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Fatih ONUR\* – Anthousa PAPAGIANNAKI\*\*

### A Late Antique Flask from Side with a Curse Inscription

**Abstract:** Excavations in the eastern colonnaded street in Side in 2002 unearthed the fragments of a clay flask, which after restoration revealed unusual inscriptions and decoration. It was found in fill dirt, and thus difficult to determine its primary archaeological context, but based on its inscriptions it is datable to A.D. around 6th century. Both words and image comprise a *defixio* against thieves, threatening the perpetrator with death, and eternal torment of his soul in the claws of the Devil. This *defixio* was possibly made on request, most likely by a magician with a better knowledge of magical practices than the average person and its purpose were to protect the owner, probably in his travels.

During the excavations of the ancient city of Side in 2002, a curious clay flask (fig.1-2) was unearthed in pieces on the colonnaded street to the west of the Great Gate (fig. 3).<sup>1</sup> Because the object was found during the removal of the rubble on this street, it has not been possible to determine whether it originated from a specific building or not, or any other archaeological context. The excavators restored the flask from the unearthed fragments in its original form, but part of its left side is still missing. It was deposited to the Side Archaeological Museum, where it is currently housed in the showcase A in the first exhibition room of the Museum with the inventory number 3107.

The flask has a circular body, convex in cross section, made by two separate mould made clay pieces joined together. It measures 21 cm in height and the diameter of its circular body is 16.6 cm. On the rear surface of the body, an inner and lowered circle of 14.6 cm was incised. The thickness of the flask's body is ca. 0.4 cm. It has a short neck, the height of which is 4 cm, with a maximum diameter of 4.5 cm at its mouth. Two angular handles, the total length of which at the bottom is 11 cm and ca. 1 cm thick, are attached. The clay used is of good quality, and there are stains all around the object, and particularly on the front surface, indicating exposure to fire. The front of the flask is decorated with incised concentric circles, but its rear with two inscriptions in Greek and an incised image.

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\* Yrd. Doç. Dr. Fatih Onur, Akdeniz Üniversitesi, Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, Eskiçağ Dilleri ve Kültürleri Bölümü 07058 Antalya (fatihonur@akdeniz.edu.tr).

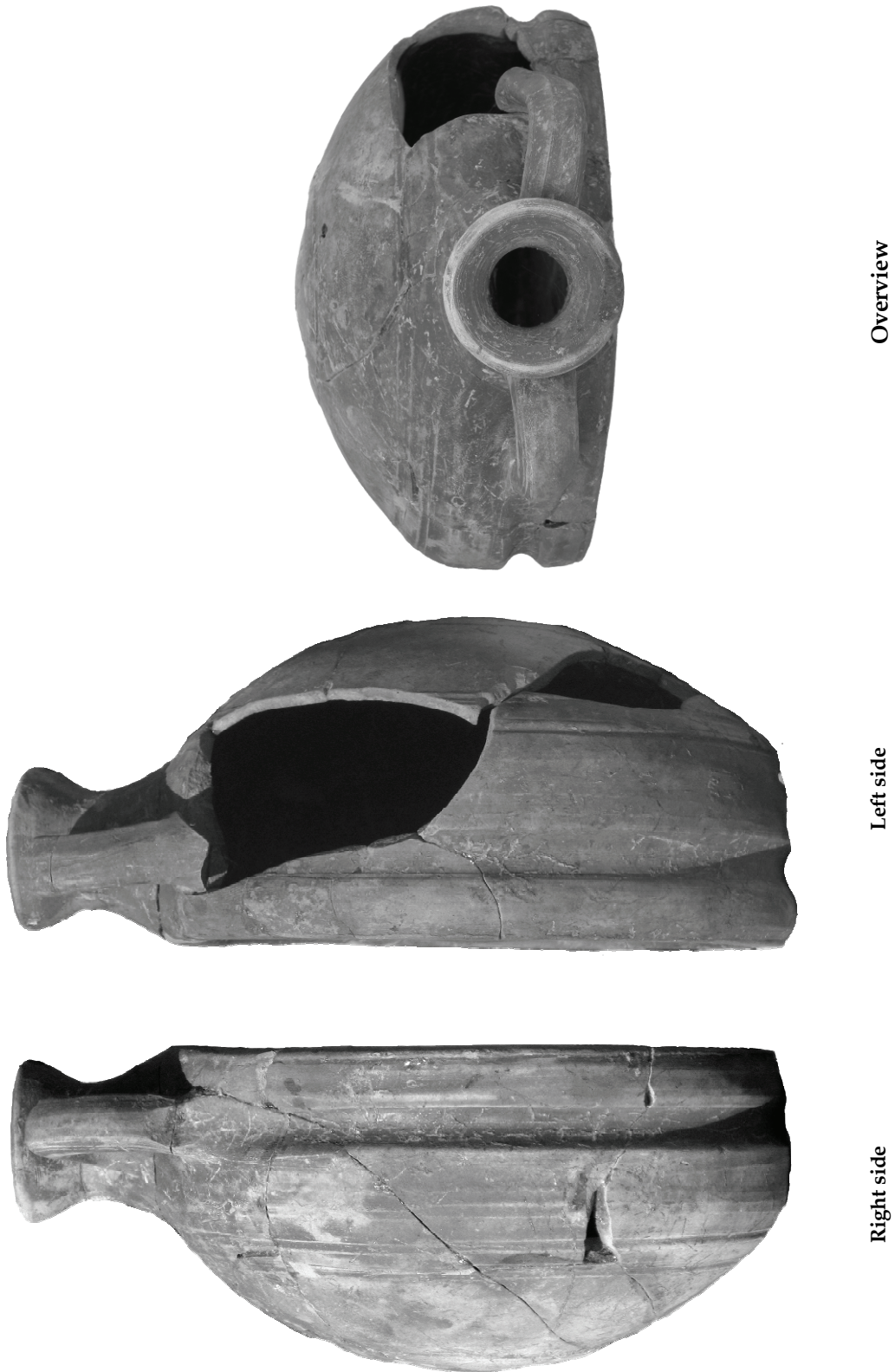
\*\* Dr. Anthousa Papagiannaki, University of Oxford, Institute of Archaeology (anthipapagiannaki@hotmail.com).

The flask was first studied by Prof. Dr. Mustafa Adak when Ali Harmankaya was the director of the museum. His successors Arif Küçükçoban and Güner Kozdere allowed us further investigations on the flask. The authors would like to thank for their kind help and support.

<sup>1</sup> For the ancient site of Side and its history see: J. Nollé, Side im Altertum: Geschichte und Zeugnisse, vol. I-II, Bonn 1993/2001 (IK 43-44).



Fig. 1: The clay flask from Side (Front and rear sides)



**Fig. 2: The clay flask from Side (Right, left and overview)**

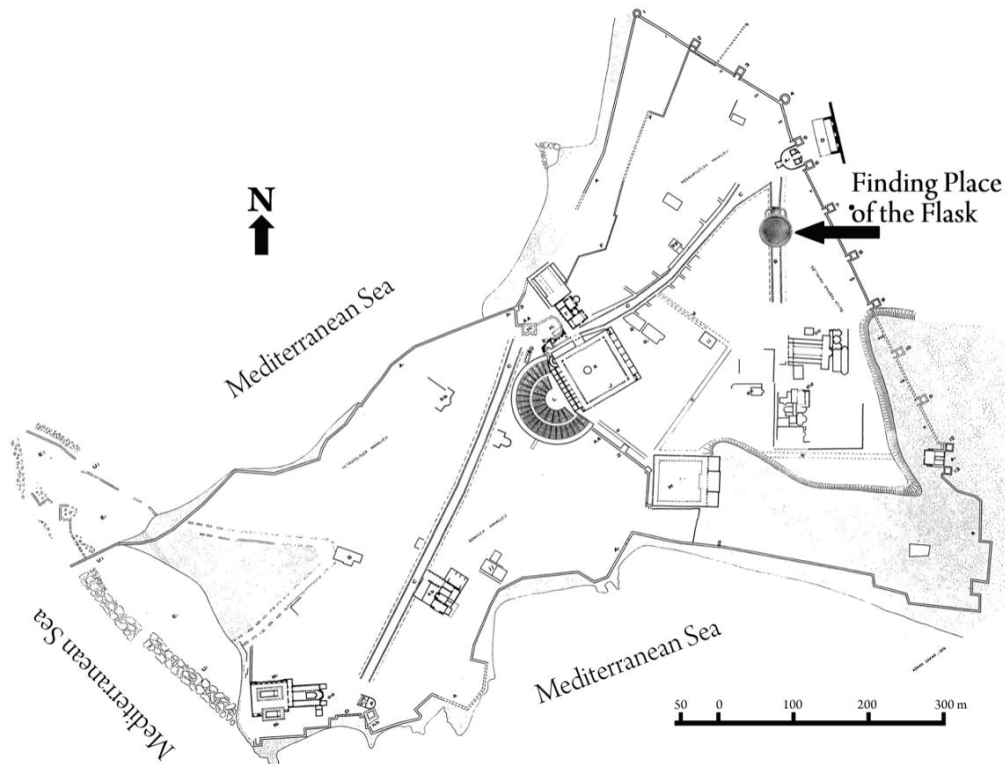


Fig. 3: Plan of Side showing the finding spot of the flask (based on A. M. Mansel).

Flasks were probably one of the most common clay vessels produced consistently around the eastern Mediterranean since before the late antique period, and continued well into the medieval Byzantine era.<sup>2</sup> A number of them have been excavated across the Mediterranean Sea, the Balkans, Hungary, and the Black Sea.<sup>3</sup> They were used for transporting liquids, particularly water and wine, by both individual travellers and soldiers.<sup>4</sup> Some of the late antique flasks are plain, but others carry a variety of decorative patterns, from simple floral motifs to saint images, the latter known in scholarship as pilgrim flasks.<sup>5</sup> Medieval examples

<sup>2</sup> M. Seif El-Din, *Technical Aspects and Workshop's Centres of the Pilgrim Flasks in the Graeco-Roman Egypt*, CCE 3, 1992, 121; W. Anderson, *An Archaeology of Late Antique Pilgrim Flasks*, *Anatolian Studies* 54, 2004, 82. We thank Susanne Bangert for this reference.

<sup>3</sup> For examples see G. M. Fitzgerald, *Beth-Shan Excavations 1921-1923. The Arab and Byzantine levels*, Philadelphia 1931, Plate XXX, no. 33; P. Delougaz and R. C. Haines, *A Byzantine Church at Khirbat Al-Karak*, Chicago 1960, 36, Plate 39, nos. 1-3, 5-6, 8 and Plate 57, nos. 5-6, 10-12; J. Hayes, *Late Roman Pottery*, London 1972, 185; Ch. Bakirtzis, *Byzantina Tsoukalolagina*, Athens 1989, 100-105; T. Vida, *Zur Frage der byzantinischen Traditionen der awarenzeitlichen Keramik*, *Actes du XIIe Congrès International de Sciences Préhistoriques et Protohistoriques*, Bratislava 1-7 September 1991, Bratislava 1993, 279-282; É. Garam, *Funde Byzantinischer Herkunft in der Awarzeit vom Ende des 6. bis zum Ende des 7. Jahrhunderts*, Budapest 2001, 168.

<sup>4</sup> G. T. Dennis (ed.), *Das Strategikon des Maurikios*, Wien 1981, 2.9.1.2-5 (CHFB XVII): Οἷς καὶ ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστιν ἐν φλασκίοις ὕδωρ ἐπιφέρεισθαι διὰ τὸ ὡς εἰκὸς λειποθυμεῖν τοὺς τραυματίας; and later Leo's *Taktika* (PG 107.840): χρή οὖν καὶ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ πολέμου ἕκαστον στρατιώτην ἐν ταῖς σέλλαις αὐτῶν ἐπιφέρεισθαι ὕδωρ εἰς τὰ λεγόμενα φλασκία; and PG 107.846: Ἔχειν δὲ καὶ φλασκίον μικρὸν ἐν τῇ ἀργαβίᾳ ὕδατος γέμον, καὶ μὴ οἴνου, διὰ τε τὰς τυχερὰς περιστάσεις, καὶ τὰς, ὡς εἰκός, ἀπαντώσας χρεῖας.

<sup>5</sup> For a typology of pilgrim flasks see Anderson, *Pilgrim flasks* (n. 2), 79-93.

of this vessel type, i.e. flasks, have been found in Corinth, the Balkans and elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> What sets the Side flask apart from its late antique and medieval counterparts are not only its inscriptions and image, but also the fact that no other artefact with parallel or similar text and image appears, to our knowledge, to have been unearthed or published so far.

There are two inscriptions on the object, the first one runs underneath the neck and along the upper edge of the circular body of the flask (fig. 4), and it reads:



Fig. 4: First inscription

‡ ΛΕΙΣΤΕΙΣ ΚΑΚΑ ΠΥΩΝ ΑΠΕΘΑΝΕ ‡

*christogram λειστείς κακὰ πυῶν ἀπέθανε. Christogram*

‡ The thief, the evil-doer, died ‡

λειστείς = ληστής: For the transformation of η/η into ει see F. T. Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, vol. I: Phonology, Milano 1976, p. 239.

πυῶν = ποιῶν: G. de Jerphanion, *Une nouvelle province de l'art byzantin, les églises rupestres de Cappadoce*, Paris 1925-1942, no. 204 (ὁ θεὸς ὁ πυῶν θ[αυμάσια]); For the change of οι into υ see Gignac, *ibid.* p. 197.

The second inscription (fig. 5) runs in three lines at the lower part of the body of the flask, and it reads:



Fig. 5: Second inscription

<sup>6</sup> Ch. H. Morgan *Corinth*, Volume XI, *The Byzantine Pottery*, The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Cambridge Massachusetts 1942, 42; Ch. Bakirtzis *Byzantina Tsoukalolagina*, Athens 1989, 100-102 with references.

‡ Ω Π Α Ρ Δ Δ Ε  
Δ Ω Μ Ε Τ Ε Ι C Ε C Τ Ε  
Ω Δ Ε Ι Α Β Ω Λ Ω C

*christogram* ᾠ παραδέ|δωμέ τεις ἐστε; | ᾠ Δειάβωλως.

‡ Who is the one to whom I have been delivered? The Devil.

παραδέδωμε = παραδέδομαι: For the transformation of ο into ω see Gignac, *ibid.* p. 276. Also for change of αι into ε see *ibid.* p. 192.

τεις = τις: e. g. MAMA VI 234 (εἰ δὲ θέλη τεις οἰστέα βαρῆσ<ε>... μή τεις ἀνύξεις·); T. Drew-Bear, *Nouvelles inscriptions de Phrygie*, Zuthphen 1978, 109, no. 48 (εἶ τεις δὲ ἕτερον ἐπενβάλει); CIJ 535a (τεις ἄν δὲ βειάσεται); CIJ 708c (ἐὰν δὲ τεις τοῦτον τὸν τάφον ἀνορύξη); SB 3, 7032 = PMich 3, 187 (ὁ τει δ' ἄν τῶν προγεγραμμένων παραβῆ τεις τῶν ὁμολογούντων); See Gignac, *ibid.* p. 190 f. on the change of ἰ into εἰ.

ἔστε = ἔσσι: in respect of the syntax, present tense is expected rather than future, i. e. ἔσται. For transformation of ι into ε see Gignac, *ibid.* p. 251-6.

In line 3 ᾠ = ὁ: e. g. BGU 1615.18 (καὶ ᾠ υἱός). For more information on the change of ο into ω see Gignac, *ibid.* p. 277.

Δειάβωλως = Διάβολος: e. g. MAMA VIII 318 (δειάκονος); PAnt 44.16 (καὶ δεῖα τοῦτο); See more for the transformation of ἰ into εἰ in Gignac, *ibid.* p. 190 f.

The text of the first inscription is a clear and bold warning of what will happen if someone removes the flask from its rightful owner: he will die. It is important to note that the text of this inscription does not invoke any supernatural being to act as the agent who will bring the downfall of the thief, a wording typical of *defixiones* (Gr. κατάδεσμοι). Neither makes use of *voces magicae* to convey this message of punishment.<sup>7</sup> It is the action of stealing that will be the catalyst in the thief's fate, and death will be the punishment. At the same time, the inscription functions as a «caption» to the image on the flask, thus emphasizing its message.

Following Audollent's classification of *defixiones*, and based on the wording preserved on the flask we could place the text of the second inscription in his general category of spells against thieves.<sup>8</sup> The general format of the curse on the flask consists of elements commonly used in *defixiones* from earlier periods. The verb παραδίδομι<sup>9</sup> was used in the meaning of

<sup>7</sup> For the use of *voces magicae* in magical charms see H. S. Vernel, *The Poetics of the Magical Charm. An Essay in the Power of Words*, in: P. Mirecki – M. Meyer (eds.), *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, Leiden – Boston – Cologne 2002, 105-156.

<sup>8</sup> A. Audollent, *Defixionum tabellae quotquot innotuerunt: tam in Graecis orientis quam in totius occidentis partibus praeter Atticas in Corpore inscriptionum Atticarum*, Paris 1904; Ch. Faraone, *The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells*, in: Ch. Faraone – D. Obbink (eds.), *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, Oxford 1991, 5, where he presents a more recent terminology on *defixiones*; see also F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, Harvard 1997, 120.

<sup>9</sup> Audollent, *Defixionum tabellae LVII*; i.e., I. Cret. 2 (17) 28: παραδίδομι τοῖς καταχθονίοις θεοῖς τοῦτ' τὸ ἥρωιον φυλάσσειν; R. Merkelbach (ed.), *Abrasax. Ausgewählte Papyri religiösen und magischen Inhalts*, vol. 4: *Exorzismen und jüdisch/christlich beeinflusste Texte*, Kleve 1996, p. 60, l. 1247: ... καὶ παραδίδομι σε εἰς τὸ

«hand over/surrender» and was used widely in curses, particularly in the first-person, which is thought to invoke the power to act directly upon the victim of the curse. At the same time the use of the word διάβολος (devil), meaning here that the offender will be forever in the clutches of the devil, demonstrates not only the underlining popular belief to daemons, but also the belief that by delivering the thief over to the devil it will be a forceful and fitting punishment, that will last for eternity.<sup>10</sup>



Fig. 5: Drawing of the Image on the Flask

In between the two inscriptions, three incised male figures are depicted (fig. 5). At least two of them have long hair rendered with zigzag lines, and all of them are dressed in knee-length garments decorated with short circular lines giving the impression of armour. The figure on the left is standing with his arms outstretched, as in triumph, holding a weapon with his right hand, and pulling the second figure from the hair with his left. The latter appears lifeless, and has his arms crossed in front of his chest, as if bound together. His legs, however, are unbound and it looks as if he is dragged. On the far right, a third figure is standing with his head turned upwards looking at the second figure, brandishing with both hands a spear, the edge of which appears to be poking the body of the lifeless figure. The style of the images is rather crude. The facial characteristics are given with bold lines and look more like masks, while simple straight lines are used in depicting each body part. What

μέλαν χάος ἐν ταῖς ἀπωλείαις.

<sup>10</sup> For the Devil in Byzantium in general see C. Mango, *Diabolus Byzantinus*, *DOP* 46, 1992, 215-223; P. Brown, *Sorcery, Demons and the Rise of Christianity: From Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages*, in: *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine*, London 1972, 131.

is striking, however, is that if we accept that the figures are dressed in armour then it is possible that the person behind the creation of this image might have wanted to indicate some kind of «military» context. If we identify the bound figure as the persona of the thief mentioned in the inscription, the «military dress» might refer to efforts of organised policing against the action of bandits, an issue that will be discussed below. Thus, the inscriptions, together with the image, issue a warning emphasized with a curse.



Fig.6: PGM XXXVI. 231-255

The only figural representation close to the image on the Side flask known to us, so far, comes from a magical papyrus describing a charm to inflict harm by commanding a divine power to dry up the blood of the chosen victim (PGM XXXVI. 231-255, see here fig. 6).<sup>11</sup> The image accompanying the text of the spell depicts a standing figure with a bird's head holding what could be a weapon in his right hand and the head of another figure pulled from its hair with his left (fig. 6). Given that the majority of the magical papyri are not illustrated, then the additional presence of an image enhances the power of the spell. The person who wants to use this spell has to inscribe on a lamella both words and image, thus binding the subject on the receiving end of the curse not only verbally, but also visually.

This psychology is more obvious on amulets, though from a different perspective, since unlike the magical papyrus example discussed above, the purpose of which is to inflict evil, amulets are objects believed to protect their owners from evil spirits, sorcery, illness and other dangers.<sup>12</sup> Amulets belong to the special category of «apotropaic» magic, and its pur-

<sup>11</sup> Beltz, *Greek Magical Papyri* (n. 11), 274-275. We thank Henry Maguire for the reference on this image.

<sup>12</sup> For magical amulets in general see C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, Ann Arbor 1950; for medicinal amulets in Late Antiquity see G. Vikan, *Art, Medicine, and Magic in Early*



pose is to ward off evil by invoking benevolent supernatural forces. They were small objects worn on the body such as a pendant, or an armband,<sup>13</sup> though they were not necessarily restricted on jewellery. Drawing from the material found in the magical papyri, and in particular from the relationship between text and image as presented above, it is reasonable to conclude that similar to the sketches on the papyri, and the designs on the gems, the *figura magica* on the flask was drawn with a specific purpose on mind: to prevent theft of the object and to demonstrate what will happen to the thief, both physically and in spirit.<sup>14</sup> The bandit would die because by removing the flask from its rightful owner, he would commit an evil act. At the same time, as the second inscription informs us, by forcing the owner to hand the flask over, the thief's soul will be in the mercy of the devil for ever. However, unlike amulets, the inscriptions and image on the flask do not invoke benevolent forces for protection. On the contrary, they invoke death and eternal torment of the soul. Why such a severe punishment over the loss of a common clay flask?

The flask was used to carry a liquid of some sort, most probably water. It is likely that it belonged to a traveller, and one of the dangers of travel was falling victim to a bandit and stripped of one's possessions. The mountainous plateau of Asia Minor must have been a very dangerous place for travellers, as well as difficult to travel in. As Brélaz has recently emphasized,<sup>15</sup> armed bandits and gangs in the area of Asia Minor were always a real threat, and a factor of constant insecurity and social unrest. Pamphylia itself, a large and fertile plain situated to the west of the Isaurian Mountains, suffered many bandit attacks in its history, particularly by the Isaurian tribes, and the policing of the region was a serious political and military issue.<sup>16</sup> Even though this kind of unrest became quieter during the reign of Anastasius (491-518), it is likely that gangs of bandits still roamed the area. The location of the city of Side itself in Pamphylia probably did not do any favours to travelers either. Side was one of the cities on the south coastal route, which was running through Patara, Myra, Attaleia, Kibyra, Anemourion, Seleukeia, Isauria, Korasion, Korykos and Zephyrion, turning

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Byzantium, DOP 38, 1984, 65-86.

<sup>13</sup> For examples of jewellery with amuletic powers see M. Mundell Mango, *Silver from early Byzantium. The Kaper Koraon and related Treasures*, Baltimore 1986, pp. 265-267 nos. 92-94; see also M. M. Fulghum, *Coins used as Amulets in Late Antiquity*, in: S. R. Asirvatham – C. O. Pache – J. Watrous (eds.), *Between Magic and Religion. Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and Society*, New York – Oxford 2001, 139-147.

<sup>14</sup> For the sketches on the magical papyri see W. Brashear, *Magical Papyri: Magic in Book Form*, in: P. Ganz (ed.), *Das Buch als magisches und als Repräsentationsobjekt*, Wiesbaden 1992, 25.

<sup>15</sup> C. Brélaz, *La sécurité publique en Asie Mineure sous le Principat (I<sup>er</sup> - III<sup>ème</sup> s. ap. J.-C.)*, Basel 2005, 53 f.

<sup>16</sup> *Amm. Marc. 14.2.12*. See also: N. Lenski, *Assimilation and Revolt in the Territory of Isauria, from the 1st Century BC to the 6th Century AD*, *JESHO* 42, 1999, 417 ff.; B. Shaw, *Bandit Highlands and Lowland Peace: The Mountains of Isauria-Cilicia*, *JESHO* 33, 1990, 199-233; 237-270; K. Feld, *Barbarische Bürger. Die Isaurier und das Römische Reich*, Berlin 2005, 351 f., Taf. 1.; C. E. Minor, *The Robber Tribes of Isauria*, *The Ancient World* 2.4, 1979, 117-127; K. Hopwood, *Policing the Hinterland: Rough Cilicia and Isauria*, in: S. Mitchell (ed.), *Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia* (B.A.R. International Series 156), Oxford 1983, 173; see also K. Hopwood, *Bandits, Elites and rural Order*, in: A. Wallace-Hadrill (ed.), *Patronage in Ancient Society*, London – New York 1989, 171-187; Nollé, *Side im Altertum*, vol. 1 (n. 1), 136; F. Onur, *The Roman Army in Pamphylia: From Third to Sixth Centuries A.D.*, *Adalya* 12, 2009, 299-318.

inland to the cities of Tarsus, Adana and Mopsuestia before going south to Antioch.<sup>17</sup> The port of Side was of great importance, due to its vital role in supplying goods and provisions for the army stations in Asia Minor, as well as for trade. However, the mountain ranges and the heights dividing the north and south regions must have made communications between urban centres difficult.<sup>18</sup> Overland travel was not done in a fast pace, particularly with oxen or bad weather conditions. Thus we can imagine that a combination of this geographical terrain teamed up with the threat of being robbed, must have made travelling a fearful experience. No traveller would like to be caught without any supplies in such an unfriendly environment therefore the loss of a flask containing any liquid that could help a traveller was important.

The last issue to consider here is whether the inscriptions and image on the flask are the work of a professional practitioner of magical arts (magician or sorcerer), or not. However, who was a magician, or what makes one a magician is a rather complex issue, and has been the subject of much scholarly scrutiny.<sup>19</sup> However, for our purposes a magician, or sorcerer, is a person with the skills to create amulets and spells, both for healing or harming, has the ability to induce amorous passion and sexual desire, and enjoys power over demons. From the lives of saints we learn that a practitioner of magical arts can be a man or a woman, a pagan, or a Jew. In this category, however, we should also include Christians, the latter usually a holy man or a saint.<sup>20</sup> Even though, strictly speaking, one would not call a holy figure a sorcerer, he does act as the agent of God overpowering the magic of Satan by working miracles, blurring the thin line between a magician and a saint.<sup>21</sup> David Frankfurter has offered a general, and rather cross-cultural and diachronic, categorization of magicians. He distinguishes between those literate enough with specialist knowledge based locally in a community, such as priests, scribes, clerics; those who are itinerant, meaning those who travel from place to place; and those who offer personalised advice at peripheral centres where one must travel to, such as shrines of saints, or, in the earlier period, temples.<sup>22</sup> Based on both written sources and archaeological evidence, including amulets and the Greek magical papyri, the categories above can be applied to Late Antiquity, and at the same time we can see different types of magicians at work.

To begin with, magic could be taught. From the Lives of Saints we hear of priests in the

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<sup>17</sup> A. Avramea, *Land and Sea Communications, Fourth-Fifteenth Centuries*, in: A. Laiou (ed.), *The Economic History of Byzantium*, vol. 1, Washington DC 2002, 61 and 76.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> For example see Brown, *Sorcery* (n. 13), 119-142; D. Frankfurter, *Dynamics of Ritual Expertise in Antiquity and beyond: Towards a new Taxonomy of «magicians»*, in: P. Mirecki – M. Meyer (eds.), *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, Leiden – Boston – Köln 2002, 159-178.

<sup>20</sup> For a good selection of anecdotes on magicians see H. Magoulias, *The Lives of Byzantine Saints as Sources of Data for the History of Magic in the Sixth and Seventh centuries AD: Sorcery, Relics and Icons*, *Byzantion* 37, 1967, 228-269.

<sup>21</sup> D. Kyratas, *The Holy Man and the Sorcerer, or How to distinguish between Good and Evil in Early Christianity*, in: *Εξορκίζοντας το Κακό. Πίστη και Δεισιδαιμονίες στο Βυζάντιο*, Athens 2006, 31-39.

<sup>22</sup> Frankfurter, *Dynamics* (n. 22), 168.

pagan temples of Egypt who would teach the magical arts to aspiring practitioners. For example, a young man went to Memphis in Egypt to learn magic, so he can conquer the heart of a maiden who happened to be a *virgo Dei*, a girl committed to chastity.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, the texts of the magical papyri presupposed specialized knowledge, which could have come only from training, and imply a high level of professionalism. These professionals were probably limited to a close circle of literate people who had the ability to either purchase or order magical books. Peter Brown pointedly calls the magical practices of this era «an art consigned to great books».<sup>24</sup> However, the activities of these professionals fell under the scrutiny of the law, since their actions could jeopardize the life of citizens or even threaten the imperial authority.<sup>25</sup> In all cases, the punishment for malevolent magic was death.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, to possess or transcribe books with incantations was equally dangerous for the book owner, since in the eyes of the public it meant that the book owner was a magician, performing malevolent magic. It is no coincidence that the voluntary burning of magical books was a sign of repentance on behalf of the book owner.<sup>27</sup> In the seventh-century life of Saint Theodore of Sykeon we learn about a magician called Theodotos Kourappos, who was engaged in a battle of power with saint Theodore. The saint had saved a woman from the magician's demonic spells, and Theodotos tried to kill the holy man first using demons, and then by trying to poison him. However, with the grace of God, Saint Theodore defeated the evil sorcerer, who in turn was so impressed with the saint's powers that he decided to be baptized, and burn his books of magic: ἐνέγκας δὲ καὶ πάσας τὰς τῆς φαρμακείας βίβλους αὐτοῦ, κατέκαυσεν ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ ἐπιζητῶν τὸ βάπτισμα.<sup>28</sup>

Another type of magic in Byzantium is encountered in amulet making. Apotropaic amulets were not the only type of amulets available. From the seventh-century life of Saint Symeon the Salos, we learn that amulets made by sorcerers released evil powers, and the only way to combat that evil was with Christian amulets. In this particular anecdote the protagonist is a sorceress who used demonic powers to cast spells and produce amulets. In order to destroy her St. Symeon the Salos got close to her by giving her his earnings and food from begging, and one day offered to make an amulet for her to protect her from the evil eye. The sorceress agreed, but the holy man's amulet, written in Syriac, condemned the woman's skills and since then she was not able to perform any kind of magic again.<sup>29</sup> Given

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<sup>23</sup> PL 23.38-39.

<sup>24</sup> Brown, *Sorcery* (n. 13), 139.

<sup>25</sup> B. H. Stolte, *Magic and Byzantine Law in the Seventh century*, in: J. N. Bremmer – J. R. Veenstra, *The Metamorphosis of Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*, Leuven et. al. 2002, 105-115.

<sup>26</sup> *Codex Theodosianus. Novellae Constitutiones. Constitutiones Sirmondianae*, trans. and ed. Clyde Pharr, Princeton 1952, 9.16.4.

<sup>27</sup> For the burning of magical books in general see for example Vie de Sévère, *Patrologia Orientalis II*, ed. and trans. M. A. Kugener, Paris 1907, 69-70.

<sup>28</sup> St. Theodore of Sykeon, in: *Μνημεῖα Ἀγιολογικά*, ed. Theophilos Ioannou, Venice 1884, 393-397, ch. 35-38.

<sup>29</sup> H. Magoulias, *The Lives of Byzantine Saints as Sources of Data for the History of Magic in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries AD: Sorcery, Relics and Icons*, *Byzantion* 37, 1967, 240; D. Krueger, *Symeon the Holy Fool. Leontius's Life and the Late Antique City*, Berkeley et. al. 1996, 165.

that amulets were easily produced,<sup>30</sup> the sorceress in question was probably the «wise woman» of the local community, who had some knowledge of magical symbols. There is nothing indicating that in order to make an amulet one had to belong to the highest echelons of professional magicians.

Both image and inscriptions on the Side flask imply that the person behind them had some knowledge of magic. The *figura magica* and the inscriptions on the flask were purpose made, probably on request. This further implies that whoever was the owner of this flask he was concerned about the difficulties he could face in his travels and preferred to be prepared. Could the owner have inscribed the flask himself? Even though it is likely that common folk had some basic knowledge of magical symbols, both the image and the inscriptions preserved on the flask appear to require more than basic knowledge of magical symbols. They are too specific and precise in every respect. Could he have hired a professional magician to create this amuletic flask? If we believe the literary sources, professional magicians had books, and had the skills to create complicated spells using a variety of materials available, not to mention the ability to overpower demons. Probably the best insight we have in what could have been the workings of those magicians are the Greek magical papyri. The spells in the magical papyri appear to be to some degree complicated, some of them custom made for a particular customer, and some so general that can be used for any person's needs.<sup>31</sup>

How «professional» was the person that inscribed this flask? It is clear that this magician understood what was requested of him. Whether he had to consult certain books for this particular magical formula and image remains unknown though it does not appear to have been necessary. The three figures on the image convey the message on the consequences of theft clear enough, and it could have been done by someone such as the sorceress in the story of Saint Symeon the Salos. At the same time, the depiction of the figures may reflect either daily life practices regarding the arrest and punishment of thieves, or the aspirations and expectations of a public that wants to feel safe. In other words, it may have been common knowledge, or even derived from an attended spectacle. Neither the wording used in the inscriptions, no matter how carefully chosen, betrays, or necessitates, some mystical knowledge of supernatural powers. Their message is equally clear in its simplicity. As a result, it is possible that the magician behind this flask may not needed to consult special books, but in order to arrange words and image in such a way, he may have had a better knowledge of magical practices than the average man.

To conclude, even though the flask from Side was probably not found in its original primary archaeological context, but in a secondary one, an analysis of its inscriptions and image may offer a chronology and an insight into daily life in Late Antiquity. The dangers of travel, the fear of losing property, or even your own life in the hands of bandits was one of

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<sup>30</sup> Bonner, *Magical Amulets* (n. 15), pp. 221 and 308.

<sup>31</sup> M. Smith, *Relations between Magical Papyri and Magical Gems*, *Papyrologica Bruxellensia* 18, 1979, 130.

the many risks one had to take. Thus, the decoration of this object mirrors the fears and difficulties one had to cope with on a daily basis in that period. At the same time, it demonstrates one of the remedies people used to make their lives easier: magic. Whether consulting a professional magician or not, magical practices were part of daily life. In their minds, the people of Late Antiquity felt that they needed protection deriving not only from divine forces, such as angels or saints, but also from simple spells that could prevent evil from happening to them.

## Özet

### Side'den Geç Roma Dönemi'ne Ait Bir Matara

2002 Side doğu sütunlu caddesi kazı çalışmalarında kil bir mataraya ait pek çok parça gün yüzüne çıkarıldı. Dolgu toprak içersinde ele geçtiğinden her hangi bir antik bina ya da başka bir arkeolojik yapılanma ile ilişkilendirilememiştir. Kaliteli bir malzemesi olan bu mataranın üzerinde pek rastlanmayan bir yazıt ve figürler bulunmaktadır. Kesin olmamakla birlikte, yazıtı aracılığıyla matarayı İ.S. 5. - 6. yüzyıla tarihlemek mümkündür. Üzerindeki yazıtları ve çizilen sahne haydutlara karşı hazırlanmış olan bir *defixio*, yani bir lanetlemeyi içermektedir. Bu lanetlemede haydut ölümle ve sonrasında şeytanın elinde sonsuz işkence çekmekle tehdit edilmiştir, yazıt ve çizim birbirini tamamlayarak durumu etkili bir şekilde vermektedir. Matara üzerindeki yazıtların çevirisi şu şekildedir:

Sahnenin üstünde:

†Kötü şeyler yapan (günahkâr) haydut öldü†

Sahnenin altında:

† Kim bu teslim edildiğim kişi? Şeytan!

Bu yazıtların arasında kaba halde çizilmiş üç adet erkek figür bulunmaktadır (fig. 5). Ortadaki figür cansız ve elleri bağlanmış bir şekilde yerde yatmaktadır. Sağ ve solda bulunan her iki figür de zırha benzer bir kıyafet giymekte olup, soldaki kolları açık bir şekilde sağ elinde bir çeşit kılıç kaldırmakta sol eliyle de ortadaki figürün saçlarından çekmektedir. Sağdaki figür ise kafası yukarıya ortadaki figüre bakar bir şekilde durup iki eliyle tuttuğu mızrak benzeri bir silahı ortadaki figüre dürtmektedir. Sağ ve soldaki figürlerin zırhlı görüntüleri, bu lanetlemeyi yapanın bir şekilde askeri bir kapsam içerisinde olabileceğini akla getirmektedir. Ortadaki bağlı figür yazıtta bahsedilen haydut olmakla birlikte onu yakalamış olan diğer iki figürün askeri kıyafetleri de bölgedeki haydutluğa karşı yapılan askeri müdahalelere de işaret ediyor olabilir.