

## Research Article

### Keeping the faith: early Christian intaglios as indexes of agency

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# Keeping the faith: early Christian intaglios as indexes of agency

*Hannah Faux*

## Abstract

This article is based on observations taken from my 2019 MA research, which assessed how the selection and treatment of iconography on early Christian Roman intaglio gemstones affected their agency. It established the range of themes and motifs available to early Christian artists by analysing records of more than 1,000 early Christian sarcophagi from the Index of Medieval Art, comparing rates of iconographic and thematic occurrence with a dataset of more than 400 early Christian intaglios. This established the range of themes and motifs that were available to artists. By using sarcophagi as a proxy, it was possible to observe patterns of selection on the gemstones. This enabled an assessment of the significance of selections and combinations and an evaluation of their treatment through iconographical analysis. Applying the concept of material agency to gemstones offers an insight into how choices affected their function, enabling an exploration of the relationships between the objects, their compositional elements and their viewers. This provided another insight into certain iconographic choices and how these may have shaped how the gems acted on their owners. The sarcophagi and the gemstones depict a similar range of themes; however, the sarcophagi corpus features an expanded repertoire of New Testament images, whereas the gemstones exhibit a range of ‘magical’ components combined in a manner that is unique to the gems. The designs on both types of object use sophisticated compositional techniques that initiate engagement in their viewers; however, the gemstone’s miniature, portable nature enables them to mediate agency in a way that is specific to the gems.

**Keywords:** intaglios, engraved gemstones, Early Christian art, Greek and Jewish magic, iconography, material agency

## Introduction

This study explores the development of early Christian iconography during the late antique period, from around AD 200 until the fifth century, during a time of religious debate and artistic exchange. Early Christian art developed through a process of adaptation, built from

Jewish, Greco-Roman 'pagan' and generic or ambiguous components (Elsner 1995; 2001; 2003; Goodenough 2014). In AD 313, Constantine's Edict of Milan legalised Christianity, channelling imperial patronage into the Church and coinciding with increasing appearances of portraits of Christ and the saints in the archaeological record. The restructuring of religious identities led to changes in attitudes towards wealth, piety and the community, and the past reliance on the ancestors as dictators of destiny was countered by a new message of salvation through membership of the Church. During this period, ecclesiastical officials debated iconoclasm, with regionally variable impacts, and artists combined borrowed symbols and biblical narrative scenes. Changes in late antique iconography may indicate social and political shifts (Cameron 2015; Gibbon 1846; Ward-Perkins 2006) and fluctuations in attitudes towards 'pagan' practices (O'Donnell 1979; Pelikan 1977). Christian imagery began to consolidate into an iconographic system around 200 years after the establishment of Christianity (Grabar 1968, 23), and the recurrence of specific themes and motifs on gemstones illustrates aspects of this development (Entwistle and Adams 2011; Huskinson 1974).

Intaglios were crafted throughout the empire to serve social functions, offering a means of signing documents and securing property, for 'pagan', Jewish and Christian clients. Roman texts associate intaglios with identity, security and honesty (Platt 2007, 97). In c. AD 200, Clement of Alexandria instructed that Christians should choose designs from the wider repertoire available to engravers but restrict themselves to a limited range deemed suitable for Christians (Spier 2007, 15). Motifs were to be associated with biblical references: 'If there be one fishing, he will remember the apostle, and the children drawn out of the water', but need not be distinctly Christian: 'a dove, or a fish, or a ship ... or a ship's anchor' (Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, Bk III, Chpt II [Roberts 2007, 285–6]). A post-third-century decline in the intaglio corpus coincides with a reduction in their practical use (Platz-Horster 2011; Spier 2007, 11–12). A corresponding increase in reuse, including gems carved on both faces, and designs cut in the positive rather than the negative indicates that their function may have been more than practical. While thousands of Roman 'pagan' or 'magical' gems survive, only just over 1,000 dated to the late antique period can be attributed to Christian production or use (Spier 2007; 2011). These have received less attention than pre-Christian 'magical' gems. 'Magical' gems can be defined as objects intended to cause or prevent changes in their original owner's environment (Gordon 2011, 44), which may also apply to how early Christian gemstones were intended to operate. Within this study, 'magic' is broadly defined as 'relations with the supernatural ... outside of the regular channels of the Church' (Maguire 1995, 51).

## Concepts and approaches

Gem carvers often used the same iconographic repertoire found on early Christian Roman sarcophagi. Sarcophagi provide a resource of self-contained narratives and symbols. From this, it is possible to ask which themes and components made up the early Christian iconographic repertoire and to identify selection patterns and observe the frequency of occurrence of themes, motifs, combinations and variations across media. To understand a composition, a knowledge of its fundamental principles and conceptual equivalents is

required. By identifying 'core' motifs (Davis 1989), it is possible to determine prominent incidents. By observing how individual components are associated, it is possible to gain insight into the meaning images carried for their makers and their intended viewers (Davis 1989, 59).

The twentieth-century emergence of archaeological and anthropological 'material culture studies' has seen the concept of social agency extended to material objects, in order to rethink human and non-human networks (see Hicks and Beaudry 2010). Material agency approaches include conceptualising objects as equally agentive to humans (Latour 1993) and as 'indexes' of agency (Gell 1998). The application of material agency within the context of Posthumanistic archaeology has been debated (see Fernández-Götz et al. 2021). Concerns have included its theoretical potential to undermine the role of human intention and responsibility, having subsequent ethical impacts (Fernández-Götz et al. 2021; Van Dyke 2021) and its potential to underestimate the effects of the social and political environment on person-object relationships (Van Dyke 2021), thereby calling for a more flexible approach to fulfil its potential to offer new insights into the past.

Material agency can offer a means to explore the production, circulation and reception of art-objects and their ability to initiate responses, which can also be likened to a 'distributed mind' (Hoskins 2006, 74). This is particularly effective when applied to ritual objects and those worn or circulated (Gell 1998), independent of their cultural context. Gell's (1998, 3) concept of material agency highlights 'the social context of art production, circulation, and reception' of art objects as mediators of agency acting within a network of relationships. Intricate designs may act as 'cognitive traps' and as technologies of enchantment, captivating their audience by means of their 'technical excellence' (Gell 1992, 51). Contrasts in subject and scale may initiate responses associated with 'our power to immobilise elemental forces' (Gell 1996, 30), decoration may be read as layers of embodied agency (Layton 2003, 449) and worn objects may transform their wearer into an index, acting as a mediative agent on behalf of their maker, patron or prototype.

The miniaturisation of monumental themes may offer their bearer a sense of empowerment through ownership, and objects kept close to the body may become the subject of intimate attachments, invested with components of the 'self' (Bennett 2001; 2010; Marcoux 2001a; 2001b). Portable, protective devices may be 'regarded as exerting power' (Bonner 1946, 26), accompanying their owners as amulets and fascinating their beholders through their association with the divine.

The sensory impacts of portable, tactile and wearable gemstones and seals have been explored by Platt (2006; 2007) and more recently by Marshman (2016; 2017). Platt's phenomenological approach explores the role of the seals as signatures and as communicative objects with causative powers. The captivating properties of miniature objects have been explored by art historians and social scientists (Mack 2007; Stewart 1993). Considering how ownership and the intimate, miniature nature of the stones may have affected iconographic choices provides an insight into how images may have functioned and what this might reveal about the nature of belief in early Christian Roman society.

This study considered a selection of 406 gems, with preliminary analysis including a small number of glass pastes (Spier 2007; 2011),<sup>1</sup> dated approximately from the second to

the fifth century, and refined to compositions with Christian characteristics and definitively Christian symbols and inscriptions split into categories, as seen in Table 1, which provides a summary of the preliminary investigation (see online supplement, Tables 2–29, for a detailed breakdown of the results<sup>2</sup>).

Due to the cyclical nature of trends in Roman art, stylistic and iconographic dating methods must be accompanied by comparative analysis, observing historical shifts in shape, material, style of engraving and original mounts. Since they cannot be dated more precisely, it has not been possible to assess iconographic changes chronologically. However, by establishing which themes and motifs make up the early Christian repertoire, it has been possible to compare the treatment of sarcophagi and gemstones and to identify variations.

The Index of Medieval Art<sup>3</sup> provided comparative material for the sarcophagi. Analysis began with a sample of 1,104 records. The term ‘narrative incident’ allows for occasions where various aspects of the same episodes may feature, repeating the listing; for example, Jonah cast up (1) and Jonah beneath the gourd vine (2). Narrative incidents are based on object-type percentages and discussed by frequency of occurrence. Observing rates and combinations of occurrences highlighted patterns of selection. These results enabled the analysis of a reduced group.

Object numbers derive from their sources. Abbreviations indicate whether they are sarcophagi (S) or gems (G). Images are grouped into three categories: ‘symbolic and recognisably Christian’; ‘Old or New Testament and Apocryphal narratives’; and those that are ‘less figurative and more decorative’ and identified as Christian by their context or accompaniments (Jensen 2010, 17–19). Compositional elements may feature within narrative and non-narrative roles.

## Results

Thirty-one gemstones depict Old Testament narratives, consisting of Jonah and the *ketos*, Daniel and the lions, Abraham sacrificing Isaac, Noah and the ark, and Adam and Eve.<sup>4</sup> Eighteen of these combine Christian monograms or inscriptions: 7 display single narratives and 11 picture multiple narratives.<sup>5</sup> Similar choices can be found on sarcophagi, with variations in frequency of occurrence.

Before the fifth century, New Testament narratives featured less often on gemstones than Old Testament narratives.<sup>6</sup> On sarcophagi, New Testament scenes became common from the third century and often include depictions of the apostles, Christ’s miracles, the Adoration, Christ’s life, and events preceding the crucifixion.<sup>7</sup> On the gemstones, there are single instances of the Adoration, the Virgin, the act of baptism, and the apostles Peter and Paul. The raising of Lazarus on gemstone G.442 is the only identifiable incident of Christ’s miracles. These scenes also occur on sarcophagi. A small group of third- to fourth-century gems combine ‘magical’ motifs, including Greco-Roman and Egyptian deities and Greek and Semitic inscriptions.<sup>8</sup> These combinations are not found on the sarcophagi.

Simple, non-narrative designs form the largest category in the gemstone corpus, conveying words and images in a manner not seen on sarcophagi. These are often made up of a single component and usually of no more than three.<sup>9</sup> A collection of gemstones

**Table 1** Instances of frequent (F), occasional (O), rare (R) or absent (A) images on sarcophagi (S) and gems (G) (F = over 20%; O = 5–19%; R = under 5%)

		F	O	R	A			F	O	R	A	
<i>Symbolic and recognisably Christian images</i>	<b>Narrative incident / component</b>											
	AW			GS						S	G	
	Chi-Rho/monogram	G	S				G			S		
	Cross	G	S					S		G		
	Dove*	G	S					GS				
	Fish*	G	S							GS		
	Good Shepherd*	GS										
	Hand of God			GS						S	G	
	Abraham sacrificing Isaac		S	G						S	G	
	Adam and eve		S	G						S	G	
Adoration		S	G						S	G		
Apostles	S		G						GS			
Baptism/John the Baptist			GS							S	G	
Christ	S		G						S	G		
Christ's life (other)		S	G						S	G		
Christ' miracles	S		G					S		G		
Crucifixion			G		S					S	G	
Daniel and the elders			S	G					GS			
Daniel in the lion's den		S	G						S			
Daniel slaying the serpent			S	G						S	G	
David beheading Goliath			S	G						GS		
Ezekiel, valley of dry bones			S	G							S	
God			S	G						GS		
Isaiah			S	G						S	G	
Job			S	G						S	G	
Jonah at Nineveh			S	G						S	G	
Jonah sequence		S	G							S	G	
Joseph the carpenter			S	G						S	G	
Lazarus		S	G							S	G	
Martha			S	G						S	G	
Mary of Bethany			S	G						S	G	
Miriam			S	G						S	G	
Moses		S		G							G	
Noah in the ark		S	G									
Paul			GS									
Peter	S		G							S	G	
Pharaoh			S	G						S	G	
Pilate			S	G						SG		
Sarah			S	G						G	S	
Scenes of martyrdom			GS									
Solomon			G		S							
Susanna with elders					G							
The Three Hebrews		S		G								
Tobias			S		G							
Virgin		S	G									
<i>Decorative neutral landscapes and images</i>	<b>Narrative incident / component</b>											
	Altar									S	G	
	Anchor	G								S		
	Angel / Victory		S							G		
	Bird (non-specific)			GS								
	Building/hut									GS		
	Chariot									S	G	
	Crab									S	G	
	Deer									S	G	
	Dog									S	G	
	Dolphin			GS								
	Fisherman									GS		
	Footstool										S	G
	Griffin									S	G	
	Horse									S	G	
	Ketos		S							G		
	Lighthouse									S	G	
	Non-Christian deities									GS		
	Orant			GS								
	Palm			S						G		
	“Pagan” magical symbols									G	S	
	Peacock									GS		
	Personification of elements									S	G	
	Personification of seasons										S	G
	Philosopher									S	G	
	Phoenix									S	G	
	Pillar of fire									S	G	
	Rabbit									S	G	
Rivers of paradise									S	G		
Sarcophagus									S	G		
Sheep/Lamb*	GS											
Shepherd*	GS											
Ship									GS			
Star									GS			
Torch										S	G	
Trident										S	G	
Vintage										S	G	
Wreath										SG		
Zodiac										G	S	

\*May be identified as Christian by context, components, or accompaniments.

assigned to a late-fifth-century workshop demonstrates the various designs available. Seventeen stones display distinctly Christian images.<sup>10</sup> The remainder are considered neutral and include a throne, a book and a vessel. These can be found within Christian compositions on sarcophagi and may refer to the liturgy.

On sarcophagi, distinctly Christian symbols occur occasionally, usually combined with non-narrative components with Christian associations and sometimes as decorative accompaniments. On the gems, symbols frequently used by Christians often include two fish flanking an anchor or cross.<sup>11</sup> Rarely, a single fish accompanies a Christian inscription.<sup>12</sup> On sarcophagi, images of fish occur occasionally and usually feature as narrative elements rather than non-narrative symbols.

Christian inscriptions and monograms without subsidiary symbols make up one of the largest categories on the gems, arranged in a manner not seen on the sarcophagi.<sup>13</sup> Over 100 display Christian inscriptions and monograms in isolation, and the Chi-Rho is among the most popular, contrasting its use as an occasional compositional element on sarcophagi with its role as a frequent core motif on gems. More than 100 display Christian symbols combined with distinctly Christian components, including a dove, a fish, a ship and an anchor.

Most gem designs are derived from the wider repertoire, and narrative elements were adapted as stand-alone symbols. The gems combine elements found less frequently on the sarcophagi, where Old Testament scenes and multiple referents to a turbulent journey are often combined with New Testament scenes that attest to the promise of salvation through membership of the Church. These combinations do not occur on the gems. During the fourth century, the sarcophagus corpus demonstrates a rise in depictions of Christ's miracles, attesting to the efficacy of the Christian faith, and frequent depictions of Peter celebrate him as a founder of the Church. The miracle of loaves appears frequently, associated with the agape meal, the funerary feast and the Eucharist, referencing access to the divine by engaging with certain objects. During the same period, images of the empty cross and the cross as a martyrdom instrument increase on sarcophagi. However, crucifixion and cross-formation compositions such as those featured on the gemstones are absent from the sarcophagi (see Plate 1).

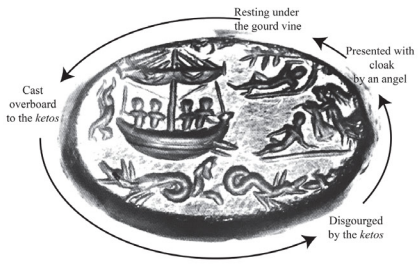
On both types of object, compositions often include watery imagery and frequently refer to baptism and the resurrection. Images concerned with travel are represented on a higher proportion of the gems, and symbols related to the sea dominate the early Christian gemstone corpus. The prevalence of the anchor demonstrates its popularity as a neutral symbol deemed suitable for Christian use, and its absence on the sarcophagi is surprising since the motif frequently appears in the catacombs within a funerary context (Elsner 1995; 2003; Goodenough 1937; 1962; Lamberton 1911).

Gems that depict a single Christian monogram or a single inscription, and symbols frequently used by Christians combined with Christian inscriptions, make up two of the largest categories in the gemstone corpus, using words and images in a manner that is not seen on sarcophagi. Certain iconographic choices appear unique to the gemstones. The gemstones occasionally feature unusual episodes, several share characteristics with 'magical' amulets and unattested compositions may represent special commissions.

On both types of objects, Jonah and the *ketos* and Daniel and the lions are the most frequent narratives, featuring on 166 sarcophagi dating to AD 200–520 listed on the IMA.<sup>14</sup> An assessment of instances of occurrence and co-occurrence<sup>15</sup> provided the basis of an investigation into their thematic treatment. These, plus unusual compositions, form the basis of the discussion.

## Discussion

The intimate and portable nature of the stones may have enabled their owners to invest in them as expressions of faith, contemplative tools and representations of the 'self'. Throughout this discussion, an individual is conceived of as someone able to act on their environment and assigned with a selfhood as a recognition of their separate identity (Hodder 2011, 50), with the ability 'to initiate casual events' (Malafouris 2008, 23).



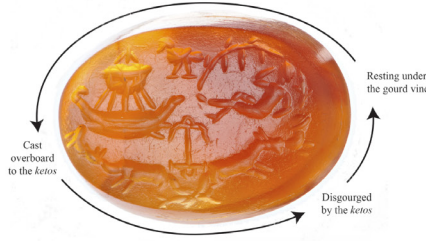
a.



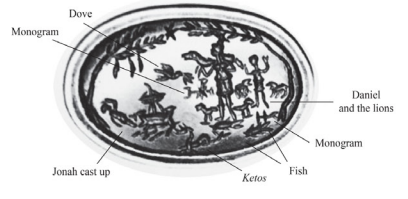
b.



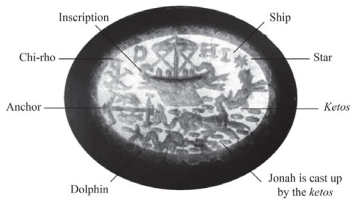
c.



d.



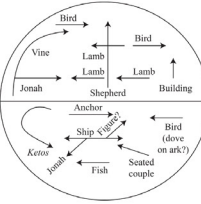
e.



f.



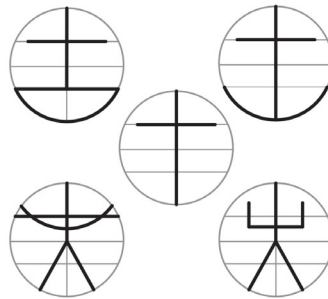
g.



h.



i.



j.



k.



l.



m.



n.



**Plate 1** Selected gemstones illustrating complex and cyclical narratives, cross-like formations and iconographic substitution (Sources: J. Spier, publishers Reichert Verlag, the National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), Purchase and the Joseph Pulitzer Bequest).

- a. G.417 in Spier 2007, Plate 49, Cat. No. 417 (reproduced from Spier 2007, with kind permission of the author and publisher).
- b. Persian painting 'Jonah and the Whale' from a Jamial-Tavarikh Compendium of Chronicles, c. 1400 (© Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1933).
- c. G.418 in Spier 2007, Plate 50, Cat. No. 418 (Public image).
- d. G.416 in Spier 2007, Plate 49, Cat. No. 416 (Inv. No. GS-01143 © National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden).
- e. G.428 in Spier 2007:69, Plate 51, Cat. No. 428 (reproduced from Spier 2007, with kind permission of the author and publisher).
- f. G.419 in Spier 2007, Plate 50, Cat. No. 419 (reproduced from Spier 2007, with kind permission of the author and publisher).
- g. G.429 in Spier 2007:69, Plate 51, Cat. No. 429 (reproduced from Spier 2007, with kind permission of the author and publisher). Schematic illustration of directionality (author's own).
- h. G.405 in Spier 2007:60, Plate 47, Cat. No. 405 (reproduced from Spier 2007, with kind permission of the author and publisher).
- i. G.406 in Spier 2007, Plate 47, Cat. No. 406 (Inv. No. 4447 © BnF).
- j. Schematic illustration of cross formations (author's own).
- k. G.310 in Spier 2007, Plate 38, Cat. No. 310 (reproduced from Spier 2007, with kind permission of the author and publisher).
- l. G.311 in Spier 2007, Plate 38, Cat. No. 31 (© Studium Biblicum Franciscanum).
- m. G.313 in Spier 2007, Plate 38, Cat. No. 313 (reproduced from Spier 2007, with kind permission of the author and publisher).
- n. G.423 in Spier 2007, Plate 50, Cat. No. 423 (reproduced from Spier 2007, with kind permission of the author and publisher).

The way intaglios mediated agency is particular to the character of the stones. Stones carved in the negative were most likely intended as seals. Seal stones acted as a circulating signature of the self that was intended to be viewed both intimately on the object and at a distance as an imprint. The idea of the seal as an extension of the 'self' was well established in Roman society, demonstrated by its use as a metaphor by Cicero, Plato, Aristotle and Diogenes Laertius.<sup>16</sup> Clement of Alexandria drew an association between the seal and its owner, stating they must adopt 'a step, and dress ... in all respects as worthy as possible'.<sup>17</sup> Stones inscribed in the positive were probably not intended to function as seals, but may have served as amulets to be kept close to the body and regarded as 'exerting power' (Bonner 1946, 26), acting as miniature 'shrines' (Henig 1990, 160), that 'invited intimacy' and were 'intended to teach' (Hahn 1997, 1080–1).

Sarcophagi and gemstones frequently combine the same subjects within their distinctive visual fields in a similar manner: complex narratives are often reduced into recognisable episodes, compositional tools such as ground lines are used to split the scene, features may be exaggerated and expressive magnification is often used to emphasise key elements (Davis 1989, 75). Multiple components frequently form compositions that rely on a network of interdependencies, often using synoptic narratives to guide the viewer through a journey in which key moments occur simultaneously, amid a backdrop of animated images. Motifs composed of multiple elements exhibit a level of technical virtuosity that contributed to their ability to captivate, rendering their compositions 'sticky' (Gell 1998, 77). The breadth and orthogonal regularity of the sarcophagus enabled the articulation of

multiple relationships in a way that is comparable to the gems, with the potential for greater elaboration. On the gems, narrative and abstract symbols and monograms frequently appear within the same visual field in a manner not seen on sarcophagi.

The themes that gained popularity conjured elemental forces, using ships, birds and sea creatures to animate scenes. New Testament writings compare Jonah's time in the belly of the *ketos* with the time Christ spent in the 'heart of the earth', linking his watery 'resurrection' to baptismal rebirth.<sup>18</sup> The typical *Jonah sequence* is usually made up of three key moments featured together or in isolation: Jonah is thrown overboard; cast up; and rests under the gourd vine. These condensed narratives may be illustrated sequentially, in isolation or collapsed into one. Both types of object usually depict at least two of the three stages and frequently employ synoptic narratives to illustrate the sequence in a condensed form.

Adaptations to the standard series may provide insight into a design's origins and purpose. An example of this can be seen in the extended Jonah sequence on G.417 (see Plate 1, a), which contrasts a detailed narration on one side with a first-century engraving of a bull on the other. The sequence has been extended to four episodes with the addition of Jonah being handed a cloak by an angel. This additional episode is unattested in the Bible and on sarcophagi and may evidence an instance of iconographic innovation. Spier (2007, 68) suggests that it may relate to the Midrash account of the *ketos* consuming Jonah's clothes, be connected to a lost tradition or linked to depictions of Christ's baptism; a theme occasionally combined with Jonah. Additionally, a similar scene on a c. fourteenth-century Persian painting may evidence a lost text (Narkiss 1979, 66). The sequence is arranged in an anti-clockwise rotation, whereby the distances between episodes are reduced as the story unfolds, speeding up the journey. The scene is divided into multiple registers, with ground-lines indicating land, and open spaces are encompassed within the seascape. The absence of vertical divisions allows the viewer to move between episodes, uninterrupted by pictorial boundaries. The stone was most likely affixed to a worn object, thus referring to the cloak as another worn protective object, thereby referencing itself and the subject of divine intervention, while expressing the wearer's desire to attract such acts of compassion. The viewer is invited as a participant in the unfolding narrative, illustrated in a sequence of salvation to be gazed upon repeatedly. The cyclical narrative becomes the object of captivation (Davis 1993, 27). Visually processing the sequence's stages may imprint it on the memory, locking the viewer into its miniature cycle as a cognitive trap (see Gell 1992; 1998). G.418 (see Plate 1, c) places an onlooker into the scene of Jonah cast overboard, mirroring the position of the gem's beholder as a fellow observer invited to read its narrative. A similar point of self-reference is occasionally found on sarcophagi that picture sarcophagi (S.103948, S.77348 and S.61090; see Plate 2, b), projecting the viewer's present circumstances into the theatricality of the scene and enabling the recipient to project themselves into the index.

G.416 (see Plate 1, d) displays the standard three-part sequence. Episodes of Jonah, cast over and cast up, are divided by an expressly magnified anchor, upturned towards a bird. The cruciform mast mirrors the anchor, balancing the negative space between narrative elements and reinforcing the compositional unity of the image field. G.428 increases the composition's density by crowding the image field. Daniel stands orant on a raised register flanked by inward-facing lions, juxtaposing outwardly gazing lambs. A monogram sits below his feet and above a fish, mirroring its proportions and reinforcing their semiotic links as symbols of salvation. A dove joins another monogram in a cluster of components,

bearing the same proportional significance as the narrative elements, combining narratives across vistas in an apparent disregard for spatial or temporal logic (Small 1999, 562). Multidirectional imagery animates the scene. Compositional consideration is clear: animals are pictured in pairs, two monograms enclose the vacant spaces, dividing the scene without split registers, and opening up the surrounding seascape, framed by two vines. Comparably, the fourth-century S.60300 (see Plate 2, a) depicts similar densely combined narratives on a single face without defined registers, against multidirectional reduced-sized episodes.

G.419 (see Plate 1, f) contains multiple components. The image is undivided by registers and the ocean's depth is determined by a gradual reduction in horizontal gouges. Its crowded composition captivates the viewer, directing their gaze across its elements: the Chi-Rho reflects Jonah and the anchor mirrors the *ketos*. The scene is set under a starlit sky and combines the Chi-Rho and the inscription (IHC) with Jonah's release from the *ketos*, reinforcing the link between Christ's name and the symbols that stand in for it, with the theme of deliverance. Christian referents sit among celestial elements as an emotive invitation into the symbology of its watery narrative.

Condensed narratives compound an image's density, reinforcing its impact. Scenes that appear to lack structure require their viewers to navigate their components. On the gemstones, this may have offered their wearer a sense of mastery through ownership. The monumental scale of multifaceted sarcophagi enabled designers to combine narratives and engage multiple associations. The late-third-century S.99523 (see Plate 2, c) combines multiple narratives, including Jonah, the raising of Lazarus, Peter smiting the rock and a fisherman, within a single face. The Jonah sequence draws the viewer across the visual plane, the fishermen evoke the 'fishers of men',<sup>19</sup> and Peter smiting the rock compounds Jonah's baptismal associations with the raising of Lazarus and correlates them with the resurrection.

On G.429 (see Plate 1, g) a central ground-line splits the composition into two zones, creating two distinct environments. These contrast the carefully composed peaceful imagery of Jonah under the gourd vine and the Good Shepherd above, with the chaos of Jonah and the *ketos* below. The multidirectional seascape, arranged without ground-lines, includes an expressively magnified anchor and fish, and a bird on an object that is most likely indicative of the Noah narrative, pertaining to the promise of peace and linking the drama below to the serenity of the Shepherd and the vine above. In a similarly complex composition, the fourth-century S.53076 (see Plate 2, e) uses split registers and compartments to combine multiple narratives that demand their viewer's engagement in exploring the links between them. On one end, Jonah is cast overboard. On the other, he reclines under the gourd vine. On the front upper register, he is disgorged by the *ketos*. The lower register depicts a Shepherd between two themes: Daniel orant flanked by lions, beside Lazarus, drawing an association between the resurrection and Daniel's salvation. Adam and Eve stand beside Christ conducting an exorcism, pertaining to Original Sin and redemption through Christ. The late-third-century S.60115 (see Plate 2, g) also combines multiple narratives with the Jonah sequence, illustrating him simultaneously cast up and under the gourd vine, and creating a split-register without geometric compartments. The Good Shepherd, the baptism of Christ and two fishermen assert the link between Jonah, the act of baptism and the resurrection, to be viewed as one fluid motion.

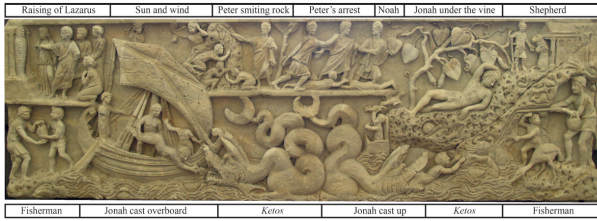
The double-sided cyclical narratives G.405 and G.406 (see Plate 1, h, i) are designed to require interaction. Both contrast a shepherd on one side with Jonah in the *ketos's* mouth on the other, depicting Jonah in an ambiguous condensed sequence, having just



a.



b.



c.



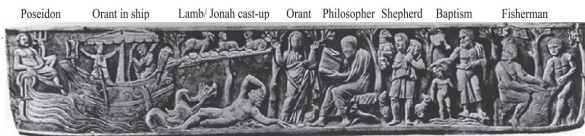
d.



e.



f.



g.



h.



i.



j.



k.



l.



m.

**Plate 2** Selected early Christian sarcophagi for comparative analysis (Sources: National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden, the Musée Saint-Raymond, Musée d'Archéologie de Toulouse, the Musée Départemental Arles Antique, The Princeton Index of Medieval Art, Miguel Hermoso Cuesta and Seudo).

- a. S.60300 depicts the Good Shepherd on the left, a philosopher on the right and a central female orant in the foreground. In the background, Daniel stands orant, flanked by two lions; Jonah is cast up and under the gourd vine; Adam and Eve stand beside an orant Noah in the ark, a dove with a branch and the miracle of loaves (<https://ima.princeton.edu>: System Number 60300) (Public image).
- b. Details of sarcophagi (<https://ima.princeton.edu>) S.103948 (Public image), S.77348 (© National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden) and S.61090 (Public image) which all depict sarcophagi.
- c. S.99523 depicts a three-part Jonah sequence and multiple narratives with baptismal associations (<https://ima.princeton.edu>: System Number 99523) (© Miguel Hermoso Cuesta, CC BY-SA 3.0).
- d. S.61650, The Tomb of St Clair, also depicts the lions turning away from Daniel (<https://ima.princeton.edu>: System Number 61650) (Musée Saint-Raymond, Musée d'Archéologie de Toulouse © Daniel Martin).
- e. Sarcophagus S.53076 (Mas d'Aire Sarcophagus) depicts Jonah cast overboard on the left end and under the gourd vine on the right end. The front top register depicts Jonah disgorged by the ketos, Tobias reaching into the mouth of a fish, Abraham sacrificing Isaac and Christ healing a paralytic. The lower register depicts a shepherd, Daniel as orant flanked by lions, Adam and Eve and Christ conducting an exorcism (<https://ima.princeton.edu>: System Number 53076) (© Seudo, CC BY-SA 4.0).
- f. S.111622 pictures the lions facing towards Daniel (<https://ima.princeton.edu>: System Number 111622) (Public image).
- g. An unravell'd image of Sarcophagus S.60115 depicts a personification of the sea, beside a ship with a mariner as orant. A female orant stands centrally, Jonah is cast up and under the gourd vine to her left, with sheep grazing above him. A philosopher sits to her right, beside the Good Shepherd, the baptism of Christ and two fishermen (<https://ima.princeton.edu>: System Number 60115) (Public image).
- h. S.107699 pictures the lions facing towards Daniel (<https://ima.princeton.edu>: System Number 107699) (Sarcophage de la chaste Suzanne, Marbre de Carrare, milieu du IVE s. apr. J.-C., FAN.1992.2480, Musée Départemental Arles Antique © Rémi Bénali).
- i. Sarcophagus S.101952 depicts the Good Shepherd beside a tree, Noah in the ark, a dove with a branch, Jonah cast into the mouth of the ketos and a woman as orant (<https://ima.princeton.edu>: System Number 101952) (Public image).
- j. S.97103 depicts the figures of Paul, Peter, soldiers, Christ and Pilate, surrounding the cross, crowned with a Chi-Rho set within a wreath (<https://ima.princeton.edu>: System Number 97103) (Public image).
- k. S.128240 depicts mixed narratives over two registers. Above: Daniel slays the Serpent, Moses receives the law, two putti flank a central tablet, Daniel is flanked by two lions and Peter is pictured beside the dog of Simon Magus (Acts of Peter). Below: a mixture of scenes concerning Christ's miracles and the Passion, including the Samaritan woman, Peter holding a cross, a cock in palm tree, and Judas kissing Christ (<https://ima.princeton.edu>: System Number 128240). (Public image).
- l. S.102608 depicts scenes related to the Passion of Christ, including a soldier holding a crown of thorns over Christ's head and Christ before Pilate. Two doves sit on a central cross flanked by two soldiers. The cross is crowned with a Chi-Rho set within a wreath. The architectural setting is adorned with wreaths and putto (<https://ima.princeton.edu>: System Number 102608) (© Miguel Hermoso Cuesta, CC BY-SA 3.0).
- m. S.99456 depicts Christ surrounded by Peter, Paul and four of the apostles on the front side. Those at either end hold wreaths. On the back, peacocks and vines flank a central cross, and on either end three apostles stand below a cross flanked by doves, vines and flowers, below a lid decorated with eight armed crosses (<https://ima.princeton.edu>: System Number 99456) (Public image).

been cast over or at the point of being cast up. On G.405 the image of the Shepherd, dove and lamb engages its audience by declaring: EIC ΘEOC – '(There is) one God' (Spier 2007, 60), inviting them to explore its compositional connections. The reverse captures Jonah orant, naked and engulfed, prior to the point of his salvation. The gemstone's agency is distributed by captivating its viewer and demanding engagement with its materiality, placing the choice of subject within the viewer's hand, to be turned to be read as a whole. This requirement for active engagement also appears on G.406, picturing Jonah naked and engulfed with his arms straightened, beside a magnified anchor, correlating the symbol with salvation. The off-centre scene is composed in a sweeping arrangement that overlaps its edges, beckoning its viewer to turn it, and drawing them into a cycle of repetitive action. On its reverse, the Good Shepherd stands beside the inscription 'IXΘYC'. On sarcophagi, when Jonah is thrown overboard, he is usually depicted entering the *ketos* head first. On these gems, Jonah faces upward, and his arms reach outward, indicating his imminent emergence. This is an unusual choice, as the episode is pictured least frequently in isolation on both types of object. These renderings of Jonah, captured at the moment before his release, increase their narrative density, as the episode cannot be understood without considering the events that occur before and after it, to be visualised either side of it. These scenes may have taken on a balancing role, switching between the drama of Jonah's plight and the Shepherd as a symbol of protection and salvation. The late-third-century S.99523 and the fourth-century S.101952 (see Plate 2, i) also use Jonah to contrast peril and peace, drawing their viewer across narratives through one sequential gaze. In contrast, the hand-held gem distributes the scenes across its two faces, to be viewed in separate rotations.

During the fourth century, the sarcophagus corpus manifests a rise in images of the empty cross and the cross as a martyrdom instrument, and the gemstone corpus demonstrates a range of motifs and decorative compositions arranged in the form of a cross. These cross-like compositions began to occur around the third century and are often symmetrically balanced and built around five variations of a cruciform core (see Plate 1) in a manner that is notably absent on sarcophagi. Contemporaneously, cross-like structures become more exaggerated, as observed in the orant posture, the mast of the ship and the crossbar of the anchor (Castelli 2013, 12). Ships often appear independently on gemstones. G.310, G.311, G.313, G.416 and G.417 all picture ships with cross-like masts (see Plate 1, k, l, m, d, a). Although inevitably cross-shaped, on the gemstones masts regularly appear exaggerated, with a clearly defined frontal orthogonal join, emphasising their likeness to an empty cross. The relationship between the cross and the mast seems more plausible when we see masts used as illustrative tools to complement uniquely Christian symbols that are not frequently combined outside Christian contexts, as highlighted on G.423 (see Plate 1, n), which pictures a Chi-Rho beside a mast. The mast mirrors the monogram's central and lower parts, reflecting its proportions and only missing the two upper radiating lines. Its placement above the main narrative transforms the monogram into a projection cast over Jonah, evidencing iconographic selection and extraction by equivalent substitution, using the mast as a centrepiece for individual variation (Davis 1989, 73–4). This may have served as a metaphor for the role of the gem owner's faith in guiding their journey.

Multiple textual sources compare the Church to a ship: in 1 Corinthians 12.28, the word *κυβέρνησις* describes the guidance bestowed on those who might govern the Church (Clarke 2008, 84), using the same terminology that applies to a ship's helmsman; the second- to third-century writings of Tertullian compare the Church to an ark, and during the same period

Clement of Alexandria recommended it as a motif for Christian use. On sarcophagi, ships usually form part of a narrative scene rather than standalone symbols. On gems, combinations of ships with Christian words and monograms may have acted as portable tokens of faith, reinforcing their owner's beliefs and responsibilities as they set about their journey.

Daniel is almost always pictured in the orant pose. On the gems, his cross-like posture is emphasised in cross-like compositions or flanked by crosses. G.424 and G.426 (see Plate 3, a, b) depict Daniel orant, flanked by lions. On G.424, a cross is placed above their heads, as Daniel gestures towards the inscription: EIC ΘEOC BOHΘI – 'The One God, help' (Spier 2007, 69). On G.426, Daniel's posture mirrors the Chi-Rho on its reverse, emphasising their correspondence and establishing a semiotic link between the two motifs. Although it may be a later addition (Spier 2007, 69), the Chi-Rho's placement represents an iconographic equivalent, using a similar technique to G.423 with the monogram and the mast.

G.436 and G.437 (see Plate 3, c, d) combine condensed narratives with symbolic components, engaging viewers through multiple referents. Both picture Daniel orant, below the shepherd, arranged around the shape of a cross, substituting direct representation of the crucifixion with a mixture of props that stand in for it. On G.436, the lions face Daniel's steadfast stance, and the cockerel may reference the Passion. On G.437, the shepherd stands orant, and the palm connects the cross to the themes of victory and salvation. An inscription splits the two zones, most likely reading: EI(COYC) ΘEO(C) EM(M)ANO(YHA) – 'Jesus, God, Emmanuel' (Spier 2007, 71). Below, Daniel orant repels two lions. Only one sarcophagus, S.61650 (see Plate 2, d) depicts the lions turning away from Daniel. These remain grounded and not yet in motion, inviting the viewer to contemplate the next stage in his journey towards salvation without viewing it on the object. Daniel is often pictured orant on sarcophagi, including S.111622 and S.107699, but the exaggerated cross-like compositions only appear on the gems.

On sarcophagi, images of Christ's suffering are absent. The fourth-century S.97103 (see Plate 2, j) depicts this corpus' earliest image of the cross as a martyrdom instrument, combining the events surrounding the crucifixion. Scenes relating to the cross as a martyrdom instrument increase in the latter half of the fourth century, demonstrated on S.102608 (mid-fourth century), S.128240 (late fourth century) and S.99456 (fifth century). The empty cross is often treated like a garlanded trophy accompanied by wreaths, birds and palms as a symbol of victory and righteousness.<sup>20</sup> Images of empty crosses are common on gemstones; however, three exceptional instances of iconographic innovation explicitly picture the crucifixion.

Until the fifth century, images of the crucifixion were rare and appear never to have transitioned to sarcophagi. While the images on sarcophagi appear concerned with consolidating their beholders' beliefs, the gemstones often appear to challenge their audience. G.443 (see Plate 3, e), the earliest crucifixion gem, may derive from an early Christian prototype (Spier 2007, 75), layering invocations outside the standard styles of prayers on contemporary 'magical' gemstones. Its style of carving, material and inscription are typical of second- to third-century 'magical' amulets (Kotansky 2017, 633). The text grounds the central depiction of Christ naked and bearded, hanging loosely from the cross in a weakened posture, far removed from later-fifth-century representations that avoided depicting his suffering. Its central motif remains in view while reading the text, until it is turned over, engaging its handler through touch. Its iconography and the nature of its text have been discussed in depth (Harley-McGowan 2011; Kotansky 2017), and it is the accumulation of these attributes that enabled the gemstone to act.



a.



b.



c.



d.



e.



f.



g.



h.

G.86



G.88



i.



j.



k.



G.173



l.



G.175



m.



n.



**Plate 3** Selected gemstones illustrating cross-like formations, crucifixion, iconographic substitution, memorable motifs, impactful text and prayers and incantations (Sources: J. Spier and publishers Reichert Verlag, Garrucci 1873 and von Urlichs 1865)

- a. G.424 in Spier 2007, Plate 50, Cat. No. 424 (after Garrucci 1873:169, no.15).
- b. G.426 in Spier 2007, Plate 50, Cat. No. 426 (illustration author's own).
- c. G.436 in Spier 2007, Plate 52, Cat. No. 436 (reproduced from Spier 2007, with kind permission of the author and publisher).
- d. G.437 in Spier 2007:71; Plate 52, Cat. No. 437 (reproduced from Spier 2007, with kind permission of the author and publisher).
- e. G.443 in Spier 2007, Plate 53, Cat. No. 443 (reproduced from Spier 2007, with kind permission of the author and publisher).
- f. G.444 in Spier 2007, Plate 54, Cat. No. 444 (reproduced from Spier 2007, with kind permission of the author and publisher).
- g. G.445 in Spier 1997:39, 2007:74, Plate 54, Cat. No. 445 (reproduced from Spier 2007, with kind permission of the author and publisher).
- h. G.166 in Spier 2007:35, Plate 23, Cat. No. 166 (reproduced from Spier 2007, with kind permission of the author and publisher).
- i. Inscriptions pictured in isolation in Spier 2007, Plate 15, Cat. No. 86, 87 and 88 (reproduced from Spier 2007, with kind permission of the author and publisher).
- j. G.447 in Spier 2007, Plate 54, Cat. No. 447 (reproduced from Spier 2007, with kind permission of the author and publisher).
- k. G.464 in Spier 2007:82, Plate 56, Cat. No. 464 (after von Urlichs 1865:39).
- l. G.168 in Spier 2007:35, Plate 23, Cat. No. 168 (reproduced from Spier 2007, with kind permission of the author and publisher).
- m. G.173 and G.175 in Spier 2007:34, Plate 24, Cat. No. 173 and Cat. No. 175 (reproduced from Spier 2007, with kind permission of the author and publisher).
- n. G.167 in Spier 2007:35, Plate 23, Cat. No. 167 (reproduced from Spier 2007, with kind permission of the author and publisher).

G.444 and G.445 (see Plate 3, f, g) bear images of Christ on the cross among the apostles. Both are inscribed with variations of Christ's name.<sup>21</sup> On G.445, this sits between Christ and the apostles, his arms outstretched in the act of embrace. Both share the characteristics of seals, yet both are inscribed in the positive. Several sarcophagi depict similar compositions of the apostles and empty cross (see Plate 2). The disciples' inclusion may have been intended to emphasise the community's role in spreading their message, fulfilled on the gem by their function as circulating images.

Seal stones served as signatures, guarantors of authenticity and powerful semiotic vehicles. Text added to core motifs functioned as a focalising device, recontextualising neutral images and reinforcing their signification. Christian words and monograms acted as religious signifiers and personal signatures, transforming the stones into communicative objects to propagate the word. Designs often conveyed modesty and piety through relative uniformity, bearing central slogans as signifiers of their owner's submission to the Church. G.166 (see Plate 3, h) explicitly illustrates memorable motifs, depicting a hand and palm as symbols of righteousness and victory,<sup>22</sup> below a Chi-Rho and above the inscription: MNHM-O-NEYE – 'remember' (Spier 2007, 35). On G.447 (see Plate 3, j), a dove, cross and fish are accompanied IHCOYC inscribed twice, amplifying its acclamation and strengthening its message. G.464 pictures Harpocrates with his fingers to his lips, motioning towards the silent contemplation of the inscription: 'anointed'.<sup>23</sup> Several examples spell out their

protective function: G.168 reads, ΘΕΟC ΘΕ ΟΥΥΙΟC ΤΗΡΕΙ – ‘God, son of God, guard (me)’ (Spier 2007, 35), inscribed in the positive; and G.173 and G.175 are both inscribed with calls for ‘help’, as seen on G.424.

‘Magical’ gems frequently combine text with images in a manner occasionally found on gemstones with Christian attributes. G.167 (see Plate 3, n) impresses the Chi-Rho as a central signifier amid the words ‘Almighty God, Jesus Christ, son of God’ on one side, and ‘Halleluiaah’ on the other.<sup>24</sup> G.443 weaves its text behind the foreground image on one side, and only features text on the other. Both gems set their text in the positive, demonstrating the work of different hands on either side, transforming each face into an index of another agent (Kotansky 2017, 635–7), to be read as layers of embodied agency (Gell 1998, 76).

The gemstones often pertain to a journey. Watery images were prevalent in the pre-Christian repertoire and are numerous in mixed Greco-Roman Jewish and Christian contexts within the catacombs. The anchor was commonly used to symbolise naval victory and the Jewish concept of *shamayim* associated water with the heavens.<sup>25</sup> The preference for images concerned with the sea, travel and connectivity, modified with words and monograms, played on their role in transmitting the word across water, spreading a message of salvation through baptism and membership of the Church. The gemstones’ translucency and the wax’s liquidity rendered them fitting vehicles for their watery metaphors. Their portability converted them into travelling indexes of faith and power, charged with the potential of replication. The characteristics shared between seal stones and amulets, notably in depictions of non-Christian deities and in prayers and incantations, demanded engagement in a manner that is not seen on the sarcophagi. Their captivating qualities enabled viewers to animate the inanimate, acting as a ‘technical miracle’ (Gell 1992, 49), reinforcing the relationships between the index, the prototype and its recipient, in which the hand of the artist remains anonymous.

The miniaturisation of monumental themes may have granted owners a sense of mastery over their environment as a reassurance of their agency in determining their relationship with higher forces. Condensed multidirectional compositions created a miniature window into an imagined landscape. Both types of object engage their viewers by combining narrative and non-narrative elements to assert their associations, accommodating a similar range with a comparable level of complexity. Certain themes on sarcophagi are not found on the gems, and certain instances and combinations appear to be unique to the stones. The sarcophagi’s scale enabled designers to illustrate a broader range of narratives and to distribute their choices across multiple surfaces, expressing various aspects of their owner’s faith. Sarcophagi designers often drew from a more uniform repertoire, a level of thematic continuity is apparent and distinctly Christian images usually outnumber Greco-Roman deities and ostensibly pagan themes. A substantial proportion of the gemstones demonstrate continuity, picturing symbols, words and monograms. These are isolated on the gems in a manner not seen on the sarcophagi. Unusual instances and non-Christian motifs occur more often on the gems and appear more prominent. Gemstone designers employed sophisticated compositional tools to maximise the potential of the stones, initiating associations on a minute scale. This compounded the captivating qualities of their condensed format, capturing the imagination in a manner more characteristic of miniature art-objects than of practical, functional seals.

## Conclusion

Themes drawn from the broader repertoire acted as indicators of shared values, declarations of faith and reminders of salvation through sacrifice and submission to the Church. The gemstones occasionally depict unusual episodes. Motifs that acted in isolation were also combined, frequent combinations may have developed distinct meanings and iconographic variations may evidence instances of innovation. The orant pose is consistently combined with themes pertaining to salvation through acts of devotion, and its frequent combination with the Chi-Rho highlights their protective functions. Semiotic reinforcement can be seen across the corpus. Narrative elements were adapted as symbols and incorporated with memorable words and monograms.

The iconographic choices on early Christian intaglio gems depended on their function and were critical to their ability to function. In this way, they acted within a network of interdependencies to fulfil the intentions of their owners.

The themes found on the sarcophagi are often concerned with New Testament narratives, miracles and the community. The motifs on the gemstones are primarily concerned with the individual, occasionally referring to the Church and the congregation and alluding to the shared responsibility of spreading the word.

On the gemstones, impactful words and monograms drew focus, and narratives concerned with salvation and protection invited their audience to engage with them through word and touch. Words and monograms were selected as religious signifiers, signatures and personal expressions of belief. Complex narratives transported their viewer into the scene, dissolving temporal boundaries. The miniature nature of the stones enabled their owners to invest in them, offering empowerment through ownership as a connection to the divine.

Innovative compositions and iconographic variations illustrated on the gemstones demonstrate a fluidity of religious belief. Artists combined polytheistic and Jewish symbols with Christian narratives and symbols to act on their owner's environment, influencing their relationship with higher forces. Uniform words and symbols acted as signifiers of values and markers of modesty, mediating the language of the faithful and the propagation of the word. Focusing on the agency of the gemstones has explored the narratives around otherwise inactive objects, revealing why particular images may have been desirable. This demonstrates how sociological and phenomenological methods can complement iconographic analysis, providing insights into how intaglios may have functioned as powerful semiotic devices and as personal portable tokens of faith.

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## Declarations and conflicts of interest

Research ethics statement

Not applicable to this article.

Consent for publication statement

Not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of interest statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest with this article. All efforts to sufficiently anonymise the author during peer review of this article have been made. The author declares no further conflicts with this article.

## Notes

- 1 See also the Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database (CBd), developed at the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, in 2010. Accessed 31 October 2024. [https://classics.mfab.hu/talismans/visitatori\\_salutem](https://classics.mfab.hu/talismans/visitatori_salutem)
- 2 UCL Research Data: <https://doi.org/10.5522/04/26954590>.
- 3 <https://ima.princeton.edu>.
- 4 Online supplement (see note 2): Table 2, Chart 1; Tables 6, 7 and 8; Table 9; Table 11; and Table 12, Chart 1, respectively.
- 5 Online supplement Table 3; and Tables 4 and 5, Chart 2.
- 6 Online supplement Tables 18 and 19.
- 7 Online supplement Tables 20, 21 and 22.
- 8 Online supplement Table 23, Chart 3.
- 9 Online supplement Table 24, 27–33.
- 10 Online supplement Table 24.
- 11 Online supplement Tables 25, 26 and 27.
- 12 Online supplement Table 28.
- 13 Online supplement Table 29.
- 14 Jonah 1:1–4; Daniel 6; <https://ima.princeton.edu>.
- 15 Online supplement Charts 4–6.
- 16 In 60 BC, Cicero wrote: ‘Let your seal ring be ... like your own person.’ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Commentariolum Petitionis*, Letter 1 (1.1) (Salomies 2004, 17); Plato used the wax impression as a metaphor: ‘an imprint-receiving piece of wax in our minds ... taking the impressions of signet rings’ Theaetetus 191C (Brown 2014, 79); Aristotle: ‘sense is the recipient of the perceived ... as the wax takes the sign from the ring’, *De Anima* 424a (Lawson-Tancred 1986, 187; Platt 2006, 245–6); and Diogenes Laertius: ‘an imprint on the soul ... borrowed from the imprints made in wax by a seal ring’, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*: 7.45–6 (Mensch and Miller 2018, 330).

- 17 Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, Bk III, Chpt II (Roberts 2007, 285–6).
- 18 Matthew 12:40 (Narkiss 1977, 64).
- 19 Luke 5:1–11, Matthew 4:18–19 and Mark 1:16–17 (Jensen 2010).
- 20 Revelation 7:9; Psalm 92:12.
- 21 G444 is inscribed with 'IXΘYC' and G.445 is inscribed with 'EHCO X-PECT-OC ΘEOC' (Spier 2007, 74).
- 22 Revelation 7:9; Psalm 92:12.
- 23 IXΘYC and XPICTOC – 'Christos' (anointed) (Spier 2007, 82).
- 24 ΘEOC [I]ANTOKP ATΩP IHCOY C XPIC TOC YIO ΘEOC – 'Almighty God, Jesus Christ, son of God' – on one side and ΑΛΛΗΛ ΟΥΙΑ – 'Halleluiah' – on the other (Spier 2007, 35).
- 25 Genesis 1:6.

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