

## Wrong Country!

### Images on banknotes of people and places not from the country. Belgium.

This series continues to draw attention to world banknotes with vignettes of items that are not from the country of issue. Understanding the connection of such an image to the country of issue often relates to other factors worth exploring on the banknote.

This example involves a banknote from the west European nation of Belgium. The 5000 Francs banknote (P137/B584) celebrates Andre Vesale on the front. The reverse depicts statue of Aesculapius (the Greek god of medicine) with serpent rod and five people in the **Temple of Epidaurus in Greece!** The serpent rod, also known as the Rod of Aesculapius, features a snake because the ancient Greeks viewed the snake as a symbol of health and healing because it could shed and regenerate its skin. The snake also produced venoms which killed many parasites in the body. While the banknote was first released in 1971 and continued production into 1977, the Temple of Epidaurus was later named a Greek UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988 because of its exceptional architecture and its importance in the development and spread of healing sanctuaries.

So what's the connection of the front and reverse of this banknote? Andre Vesale was also known as Andreas Vesalius. The Belgian was one of the first physicians to accurately record and illustrate human anatomy based on his findings from autopsies and dissections, which led to improved understanding of the human body and enhanced surgery techniques. This was recorded in his important works De Humani Corporis Fabrica Libri Septem (On the Fabric of the Human Body in Seven Books in English) It is considered to be one of the most influential books on human anatomy. So, Vesalius and the medical theme of the banknote applies to the entire banknote, front and reverse.

But there is one other connection! While Vesalius was born in Brussels, Belgium in 1514, he died in Zakynthos, Greece. Returning from a pilgrimage to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, Vesale became ill aboard ship and was put ashore on the Greek island of Zacynthus and died there. Vesalius had his greatest works published at the age of 29, but died at the age of 49. He was buried at Santa Maria delle Grazie Church.

While this banknote can hold a prominent place in a collection of Belgian, UNESCO sites, medical images, or sculptures it is scarce to rare, especially in high grades. The banknote, graded 68, shown here sold for \$1560 before fees at a Stacks & Bowers auction in 2022.

