philes on the Theotokos tes Peges and Its Art,” *DOP* 48 (1994): 135–65.

who are listed in my database, thirty-eight percent were women, while for the tenth century the figure is twenty-eight percent. In view of the customary underrepresentation of women in virtually all Byzantine sources, these percentages are in fact quite high. Since visitation to a holy tomb obviously necessitated travel, these *miracula* shed some light on women's activities outside the home that are normally passed over in silence by the narrative sources. For the most part the gender of the pilgrim does not seem to have profoundly affected his or her choice of shrine; thus women might seek healing from the relics of male saints and men from the relics of female saints. The data I have assembled do indicate, however, that in general men were somewhat more likely to be healed by the relics of male saints and women by female saints, but not always: for instance, eighteen men received healing at the tomb of Mary the Younger, and only eleven women. Although male monasteries and female convents usually excluded or strictly limited visitation by members of the opposite sex, monastic shrines with healing relics often admitted lay pilgrims of both sexes, as can be seen at the monasteries of Hosios Loukas, Eustratios of Agauros, and Theodora of Thessalonike. There are exceptions, of course, to this pattern of lack of gender discrimination.

Thus it is to be expected that only male pilgrims were able to visit the tomb of St. Athanasios on Mount Athos. But even in this extreme case, a rag dipped in his blood effected several posthumous cures outside Mount Athos, including of a woman with a hemorrhage.<sup>52</sup> The cures of only five women are reported for the shrine of St. Peter of Atroa, in contrast to fourteen men. Here an explanation may be found in the rigorous principle of *abaton* or exclusion of women imposed by the typikon of his monastery of St. Zacharias near Mount Olympos.<sup>53</sup> Women were likewise excluded by the typikon that the patriarch Tarasios drafted for his monastery on the European shore of the Bosphoros, where he was buried. His hagiographer tells us that in order to circumvent this rule two hemorrhaging women, in desperation, disguised themselves as eunuchs so as to approach his coffin. And indeed they were healed after anointing themselves with oil from the lamp hanging over his tomb.<sup>54</sup>

Yet another healing shrine that denied access to women was the cave of St. Elias Spelaiotes in Calabria where he himself had dug his own grave. Here female pilgrims

---

Very few objects that served as votive offerings have survived from the middle Byzantine period; for a description of one such ex-voto, a copper plaque with St. Hermolaos in the Dumbarton Oaks collection, see S. A. Boyd, "Ex-Voto Therapy: A Note on a Copper Plaque with St. Hermolaos," in *AETOS: Studies in Honour of Cyril Mango*, ed. I. Ševčenko and I. Hutter (Stuttgart–Leipzig, 1998), 15–27.

<sup>52</sup> *Vita B*, chap. 72, ed. Noret, *Vitae duae antiquae Sancti Athanasii Athonitae*, 206–7.

<sup>53</sup> While Peter was still alive, he healed very few women, all outside the precincts of the monastery of St. Zacharias. He agreed to meet one woman, whose son had a growth disorder, in the chapel of the Theotokos outside the monastery walls, and cured the child by a laying on of hands (V. Laurent, *La vie merveilleuse de Saint Pierre d'Atroa* (†837) [Brussels, 1956], 169–71, chap. 51). Of his posthumous cures of women, two were effected at his initial burial place at the chapel of St. Nicholas near the Balaion monastery (Laurent, *Vita Retractata*, 137, chap. 88). Twenty months after his death his remains were transferred to the chapel of the Theotokos at the monastery of Zacharias; Laurent (*Vita Retractata*, 146 note 2) assumes that this chapel, located in a grotto, was inside the monastery, and to be distinguished from the chapel of the Theotokos outside the walls. In this case it is hard to understand how the demoniac woman who was cured by approaching his coffin and drinking oil from the tomb lamp (*Vita Retractata*, 153, chap. 102) was granted access to his tomb. Another woman and her servant girl were cured by oil that was brought to them in their home (*Vita Retractata*, 161, chaps. 107–8).

<sup>54</sup> S. Eftymiadis, *The Life of the Patriarch Tarasios by Ignatios the Deacon* (BHG 1698) (Aldershot, 1998), 160–61, chap. 66.

resorted to various subterfuges to gain entry or otherwise avail themselves of the saint's powers. For some it was sufficient to kiss the door to the cave or sleep nearby.<sup>55</sup> A victim of demonic possession disguised herself as a man in order to kiss Elias's tomb and spend the night inside the cave in incubation.<sup>56</sup> Another woman secretly introduced her small paralyzed daughter into the cave so the child could sleep near the tomb.<sup>57</sup> Finally, I should mention the young blind woman who received special permission from the gatekeeper (after a donation perhaps?) to keep vigil at the saint's tomb.<sup>58</sup> Other women (and men as well) found healing without visiting the holy cave by drinking or anointing themselves with water that had washed Elias's wooden vessel or staff, or even the sponge used to cleanse his body before burial.<sup>59</sup> It was common for women thus denied access to a healing tomb to seek benefit from the miraculous powers of the relics in just this way, by sending an emissary to bring them something that had come into contact with the living saint or his relics, dust from the tomb, for example, or oil from the tomb lamp, or washwater that had touched his bones or objects he had worn or used.

Hagiographers do not always indicate the social status of pilgrims, often limiting their identification to merely "an old woman" or "a twelve-year-old boy." Some *vitae*, however, provide sufficient information to demonstrate the widespread appeal of healing shrines to peasants, clerics, and high imperial officials alike. Monks and nuns are by far the most common beneficiaries of miraculous healing, not surprising in view of the milieu in which these cures were being effected. Otherwise there are no predominant social groups, with pilgrims ranging from senators and strategoi to coppersmiths, vinedressers, sailors, charcoal makers, and prostitutes.

#### 6. Distances Traveled to Healing Shrines

Even less information is provided by hagiographers on another important factor, from our point of view: how far did pilgrims travel to these healing shrines? Did they primarily visit tombs in a local church, or were they willing to travel to another town to seek a miraculous cure?<sup>60</sup> Where sufficient evidence is available, it seems that most visitors to a shrine lived in the near vicinity. The *miracula* of Theodora of Thessalonike, one of the most detailed surviving records of posthumous miracles, demonstrate that about seventy percent of the attested pilgrims to her tomb were local inhabitants of Thessalonike. Two others came from Verroia, a distance of forty-five miles, including a paralyzed woman who had

<sup>55</sup> *V. Eliae Spelaiotae*, *AASS* Sept. 3:882, chap. 83; 885A, chap. 93.

<sup>56</sup> *AASS* Sept. 3:881–82, chap. 82.

<sup>57</sup> *AASS* Sept. 3:882–83, chap. 86.

<sup>58</sup> Latin version of *vita* of Elias Spelaiotes, ed. M. V. Strazzeri, "Una traduzione dal greco ad uso dei normanni: la vita latina di Sant'Elia lo Speleota," *ASiCal* 59 (1992): 81, para. 12, lines 1331–41.

<sup>59</sup> Wooden vessel: *AASS* Sept. 3:886E, chap. 96; staff, 881, chap. 81; sponge, 884, chap. 92.

<sup>60</sup> Only about 20 *miracula* of the 9th and 10th centuries provide sufficient information on long-distance pilgrimage for us to determine the actual length of a journey. Even when the hagiographer tells us the pilgrim's point of origin, it may turn out to be an obscure village or monastery impossible to locate on a map. For general discussions of travel in the Byzantine era, see M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300–900* (Cambridge, 2001), Part IV, esp. chap. 16; A. Avramea, "Land and Sea Communications, Fourth–Fifteenth Centuries," in *The Economic History of Byzantium from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. A. Laiou (Washington, D.C., 2002), 57–90; and E. Malamut, *Sur la route des saints byzantins* (Paris, 1993).

to be transported on a pack animal.<sup>61</sup> In addition, the monk Antony came from his hermitage on a nearby mountain, perhaps Chortaites, and an Arab from a village of the western Chalkidike, about thirty miles distant.<sup>62</sup> Finally, one should mention the wife of the strategos of Thebes who sent to the tomb for an ampulla of oil to heal her blind servant girl;<sup>63</sup> in this case she evidently felt 160 miles was too long a journey.

The *miracula* of St. Luke the Younger also provide good information on the hometowns of pilgrims, and we learn of journeys to Hosios Loukas of approximately twelve miles (from Davleia) and of twenty-seven miles (from Thermopylae).<sup>64</sup> Longer distances are more rarely attested: in the *vita* of Athanasios of Athos we learn of a monk from Euboea who traveled about 110 miles to the saint's tomb at the Lavra,<sup>65</sup> and in the anonymous miracles of the Pege we read about a pilgrim from Thessaly who sailed ca. 400 miles to Constantinople and a monk who journeyed to the capital from Chaldia, a distance of ca. 550 miles.<sup>66</sup>

#### MIRACULA OF THE EARLY PALAIOLOGAN ERA

Finally, I will discuss, much more briefly, the evidence on pilgrimage in the early Palaiologan era, focusing on a group of *miracula* for Constantinopolitan shrines that flourished during the reign of Emperor Andronikos II (1282–1328). As is well known, Byzantine hagiography experienced a marked decline in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and in the first half of the thirteenth, with a concomitant lack of evidence for miraculous cures.<sup>67</sup> Then in the Palaiologan period there is a revival of the appearance of new Orthodox saints, some of whom, like the patriarch Athanasios I, were venerated posthumously at shrines where their relics performed healing miracles. With the shrinking of the boundaries of the empire, most of these new holy men (there were no Palaiologan women saints) were active in Constantinople or in Greece. At the same time, subsequent to the period of Latin occupation of Constantinople (1204–61), when many churches and monasteries had been closed or occupied by Latins, a number of healing shrines were restored and reopened or at the least reinvigorated in the years following the Byzantine recovery of their capital.

Thus, as already mentioned, after a long period of silence in the sources with regard to healing miracles at Sts. Kosmas and Damianos, ca. 1300 Maximos the deacon described a small number of miracles that occurred at the shrine in the early Palaiologan period.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Paschalides, *Bios tes Theodoras*, 192, chap. 2.11–13; 214, chap. 12.1–5.

<sup>62</sup> Antony: Paschalides, *Bios tes Theodoras*, 184, chap. 59; Arab from village of Chalkidike: *ibid.* 178, chap. 57.1–3.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 178, chap. 56.

<sup>64</sup> C. L. and W. R. Connor, *The Life and Miracles of St. Luke*, 136, chap. 83.1–2, and 132, chap. 81. Similar distances are attested in the *vitae* of Eustratios of Agauros (ca. 45 miles from Malagina to Agauros) and of Nikon ho Metanoieite (ca. 30 miles from Helos to Sparta, and ca. 37 miles from Kalamata to Sparta by the road over Mt. Taygetos). See *vita Eustratii*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 'Ανάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς Σταχυολογίας, 4:398.1; Sullivan, *The Life of Saint Nikon*, 168, chap. 51.1–4; 174, chap. 55.2–3; 178, chap. 56.2–4.

<sup>65</sup> *V. Athan. Athon.* (B), ed. Noret, 204, chap. 70.

<sup>66</sup> *AASS* Nov. 3:881B, chap. 12; 886B, chap. 30.

<sup>67</sup> See P. Magdalino, "The Byzantine Holy Man in the Twelfth Century," in *The Byzantine Saint. University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. S. Hackel (London, 1981), 51–66.

<sup>68</sup> *μ saints Cyr et Jean (extraits), saint Georges* (Paris, 1971), 191–210. My article on the *miracula* of Maximos, entitled "Metaphrasis in the Early Palaiologan Period: The *Miracula* of Kosmas and Damian by Maximos the

Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos appended to his *vita* of the middle Byzantine saint Euphrosyne an account of the healing miracles that took place at her church;<sup>69</sup> the same author, after rewriting in higher style the already existing *miracula* of Pege, added sixteen new miracles that had occurred in his lifetime.<sup>70</sup> The hagiographer Constantine Akropolites, frequently termed “the new Metaphrastes,” included three contemporary healing miracles in his reworking of the *vita* of St. Theodosia, the iconodule martyr of the eighth century.<sup>71</sup> Thus we can speak of a revival of healing cults, or, more precisely, of hagiographical accounts of miraculous healing, during the long reign of Andronikos II.<sup>72</sup> In the group of five Palaiologan miracle accounts that I discuss here, only one, the *logos* of Theoktistos the Stoudite on the posthumous miracles of the patriarch Athanasios,<sup>73</sup> describes the cult of a new saint; the others are continuations or revivals of older cults. Overall, these *miracula* provide quite detailed information on name, hometown, and occupation of the individuals cured, and thus are a valuable source of evidence on patterns of pilgrimage. The most numerous are the thirty-nine miracles of the patriarch Athanasios, followed by sixteen at Pege and twelve at the shrine of Euphrosyne.

In general, both men and women visited these Palaiologan shrines. For example, twenty-one men and eighteen women are attested as coming to the tomb of St. Athanasios. At Pege, on the other hand, the proportion of male pilgrims is much higher, with thirteen men and three women. The reverse can be seen at St. Euphrosyne, with only one man, and eleven women, but it was a shrine that had infertility as one of its specialties, which would in part explain the gender imbalance.<sup>74</sup>

Many of these Palaiologan shrines attracted primarily a local clientele, but there is some evidence of pilgrimage from more distant points. Pilgrims to the tomb of the patriarch Athanasios came from such Bithynian towns and villages as Hieron, Kroulla, and even Prousa (some 60 miles from Constantinople), and from the Thracian towns of Medeia and Bizye (60 and 72 miles distant respectively).<sup>75</sup> The *miracula* for Sts. Theodosia and Euphrosyne mention only local pilgrims by name, but we know that four of the Russian travelers venerated the relics of St. Theodosia,<sup>76</sup> and the fame of the shrine of St. Euphrosyne

---

Deacon,” is currently in press in the proceedings of the 1999 Athens symposium on “The Heroes of the Orthodox Church: New Saints, 8th–16th cc.”

<sup>69</sup> “Vita s. Euphrosynae,” *AASS* Nov. 3:861–77.

<sup>70</sup> For the new miracles, see Xanthopoulos, *Logos*, 65–94.

<sup>71</sup> “Sermo in s. martyrem Theodosiam,” PG 140:924–33.

<sup>72</sup> For fuller discussion and complete bibliography, see A.-M. Talbot, *Healing Shrines in Late Byzantine Constantinople*, “Constantinople and Its Legacy” Lecture Series, 1997, Hellenic Canadian Association of Toronto (Toronto, Ont., 2000).

<sup>73</sup> A.-M. Talbot, *Faith Healing in Late Byzantium: The Posthumous Miracles of the Patriarch Athanasios I of Constantinople by Theoktistos the Stoudite* (Brookline, Mass., 1983) (hereafter Talbot, *Miracles of Athanasios*).

<sup>74</sup> The *miracula* of Akropolites for St. Theodosia describe the healing of only three men and no women, but we know from the evidence of the Russian traveler Stephen of Novgorod that many female pilgrims came to this shrine as well; cf. G. P. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Washington, D.C., 1984), 346: “<We> went to the convent near the sea named after St. Theodosia the Virgin, where we kissed her <body>. It is quite wonderful; every Wednesday and Friday is like a holiday <there>. Many men and women contribute candles, oil, and alms, and many sick people suffering from various diseases lie [there] on beds, receive cures and enter the church. Others are carried in and are laid before her one at a time. She intercedes, and those who are ill receive healing.”

<sup>75</sup> Talbot, *Miracles of Athanasios*, 80.10, 86.35, 114.9–10, 78.9, 94.22.

<sup>76</sup> Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 346–51.

must have reached Rome, since barren Roman women sent to Constantinople for oil from the lamp over her tomb and girdles of silk sanctified by contact with her relics.<sup>77</sup> Several visitors to Pege were originally from towns like Sparta and Serres, but seem to have fallen ill while resident in Constantinople, and so must be counted as local pilgrims. The exception is a boy from Nicaea with a carbuncle on his ankle whose mother brought him to the shrine to anoint his afflicted foot with holy water and mud.<sup>78</sup>

By and large the types of illness documented in the Palaiologan *miracula* are similar to those of the ninth and tenth centuries. At the monastery of St. Athanasios demonic possession tops the list of afflictions, accounting for eleven of the thirty-nine cases described. Urinary problems are second, and blindness third. Curiously, at Pege, where urinary difficulties had been a common complaint in the middle Byzantine period, Palaiologan pilgrims were more likely to suffer from skin diseases such as leprosy, rashes, or carbuncles and from cancerous tumors. There is only one case of a kidney stone and one of sand in the bladder. As already mentioned, the shrine of St. Euphrosyne specialized in infertility, and also in deafness.

Most of the methods of healing remain similar to those reported in the ninth and tenth centuries. Drinking holy water and application of holy mud continue to be the preferred treatments at Pege, but one unique treatment is mentioned. In order to access an internal tumor, holy dust was blown through a tube inserted into the patient.<sup>79</sup> At the tomb of Athanasios pilgrims typically anointed themselves with oil from the tomb lamp, drank water that had come into contact with the relics, or practiced the rite of incubation next to the saint's coffin. An unusual innovation was the burning of tiny pieces of cloth stolen from Athanasios's garments and inhaling the fumes.<sup>80</sup> A curious method of healing deafness at the shrine of St. Euphrosyne was the insertion of the key to the reliquary in the ear of the pilgrim.<sup>81</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

Between the seventh and fifteenth centuries, Byzantines with chronic and acute diseases often sought healing at shrines, many times after unsuccessful recourse to physicians. Normally they would visit a tomb or reliquary close to home, although journeys of up to 100 miles might be undertaken, even if the individual had to be carried on a pack animal. It makes sense, of course, that someone who is ill would avoid long-distance travel, unless there were no alternative. If visitation to a shrine in person proved impossible, because of distance, the severity of the illness, or because access was denied due to one's gender, the individual might send for some sort of healing substance that had come into contact with the saint's relics, normally oil or water. Gender does not seem to have played a major role in choices of healing shrine; Byzantine men and women sought cures from the relics of male and female saints alike. Women are relatively well represented in the lists of cured individuals, and were evidently free to go on at least short-distance pilgrimage without restrictions.

<sup>77</sup> *Vita* of Euphrosyne by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos, *AASS* Nov. 3:876A.

<sup>78</sup> Xanthopoulos, *Logos*, mir. 53, p. 71.

<sup>79</sup> Xanthopoulos, *Logos*, mir. 50, pp. 68–69.

<sup>80</sup> On this see Talbot, *Miracles of Athanasios*, 18–19.

<sup>81</sup> *Vita* of Euphrosyne, *AASS* Nov. 3:877A.



The surviving *miracula* suggest that there were three periods of particularly intense interest in pilgrimage to healing shrines: the fifth to early seventh century, the post-iconoclastic period of ca. 850–1000, and the period following the Byzantine reoccupation of Constantinople in the late thirteenth century. It is possible, of course, that these apparent peaks of activity are due to random preservation of texts. It is more likely, however, that intensification of pilgrimage to shrines with relics was a reaction to triumph over crises within the Church and empire: the Great Persecution, followed by the toleration of Christianity, the establishment of an official church, and an explosion of church construction; iconoclasm, followed by the triumph of orthodoxy, the renewed veneration of icons and relics, and restoration of images; and the Latin capture and looting of Constantinople in 1204, followed by the recovery of the Byzantine capital and the restoration of its despoiled churches.

Dumbarton Oaks

## Appendix 1

### Total number of healing miracles (by century)

	8th century	9th century	10th century
Number of <i>vitae</i> surveyed	17	42	24
Miracles performed by living holy man/woman	17	113	103
Miracles performed posthumously	2	142	120
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>223</b>
Number of men healed	15 (79%)	154 (61%)	163 (71%)
Number of women healed	4 (12%)	92 (36%)	60 (26%)
Persons of indeterminate sex healed	0	9 (3%)	7 (3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>230</b>

Synaxarion notices have not been included in these statistics, since their summary nature means that miracles are omitted or mentioned only in a summary fashion.

#### *Saints for whom no healing miracles are recorded*

##### *8th century*

Andrew in Tribunal, iconodule Martyr  
 Andrew of Crete, poet and hymnographer  
 Paul of Kaioumas, iconodule martyr  
 Stephen of Sougdaia, iconodule confessor  
 Bakchos the Younger, Palestinian martyr  
 John Eremopolites, Palestinian hermit (very fragmentary *vita*)  
 Elias of Heliopolis, Syrian martyr  
 Germanos I of Constantinople, iconodule patriarch  
 John of Damascus, iconodule theologian

##### *9th century*

Theodora, empress, wife of Theophilos  
 Methodios I, patriarch  
 Nikephoros I, patriarch  
 Athanasios, bishop of Methone  
 Germanos of Kosinitza, monk  
 Theophylaktos, bishop of Nikomedeia  
 Nikephoros of Sebaze, iconodule abbot  
 Nikephoros of Medikion, iconodule abbot

Prokopios of Dekapolis, iconodule monk  
 Joseph the Hymnographer  
 Plato of Sakkoudion, iconodule abbot  
 42 Martyrs of Amorion—*vita Evodii* [*vita* by Michael—generic posthumous miracles]

*10th century*

Theoktiste of Lesbos, legendary hermitess  
 Euthymios, patriarch of Constantinople

*Saints for whom only posthumous miracles are recorded*

<i>8th century</i>	<i>Number of Miracles</i>
Leo, bishop of Catania	1
Philaretos the Merciful	1
60 Martyrs of Jerusalem	generic only
<i>9th century</i>	
Theophano, empress	5
Tarasios, patriarch	4
Ignatios, patriarch	9
Theodora of Thessalonike	17
Michael the Synkellos	1
Theophanes the Confessor	1
<i>10th century</i>	
Mary the Younger of Bizye	30
Antony Kauleas, patriarch	4
Nikephoros of Miletos	1
Theodore of Kythera	generic only

## Appendix 2

### Summary of Ninth-Century Healing Miracles

	Living/ Posthumous	Living: M/F/I	Posthumous: M/F/I	Total: M/F/I
Athanasia of Aegina	1/11	1/0/0	2/7/2	3/7/2
Matthias of Aegina	4/0	3/1/0	—	3/1/0
Anthony the Younger	4/0	3/1/0	—	3/1/0
Constantine the Jew	5/1	2/3/0	1/0/0	4/2/0
David of Lesbos	0	—	—	—
Symeon of Lesbos	3/0	1/2/0	—	1/2/0
George of Lesbos	2/0	2/0/0	—	2/0/0
Athanasios of Methone	0	—	—	—
Eustratios of Agauros	4/29	2/1/1	19/9/1	21/10/2
Euthymios of Sardis	1/3	1/0/0	1/2/0	2/2/0
Euthymios the Younger	2/0	2/0/0	—	2/0/0
Evaristos	11/3	7/4/0	1/2/0	5/9/0
George of Amastris	1/1	0/1/0	1/0/0	1/1/0
Gregory of Dekapolis	6/10	4/2/0	7/3/0	11/5/0
Germanos of Kosinitza	0	—	—	—
Ioannikios ( <i>vita</i> e of both Peter and Sabas)	8/3	3/5/0	2/1/0	5/6/0
John Psichaites	4/2	3/1/0	0/1/1	3/2/1
Theodora, empress	0	—	—	—
Theophylaktos of Nikomedeia	0	—	—	—
Nikephoros of Sebaze	0	—	—	—
Makarios of Pelekete	6/7	3/3/0	5/0/2	8/3/2
Nicholas of Stoudios	2/1	0/2/0	1/0/0	1/2/0
Methodios I, patriarch of Constantinople	0	—	—	—
Theodora of Thessalonike	0/17	—	6/11/0	6/11/0
Michael the Synkellos	0/1	—	1/0/0	1/0/0
Theophano, empress	0/5	—	3/2/0	3/2/0
Peter of Atroa	31/21	29/2/0	15/4/2	44/6/2
Niketas Patrikios	3/4	3/0/0	2/2/0	2/5/0
Nikephoros of Medikion	0	—	—	—
George, bishop of Mytilene	3/0	3/0/0	—	3/0/0
Peter of Athos	1/2	1/0/0	2/0/0	3/0/0
Niketas of Medikion	4/1	4/0/0	0/1/0	4/1/0

	Living/ Posthumous	Living: M/F/I	Posthumous: M/F/I	Total: M/F/I
Nikephoros I, patriarch of Constantinople	0	—	—	—
Theodore of Edessa*	3/0	2/1/0	—	2/1/0
Theophanes the Confessor	0/1	—	0/1/0	0/1/0
Prokopios of Dekapolis	0	—	—	—
Joseph the Hymnographer	0	—	—	—
Plato of Sakkoudion	0	—	—	—
Theodore of Stoudios	3/6	1/2/0	6/0/0	7/2/0
Ignatios the Patriarch	0/9	—	3/6/0	3/6/0
Tarasios the Patriarch	0/4	—	2/2/0	2/2/0
Theokletos of Lakedaimon	1/0	0/1/0	—	0/1/0
42 Martyrs of Amorion ( <i>vita</i> by Michael)	0/**	—	**	—
42 Martyrs of Amorion ( <i>v. Evodii</i> )	0	—	—	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>113/142</b>			<b>155/91/9</b>

\*plus generic posthumous miracles

\*\*generic miracles only

## Appendix 3

### Summary of Tenth-Century Healing Miracles

	Living/ Posthumous	Living: M/F/I	Posthumous: M/F/I	Total: M/F/I
Demetrianos	0*/0**	—	—	—
Irene of Chrysobalanton	2/0	1/1/0	—	1/1/0
Elias Spelaiotes	11/23	8/3/0	13/10/0	21/13/0
Elias the Younger	14/1**	6/4/4	1/0/0	7/4/+4
Loukas of Steiris	3/17	2/1/0	13/4/0	15/5/0
Blasios of Amorion	1/0	1/0/0	—	1/0/0
Christopher and Makarios	1*/0**	0/1/0	—	0/1/0
Sabas the Younger	20/0**	18/2/0	—	18/2/0
Michael Maleinos	1/0	1/0/0	—	1/0/0
Loukas the Stylite	17/0	11/5/1	—	11/5/1
Thomais of Lesbos	5/6	2/3/0	4/2/0	6/5/0
Mary the Younger	0/30	—	18/11/1	18/11/1
Theoktiste of Lesbos	0	—	—	—
Paul of Latros	4/6	4/0/0	5/1/0	9/1/0
Euthymios, patriarch of Constantinople	0	—	—	—
Peter of Argos	2/0**	1/1/0	—	1/1/0
Antony Kauleas, patriarch of Constantinople	0/4	—	2/2/0	2/2/0
Naum of Ohrid	*/0			—
Kliment of Ohrid	3/1**	2/0/1	1/0/0	3/0/1
Nikon ho Metanoeite	7/16	4/3/0	15/1/0	19 (includes several groups) /4/0
Theodore of Kythera	0/**	—	—	—
Nikephoros of Miletos	0/1	—	1/0/0	1/0/0
Phantinos the Younger	6/7	5/1/0	5/2/0	10/3/0
Athanasios of Athos (A and B)	12/8 (of which only 3 are at his tomb)	12/0/0	7/1/0	19 (includes 1 group) /1/0
<b>Total</b>	<b>109/120</b>	<b>78/25/6</b>	<b>85/34/1</b>	<b>163/59/7</b>

\*plus generic living miracles

\*\*plus generic posthumous miracles