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PAGANISM IN THE GREEK WORLD AT
THE END OF ANTIQUITY:
THE CASE OF RURAL ANATOLIA AND GREECE*

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I propose to discuss what might be called the "mechanics of conversion" in the countryside of the sixth-century later Roman Empire. This process consisted fundamentally in implanting monasteries in districts where few villages had been Christianized, or where the population was nominally Christian but so badly instructed that earlier pagan cult practices persisted.¹ There is considerable evidence for rural conditions in the hagiographic lives of monks and in the ecclesiastical histories of this period.² One of the principal difficulties in this sort of study is the geographic distribution of the sources. Hagiographic texts are, in effect, local histories, largely confined to the environs of the monastery. Thus, we are reasonably well informed about western Asia

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¹This problem is barely alluded to in Johannes Geffcken, *The Last Days of Greco-Roman Paganism* (trans. Sabine MacCormack; New York: Elsevier North-Holland, 1978), the only thoroughgoing study of the decline of Hellenic paganism. See also A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602: A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964) 938-43. Cf. the constructive discussions of rural paganism (for other regions) by W. Liebeschuetz, "Problems Arising from the Conversion of Syria," in D. Baker, ed., *The Church in Town and Countryside* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979) 17-24, and C. E. Stancliffe, "From Town to Country: The Christianization of the Touraine 370-600," *ibid.*, 43-59. For preliminary discussion, see Frank R. Trombley, *The Survival of Paganism in the Byzantine Empire during the Pre-Iconoclastic Period (540-727)* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1981) *passim*.

²The tendency is to rehabilitate hagiographic texts as sources. See, e.g., Stephen Mitchell, "The Life of Saint Theodotus of Ancyra," *Anatolian Studies* 32 (1982) 92-113. For the use of hagiography to reconstruct rural social and economic life, see Frank R. Trombley, "Monastic Foundations in Sixth-century Anatolia and Their Role in the Social and Economic Life of the Countryside," *GOTR* 30 (1985) 45-59.

Minor and Galatia in the sixth century, for which sources like this exist, but hardly know anything about paganism in Greece until the tenth century, when monasteries finally began to appear in rural districts.

It should be borne in mind as well that paganism survived elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean world, but in provinces which were only superficially hellenized. Thus, there were pagan Syrian villages near Qalat Simān between Antioch and Beroia-Aleppo³ where the monastery of Symeon Stylites the Younger lay, and in Egypt Coptic villagers and diviners continued the cults of the Nile River gods down through the eighth century.⁴ I have here concentrated on the evidence for the ethnically Greek sections of the empire, preeminently western Asia Minor and the Peloponnese.

A section of the *Codex Justinianus* dating from after 472 CE makes specific reference to the survival of rural paganism and to efforts at its eradication:

If any unholy and defiled pagan (*hellēn*) does not make himself manifest, whether living here or in the countryside (*chōra*), and run to the churches with his household, that is to say wives and children, let him submit to the aforesaid penalties, let the fisc confiscate their property, and let them be given over to exile.⁵

Another clause provides for the immediate baptism of the young children of recently converted pagans, prior to their instruction in the ecclesiastical canons and scripture, in order to assure their "genuine conversion" (*γνησία μετανοία*).⁶ This part of the law sought to prevent their acculturation by partially catechized and not yet baptized parents. References to sixth-century rural temples and pagan local cultures are rare. Procopius mentions the conversion of temples dedicated to Artemis and Iphigenia at Komana in his own time.⁷ It is unclear whether the priesthood and cult attested by Strabo, which had sacred

³ Paul van den Ven, ed., *La Vie ancienne de S. Syméon stylite le jeune* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1962). Some examples: a pagan from the village of Apate near Antioch whom Symeon urged to reject Aphrodite and all idols (l. 130–31); pagan shepherds in the countryside l. 163; the pagan village Poulion which had a sacred grove (l. 166); a rural wedding at a pagan village (l. 168–69); and dangers popularly attributed to "ancient" (and presumably pagan) tombs at the village of Kalinea (l. 201).

⁴ Roger Rémondon, "L'Égypte et la suprême résistance au Christianisme (V^e–VII^e siècles)," *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie, Cairo* 51 (1952) 63–78.

⁵ *CJ* I 11.10.3 in P. Krueger, ed., *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1929) 2. 64.

⁶ *CJ* I 11.10.5.

⁷ Procopius *Wars* I 17.11–12.

lands 2 *schoini* (= 60 stadia) in circuit and a colonate numbering 6000 cultivators, lasted until this time.⁸ The situation in western Asia Minor is much clearer thanks to the pen of John of Ephesus.

John, the Syrian Monophysite bishop of Ephesus, describes his own missionary work in western Asia Minor in his *Ecclesiastical History*.⁹ Nicknamed "the idol-breaker" and "over the pagans" (*al-ḥanephē*), he began the work of converting the pagans in the civil provinces of Asia, Caria, Lydia, and Phrygia around the year 540.¹⁰ John claimed to have redeemed "many thousands" of persons from "the error of idol-worship" in the rugged mountains of Caria near the city of Tralles. He indicates that "a great and renowned idol-temple of the pagans" stood in that district, called Dareira in the Syriac text.¹¹ The temple in question appears to have been that of the Isodromian Mother in the Meso-geis massif near Tralles mentioned in Strabo's *Geography* (9.5.19). The *-eira* ending of the locality's name recurs frequently in Lydian toponyms.¹² The "old men" of the place told John that at one time 1500 smaller temples lay under its jurisdiction, and that its priests had educated the people in customary law (*νόμος*).¹³ John indicates that the entire district was pagan in religion, and, based on his account, it appears that Dareira had a well organized local culture.

Under a provision of the Theodosian Code pagan temples reverted to the imperial fisc after being closed.¹⁴ John of Ephesus, with the approval of the government and contrary to the common practice of converting temples into churches, ordered this temple to be razed. He then supervised the construction of a new monastery on the same spot, which received extensive subsidies from the emperor Justinian (527–65). Three separate imperial rescripts confirmed the jurisdiction of the monastery at Dareira over the fourteen churches and seven monasteries also constructed in that district.¹⁵ William Mitchell Ramsay remarked long ago that "such a Christian ecclesiastical establishment

⁸ Strabo 12.3.32.

⁹ John of Ephesus, *Historia Ecclesiastica; Pars Tertia* (= *Hist. Eccl.*; CSCO 105, 106; Paris, 1934–35).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.45.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3.36.

¹² E. Honigmann, "Geographica: L'histoire ecclésiastique de Jean d'Ephèse," *Byzantion* 14 (1939) 620–21.

¹³ John of Ephesus *Hist. Eccl.* 3.36.

¹⁴ *CT* 16.10.25 in T. Mommsen, ed., *Theodosiani Libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1905) 905. Cf. Garth Fowden, "Bishops and Temples in the Eastern Roman Empire A.D. 320–435," *JTS* n.s. 29 (1978) 53ff.

¹⁵ John of Ephesus *Hist. Eccl.* 3.36.

took the place of the ancient Anatolian *hieron* as a center of social and municipal life.”¹⁶ A sixth-century inscription from Alexandria Troas indicates that former temple lands were at times organized under the administration of a monastery: “On behalf of the vow of the villages and people of St. Tryphon, and all those who make offerings in it, and all their households.”¹⁷ The name of the monastery’s saint—in this case St. Tryphon—replaced the earlier invocation of the god or goddess.¹⁸

None of this is new. John of Ephesus’s account is consistent with known evidence about temple conversions in the fourth through sixth centuries.¹⁹ Critics have, however, doubted that a large pagan population could have existed anywhere in western Asia Minor as late as 542, and, perhaps more convincingly, have felt that his final figure of 80,000 conversions in the course of a year or two was simply fantastic.²⁰ Yet the painstaking collection of information from scattered sources demonstrates the plausibility of this story.

John of Ephesus wrote another work entitled *The Lives of the Eastern Saints*, which reports not only some additional details about the conversion of western Asia Minor, but suggests a chronology as well.²¹ The biographical sketches in this work refer to ecclesiastical personnel who assisted John in Asia, many of them Syrians. In a section dated 565/6, the author notes that the “thirty years” since he first went to Constantinople were spent “on account of the conversion from the error of paganism of the districts of Asia,” during which time 80,000 persons were baptized, and 98 churches and twelve monasteries were built.²²

¹⁶ William M. Ramsay, “The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire,” idem, *Luke the Physician and Other Studies* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908) 153.

¹⁷ Henri Grégoire, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes d’Asie mineure* (Paris: Laroux, 1922) 4.

¹⁸ Michael Rostovtzeff, *Studien zur Geschichte des römischen Kolonates* (Berlin/Leipzig: Teubner, 1910) 287–88 and 288 n. 1.

¹⁹ There is an urgent need to update the list of converted temples given in Friedrich Deichmann’s article, “Frühchristliche Kirchen in antiken Heiligtümern,” *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 54 (1939) 105–36.

²⁰ Cf. the cautious approach of I. Engelhardt, *Mission und Politik in Byzanz* (Munich: Institut für Byzantinistik und Neugriechische Philologie der Universität, 1974) 12–22a, and the arbitrary reduction of the number of converts to 10,000 by Ilse Rochow, “Zu einigen oppositionellen religiösen Strömungen,” in Friedhelm Winkelmann et al., eds, *Byzanz in 7. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1978) 230. cf. Jones, *LRE*, 939.

²¹ John of Ephesus, “Lives of the Eastern Saints,” *Patrologia Orientalis* 17 (1923) 1–307; 18 (1924) 511–698; 19 (1926) 152–285. This series hereinafter cited as *PatOr*.

²² John of Ephesus *PatOr* 18. 681.

The thirty years were roughly 536–66.²³ John was already in western Asia in 542 when consecrated bishop, and had probably begun the mission some years before.²⁴ The conversion of 80,000 pagans seems a less formidable task if considered over a thirty-year period. Let us average these figures for the sake of argument. The result comes to about 2700 converts, 3.3 churches, and well under one monastery per year. We know that the typical sixth-century Anatolian village had a population of 250–700 persons.²⁵ A large village might number 1000 persons.²⁶ The figure of 80,000 can in view of these estimates be said to represent 100 or so unchristianized villages, or an average of 25 per province. This conjecture is somewhat confirmed by a comparison of the number of churches built to the number of converts: 98 churches and twelve monasteries for 80,000 persons is proportional to one institution per 720 persons, the mean size of an Anatolian village. The remarkable convergence of these figures, all drawn from different sources, suggests that John is here speaking of rural churches, built in large and medium-sized villages, and monastic foundations in the midst of small hamlets (χωρία), all of them built at a rate of 3.6 per year to serve the 3.3 villages annually converted.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 680–61.

²⁵ Some statistical data are forthcoming for the sizes of villages in sixth-century Lycia in the life of Nicholas of Hagia Sion (BHG 1347): *Hagios Nikolaos: Der heilige Nikolaos in der griechischen Kirche* 1 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1913) 1–55. The work force of the village of Arneae (εις ὅλην τὴν κόμην) which assisted stonemasons in quarrying numbered no less than 75 (ibid., 33, lines 12–14). Assuming the ratio of the work force and total population of the village to be about 1 to 3 1/2 (allowing for infant mortality, periodic outbreaks of the bubonic plague, etc.), one gets a figure of 262 persons. At the Christianized sacrifice at the village of Plenios, 200 couches (στιβάδια δικόσια) were laid (43, line 5). I take it that there was one couch for each man of the place, and that the full population of the village was thus about 700. Seven calves, 100 measures of wine, and 40 *modii* of grain were expended at Plenios (including leftovers). Comparable figures are given for sacrifices at other villages. The number of calves slaughtered was probably proportional to the population of the other villages named. Thus, only three calves, 70 measures of wine, and 30 *modii* of bread were expended at Karkabo. This village undoubtedly had a smaller population than the 700 surmised for Plenios. Nicholas performed sacrifices at other villages as well, but detailed figures are lacking; the hagiographer notes only the number of yoke of oxen slaughtered (44–45). It is in any case probable that many villages in the riverine valleys of Asia, Lydia, and Phrygia were larger than those in Lycia.

²⁶ The Metaphrastean recension of a sixth-century life of Abram the Solitary suggests this figure. The village of Taenia near Lampsacus is characterized as “a large and populous village” (κώμη . . . μεγάλη καὶ πολυάνθρωπος) PG 115, 52A. The hagiographer indicates that a large number of the villagers was converted, about 1000 persons (περί που χιλίους τὸν ἀριθμὸν ὑπάρχοντας), ibid., 60A. For the date see Rochow, “Religiöse Strömungen,” 239.

The task of breaking down the cultural ethos of rural paganism was a painstaking and much protracted business.²⁷ John's earliest collaborator was Deuterius, the Monophysite metropolitan of Caria.²⁸ Many eastern clerics and monks joined him later in the campaign. Kashish, the Monophysite bishop of Chios, arrived to help him in 556 at the latest.²⁹ Leontius the Presbyter, who collaborated with Kashish, did so before 558, as internal evidence from the text suggests.³⁰ Other persons, like a certain Abraham, "worked in Asia for many years."³¹ These fragmentary data suggest that the serviceable manpower at John's disposal increased with time. John's assistants complained at times of the "high rugged mountains" and "tiring nature of the country,"³² where villages and temples often lay isolated in high valleys and flock tenders roamed from place to place.

John of Ephesus notes in his *Ecclesiastical History* that the expense of constructing churches and monasteries was raised in part by grants from the emperor Justinian, in part from a tax laid on the newly converted villages.³³ The latter surcharge brings no surprise, nor does the imperial contribution, inasmuch as that emperor is commemorated in the inscriptions and in Procopius's work the *Aedificia* as "fond of building," (φιλόκτιστος).³⁴ To these sources of funds must be added a third hitherto unnoticed source mentioned by John in the *Lives of the Eastern Saints*. He had a friend and collaborator named Theodore, a court official who held the rank of *praepositus sacri cubiculi*, or Grand Chamberlain, a position of very great influence and honor, since its holder enjoyed direct access to the emperor and set the agenda for court business.³⁵ Theodore reportedly gave John a *kentenarion*, that is, a sum equal to 100 pounds of gold or 7200 *nomismata*, to be "sent to the

²⁷ See the rather dated observations of William M. Ramsay, "The Permanence of Religion at the Holy Places in Western Asia," in idem, *Pauline and Other Studies in Early Christian History* (3d ed.; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1906) 163–88.

²⁸ John of Ephesus *Hist. Eccl.* 2.44

²⁹ Kashish settled on Chios no later than 553, and crossed over shortly thereafter to assist John in Asia; *PatOr* 19. 162 n. 1 and 163.

³⁰ *PatOr* 18. 646.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 650.

³² This is clearly implied in John of Ephesus *PatOr* 18. 659. See below, n. 125.

³³ F. Nau, "Analyse de la seconde partie inédite de l'Histoire ecclésiastique de Jean d'Asie," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 2 (1897) 482.

³⁴ Ἰουστινιανοῦ αὐτοκράτορος [το]ῦ φιλοκτίστου. Inscr. no. 1: Ihor Ševčenko, "The Early Period of the Sinai Monastery in Light of Its Inscriptions," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 20 (1966) 262.

³⁵ John of Ephesus *PatOr* 19. 200–203. Jones, *LRE* 567–70.

regions of Asia.”³⁶ This money was almost certainly used for the construction and furnishment of churches. These were probably small basilicas and single-aisled churches with apses.³⁷ We may conjecture that artisans were at times hired to cut some fine capitals and ambos, and to improvise some fine mosaics.³⁸ The play of sunlight on white marble and richly colored mosaics was thought to provide a necessary emotional element to the conversion of the rustic pagan, whose animistic world view must have weakened but slowly in his rough surroundings.

John of Ephesus mentions the western Anatolian cults in the second part of his *Ecclesiastical History* only briefly:

In the year 542 the kindness of God visited Asia, Caria, Lydia, and Phrygia, thanks to the zeal of the victorious Justinian and by the activity of his humble servant [John of Asia]. . . When God opened the minds of [the pagans] and made them know the truth, he aided us in destroying their temples, in overturning their idols, in eradicating the sacrifices which were offered everywhere, in smashing their altars defiled by the blood of sacrifices offered to pagan gods (*aux démons*), and in cutting down the numerous trees which they worshipped, and so they became estranged from all the errors of their forefathers. The saving sign of the cross was implanted everywhere amongst them, and churches of God were founded in every place.³⁹

In *The Lives of the Eastern Saints* he recalls that the four deacons, Abraham, Kyriakos, Barhadbshabba, and Sergius, were “strengthened to abolish paganism, overthrow idolatry, uproot altars, destroy temples

³⁶ John of Ephesus *PatOr* 19. 204.

³⁷ For architectural examples of a rural monastic basilica (ante 462) and a small three-apsed basilica (Justinianic or earlier) possibly built within a temple enclosure, see, Arthur C. Headlam, *Ecclesiastical Sites in Isauria (Cilicia Trachea)* (London: Macmillan, 1893) 9–20. The Koja Kalessi monastery had three churches (see maps). For examples of single-apsed churches, see, Robert W. Edwards, “Two New Byzantine Churches in Cilicia,” *Anatolian Studies* 32 (1982) 23–32. The relative isolation of sites was no impediment to the production of well-cut blocks and the ornamental carving of lintels, arches, and cornices (see photos). The record is silent on mosaics.

³⁸ *Ibid.* Building materials were at times reused from abandoned temples. A certain presbyter and *kourator* named Kyriakos is reported by an inscription to have ordered the construction of an ambo from the debris of the Apollo Klarios temple near Colophon. These marble fragments bear pre-Christian Greek inscriptions. T. Macridy, “Antiquités de Notion II,” *Jahresheft des Österr. Archaeologische Instituts in Wien* 15 (1912) 37–40 and 55–56.

³⁹ See n. 33.

(*ναοί*) and cut down trees.”⁴⁰ These statements are consistent with those of fifth- and sixth-century Greek texts dealing with the Anatolian countryside and with other regions of the Mediterranean basin as well.⁴¹ There are many attested cases of temple conversions, the destruction of sacred trees and groves, and the suppression of rural shamans. Let us consider some of the more striking texts.

The fifth-century life of St. Hypatius describes his missionary work in Phrygia and Bithynia. Of the latter province the hagiographer notes:

[Hypatius] had zeal for God and converted many places in Bithynia from the error of idol-worship. If he heard that there was a tree or some other such [cult object] which persons worshipped, he went there at once taking along his disciples the monks, cut it down, and burned it. Thus they became Christians in part.⁴²

This text confirms the surmise of Johannes Geffcken that the monks were the “shock troops” of Christianization.⁴³ The rustics became Christians “in part”: not all of them were converted, nor did their daily customs change that radically. Sacred trees are reported in the sixth century as well. In Lycia, the men of the village of Plakoma complained of an ancient cypress tree, eighty feet tall and seven feet in diameter, “in which there dwells the spirit of an unclean idol; it harms men and the tilled lands.”⁴⁴ Nicholas, the hegumen of the local monastery of Hagia Sion, ordered the men of the village to cut down the tree. When they refused, the task fell to the monk himself. Louis Robert cites this text to prove that the cult of Artemis Eleuthera survived into the sixth century.⁴⁵ The fear which the villagers expressed of the idol (*ξοάνον*) suggests that an unconverted idol temple existed within their memory, and that demonic powers were ascribed to its deity by the recent converts, as they learnt in Psalm 95: 4–5: “The gods of the pagans are demons.” Sacred groves are mentioned as well. In the mid-sixth century the monk Theodore of Sykeon in Galatia

⁴⁰ John of Ephesus, *PatOr* 18. 659.

⁴¹ Stephen McKenna, *Paganism and Pagan Survivals in Spain up to the Fall of the Visigothic Kingdom* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1938) 104 and 129.

⁴² Callinicus of Rufiniana, *De Vita S. Hypatii Liber* [BHG 760] (*Seminarii Philologorum Bonnensis Sodales*; Leipzig: Teubner, 1895) 8.

⁴³ Geffcken, *Greco-Roman Paganism*, 170.

⁴⁴ *Hagios Nikolaos* (ed. Anrich), 13–15.

⁴⁵ Louis Robert, “Villes et monnaies de Lycie,” *Hellenica* 10 (1955) 197–99.

inspected a site, probably a sacred grove, where Artemis was thought to appear:

He heard about a place which was about eight miles away called Arkea, which was impossible for anyone to approach because of the popular clamor that Artemis lived there with many demons and harmed people unto death. Astonished at this rumor, he ran to that place. . . and spent the entire afternoon in the places believed to be sacred to Artemis. [But nothing happened.]⁴⁶

The accuracy of this typology shows that the memory of the Artemis cult lingered in this district. Artemis' epiphany in the afternoon, holding court in a grove with a group of lesser deities, is attested in the life of St. Symphorianus of Augustodunum in third-century Gaul, another region affected by Celtic cultural forms.⁴⁷ Sacred groves are seemingly attested in northern Syria as well.⁴⁸

Memories of the old cults seem to have been fed by rustic shamans, who claimed to be able to predict the future and find lost objects. Hypatius is reputed to have conversed with such a man, who asserted that revelations came to him at night, after he had told the person seeking guidance to sacrifice a cow, a sheep, or a bird at the idol temple; "angels" sometimes made direct revelations to him, he claimed.⁴⁹ Our author adds that he was an "old man" (γέρων), a term often used for monks.⁵⁰ It will be recalled that John of Ephesus's men destroyed many rural temples and altars. Until that time, abandoned temples—such as the shrine of Apollo Klarios at Colophon⁵¹—littered the Anatolian countryside, and a person bent on sacrificing could usually slip in at night and perform rites, all this notwithstanding the fourth-century

⁴⁶ *Vie de Théodore de Sykéon* (trans. and ed. A. -J. Festugière; Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1970) 1. 13–14. Cf. Festugière's note, *ibid.*, 2. 179.

⁴⁷ "Passio S. Symphoriani Martyris," *Acta Primorum Martyrum*, (ed., T. Ruinart; Amsterdam: Wetsten, 1713) 82. Symphorianus lived in the town of Augustodunum during the reign of Aurelian (270–275).

⁴⁸ *Vie de Syméon*, 166. See note 3 above.

⁴⁹ *Vita S. Hypatii*, 90–91. Cf. the condemnation of angel-worship by the Thirty-fifth Canon of the Synod of Laodicea (saec. IV): "Christians are forbidden to abide in the church of God, and depart, and summon angels, and make assemblies. If anyone is found in this secret idolatry, let him be anathema." G. A. Rhalles and W. Potles, *SynAGMA tōn theiōn kai hierōn kanonōn* (Athens: Chartophylakos, 1853) 3. 201. The cult was, in fact, pagan. See now: A. R. Sheppard, "Pagan Cults of Angels in Roman Asia Minor," *Talanta* 12/13 (1980/81) 77–101.

⁵⁰ Cf. John Moschus, *Pratum Spirituale*, PG 87. 2851–3112, *passim*, for frequent references.

⁵¹ See note 38 above.

Constantinian legislation and the subsequent laws against sacrifice collected in the fifth-century Theodosian Code.⁵² The “old men” who told John of Ephesus about the history of the idol temple at Dareira may well have been priests of the sort described here. A local diviner is reported in the life of Theodore of Sykeon. The man reputedly had the power to dispatch spirits and bring down clouds of locusts on his clients’ enemies, for a fee it would seem. He owned magic books—this in a Galatian village—and had not yet been baptized—this in the mid-sixth century.⁵³

John of Ephesus’s subordinates held clerical ranks from deacon all the way up to bishop, but all had previously been monks. Most of them were Syrians, but there were also Armenians and Iranian Aramaeans as well.⁵⁴ Their effectiveness in converting western Asia Minor may have been hindered to some extent by a lack of familiarity with the local dialects. There is absolutely no epigraphic evidence for the survival of the Phrygian language beyond the fourth century CE.⁵⁵ The prevailing language was the local Greek dialect, barbarous to Atticized ears and equally strange to the Syrian monks, who learned Greek as a second language in their provincial schools, in the marketplace, and in the Christian scriptures.⁵⁶ The difficulties and slow progress which they

⁵² CT XVI.10. For a detailed commentary, see, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmundian Constitutions* (trans., C. Pharr et al.; Princeton, 1952) 472–76. See also, Geffcken, *Greco-Roman Paganism*, 223–25 and Jones, *LRE*, 938–39. For the chronology of the pre-Justinianic legislation against paganism see Périclès-Pierre Joannou, *La législation impériale et la christianisation de l’empire romain (311–476)* (Rome: Pontificum Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1972).

⁵³ Books of this genre were still common in the sixth-century cities. E.g., the pagan trials conducted by the imperial judge Amantius at Antioch ca. 554–58 turned up books, idols, and service vessels; *Vie de Syméon* 1. 143.

⁵⁴ The four deacons Abraham, Kyriakos, Barhadbshabba, and Sergios—more typically of the lower cleric ranks—were, respectively, a Syrian, a Greek or Armenian from Maiferkat-Martyropolis, an Aramaeo-Persian, and an Aramean from the village of Ar’ra Rabtha in Ingilene; *PatOr* 18. 658–59.

⁵⁵ For a recent summary of the hellenization of Phrygia, see Speros Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971) 45–49.

⁵⁶ John of Ephesus relates that a certain Elijah and Theodore began their careers as traders operating between Sasanid Persia and their hometown Amida, and later settled in Melitene to practice eleemosynarian activities. In all these places the *koinē* was Greek or Syriac (*PatOr* 18. 576–79). Another figure found in the “Lives of the Eastern Saints” is a certain Thomas of an ethnically Armenian family of satrapal status from Armenia IV or Balbitene. He must have learned Greek grammar locally before studying rhetoric and law (“the wisdom of the Greeks”) at Antioch and Berytos (*ibid.*, 284–85). One Armenian named Aaron, who rose to the rank of presbyter, entered the monastery at an

made have been noted. Other sources suggest that the most successful converters of pagans were monks who, in youth, had a stake in the village economy, knew the rudiments of agriculture, spoke the local *koinē*, had friends and relatives in the community, and understood the yearnings which lay behind the local cults. The case of fifth-century Phrygia, prior to its Christianization, is illustrated in the life of St. Hypatius:

There were not even one or two [monks] in Phrygia at that time, not even one or two here and there, and if a church existed somewhere the clerics were indifferent because of the country. . . . When the population heard about Hypatius and were amazed that such a man came from their country, they all became Christians, little by little.⁵⁷

An analysis of the lives of St. Nicholas of Hagia Sion and of St. Theodore of Sykeon shows that this was often accomplished by the monks' taking over some of the functions of the rustic shaman, but only after Christianizing the rite (*Ritenchristianisierung*). It is generally recognized by students of early Anatolian religion that pre-Christian and even pre-Greek aetiologies and customs are passed on through the hagiographic lives under consideration here.⁵⁸ Only a person who knew local culture thoroughly could accomplish conversions through these means.

Nicholas was born in the Lycian countryside in the early sixth century, became a monk in youth, and joined the monastery at Hagia Sion.⁵⁹ R. M. Harrison's survey of the Lycian hinterland has tentatively identified the site of this monastery in the hamlet of Karabel.⁶⁰ There are no traces of ecclesiastical buildings anywhere in rural Lycia dated

early age. If he learned Greek—and this is problematical—it must have been from the Septuagint and New Testament texts (*ibid.*, 641–42). A certain Tribounos from the village of Beth Roumanet in Sophanene learned to write Greek and Syriac from his parents, who were apparently ethnic Armenians (*ibid.*, 661). These texts suggest that even the well educated speaker of Aramaic or Armenian must have required some time to acculturate himself to the rural speech of western Asia Minor. Nothing is in fact known about the linguistic skills of John of Ephesus's catechists named in n. 54 above. Their piety must in any case have exceeded their knowledge of the local *koinē*.

⁵⁷ *Vita S. Hypatii*, 8.

⁵⁸ E. Kirsten, "Artemis von Ephesos und Eleuthera von Myra mit Seitblick auf St. Nicolaus und auf Commagene," in S. Sahin et al., eds., *Studien zur Religion und Kultur Kleinasiens: Festschrift für Karl Dörner* (Leiden: Brill, 1978) 465.

⁵⁹ Anrich, *Hagios Nikolaos*, 4, lines 2–3 and p. 7.

⁶⁰ R. M. Harrison, "Churches and Chapels of Central Lycia," *Anatolian Studies* 13 (1963) 117–51.

earlier than the sixth century.⁶¹ It seems quite improbable, considering the similar case of western Asia Minor, that the Lycian countryside became widely Christianized until after the rural churches and monasteries were built and staffed.

The existence of a cult centered on a sacred cypress tree has already been mentioned. Nicholas's biographer also mentions an "ancient spring" (ἀρχαία πηγή) which caused the farmers of the village of Arnabandea anxiety after a woman was supposed to have been cast in it by a spirit dwelling in it. The spring's waters had become turbulent and muddy, and men and animals feared to drink from it.⁶² Sacred springs, often enclosed in temple precincts, abounded in rural Anatolia.⁶³ This site, too, seems to have been a cult center prior to the arrival of the monks, for the villagers refer to Nicholas's ability to "free the sacred site at the spring" (τὸ ἱερὸν εἰς ἀγιασμόν ἡλευθέρωσας) from the spirit or pagan god.⁶⁴ Previous catechization had convinced the people that the old gods were harmful demons. Nicholas arrived at the spring, but a lacuna in the text hides from us the immediate sequel.⁶⁵ The people seem not to have overcome their fear, however, because later on Nicholas was persuaded to divine for "hidden water" (ὑδωρ κεκρυμμένον) near the village.⁶⁶ The Anatolian shamans claimed to have power over geological and meteorological phenomena. Nicholas took care, however, to perform the service with a gospel book

⁶¹ Ibid., 148–51.

⁶² Anrich, *Hagios Nikolaos*, 16–17.

⁶³ A temple complex built at a spring is attested for Laodikea Kombusta (present-day Ladik) in Phrygia. The spring or ἀγιασμός was channeled into a rectangular cement tank. The shrine was subsequently converted into a Christian building, probably a church. A fourth-century inscription records the extensive building program of a certain bishop Eugenius. It included stoas, tetrastoas, murals, mosaics, a reservoir, a propylaeon, and a variety of stone-cut ornamentation. W. M. Calder suggests that an earlier, pre-Diocletianic church which was destroyed in the great persecution preceded it. He bases his hypothesis on an expression found in the building inscription: "having restored [it] from the foundations" (W. M. Calder, "A Journey around the Proseilemmene," *Klio* 10 [1910] 233–34). The site may thus have been jointly used by Christians and pagans in its earlier days. The synoikism of pagan and Christian at sacred springs, with each group claiming cures by its own deity or saint, finds some confirmation in a thought provoking if problematical text dealing with a sacred spring at Khonai-Kolossos. For the text see "Le miracle de saint Michel à Colosses," *PatOr* 4. 542–62 (BHG 1282). For a preliminary commentary see Trombley, *Survival of Paganism*, 158–65.

⁶⁴ Anrich, *Hagios Nikolaos*, 17, line 2.

⁶⁵ Anrich suggests a possible sequel by quoting a different text, *ibid.*, 17–18 n. 2.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 19, lines 7–9ff.

(μεγαλείου) and an array of crosses at hand.⁶⁷ On another occasion, Nicholas was challenged by the *deuterarios* of the monastery when he dismissed the stonemasons who were cutting marble for the apse of a basilica because of a planned pilgrimage to Palestine. Nicholas replied to him: "The stone obeys me" (ἐμοὶ ὑπακούει ὁ λίθος).⁶⁸ Some other cases of the adoption of shamanistic practices to the needs of the recently Christianized villages will be seen in the life of Theodore of Sykeon.

The pagan sacrifice, banned once again by the Justinianic law of 529, lay deep in the ethos of rural village life.⁶⁹ Whatever its cultic significance, it functioned as the symbol and instrument of the community's solidarity. Nicholas and the monks of Hagia Sion made a remarkable concession to their recently converted congregations by sponsoring sacrifices which used Christian cult formulae and were held at rural chapels. Thirteen such incidents are reported in the life of St. Nicholas.⁷⁰ I quote from one of the more complete descriptions:

The clerics from Plenios came in a procession with the Christ-beloved people with crosses and met Nicholas at the chapel of St. George. He followed them from there with seven calves. After they went into the chapel . . . he slaughtered (literally, "sacrificed") the seven calves. The crowds assembled and two hundred couches were laid. [Nicholas] also brought one hundred measures of wine and forty *modii* of wheat. All ate and were filled, and gave thanks to God who gave grace to his servant Nicholas. Left over were sixty measures of wine, 100 loaves of bread, and four measures of oil.⁷¹

Although the example of the Israelite king David was cited as the basis for these acts, the details given here fit the typology of the pagan sacrifice.⁷² The sacrifice (*θυσία*) survived in Turkish popular religion until Ottoman times as the *kurban*, and is attested as late as 1570, when the *dermatikon* or priest's share was apportioned in the ancient Hellenic manner.⁷³

⁶⁷ Ibid., 20, lines 3–4.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 33, lines 7–8.

⁶⁹ CJI 11.9.4.

⁷⁰ Anrich, *Hagios Nikolaos*, 42–45.

⁷¹ Ibid., 55–56.

⁷² Ibid., 55, lines 16–18.

⁷³ Speros Vryonis, "Religious Changes and Patterns in the Balkans, 14th–16th Centuries," in H. Birnbaum and S. Vryonis, eds., *Aspects of the Balkans* (The Hague/Paris: Mouton, 1972) 174.

The adaptation of Christianity to the older pagan culture occurred also in Galatia. Theodore of Sykeon, hegumen of a prominent local monastery near Ankyra, flourished in the late sixth and early seventh centuries (ob. 613).⁷⁴ The existence here of a grove sacred to Artemis and of a pagan shaman has already been noticed. Peter Brown's article on the holy man in late antiquity omits reference to the local monk as supplanter of the rural diviner, and as one who proved that the "magic" of the new religion was superior to that of the old cults.⁷⁵ For example, Theodore is reputed to have broken the grip of the aforementioned pagan diviner named Theodotos Kourappos over a village near the monastery. Kourappos in the end confessed that his powers were inferior, burned his magic books, loosed the spells he had cast on persons, animals, and buildings, and submitted to baptism.⁷⁶

Theodore of Sykeon was born in the countryside and remained there all his life, except for visits to Constantinople and Palestine, and his brief tenure as bishop of Anastasiopolis, a provincial town of Galatia Prote.⁷⁷ He knew the superstitions of the rustics, and they attributed great powers to him.⁷⁸ On one occasion, when some workmen shifted a large stone atop a quarry and it rolled downhill toward an apple tree, Theodore is said to have grieved for the tree, and to have ordered the stone to turn aside. The hagiographer adds: "At once, like an intelligent person (ὡς ἄνθρωπος συνετός), it inclined away from its attack on the tree."⁷⁹ Steeped in primitive animism, the Galatians ascribed an "attack" to the stone, and mastery over its movements to the monk. A very striking case is recorded in connection with hailstorms:

In the village of Reake a wild cloud periodically attacked the land, and would cast hail upon the vines when they were ripe. . . . Theodore led a procession around the vineyards and fields, and having made a prayer, he stuck four crosses of wood into the ground at

⁷⁴ See above, n. 46. Cf. Trombley, "Monastic Foundations," 45–51.

⁷⁵ Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *JRomS* 61 (1971) 80–101.

⁷⁶ Festugière, *Vie de Théodore*, 1. 34. All citations hereinafter are from the first volume of this work.

⁷⁷ M. Lequien, *Oriens Christianus* (Paris, 1740) 1. 485–86. The relevance of the life of Theodore to questions of ecclesiastical land management has been little more than noted in passing. See Jones, *LRE*, 903, 916; G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1981) 225–26, 496.

⁷⁸ Cf. the Anatolian superstition about evil spirits which manifested themselves as "black dogs" (Festugière, *Vie de Théodore*, 85, 126).

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 47–48.

opposite ends of the boundary (ἐκ τετραάντου).⁸⁰

Here we have a "wild cloud" (νέφος ἄγριον) which "attacks" the fields. Nilsson mentions the use of *horoi* in the configuration of "magic circles" to protect fields in pre-Christian Greek lands.⁸¹ The respective practices seem to be identical and dictated by rustic common sense. On another occasion Theodore inserted a cross into the bank of the Sangaris river which was undermining the arable land of the monastery at Sykeon, and ordered it to change its bed.⁸² Such practices predated the Christian religion and the monks who supervised the new congregations.

The central plateau of Anatolia was at best marginal agricultural country. Rainfall varied from year to year, and droughts were common.⁸³ Theodore is reputed many times to have directed rain-bearing clouds to parched fields.⁸⁴ This, too, was a common practice among the pre-Christian shamans known as *nephodioktai* or "cloud-drivers."⁸⁵

There is much else of significance for the present discussion in the life of Theodore of Sykeon, but I shall limit my remarks to the above. It suffices here to say that the pre-Christian ethos remained quite strong in the rural and mountainous districts of Anatolia. The life of Theodore mentions the settlement of many solitary monks in the upland districts of Galatia.⁸⁶ The experience of the monastic catechists must have been quite similar throughout the sixth century, wherever they went.

We have yet to describe the precise methods used to Christianize villages. A sixth-century text, the life of Abraham the solitary, offers some important details about this process.⁸⁷ The village of Taenia lay near Lampsacus in northwestern Anatolia and was regarded as a "large village" (κώμη μεγάλη καὶ πολυάνθρωπος), having more than 1000

⁸⁰ Ibid., 45.

⁸¹ Martin P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* (Munich: Beck, 1967) 1. 113–14.

⁸² Festugière, *Vie de Théodore*, 40–41. See also 46, 111, and 113.

⁸³ Still useful is the work of Max Cary, *The Geographic Background of Greek and Roman History* (Oxford, 1949).

⁸⁴ Festugière, *Vie de Théodore*, 12. The ritual was performed before the apse of a rural chapel. When Theodore made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, it was the Galatians in his entourage who asserted his capacity to summon a rain-bearing cloud from the west (44). Theodore is reputed to have performed a similar act for the metropolitan of Pessinus (81).

⁸⁵ See below, notes 96 and 97.

⁸⁶ Festugière, *Vie de Théodore*, 43.

⁸⁷ *Vita S. Abramii*, PG 115. 44B–77A.

inhabitants.⁸⁸ Sacrifice and idol-worship were practiced there, and an unclosed temple still stood.⁸⁹ The bishop of Lampsacus had sent numerous presbyters and deacons to convert the place, but without success.⁹⁰ He then called upon Abraham, a local solitary monk. Abraham entered the village, endured considerable physical abuse, and in a year's time converted the population of Taenia, while teaching them the ecclesiastical canons and scriptures.⁹¹ The village was deemed "converted," and the bishop of Lampsacus thereupon furnished regular clergy.⁹² Pagan and Christian, however, must have continued to live side by side for some time. One is reminded of the island of Philae in Egypt, where Christian bishops and a pagan priesthood led their communities side by side for about 150 years, until 537.⁹³ The life of Abraham does not, unfortunately, indicate that churches were built, or whether the temple was closed, dismantled, or converted into a church. It is significant that a large number of the new clergy was selected from the recently converted congregation of Taenia, whose members had been Christians no longer than a year.⁹⁴ It would not be surprising if certain types of *Ritenchristianisierung* arose under these conditions.

There remain to be considered briefly some fragments of evidence which attest to the survival of cult and the Christianization of rite in the seventh through the tenth centuries.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 52A.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 56A.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 52B.

⁹¹ Ibid., 60A.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ A dedicatory inscription of Smetchem the protostolist stands in the temple of Isis at Philae, bearing the date 20 December 452 CE. Also present is the inscription of Damonikos, Count of the *limes* of the Thebaid, who repaired the wall at Philae (dated 11-12 December 449 or 468). The latter inscription mentions the bishop Abba Daniel, who was undoubtedly the prelate of the place, which was an episcopal see as early as 362 (Le Quien, *Oriens Christianus* 2. 613-14). The temple of Isis was not converted into the martyrion of St. Stephen until much later, around 537, during the episcopate of a certain Theodore. It would seem that the pagan and Christian communities coexisted throughout the late fourth and fifth centuries, probably down to the cleansing of the temple mentioned by Procopius (*Wars* I.19.37). Procopius mentions a pagan priesthood there when Narses Kamsarakan allegedly demolished the temples. The archaeological evidence does not completely bear out the historian's account, inasmuch as the buildings are still standing. He indicates that the Blemmyes and Nobadae sacrificed at the temple. This fact is not, in itself, inconsistent with the survival of a hereditary Egyptian priesthood there until ca. 537. See, Etienne Bernand, *Les inscriptions grecques et latines de Philae II: Haut et Bas Empire* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1969) 227-32 (no. 194), 237-44 (no. 197), 263-67 (no. 203).

⁹⁴ *Vita S. Abramii*, 60D.

The Canons of the Quinisextum Council, held at Constantinople in 691–692, indicate the survival of pagan cult practices at that time.⁹⁵ Most of the forbidden behavior reflects a continuation of sixth-century practices. For example, the Sixty-first Canon condemned diviners of various types.⁹⁶ Among these were the so-called *nephodioktai* or “cloud-drivers” mentioned in the fourth-century pseudo-Justin, who reputedly “drive clouds wherever they wish by certain invocations to cast hail and immoderate rainfall.”⁹⁷ In the competition between Christian and pagan in the countryside, monks like Theodore of Sykeon had in effect become rural “rainmakers,” but the older sort who used pagan invocations still found employment in the late seventh century.

The Sixty-first Canon also condemned “animal leaders.” This seemingly innocuous practice belonged to the pagan subculture, as a text from the chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor shows:

In 544 a certain man named Andrew appeared from the land of Italy, wandering from village to village and having with him a yellow dog, which was blind and performed wonders upon command. While he stood in the agora with a crowd round about, the man was given small rings of gold, silver and iron which he concealed from the dog. He set them in the ground, heaped it into a mound, and bade the dog perform. It took and gave each person his own ring. The dog similarly delivered by name the coins of different emperors which had been mixed together. While a crowd of men and women stood by, the dog indicated upon being asked which women were pregnant, and which men were fornicators and adulterers, miserly and generous. And it told all with truth, wherefore they said: “It has the spirit of Python.”⁹⁸

The Canon also condemned the purveyors of amulets.⁹⁹ Theodore of Sykeon is reported a century earlier to have hurried to the village of

⁹⁵ For the text of the Canons, see: Rhalles and Potles, *Syntagma* (Athens, 1852) 2. 295–554. Cf. Périklès-Pierre Joannou, *Discipline générale antique (II^e–IX^e s.)* (Rome, 1962) 98–241. See also, Charles Hefele, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux* (trans. H. LeClercq; Paris, 1909) 3/1 560–81, and John Bury, *A History of the Later Roman Empire from Arcadius to Irene (395 A.D. to 800 A.D.)* (London, 1889) 2. 393–96.

⁹⁶ Rhalles and Potles, *Syntagma*, 2. 442–43.

⁹⁷ Ps. Justin, *Quaestiones et Responsiones ad Orthodoxos*, PG 6. 1277C–D.

⁹⁸ Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronographia* (ed. C. de Boor; Leipzig: Teubner, 1883) 1. 224.

⁹⁹ See note 96 for citation. For some examples of amulets, see: Campbell Bonner, “Two Studies in Syncretistic Amulets,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 85 (1942) 466–71; idem, *Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor, 1950); and SEG 31 (1984) lemmata 844, 1398, and 1399.

Apokoumis where the people lay sick from the foul meat they had boiled in a cauldron and eaten. Upon his prayer, all recovered except one of the headmen. His brother had not awaited the prayer of the monk, but ran instead to a woman who performed invocations and made amulets. The man is reputed to have died as soon as the device was attached to him.¹⁰⁰ Want of space prevents a more full analysis of the Quinisextan Canons here.

Pagan cult practices are attested in the eighth century as well. The cult of Kybele seems to have persisted in Caria, one of the provinces evangelized by John of Ephesus. Following a description of the cult of Kybele, Cosmas of Jerusalem reports: "Certain irrational pagans in the mountains of Caria practice self-castration even until the present day, as the story goes, gripped by this ancient custom."¹⁰¹ Pagan diviners continued to ply their trade in the towns of the empire, as when the Arabs raided Pergamum in 717:

When Maslama [the emir] reached Pergamum, he besieged it and took it by the permission of God. . . . By the admonitions of a certain sorcerer (*magos*), the citizens brought a pregnant woman and killed her. After taking the fetus and boiling it in a cauldron in a sacrifice abominable to God, all who wished to wage war dipped in the cuffs of the right hand. Because of this they were delivered to the enemy.¹⁰²

The chronicler makes no mention of the bishop of Pergamum, who must have argued heatedly with the citizens (*οἱ τῆς πόλεως*) about their intended act. This report was undoubtedly published to discourage desperate resort to magic when towns came under siege—as often happened in seventh- and eighth-century Anatolia.¹⁰³ The ninth-century life of St. Ioannikios mentions a rural seer (*μαγομάντις*) named Gourias, a non-Greek, non-Christian name, who practiced poisoning and magic arts (*μαγικὰ ἔργα*). The man lived in the country-

¹⁰⁰ Festugière, *Vie de Théodore*, 113.

¹⁰¹ Kosmas of Jerusalem, *Scholia in Gregorii Nazianzeni Carmina*, PG 38. 502.

¹⁰² Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 390–91. Bury conjectures that the *magos* in question here was one of the hekatontarchs or centurions mentioned in the Sixty-first Canon of the Quinisextum. Jones, *LRE* 2 (1889) 398. For this form of divination, see, Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 8.14.5.

¹⁰³ The most convenient summary of the Arab raids is still E. W. Brooks, "The Successors of Heraclius to 717," *Cambridge Medieval History* (1913) 2. 391–417. Cf. the translations of al-Tabarī and other early Arabic texts in idem, "The Arabs in Asia Minor (641–750), from Arabic Sources," *JHS* 8 (1898) 182ff.

side of the Thrakesion theme.¹⁰⁴ There is, finally, a tenth-century case of *Ritenchristianisierung* from Caria. The life of Paul the Younger of Mt. Latros describes it thus:

A drought and generally severe shortage of water gripped Miletus. Certain like-minded men, not less than forty of them, assembled from different villages, formed a procession, and went up to the peak of the mountain with hymns beloved to God. This peak was not only very high, but very difficult to climb. An extremely large stone lies on the peak. This stone was called sacred from of old.¹⁰⁵

Many miracles were thought to occur through the agency of the stone. Hermann Usener has pointed out that stone fetishes were common in pre-Greek Anatolia.¹⁰⁶ The cult of this particular stone seems to have lasted through all phases of religious transformation in western Asia Minor.¹⁰⁷ The hagiographer also mentions a very ancient iron cross which stood on the peaks beside the stone.¹⁰⁸ It is conceivable—but hardly proveable—that this cross was set in place by John of Ephesus's monks four centuries earlier. Since then the cult formulae had become Christian, but the practices still bore a striking resemblance to their pagan predecessors.

The evidence so far cited has immense significance for rural Greece between the sixth and tenth centuries, particularly for the Peloponnese. There is no sound evidence for the establishment of monasteries on mainland Greece before the ninth century. When they were founded, monasteries were usually put in the coastlands, in places like Aegina, lower Phocis, and Thessalonica, to name a few.¹⁰⁹ It is unlikely that the

¹⁰⁴ *Vita S. Ioannicii*, *ActaSS*, Nov. IV, 395a–396c. For the development of ascetic practices among pagan holy men, hermitism, pilgrimage, and their movement to the countryside in the fifth century and after, see Geffcken, *Greco-Roman Paganism*, 240–41. The Gourias incident fits this typology.

¹⁰⁵ *Vita S. Pauli Iunioris in Monte Latro* (BHG 1474) *AnBoll* 11 (1892) 53–54.

¹⁰⁶ Hermann Usener, "Übersehenes," *KS* 4 (Leipzig/Berlin: Teubner, 1913) 198.

¹⁰⁷ See above, nn. 16, 27.

¹⁰⁸ *Vita S. Pauli Iunioris*, 55. At other times crosses were cut on temple walls or cult effigies. Cf. the inscription at Philae: "The Cross + conquered. May it always conquer! +++" (Bernand, *Inscriptions de Philae*, no. 201, pp. 256–67). The unknown group which christianized Eleusis in Attica cut crosses on the chest of the Marcus Aurelius shield bust. Otfried Deubner, "Zu den grossen Propyläen von Eleusis," *Deutsches Archäolog. Institut, Athenische Abteilung, Mitteilungen* 62 (1937) 73–81. The cross was cut on the Gorgoneion for obvious reasons (*ibid.*, 75 and pl. 39). The act presumably dates from the dismantling of the sacred site.

¹⁰⁹ Athanasia housed and supported monks at Aegina (ante ca. 860), and eventually established a monastery for women (*ActaSS*, Aug. III, p. 170d–e [BHG 180]). Hosios

rustics were largely converted without the steady catechetical work so abundantly attested for western Asia Minor. Greek urban religious life had strong ties to the local and rural temples. This allegiance was transferred to the basilicas as more citizens became Christian.¹¹⁰ It should be borne in mind in this connection that the cities of the later Roman Empire often had substantial pagan populations even at the end of the sixth century. John of Ephesus, our best witness, reports large numbers of pagans in eastern cities like Edessa, Antioch, Baalbek, and Ḥarrān.¹¹¹ The last-mentioned town was largely pagan at the time of the Arab conquest, as al-Balādhurī reports, and even beyond.¹¹² *The Miracles of John and Cyrus*, an untranslated text full of information about the crypto-pagans of Alexandria, dates from the early seventh century, and papyri attest the survival of the Nile River cults in the eighth century.¹¹³ Based on analogous evidence like this and what is known about Anatolia, we should not err in supposing that pagans continued to live in Athens and other towns of Greece well past the beginning of the Slavic *Landnahme* in the late sixth century, and that the countryside had its share of ethnically Greek pagans whose devotion to the chthonic deities had changed little since antiquity.

The temple complex at Lykosoura in Arcadia furnishes a case in point. It housed the cults of the chthonic Demeter, Despoina, Artemis, and Anytos. A single-aisled Christian basilica of sixth-century date was erected there. It served, perhaps, as the locus for a competing martyr cult and for a *prosmonarios*, an ecclesiastic who oversaw the temenos now dismantled and watched for the practitioners of proscribed

Lukas (ob. 935) founded such an institution in Phocis in the second half of the ninth century (PG 111. 441–80 [BHG 994]). Theodora entered a monastery in Thessalonike only after migrating from Aegina with her relatives and other refugees because of Arab sea raids after 826/7 (Arsenij, *Zhitie i Podvigi sv. Theodora Solunskoj* [Jurjev: Mattisen, 1899]) 11–12 (BHG 1737). For chronology see Gabriel Welter, *Aegina* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1938) 111.

¹¹⁰ This problem still awaits definitive study.

¹¹¹ Rochow, "Religiöse Strömungen," 231–42; idem, "Die Heidenprozesse unter den Kaisern Tiberios II Konstantinos und Maurikios," in F. Winkelmann, ed., *Studien zum 7. Jahrhundert in Byzanz* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1976) 120–30.

¹¹² The emir ʿIyadh ibn Ghamn accepted separate capitulations from the Christian and pagan (*al-Harnāniyah*) factions of Ḥarrān. Al-Balādhurī, *The Origins of the Islamic State . . . The Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916) 272–73. The persistence of this cult is noted in the eighth century: "[Marwan] was of the heresy of the Epicureans or Automatistai, partaking of the impiety of the pagans who inhabit Ḥarrān" (Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 426). Rochow, "Religiöse Strömungen," 234–36.

¹¹³ Ibid., 241–42.

cults.¹¹⁴ The Appendix to the eighth-century *Ekloga* of Leo III, a simplified law code then in use, observes: "Let apostates who make sacrifices and temples be denounced by every person. If they had become Christians from pagans, and had been baptized, they shall be executed."¹¹⁵ It would not be surprising if such behavior persisted at Lykosoura during the troubled period of the Slavic *Landnahme* in the Peloponnese. It is but a short jump from this time into the ninth century, when the inhabitants of Maina were converted to Christianity during the reign of the Byzantine emperor Basil I (869–86).

Our source for this event, the *De administrando imperio* of the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, is quite clear in its main points: the citizens of Maina were not Slavs but descendants of the ancient Greeks, they were called *hellēnes* by the local inhabitants, and they claimed to have been idolators in ancient times.¹¹⁶ Another section of this text has been overlooked. It states: "They have paid an agreed sum of four hundred *nomismata* [as their tax assessment] since ancient times." It would seem that the imperial administration had always remained in touch with Maina and that the series of tax registers dating back to the sixth century remained unbroken, or was known to be unbroken, in the ninth century. The government, anxious to keep its tenuous grip on the coastlands of Greece, made no demands on the people of Maina in the area of cult, and defended them against the Slavic tribes as long as the required tax monies were paid.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ I have myself visited the site and viewed the objects in the Lykosoura Museum, including coin finds from the reign of Tiberius Constantine (578–82). The coins are not cited by K. Kourouniotes, *Katalogos tou Mouseiou Lykosouras* (Athens: Sakellariou, 1911). For general bibliography, see R. Stillwell et al., eds., *The Princeton Index of Classical Sites* (Princeton, 1976) 537. The erection of a chapel (εὐκτήριον) and staffing it with a *prosmonarios* is attested at the sacred spring of Khonai. Christian and pagan alike continued to frequent the site. A converted pagan erected the structure. This aspect of the story appears to be accurate, despite other mythological elements found in this text. F. Nau, "Le miracle de Saint Michel à Colosses," *PatOr* 4. 542–62 (BHG 1282).

¹¹⁵ *Ecloga Leonis et Constantini cum Appendice*, Appendix 4.20 (ed. A. C. Monferratus; Athens: Fratrum Perri, 1889) 66–67.

¹¹⁶ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio* (ed. G. Moravcsik; trans. R. Jenkins; Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967) 236.

¹¹⁷ This thesis has never been put forward. Cf. A. Bon, *Le Peloponnèse jusqu'au 1204* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951). It is consistent with the toleration shown the neo-Manichaean Paulician sect in Phrygia and Lycaonia, and later in Armenia, down to the end of the reign of Nicephorus I (803–11). These sectarians of the "Manichaean abomination" were kept in the countryside to preserve the military manpower of the eastern frontier. See A. A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes I: La dynastie d'Amorium (820–867)* (Brussels: Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales, 1935) 227–28. Their subsequent persecution proved to be a politico-military disaster; cf. John B. Bury, *A His-*

The ninth-century court historian Joseph Genesios mentions the existence of pagan cult practices on the Spartan plain, while describing the voyage of a naval unit commanded by a certain Adrian, who was sailing to Sicily to raise the Arab siege of Syracuse:

Having reached the Peloponnese, he put in at the harbor called Hierax and was hindered there by a very bad wind for fifty days. . . . A certain citizen approached and gave him the bad news that . . . Syracuse had been taken. . . . Adrian investigated the source of the rumor, and received this answer: "In the district of Helos there is a plain about eight miles off. On that evening certain shepherds approached and said that Syracuse had been taken, based on the account of visiting demons which were themselves present at the city."

Adrian did not believe this, but hoped to get fuller information. With this in mind he reached the district delimited to the shepherds where the spirits of the air dwelt. The spirits replied to a certain shepherd that their abode had been in Syracuse, that they fed on residual Christian blood, that they knew Adrian was investigating events, and that they fully knew his name and official rank. Adrian did not believe this, but still took the day-old news into account. After fifteen days, the rumors reckoned to be false were revealed to be true by persons coming from Syracuse.

Such knowledge by the indigenous spirits, or rather their knowledge of events completed, has persisted among the people of the same district until the reign of the most pious emperor Leo VI.¹¹⁸

There is not the slightest suggestion here that the shepherds were Slavs. If so, one might have hoped for references to interpreters. It was difficult to Christianize herdsmen, as I have repeatedly stressed, because of their migratory habits. Monks would have had, literally, to follow them around the countryside to ensure that the shepherds avoided acts of divination, particularly during the summer, which the flocks spent in the high pastures.

tory of the Eastern Roman Empire . . . (A.D. 802–867) (London: Macmillan, 1912) 276–78. The requirement of expediency is undoubtedly the best explanation for the survival of a pagan Maina. Rochow's objections to the historicity of the DAI text are hardly worth discussing; Rochow, "Religiöse Strömungen," 245–46.

¹¹⁸ *Iosephi Genesii Regum Libri Quattuor* (ed. A. Lesmueller-Werner and I. Thun; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1978) 82–83.

Let us consider next the life of Nikon the Metanoïte, who died in 998.¹¹⁹ Nikon made periodic catechetical tours through the southern Peloponnese, and seems to have converted many half-Christian and pagan villages.¹²⁰ Archaeological evidence confirms that the church maintained an institutional presence on the Spartan plain during the Byzantine "Dark Age." An impost block from a church, dated to the seventh or eighth century, was discovered near Sparta, and is noted in Demetrios Pallas' *Monuments paléochrétiens de Grèce*.¹²¹ This presence had become quite thin by Nikon's day. One section of his hagiographic life reports:

He departed from Argos, then went on from Sparta. He next reached the land of the Dorians, built two churches there, proclaimed repentance to all, and went on to Maina. He crossed over from there to Kalamas. He arrived in Arcadia next, after coming from Korone, Methone, and Mesyne, which the inhabitants called Bourkanon. He went through the remaining village-towns and led limitless multitudes to conversion.¹²²

Among other things, this text indicates the position of Maina as being somewhere on the Spartan plain east of the Taygetos range, since Nikon "crossed over from there to Kalamas." It appears that the "land of the Dorians" encompassed the flatlands which run southwest to the point where the Taygetos meets the sea. This district had a few churches in the late tenth century,¹²³ but these structures hardly met the needs of the rural population, inasmuch as two new ones had to be built. There is not the slightest suggestion that monasteries existed anywhere in the southern Peloponnese at this time. The situation described here supports the view that this stretch of country remained missionary country throughout the tenth century.

I wish, in conclusion, to cite a text which, so far as I know, has not been cited in connection with the study of late paganism in Greece. It stands in the life of George the Hagiorite, one of a series of Athonite monastic biographies composed in Georgian during the eleventh

¹¹⁹ *Vita Nikonis* in S. P. Lambros, ed., *Neos Hellēnomnēmōn* 3 (1906) 131–222, 256 (BHG 1366).

¹²⁰ The function of the *periodeutes* is set forth in the Fifty-seventh Canon of the Council of Laodicea (saec. IV). Cf. the glosses of Balsamon et al. in Rhalles and Potles, *Syntagma* 3 (Athens, 1853) 222–24. It is uncertain whether Nikon held this rank officially.

¹²¹ D. Pallas, *Les monuments paléochrétiens de Grèce découverts de 1951 à 1973* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di archeologia Cristiana, 1977) 194–95.

¹²² *Vita Nikonis*, 161.

¹²³ Bon, *Le Peloponnèse byzantin*, 69–70.

century. The text in question refers to pagan Bulgars, but strongly suggests that their cult site had been in use since antiquity. I quote from the Latin translation of the text:

There is among the villages of the Holy Mountain a certain village called Livadia, whose site is somewhat back from the sea in an empty desert between terrible mountain saddles, where in my opinion none of the holy men [of Athos] ever lived. The Bulgars called Slavs settled there long ago—men who are stupid and brute-like. . . . In this village, from the earliest times until our own age, there survived an effigy made of marble (*ex marmore*), the figure of a woman. This the stupid men worshipped, saying: “Rain and all good things come from it. . . .” George was moved by mercy, but bore their destructive habit badly when he saw those men, the worshippers of the idol, when they went up to it in such great impiety. Once, when he set out for Constantinople and passed through the said village, some men approached him and said: “If you wish to prosper in all your affairs, ask the goddess that she would help you with the emperor.” The holy man said: “Oh, really! Go and show her to me. For such good news I thank you much!” And so the men led the holy man to their ridiculous and lifeless goddess, at which he gazed and told them: “Let me go away alone and consider her.” At dawn on the next day he ordered an iron hammer and set out, himself the old man with the *oikonomos* and two other companions. When he approached the place he drew the sign of the cross in front of him and began to recite the gospel according to John: “In the beginning was the Word” and the rest. Those men said to him: “Woe to you! You contemplate your own death.” The old man smiled, and like a strong warrior, armed with the cross of Christ, he rushed quickly at the effigy and began to smash it with the hammer and broke it into little pieces.¹²⁴

The amusing nature of this text should not distract us from the basic issues which it raises. Athos had been a monastic enclave for some 50–100 years by the time of this incident, since ca. 964, yet a pagan cult center lay within the perimeter of the Holy Mountain.¹²⁵ It was

¹²⁴ For a Latin translation of the Georgian text see P. Peeters, “Histoires monastiques georgiennes,” *AnBoll* 36/37 (1917–19) 104–5.

¹²⁵ The earliest Athonite chrysobulls date from ca. 964 in the reign of Nicephorus II Phocas (963–69), and refer to the Lavra of St. Athanasius. Franz Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 565–1453* (Munich/Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1924) 1. 90–91, 95 (Tzimisces). The Lavra of the Georgians at Athos was not founded until after the death of George the Hagiorite. Peeters, “Histoires monastiques,” 71–72.

prior to this a rough, rocky place of habitation to perhaps a small number of heremitic ascetics. Its Bulgaro-Slav rural population was certainly isolated from developments in the Bulgar Kingdom, of which the Christianization began in 864 with the baptism of Boris I (852–89). In the end it was a Georgian, not a Greek, who went up into the crags and peaks to smash the idol. Perhaps the Georgians were better mountaineers than the Greeks. Perhaps, as a well traveled Iberian, George knew something of the Bulgar dialect, which the Greeks ignored.¹²⁶ It is conceivable, as well, that the Greeks simply lived in accommodation with the pagans, because such practices still existed in the Greek countryside and were generally tolerated. There are, for the present, no firm answers to these questions.

The action of George the Hagiorite emphasizes once again the importance of the role of monks in eliminating pagan cult centers. It took a man of conviction to brave high mountains in order to perform such tasks, and few had such determination even among the monks. The effigy of the goddess was of great antiquity. Cut from marble, it had stood there “since the earliest times.”¹²⁷ It is to be doubted that there could have been a mistake about the antiquity of the statue. There is no record, so far as I know, of middle Byzantine marble statuary in Greece. Many ancient statues stood in the public squares of Byzantine towns, and the pedimental sculptures of some pagan temples still stood in place.¹²⁸ Although direct proof of continuity of cult is

¹²⁶ Bulgars settled in the vicinity of Hierissos between 913–27 according to an Athonite document. Cf. the discussion of the scholarship in Rochow, “Religiöse Strömungen,” 250 n. 2.

¹²⁷ Franz Dölger has analyzed this text as evidence for a supposed Slavic or proto-Bulgar cult (*ibid.*). To my mind, this misses the point. Livadia is certainly a Greek toponym and, as a “high place,” the locality may well have had a temple or grove (as for example of Artemis) in pre-Christian times. No classical site named Livadia is in evidence at Athos. See Ulrich Hübner, “Die literarischen und archäologischen Zeugnisse über den vorchristlichen Athos,” *Antike Welt* 16 (1985) 35–44 (with extensive bibliography). The localization of place-names will prove difficult until the complete publication of known inscriptions on Athos (*ibid.*, 40–41).

¹²⁸ Among the marble objects found at Athos thus far are columns, sarcophagi, funerary steles, and a statue of Attis of Roman date, the last-named having been observed in 1914 in the Vatopedi Library by Charles Avezou (*ibid.*, 39–40). See the *Parastaseis syntomoi chronikai* in T. Praeger, ed., *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolis* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1901), which mentions many statues of pagan gods in Constantinople. The origin of these spolia is not always given. Some examples are a Zeus preserved in the Hippodrome (71, lines 7–9) and a Perseus and Andromeda in the Constantiana baths (72, lines 13–15). A statue (στήλη) of Artemis also stood in the Hippodrome (70, lines 11–12), as well as idols (εἰδωλα) taken from Rome (59, lines 14–16). The survival of statuary in provincial towns is less well attested.

lacking at Livadia, it is a plausible hypothesis that the Bulgars took over this cult from the Greeks. Since the Bulgars did not settle in the Balkan peninsula in great numbers until after 679,¹²⁹ we should infer that the Greek cult persisted until at least the end of the seventh century, but probably longer, inasmuch as the Bulgar settlement of the southern fringes of the Balkans took considerably longer, probably until the ninth or tenth century.¹³⁰

The foregoing analysis suggests that the monks who Christianized the countryside in the fifth and sixth centuries found the rural ethos intractable in some localities. The process was itself a protracted one which began with the foundation of small churches, chapels, and monasteries, and advanced by the reorganization of the agricultural communities' cultural life. This was achieved not so much by the eradication of the old practices as by the Christianization of cultural forms. The barriers to this were in great part cultural and linguistic, in part economic. Catechists who understood the rustic ethos were always in demand. John of Ephesus's importation of Syrians to western Asia Minor is striking proof of a manpower shortage in this sphere. The sixth century was marked by the considerable infusion of men and money into the Mediterranean hinterlands.¹³¹ This trend must be regarded as an important conditioning factor in the transformation of the old cults, but not in any case the determining one. The hagiographic texts suggest that the geniality and forbearance of the monastic catechists often carried decisive weight in this process of transition.

¹²⁹ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 356, lines 18–19.

¹³⁰ See above, n. 126.

¹³¹ Trombley, "Monastic Foundations," 58–59. Cf. the general observations of Oswyn Murray, review article, "Ramsay MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*," *JRomS* 59 (1969) 264–65.