

## *The Political Saint in Byzantium in the tenth and eleventh Centuries*

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Ever since the late 1960's, Byzantinists have been fascinated by saints. The reasons for this enthusiasm are not far to seek. Two important articles pointed the way: Professor Evelyne Patlagean published a seminal article in *Annales* in 1968 in which she argued that, far from presenting stereotyped and unreliable information, hagiographies provided a wealth of information about the day to day concerns of Byzantines of all ranks: about famines, floods and drought; about plagues and illnesses; about disputes and their adjudication; about problems and their solution and about spiritual counselling and advice<sup>1</sup>). In 1971, Professor Peter Brown's study »The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity«, made an important contribution to the study of – if I may use a mathematical analogy – »applied« as opposed to »pure« hagiography. His thesis, that holy men took on the mantle of local authority in many parts of the eastern late antique world since they stood outside and above existing social relationships, has been much discussed. The power of their authority, he argued, lay in their ability to rise above worldly considerations and in the access (*parresia*) which they could offer to divine favour and intervention. The use of that authority made them into the »stars« of the late antique world, a world which he saw as suffering a crisis of anxiety and dislocation which made many turn away from accepted systems of patronage and help towards those that the holy men could offer<sup>2</sup>).

Whether or not we completely agree with its conclusions – and I shall myself argue that Byzantine saints were rather more clearly »of« the world than Brown then allowed – the article further stimulated the study of holy men and their rôle in Byzantine society at all periods as well as re-inforcing the view that hagiographies could be used to provide accurate information on contemporary concerns. Of present concern to us is the commonly found enthusiasm of Byzantine hagiographers to magnify the reputations of their subjects by

1) Evelyne PATLAGEAN, *Ancienne hagiographie et histoire sociale*, *Annales* pp. 23 (1968) 104–124 and *Sainteté et pouvoir*, in: *The Byzantine Saint*, ed. by S. HACKEL (1981) pp. 88–105. This collection of essays provides a useful introduction both to hagiography and to more general questions of Byzantine attitudes to sanctity. See also François HALKIN, *L'hagiographie byzantine au service de l'histoire*, in: *Acts of the 13th International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, Oxford 1966 (1968) pp. 345–349.

2) Peter BROWN, *The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity*, *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971) pp. 80–101.

mentioning as many as possible of the important personalities with whom they came into contact and the occasions upon which they did so. In this sense, the anecdotal nature of many passages is of positive value. They also often provide an invaluable (but as yet insufficiently exploited) source of prosopographical information and provide a basis for the investigation of the relationships of saints and the lay population.

The period from 843 to the beginning of the twelfth century is particularly rich in hagiography and sees the last real flowering of this genre of Byzantine literature. The decline into mannered and imitative saints' lives is foreshadowed by the late tenth-century collections associated with Symeon Metaphrastes, but there are still examples of hagiographies of great freshness of style as well as of considerable intrinsic interest<sup>3</sup>). The phenomenon is, of course, associated with the great expansion in the monastic life as a consequence of the renewed favour in which monks, often (but not always) protagonists of iconodule theology, found themselves after the official re-establishment of the doctrine of the veneration of images in 843<sup>4</sup>). In the vast majority of cases, the saints of the tenth and eleventh centuries were also monks. The lack of monastic orders of the western variety meant that Byzantine monasticism was highly individualistic. Not only did the founders of monastic houses specify in their *typika* (foundation charters) the type of monastic life they wished to be practised, which often resulted in a hybrid mixture of the coenobitic and the lavriote, but the monastic saints themselves often lived lives which took little account of canonical dictates (the prohibition on monks leaving monasteries was frequently ignored, for example) and were often admired more for their unusual behaviour than for their strict adherence to monastic custom<sup>5</sup>). In addition, the frequent lack of any formal canonisation process in the eastern church in this period left the question »what makes a saint?« even more open to solution by popular acclaim than it was in the West. The church never gained complete control of the processes by which sanctity was either conferred or recognised and it was sometimes unconventional rather than conventional behaviour which often created a saint in Byzantium<sup>6</sup>).

3) The stultifying effect of the Metaphrastic collections is described by Hans-Georg BECK, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reiche* (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 12,2, 1, 1959) pp. 570–575.

4) See Jean GOUILLARD, *Le Synodikon de l'orthodoxie: Edition et Commentaire*, *Travaux et Mémoires* 2 (1967) pp. 1–316, especially pp. 144–146 for monastic commemorations. A useful summary of the events surrounding the re-establishment of icon veneration can be found in: Joan HUSSEY, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (1986) pp. 30–68.

5) Catia GALATARIOU, *Byzantine ktetorika typika: a Comparative Study*, *Révue des Etudes Byzantines* 45 (1987) pp. 77–138 discusses the motives of the founders of monastic houses as reflected in their *typika* (foundation charters). The canonical ban on monks freely leaving their houses is discussed in: Emil HERMAN, *La »stabilitas loci« nel monachismo bizantino*, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 21 (1955) pp. 115–142.

6) As yet, no full treatment of the subject of canonisation in Byzantium exists, but see BECK, *Kirche und theologische Literatur* (as footnote 3) p. 274 and the interesting comments (relating to the Palaiologan period) of Ruth MACRIDES, *Saints and Sainthood in the Early Palaiologan Period*, in: *The Byzantine Saint* (as footnote 1) p. 83.

As with many other Byzantine sources, the geographical spread of the hagiographies of the tenth and eleventh centuries is extremely limited. The largest groups come from Southern Greece (the lives of St Peter of Argos, St Luke of Steiris and St Nikon »Metanoieite«-»Repent Ye«); from the western coast of Asia Minor (lives of St Paul of Latros, St Nikephoros, St Michael Maleinos, St Lazaros of Mount Galesion); from Athos (St Athanasios of the Lavra and the Georgian saints associated with Iviron such as SS John and Euthymios and St George the Hagiorite); from the Aegean Islands (St Christodoulos of Patmos and possibly the prototype for the existing biography of SS Niketas, John and Joseph, monks associated with the Nea Mone on Chios) and from Southern Italy (for example, the Lives of St Nil of Grottaferrata, St Sabas, St Luke of Demena, St Elias Spelaiotes and St Elias the Younger). The lives of a few saints living in or near Constantinople have also survived (St Luke the Stylite, St Basil the Younger and St Symeon the New Theologian)<sup>7</sup>. One of the areas least represented in

7) Vita et conversatio S. Patris Nostri Petri episcopi Argivorum, ed. A. MAI (Novae Patrum Bibliothecae 9,3, 1888) pp.1-17. Also ed. in: C. PAPAIOKONOMOS, Ho poliouchos tou Argous Hagios Petros episkopos Argous ho thaumatourgos (1908). See A. A. VASILIEV, The »Life« of St Peter of Argos and its Historical Tradition, Traditio 5 (1947) pp. 163-190. The Life of St Luke of Steiris was ed. by G. KREMOS, in: Phokika, proskynetariou tes en Phokidi mones tou Hosiou Louka tou piklen Steiriotou (1874-1880) and a new English translation will shortly be published by Carolyn CONNOR. In the meantime, I refer to other more easily accessible editions, which, taken together, provide a full text. They are in Migne PG 111, cols. 441-80 and E. MARTINI, Supplementa ad acta S. Lucae Iunioris, Analecta Bollandiana 13 (1894) pp. 81-121. See now the discussion of the Life in: Carolyn CONNOR, Art and Miracles in Medieval Byzantium: The Crypt at Hosios Loukas and its Frescoes (1991). Life of St Nikon, ed. and English translation, D. F. SULLIVAN (1987). Vita S. Pauli junioris, ed. H. DELEHAYE, Analecta Bollandiana 11 (1892) pp. 19-74, 136-182. Vita S. Nicephori episcopi Milesii, ed. H. DELEHAYE, Analecta Bollandiana 14 (1895) pp. 129-166. Vie de S. Michel Maleinos, ed. L. PETIT, Revue de l'Orient Chrétien 7 (1902) pp. 543-568. Vita s. Lazari auctore Gregorio monacho, AA SS Nov. 3 (1910) pp. 508-588. Vitae duae antiquae Sancti Athanasii Athonitae, ed. J. NORET (CC ser. graeca 9, 1982), usually referred to as (A) and (B). Vitae SS Iohannis atque Euthymii, ed. P. PETERS, Analecta Bollandiana 36-37 (1917-1919) pp. 13-68. John of Rhodes, Bios kai politeia tou hosiou patros hemon Christodoulou and the Akolouthia of Athanasios of Antioch and Theodore of Byzantium, all ed. K. BOINES, Akolouthia hiera tou hosiou kai theophorou patros hemon Christodoulou (1884). The Lives of Christodoulos have been examined by Era VRANOUSI, Ta hagiologika keimena tou Hosiou Christodoulou (1966). The Lives of SS Niketas, John and Joseph were edited by G. PHOTEINOS, Ta Neamonesia (1865). Vita S. Nili, Migne PG 120, cols. 15-165. Orestes patriarcha Hierosolym. de historia et laudibus Sabae et Macarii Siculorum, ed. J. COZZA-LUZI, Studi e documenti di storia e diritto 12 (1891) pp. 37-56; 135-168; 312-323. Vita S. Lucae Abbatis, AA SS Oct. 6 (1868) pp. 337-341. Vita S. Eliae Spelaeotae in Calabria, AA SS Sept. 3 (1868) pp. 848-887. Vita di Sant'Elia il Giovane, ed. and Italian translation, G. ROSSI-TAIBBI (Vite dei Santi Siciliani III, Istituto Siciliano di Studi bizantini e neoellenici, Testi e Monumenti 7, 1962). Vita S. Lucae Stylitae, ed. and French translation F. VANDERSTUYF, Patrologia Orientalis 11 (1915) pp. 187-287. Vita S. Basili junioris, AA SS Mar. 3 (1865) pp. 664-678 (Latin), \*24-\*39 (Greek) is an excerpted version of the Life of Basil by his disciple, Gregory. Fuller but later versions (which I have not been able to consult): Zhitie sv. Vasiliya Novago, ed. A. N. VESELOVSKII, Sbornik otdeleniya russkago jazyka i slovesnosti Imp. Akademii Nauk 46/6 (1889-1890) and Zhitie sv. Vasiliya Novago v russkoi literature, ed. S. G. VILINSKII (1911-1913). Un grand mystique byzantin: Vie de Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, ed. and French

the hagiographies, the northern Balkan regions of the Empire, is precisely that where more formalised coenobitic monasticism was most prominent in the eleventh century and there is, surely, a link to be made between the type of monasticism practised here and the type of monastic literature produced, which tended to be more liturgical and instructive in tone. Where the emphasis was laid on asceticism, the lavriot style and individual spirituality, there hagiography, as part and parcel of the process of spreading the reputation of the holy men also flourished. There are, of course exceptions to this general rule. The Life of St Cyril of Philea is a fine example of hagiographical writing, where the spiritual message is presented with a wealth of detail about contemporary events and especially the late eleventh-century court circle of Alexios I Komnenos. It is set in Thrace, an area not associated with lavriote houses, but does deal with one of the last figures in this period who fulfilled the role of holy man<sup>8)</sup>. The other area of potential interest, where there is abundant visual evidence of the existence of hermitages and local cults – Cappadocia, and especially the famous rock-cut churches and monasteries – has left us no documentary evidence whatsoever<sup>9)</sup>!

Though the monastic state brought with it a different way of life and conferred distinct responsibilities on those who followed it, it would be wrong to consider monks as constituting a separate caste in Byzantine society. Their contacts with the secular world were, in practical terms, often close and frequent and, though Canon Law might decree the opposite, complete monastic seclusion – a life »in the world but not of it« – was, in fact, rarely practised. All the monastic saints recorded by the hagiographers maintained contacts with the lay world around them and, indeed, their biographers expected that they should do so and were eager to chronicle such associations. For it was through their relationships with others, both religious and secular, that their power could be demonstrated. Two kinds of power were involved. Firstly, the power that *parresia*, access to God and a familiarity with Him, could bring to monks who thus provided a channel between the ordinary believer and the Deity, and, secondly, the practical influence always wielded by those individuals who could provide local and immediate leadership. In a sense then, all Byzantine saints were »political«, in that they concerned themselves with lay affairs (often quite mundane matters) and acted as a link between the world below and the world above. But a more precise definition which I initially intend to follow would be to see »political saints« as those who played a role in the political life of the empire, who were involved in and had influence upon imperial and governmental decisions and who also participated in the activities of those with some degree of prestige within the Byzantine state<sup>10)</sup>.

translation, I. HAUSHERR and G. HORN, *Orientalia Christiana* 12 (1928). I shall refer to these lives in a uniform fashion e.g. Life of St Peter of Argos, Life of St. Luke of Steiris, Life of St Nikon »Metanoiete« et cetera, distinguishing editions where necessary.

8) *La vie de S. Cyrille le Philéote* par Nicholas Katasképenos, ed. and French translation, E. SARGOLOGOS (*Subsidia Hagiographica* 39, 1964).

9) See Lyn RODLEY, *Cave Monasteries of Byzantine Cappadocia* (1985).

10) See Rosemary MORRIS, *The Political Saint in the Eleventh Century*, in: *The Byzantine Saint* (as footnote 1) pp. 43–50.

What was the means of contact between these holy men and those with political influence? At the nub of the relationship between saints and the laity was their role as spiritual guides. It was a role which in other medieval Christian societies was often the province of the parish priest. But although little is known of the Byzantine secular clergy, especially in the provinces, their often humble origins, peasant lifestyle and, above all, potentially married state did not differentiate them to any great extent from their lay flocks. A basic level of education was doubtless necessary for the performance of the liturgy and for instruction in the faith (though the Emperor Alexios I Komnenos found it necessary to recruit a special group of *didaskaloi* – »teachers« – with salary because he felt the level of instruction inadequate amongst the Constantinopolitan clergy at the beginning of the twelfth century) and local priests are sometimes heard of providing elementary teaching for children, but literacy and a competent understanding of the Bible, the liturgy and religious literature was not confined to them. Many lay Byzantines of the »middling sort« were perfectly able to read and understand such matters for themselves and affairs often confined to priests in the West, such as the drawing up of charters or legal documents were, in Byzantium, quite often the province of the laity<sup>11</sup>.

Though doubtless able to give comfort and advice in the normal course of their duties, priests do not seem to have been those to whom the laity turned for deeper spiritual guidance. Indeed, outside the towns and larger settlements, it is not at all clear that many priests could be found, or whether they were easily accessible to the population at large, since many churches at this period seem to have been the private foundations of landowners, or attached to monasteries, rather than *katholikai ekklesiai*, or »public« churches. The lure of Constantinople for ambitious clerics who wished to gain a post in the patriarchal or imperial administrations, or become the chaplain of a rich household, had already been noted by the time of the Second Council of Nicaea (787) which forbade priests to leave their own dioceses, especially in order to go to the capital and »live with princes and celebrate the divine liturgy in their chapels«<sup>12</sup>. Those who stayed in small provincial settlements were probably those whose intellectual or spiritual talents could take them no further. They were not those to whom landowners or imperial officials wished to turn for intimate spiritual guidance.

11) HUSSEY, *Orthodox Church* (as footnote 4) pp. 329–335 for a short survey of the secular clergy. For the Novel of Alexios Komnenos on *didaskaloi*, see Paul GAUTIER, *L'Edit d'Alexis Ier sur la réforme du clergé*, *Revue des Etudes Byzantines* 31 (1973) pp. 165–201. On Byzantine literacy, see Margaret MULLETT, *Writing in Early Medieval Byzantium*, in: *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. by R. McKITTERICK (1990) pp. 156–185. In the countryside the notary might often be a priest, but in cities, especially Constantinople, specialised corporations took on general legal drafting work, see Rosemary MORRIS, *Dispute Settlement in the Byzantine Provinces in the Tenth Century*, in: *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. by Wendy DAVIES and Paul FOURACRE (1986) pp. 125–147, espec. pp. 140–141.

12) See HUSSEY, *Orthodox Church* (as footnote 4) pp. 331–332.

The full history of spiritual relationships in Byzantium, always made much of by hagiographers, has yet to be written, but recent research has demonstrated how important non-blood ties could be. Friendship amongst the educated classes, for instance, was a highly structured affair, in which both parties were well aware of the duties and responsibilities they held to one another. The relationships of godparents not only to their god-children, but to these childrens' families and kinship groups, were deemed to be so close that they involved the same prohibitions on marriage as affected those related by blood. The connection of spiritual father to spiritual son or daughter was thus part of a whole nexus of relationships which employed the vocabulary of the family and in a sense replicated it, but always on a higher plane. The mere accident of blood relationship, a matter of the most basic worldly significance, was replaced by a deliberate choice based on spiritual criteria. The number of »children« guided by a particular spiritual father was a mark of his merit, a recognition of his extraordinary powers and thus a willing acceptance of his authority. What power Roman Law decreed for the *pater familias* as of *right*, was bestowed on the spiritual father by the *choice* of his children. But it was, like the ties that bound god-parents and the families of their god-children, a two-way relationship: the »son« complimented his spiritual father by requesting his guidance; the »father« bestowed favour and access to his spirituality by accepting the task of guiding the son<sup>13</sup>.

Although the most common form of spiritual fatherhood was doubtless that exercised by the *begoumenos* of a monastery over the monks within it (though in nunneries it is not surprising to note that a priest often assumed this function in place of the female – and thus less spiritually »adequate« – *begoumene*), the most influential, and that most relevant to a study of political saints, was that which existed between a small, celebrated group of spiritual advisors and major figures amongst the laity<sup>14</sup>. Spiritual fathers were among the closest advisors of men in positions of power and influence in Byzantium and the advice they gave was often instrumental in shaping affairs of state<sup>15</sup>. The most celebrated spiritual father of the period was undoubtedly Symeon the New Theologian, *begoumenos* of the great Constantinopolitan Monastery of St Mamas (which he restored) from 980 to 1005. It is from his copious collection of surviving homilies that evidence for the workings of the institution can be collected, as the duties and demands of

13) Margaret MULLETT, *Byzantium: a Friendly Society?*, Past and Present 118 (1988) pp. 3–24. For non-blood relationships: Evelyne PATLAGEAN, *Christianisme et parentés rituelles: le domaine de Byzance*, Annales ESC 32 (1978) pp. 625–636, repr. in: *Structure sociale, famille, Chrétienté à Byzance (IVe–IXe siècles)* (1981), and Ruth MACRIDES, *The Byzantine God-Father*, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 11 (1987) pp. 139–162. It is significant that monks were canonically forbidden to act as god-parents (though on occasion they did) since they were deemed to have renounced »simply every blood-relationship«, see MACRIDES p. 144 and n. 24; p. 154.

14) For the *begoumenos* as spiritual father to his monks, see GALATARIOU (as footnote 5) pp. 108–109.

15) Irénée HAUSHERR, *Direction spirituelle en Orient autrefois* (*Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 144, 1955) remains the only general study, but on Symeon the New Theologian, see John TURNER, *St. Symeon the New Theologian and Spiritual Fatherhood* (*Byzantina Neerlandica* 11, 1990).

spiritual fatherhood were matters frequently discussed in them<sup>16</sup>). Symeon laid great importance on the fact that the spiritual son (or daughter) must completely open his heart in order to make the relationship possible. It was unfair, he maintained, to place the burden of spiritual direction on the »father« unless this could be guaranteed. Clearly, then, the latter must be chosen as someone with whom the layman (or ecclesiastic) felt some affinity or, in some cases, a charismatic figure who had become a sought-after confessor. Symeon explained the mystic process by which, he felt the choice would be made:

»Go and find the man whom God, either mysteriously through Himself, or externally through His servant, shall show you. He [the spiritual father] is Christ Himself. So you must regard him and speak to him; so must you honour him; so must you learn from him that which will be of benefit to you.«<sup>17</sup>)

In practical terms, this must surely have implied someone to whom the layman was already closely related, or someone with whom he felt he could undertake such an intimate relationship – a man of learning (either intellectual or intuitive) and of the experience and proven ability to respond to considerable emotional demands. It is therefore interesting to note that most of the saints with whom we are concerned had received some kind of education or training, often to an extremely high level. They are very often described as coming from well-born, but not rich parentage. St Paul of Latros' father, Antiochos, was a *komes* in the navy; St Luke the Stylite's family were the holders of a military estate and St Nikephoros had been Bishop of Miletos before entering the monastic life<sup>18</sup>). St Athanasios, the founder of the Great Lavra on Mount Athos, was a native of Trebizond, but came to Constantinople to study and was so successful that he was first made assistant to his own teacher and then became master of his own school during the reign of the Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (913–959)<sup>19</sup>). In the second half of the tenth century, Symeon the New Theologian, a native of Paphlagonia, was first educated by his parents, then sent to his grandparents in Constantinople to be perfected in »profane culture and rhetoric«. He was taken up by an uncle who was a *koitonites* – a chamberlain in charge of the bodyservants of the Emperors Basil II (976–1025)

16) See Life of St Symeon the New Theologian (as footnote 7) Introduction, pp. i–xciii, and Symeon's Catecheses, ed. B. KRIVOCHÉINE, French translation, J. PARAMELLE (1963–1965); ID., Chapitres théologiques, gnostiques et pratiques, ed. and French translation, J. DARROUZÈS and J. NEYRAND (1980); ID., Traités théologiques et ethniques, ed. and French translation, J. DARROUZÈS, (1966–1967).

17) Catechesis XX, p. 335.

18) Life of St Paul of Latros (as footnote 7) 2, p. 13; Life of St Luke the Stylite (as footnote 7) 10, p. 200; Life of St Nikephoros (as footnote 7) 10, p. 143.

19) Life of St Athanasios (as footnote 7) (A) 14, p. 9 and see also Paul LEMERLE, Byzantine Humanism (Byzantina Australiensia 3, 1986) pp. 298–302.

and Constantine VIII (1025–1028) and he himself entered imperial service<sup>20</sup>. He entered the Monastery of Stoudios at about twenty-seven years of age and by this time his place in the society of middle-ranking court officials had been established. It is no surprise to learn that it was of such people that the saint's lay circle was later comprised<sup>21</sup>. St Lazaros, a native of Magnesia on the Maeander was again taught first by his parents and then by a local priest. After three years training with a *notarios* he joined an uncle in the monastic life. Although he had not, then, been sent to Constantinople to finish his studies, he had probably studied the Scriptures in detail and some theology. His notarial training would have familiarised him with the drawing up of documents and also, perhaps, with basic legal terminology and financial calculation<sup>22</sup>. *Notarioi* were frequently found in the company of imperial officials going about their business in the provinces. Even St Cyril of Philea, who spent his early manhood as a ship's pilot on the Black Sea, turns out to have been appointed to the rank of reader in his local church by the Archbishop of Derkos, so cannot have been completely illiterate<sup>23</sup>.

It is necessary to emphasise the social and educational background of these saints, because it helps to explain why they were accepted as spiritual guides by important lay figures. For, as we have seen, the relationship between the two parties was to be, from the first, one of complete openness and trust and of unquestioning acceptance of the advice of the spiritual father. The consequence of this docility and obedience would be the achievement of complete self-renunciation and, in practice, this seems to have been very much the case, as can be illustrated from two episodes related in the Life of St Cyril Phileotes which demonstrate spiritual fatherhood in action.

The first is an example of spiritual counselling, which probably owed a great deal of its detail to the inspiration of Cyril's biographer, Nicholas Kataskepenos, but was, nevertheless, what the writer, himself a distinguished monk, knew happened on such occasions. An unnamed woman (who was clearly Anna Dalassena, mother of the future Emperor Alexios I Komnenos), asked the saint to provide her with a spiritual aide memoire which would be suited to her abilities. Cyril responded with a series of short *apophthegmata*; quotations from Basil the Great on the virtues of charity and, amongst others, from John Klimakos and the desert father, Barsanouphios. At this point the woman confessed that »I wish to reveal my thoughts to your holiness, but I am afraid of not staying faithful to your words and thus

20) Life of St Symeon the New Theologian (as footnote 7) 2–3, pp. 3–6. For the *koitonites*, see Nicholas ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΔΗΣ, Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles (1972) pp. 301–302, 305. Life of St Symeon the New Theologian 3, p. 5. Symeon gained the rank of *spatharokoubikouarios*, a position reserved for eunuchs, see ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΔΗΣ, Listes de préséance pp. 301–302.

21) For the age at which Symeon entered the Monastery of Stoudios, see TURNER, St Symeon the New Theologian (as footnote 5) p. 27. His circle included men such as Christopher Phagoura who built for him a small Oratory dedicated to St Macrina, Life of St Symeon the New Theologian (as footnote 7) 100, p. 138; 109, p. 145.

22) Life of St Lazaros (as footnote 7) 3, pp. 509–510.

23) Life of St Cyril Phileotes (as footnote 8) 2, p. 268 (references are to the pagination of the French translation).



offending God.« Cyril assured her that the unveiling of innermost thoughts to spiritual fathers was the first indication of wishing to reform one's way of life and proceeded to give her a series of moral precepts which she should attempt to follow<sup>24</sup>).

In this episode, the beginnings of a spiritual relationship were being laid down, but the association could develop into something rather more complex. Spiritual fathers could become constant companions of their spiritual children and not merely occasionally subject to consultation. On a visit to Cyril Phileotes, Alexios Komnenos, by this time Emperor, described the devotion of an earlier spiritual father, the monk Ignatios, who was appointed by his mother to accompany the young man on one of his first campaigns, against the Norman rebel, Roussel of Bailleul in 1074 and who comforted him when he was suffering from cold and illness. Ignatios was clearly a member of the household and close both physically and emotionally to the young soldier<sup>25</sup>). What seems to emerge from all this, is that some degree of education was necessary to enter the world of the Byzantine powerful. The saints may not all have been highly sophisticated men – indeed simplicity of behaviour was much admired – but we may seriously question whether members of the Byzantine aristocracy would have entrusted their spiritual guidance to illiterates. Byzantine Rasputins are hard to find.

The choice of a spiritual father, although often arising from existing family links, could also depend on other factors. Groups already bound together by friendship strengthened these ties by associating themselves with the same spiritual father. Thus St Basil the Younger, active in the tenth century, became the spiritual advisor to a group of aristocratic ladies in Constantinople and was introduced by one of them to the Empress Helena, wife of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos. The canonical prohibitions against leaving monasteries were clearly not observed by these monks and in Basil's case, it was clearly quite acceptable for a spiritual father to spend a great deal of time in the company of a group of women whose status would normally have decreed a great deal of seclusion<sup>26</sup>).

The existence of a common spiritual father was thus an important aspect of the creation of social and political alliances amongst the aristocracy as well as an indication of prevailing fashions in spirituality. But it must not be seen as an exclusively aristocratic institution. An act of donation from the archives of the Great Lavra on Mount Athos, that of Constantine and Maria Lagoudes (Feb. 1014), was made »because of the strongest attachment« the couple had felt throughout their lives to their spiritual father Theodoret, the *hegoumenos* of the monastery. There is no evidence to suggest that they were either particularly wealthy or aristocratic. Similar humble donations were made by single monks or hermits to the monasteries of their spiritual fathers on Athos. In such cases, the gift was often in return for

24) Life of St Cyril Phileotes 17, p. 314.

25) Life of St Cyril Phileotes 47, p. 459. For the campaign against Roussel of Bailleul, see Anna Komnena, *Alexiad* I 1–3, ed. B. LEIB (1937–1945) pp. 9–17.

26) Life of St Basil the Younger (as footnote 7) 21, p. 670 (\*31). Spiritual relationship conferred the social freedom enjoyed by blood relations and could, in the secular world, even be used as a cover for sexual relationships, see MACRIDES, *Byzantine God-Father* (as footnote 13) p. 154.

shelter being provided for the grantor in his old age. The monastic community fulfilled the protective rôle which would have been undertaken by the family in lay society<sup>27</sup>.

But it was not merely the provision of expert advice and guidance which made certain spiritual fathers famous and ensured the success of their foundations. There were certainly difficulties about the acceptance as saints of those who were merely revered spiritual fathers – Symeon the New Theologian's insistence in venerating an icon of his own spiritual father, Symeon the Stoudite, who does not seem to have had any following beyond the monastery, produced grave difficulties – but it is clear that the spiritual children of outstanding spiritual fathers did consider that they possessed supernatural powers. The Emperor Nikephoros Phokas (963–69), according to the historian Skylitzes, was accustomed to sleep wrapped in a bear skin which had once been worn by his uncle, the monk Michael Maleinos. Another of Michael's spiritual children, St Athanasios of Athos, took with him Michael's *koukoulion* («cowl») when he left the latter's monastery on Mount Kyminas (in western Asia Minor) and »wore it as a protection in life and when dying had it placed in his tomb«. Such talismans could breach any physical separation between the spiritual father and his child and were, of course, a form of relic which could be created even before the death of the original owner<sup>28</sup>.

The protection thought to be provided by such items of clothing, as by relics, was a sign of a spiritual power which placed the monks concerned in a rank above the human but below the divine. Their holiness gave them an increased access to God and made of them His chosen channels of communication with the world below. This contact could, it was believed, be translated into eminently practical terms. A commonly accepted mark of sanctity was, in fact, an ability to predict the future. It was a gift primarily associated with those who led the eremitic life; their long periods of solitary contemplation could allow them to reach a higher degree of nearness to God than could a coenobitic *hegoumenos*, frequently distracted by the organisational problems of his monastery. There is very often an association to be drawn between the recipients of prophecy (always, of course, correct, otherwise it would have remained unrecorded) and their subsequent patronage of a monastic house. Again, it is a phenomenon which seems to have occurred at all social levels, though, naturally enough, the hagiographers usually only reported instances concerning important figures of the day<sup>29</sup>. But

27) Actes de Lavra I no. 18, eds. P. LEMERLE, A. GUILLOU, N. SVORONOS, D. PAPACHRYSSANTHOU (Archives de l'Athos 5, 1970).

28) Life of Symeon the New Theologian (as footnote 7) 72, p. 98; 78, p. 106; John Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum* 22, ed. J. THURN (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, 1973) p. 280; Life of Athanasios (as footnote 7) (A) 240, p. 115; (B) 12, p. 139; (B) 65, p. 200.

29) Little has been written on the subject of the Byzantine interest in prophecy, oracles, horoscopes and other prognostications. But see Paul ALEXANDER, ed. Dorothy ABRAHAMSE, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (1985) for the books of prophecy which the western Bishop Liutprand of Cremona saw at the Byzantine court in the mid-tenth century. Cyril MANGO, *The Legend of Leo the Wise*, *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 65 (1960) pp. 59–93 discusses early Macedonian attitudes to divination. On horoscopes, see David PINGREE, *The Horoscope of Constantine VII*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 27 (1973) pp. 219–231. A horoscope for the coronation of that most apparently devout of Emperors, Alexios I

in the Life of St Luke of Steiris, a saint active in southern Greece in the tenth century, for example, there are episodes in which the Saint used his powers of prophecy for the benefit of the community, rather than for the guidance of any powerful individual. He apparently predicted the Bulgar attack of 917 which culminated in the Byzantine defeat at the Battle of the Acheloos and a later »barbarian« invasion into the Peloponnese, probably the Magyar raids of 934. The people treated him as a prophet and none of them would leave their homes until he gave the signal of impending attack. Many similar examples could be cited<sup>30</sup>.

What can be made of these predictions? They were, of course, reported by hagiographers after the event, but this is no real reason to dismiss them out-of-hand merely as later fabrications. The accounts are doubtless embroidered and certainly fulfilled an important rôle in the construction of the hagiographical portrait, but they may well have been based on the saint's access to important and wide-ranging intelligence systems. In the instances discussed here, contact with spiritual children among the ranks of the military might have given access to information of both attack and planned response and the provision of up-to-date information about the position of the enemy would have been quite possible<sup>31</sup>.

Access to »privileged information« probably also lies at the root of the success with which spiritual fathers often predicted the fortunes of those Byzantines whose rank placed them in positions of authority, those in court circles and those who held, or eventually gained, the imperial rank. Numerous examples, often borne out by the chroniclers of the period, can be culled from the hagiography of the tenth and eleventh centuries. St Basil the Younger, for instance, warned two young court officials not to take part in a doomed revolt of Constantine Doukas in 917. Was he already aware from other court sources that the imperial government knew of the plans and had already taken suitable countermeasures? St Luke of Steiris may have

Kommenos, is contained in: David PINGREE, Gregory Choniates and Palaeologan Astronomy, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 18 (1964) pp. 135–160. The rôle of prophecy in assuring the success of revolts is discussed by Jean-Claude CHEYNET, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963–1210)* (Byzantina Sorbonensia 9, 1990) pp. 161–162.

30) Life of St Luke of Steiris (as footnote 7) 25 (Martini), p. 94; 52 (Migne PG), col. 462; 63 (Migne PG), col. 468. The Life of St Peter of Argos (as footnote 7) 9, p. 13 describes a vision of St John the Baptist warning him of troubles in the Peloponnese »after the death of the Patriarch Theophylact« – a probable reference to Slav rebellions. For the dating of this episode (probably between 924–927), see VASILIEV, Peter of Argos (as footnote 7). St Nikon »Metanoiete« predicted a »barbarian attack« which would be turned by the *strategos* of the Peloponnese, Basil Apokaukos – a reference to the raid led by the Bulgarian leader, Samuel, in 996: Life of St Nikon (as footnote 7) 40, pp. 140–142. For the career of Basil Apokaukos, see Alphonse BON, *Le Peloponnèse byzantin jusqu'en 1204* (1951) p. 186, n. 3.

31) Philip PATTENDEN, The Byzantine early-warning system, *Byzantion* 53 (1983) pp. 258–299, discusses the beacon system which stretched from the eastern frontier to Constantinople. Byzantine military officers were expected to be able to gather intelligence of all sorts as their tactical treatises make clear. See, for example, *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, ed. G. DENNIS (Dumbarton Oaks Texts 9, 1985), Anonymous Byzantine Treatise on Strategy 3, p. 26 (on beacons); *Skirmishing* 2, p. 152; 7, p. 162 (both on spies); *Campaign Organization and Tactics*, 18, p. 290–292 (on spies and information gathering). The first treatise dates from the sixth century, the last two from the tenth century.

been able to predict that the *strategos* (military governor) of Hellas, Pothos Argyros, an appointee of the Emperor Romanos Lekapenos (920–45), would come to no harm under the restored régime of Constantine Porphyrogennetos and that Krinites Arotas, his successor, would later be given control of the Peloponnese because, as a bishop, he had enough contacts in church circles in the capital to keep him informed of the way the political wind was blowing. Both these *strategoi* were clearly among his spiritual children<sup>32</sup>).

In the eleventh century, St Lazaros of Mount Galesion (western Asia Minor) seems to have been at the centre of a net-work of local officials in the Thrakesion theme (administrative district). His circle included Nikephoros Proteuon, the then *krites* (literally »judge« but by this time administrator) of the theme and John Mitas the *dioiketes* of Ephesos (the official in charge of the financial management of the property of a governmental bureau in the same theme), who came to request a cure for his uncle, Eustathios. But St Lazaros also had contacts in Constantinople. He warned the *eparch* (city governor), Nikephoros Kampanarios, of an imminent revolt against the Emperor Michael V and he prophesied the downfall of one Constantine Barys who later led an abortive revolt against Constantine IX Monomachos. He also received visits from the *strategos* Romanos Skleros and from Kosmas Konidiarès, two figures well-known from contemporary chronicles and from a legal compilation known as the *Peira*. On an even higher level, he was consulted by Maria Skleraina, the sister of Romanos Skleros and the influential mistress of the Emperor Constantine Monomachos and by a certain Makrembolites, possibly the father of the Empress Eudocia Makrembolitissa, the consort of both Constantine X Doukas (1059–67) and his successor, Romanos IV Diogenes (1067–81)<sup>33</sup>).

32) Life of St Basil the Younger (as footnote 7) pp. 666–667 (\*22–23). For the revolt of Constantine Doukas, see Pseudo-Symeon Logothetes pp. 719–721 in: Theophanes continuatus, Chronographia, ed. I. BEKKER (Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae, 1838); Vita Sancti Euthymii 21, ed. and English translation P. KARLIN-HAYTER, Byzantion 25–27 (1955–1957) pp. 136–138 and Steven RUNCIMAN, The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and his Reign (1929) pp. 49–50. The account in the Life of St Basil the Younger is remarkable for its virulent hostility towards the Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos (also strongly criticised in the Life of St Euthymios and then in charge of the government) and its admiration for Constantine Doukas. Could he have been one of Basil's spiritual sons? For Pothos Argyros and Krinites Arotas, see Life of St Luke of Steiris (as footnote 7) pp. 58–59; cols. 464–468 (Migne PG) and Pseudo-Symeon (as footnote 32) p. 732. Pothos Argyros had real cause for concern, as his brother Leo's son was married to Romanos Lekapenos' daughter, Agatha, see RUNCIMAN, Romanus Lecapenus pp. 69; 87–88; 135. For Krinites Arotas, see BON, Peloponnèse byzantin (as footnote 30) p. 182, no. 17. He was *strategos* of Hellas, then Peloponnes, then Hellas again and was sent by Constantine Porphyrogennetos to put down revolts by the slavic tribes in the Peloponnese in 952, see Constantine Porphyrogennetos, De Administrando Imperio 50, ed. R. J. H. JENKINS and G. MORAVCSIK (Dumbarton Oaks Texts 1, 1967) pp. 232–234; RUNCIMAN, Romanus Lecapenus pp. 73–74.

33) Life of St Lazaros (as footnote 7) 120, p. 543 (Nikephoros Proteuon); 103, p. 539 (John Mitas); 102, p. 539 (Nikephoros Kampanarios). Nikephoros Proteuon later became *katepan* of Bulgaria, attempted to seize the throne as Constantine IX lay dying in January 1055 but was thwarted and imprisoned in the Monastery of Kouzenos, interestingly enough quite near Mt. Galesion, the home of St Lazaros, see CHEYNET, Pouvoir et contestations (as footnote 29) p. 65; 194. Nikephoros Kampanarios is mentioned in: Skylitzes, Synopsis Historiarum (as footnote 28) p. 420. He is probably the *krites* Kampanarios mentioned

Other examples can be found in the hagiography of the later eleventh century, notably, perhaps, in the contacts between St Cyril Phileotes and the Komnenos family. Cyril was the spiritual father of Anna Dalassena, the mother of the future emperor (whose accession to the purple he prophesied), of the emperor himself and of his wife's brother-in-law, George Palaiologos. He was also consulted by the celebrated general Eumathios Philokales and by Constantine Choirospaktes, the scion of an eminent Byzantine family<sup>34</sup>.

Monastic leaders were thus often visited by members of the laity for consultation on all sorts of matters which we would not, perhaps, immediately describe as spiritual, but which were probably disguised as such. St Lazaros of Mount Galesion was reported to have turned away a *topoteretes* (military officer) who wanted to talk to him about »wars and other worldly happenings« simply because he had not asked the saint's advice on spiritual matters. But there is a case for arguing that, to Byzantines, »doing the right thing« was a matter with considerable moral as well as practical implications. From members of the Byzantine administrative »middle management« as far up the social scale as the imperial families themselves, the clients represented a cross-section of the Byzantine ruling class. They consulted their spiritual fathers either in person, or by letter and it is very likely that they were well aware of others who also sought guidance from the same source. It is not clear whether spiritual sons and daughters of the same »father« considered themselves related, as did those linked by other forms of spiritual relationship such as baptism, but the example of the spiritual children of Cyril Phileotes, all of whom were close to, if not members, of the Komnenan »clan«, strongly suggests that spiritual and political alliances were sometimes not very far apart<sup>35</sup>. In other cases, the accuracy of the

the *Peira*, see CHEYNET, Pouvoir et contestations p. 55, no. 56. For the plot of Constantine Barys, see Life of St Lazaros 105, p. 540 and CHEYNET, Pouvoir et contestations pp. 64–65, no. 74 who also identifies other members of the family. Life of St Lazaros 87, p. 536 (Romanos Skleros); 245, p. 554 (Maria Skleraina). For the Skleros family, see Werner SEIBT, Die Skleroi. Eine prosopographisch-sigillographische Studie (1976) and Nicholas OIKONOMIDÈS, St George of the Mangana, Maria Skleraina and the »Malyj Sion« of Novgorod, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 34–35 (1980–1981) pp. 231–246. For Kosmas Konidiarès, a monk who later returned to the world to take part in the rebellion of Isaak Komnenos in 1057, see Life of St Lazaros 97, p. 538 and CHEYNET, Pouvoir et contestations pp. 68–69, and for Makrembolites, Life of St Lazaros 101, p. 539 and, if this is the same man (i.e. John Makrembolites, who rebelled with the future Patriarch Michael Keroularios in 1040), CHEYNET, Pouvoir et contestations pp. 51–52.

34) Life of St Cyril Phileotes (as footnote 8) 17, p. 314 (Anna Dalassena); 51, p. 469 (Alexios Komnenos); 48, p. 463 (George Palaiologos); 34, p. 370 (Constantine Choirospaktes) 35, pp. 377–378 (Eumathios Philokales). See also Basil SKOULATOS, Les personnages byzantins de l'Alexiade (Université de Louvain, Recueil de Travaux d'Histoire et de Philologie, 6e série, fasc. 20, 1980) for all these personalities.

35) Life of St Lazaros (as footnote 7) 118, p. 543. George Palaiologos was the brother-in-law of the Empress Irene Doukaina, wife of Alexios Komnenos, see CHEYNET, Pouvoir et contestations (as footnote 29) p. 275 (genealogy of the Doukai); Eumathios Philokales one of the most important military men of the late-eleventh century and Constantine Choirospaktes one of the *oikeioi*, the closest advisors of Alexios Komnenos, see CHEYNET, Pouvoir et contestations p. 257; 297 and, for the church that Eumathios Philokales restored in Cyprus »to expiate the wicked actions which he had erred in committing«, see Cyril MANGO and Ernest HAWKINS, Report on Field Work in Istanbul and Cyprus, 1962–1963, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 18 (1964) pp. 319–340 espec. pp. 325–326.

specifically secular guidance dispensed by the saints can be explained by their access to a number of political groupings, which might be allied to each other, but equally well might not. The relationship of »father« to »son« or »daughter« and the protection afforded by one to the other could transcend any scruples about the divulging of information and modern perceptions of the »sanctity of the confessional« should not unquestioningly be transferred into the Byzantine context.

Of particular interest, since they concerned the political fortunes of the Empire are the predictions made to certain individuals of their imminent accession to the imperial power. In the mid-tenth century, St Michael Maleinos described to a group of courtiers from Constantinople a dream in which he had seen five small boxes on the altar of Haghia Sophia. He interpreted this as meaning that the usurper Romanos Lekapenos and his four sons would soon be toppled from power and Constantine Porphyrogenetos would be again left as sole ruler. Constantine Monomachos' accession in 1042 was predicted while he was in exile on the island of Mytilene by, it would appear, monks from both Galesion and Chios and Cyril Phileotes predicted the accession of Alexios Komnenos<sup>36</sup>. The act of making this kind of prediction was not essentially different from that of advising less august figures on their future political actions, and again depended to a large extent on an efficient intelligence system, but the consequences were much more significant<sup>37</sup>.

The personal relationships established between leading monks and members of the Byzantine élite were one aspect of the very close association which had long been established between the welfare of monastic institutions and that of the empire itself. Indeed, concern for the Emperor, and through him the state, was one of the most fundamental links between personal and state piety, between spiritual observance and political duty<sup>38</sup>. In fact, since the philosophical premise of the Byzantine State was that it represented a mimesis (»shadowing«)

36) Life of St Michael Maleinos (as footnote 7) 23, p. 565; Life of St Lazaros (as footnote 7) 230, p. 600; Lives of SS Niketas, John and Joseph (as footnote 7) p. 24, see CHEYNET, Pouvoir et contestations (as footnote 29) p. 46, no. 39; pp. 56–57, no. 60. It is interesting that this prophecy is attributed to two monastic groups and the story may have been »borrowed« by the 19th-century editor of the Lives of SS Niketas, John and Joseph from the 11th-century tradition in the Life of St Lazaros, see Charolambos BOURAS, *Nea Mone on Chios: History and Architecture* (1982) and for the unreliability of the existing Lives of SS Niketas, John and Joseph, see Era VRANOSSI, *Les archives de Néa Moni de Chio: Essai de reconstitution d'un dossier perdu*, *Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher* 22 (1977–1984) pp. 267–284. Life of St Cyril Phileotes (as footnote 8) 17, p. 314.

37) In particular, patronage of the monasteries of holy men who predicted a rise to the imperial throne could be assured. See, for example, those of Constantine Monomachos: Life of St Lazaros (as footnote 7) 230, p. 579; 245, p. 584, VRANOSSI, *Archives* (as footnote 36) p. 267.

38) See, for instance, the eleventh-century Typikon of Michael Attaleiates, where prayers for the Emperor were decreed and the imperial responsibility to protect the monastic houses of the empire clearly expressed: »For it is fitting for him (the Emperor) to look to the wishes of the founders and to protect the holy establishments ... so that the holy men may commend their lives to God and offer prayers for his safety and the raising of the imperial standards ...« (my translation). See Paul GAUTIER, *Le diataxis de Michel Attaliates*, *Revue des Etudes Byzantines* 39 (1981) p. 81.

of the Heavenly Kingdom, it is mistaken to attempt to separate out »religious« and »secular« aspects in too precise a way. Certainly, the responsibility of the emperor to ensure the spiritual welfare of the Byzantine people had been established since the days of Justinian and was accepted just as much in the tenth and eleventh centuries as it had been in the sixth<sup>39</sup>). The monastic life, the highest form of spiritual life and thus beneficial to those who practised it, was also a means by which the most numerous (and most efficacious) prayers could be offered on behalf of the state and this was one of the most important functions of the great coenobitic houses. It was also a prime concern of the *lavrai* of the holy mountains. The necessity for this type of intercession was clearly strongest in time of war and on a number of occasions in the tenth century, when the Byzantine state was facing a serious military challenge, imperial appeals were made for the spiritual assistance of the monks. Such actions reveal an important official motive for the patronage of monasteries – the belief that the monks could provide reinforcements on a non-combative, but highly beneficial level. The importance of prayers for the emperor and the empire was a constant theme of monastic documents. One from the Lavra on Mount Athos (972) made use of the familiar, indeed hackneyed, imagery of ships in a storm, but in this case the monastery was seen as the haven from which the monks sent up prayers for the beleaguered ship of state. And far from regarding these duties as detracting from their individual spiritual development, the monks accepted such generalised intercession as an important part of their spiritual labours. Individual founders and benefactors were commemorated in the liturgy as those whose personal efforts had brought the house into being and ensured its survival; the Emperor was commemorated as the symbol of that stability and protection which allowed all religious life in the Empire to flourish<sup>40</sup>).

It would, however, be both unjust and inaccurate to conceive of the monasteries and their leaders simply concerning themselves with the spiritual welfare and guidance of the aristocracy, even though this brought considerable returns in the form of donations, privileges and protection. For monastic leaders, especially in the tenth century when the peripatetic life was still practised and when the small, locally based houses predominated, were also community leaders and in this sense important actors in the local political arena too. They also possessed the power of prophecy, but it was often devoted to affairs of much more general concern than fortelling the political fortunes of powerful individuals. In areas where safety could not be guaranteed by the military forces of the state – southern Italy and Greece are two cases in point – the holy men provided guidance and re-assurance for anxious and displaced communities. In some cases, they acted as an intercessor between rural communities and the representatives of the state. St Paul of

39) Louis BRÉHIER, *Le monde byzantin* 2 (1949) pp. 63–65 for an old but valuable discussion.

40) For prayers for the Emperor in late eleventh-century coenobitic houses, see Paul GAUTIER, *Le typikon du sébaste Grégoire Pakourianos*, *Revue des Etudes Byzantines* 42 (1984) p. 9; ID., *Le typikon de la Théotokos Kécharitôméné*, *ibid.* 43 (1985) p. 239. For imperial appeals for prayers for the army on campaign, see Hélène AHRWEILER, *Un discours inédit de Constantin VII Porphyrogénète*, *Travaux et Mémoires* 2 (1967) p. 395 and the letters in Jean DARROUZÈS, *Epistoliers byzantins du Xe siècle* (1966) no. 83, pp. 146–147; no. 88, p. 149. *Actes de Lavra* (as footnote 27) I, no. 7 (972).

Latros (western Asia Minor) intervened in the case of the villager, John, who had taken part in some kind of minor revolt and was in the process of being taken away in chains for punishment, and who, after praying to the saint, felt his fetters miraculously drop away. St Nil, in Southern Italy, protected the inhabitants of Rossano from the over-enthusiastic attentions of imperial officials (probably tax-collectors) and St Elias Spelaiotes, another southern Italian saint, was not averse, when travelling through Greece, to sharing his unflattering opinion of the local *strategos*, John Mouzalon, with the notables of Patras with whom he was dining<sup>41</sup>.

But they also concerned themselves with other, more personal troubles. Luke of Steiris directed two brothers to the site of their father's buried treasure in order to end a family feud; he also identified the thief of a large amount of gold stolen from an imperial official en route for Africa and thus saved the weight of imperial justice falling on the community as a whole. St Nikon »Metanoieite«, a fearsome individual who tramped across Crete to bring back Christians to the fold after the island had been re-conquered by the Byzantines in 961 and later preached in the Peloponnese, freed Sparta of plague apparently by the simple expedient of expelling the Jews, a somewhat hazardous move as they enjoyed official toleration and protection, but one which may well have reflected wide-spread Christian popular opinion. Other examples can be cited from Italy. St Sabas tactfully refused a gift of honey offered him by a man who, the Saint knew, had stolen it from his neighbours' hives and thus avoided contributing to a potentially serious feud. In the mid-980's, St Luke of Demena organised a foray of townspeople from the *kastron* of Armento which successfully saw off a Saracen raiding force. St Elias the Younger ended a five-month drought by first lecturing the villages on the virtues of the brotherly love that had hitherto been lacking and then praying for rain, to immediate effect<sup>42</sup>.

It was, in fact, to these monk-saints that Byzantines of all ranks turned in times of crisis, when self-help, or existing communal and kinship structures were of no avail and when the officials of the state seemed powerless to intervene or were, themselves, the cause of the problem. The saints took on the rôle of local judge, of local administrator and even, on occasion, local general, thus, in a sense, usurping positions already well catered for by the political structures of the Byzantine State. Periods of attack and insecurity were one important circumstance in which the practical expedient of allowing terrified villagers inside the fortified walls of monasteries could be bolstered by the morale-boosting effects of preaching and the expression of the certainty of ultimate Christian triumph. In the tenth century, in particular, the Balkan and Italian themes suffered constant raiding and although the prophetic guidance provided by the saints could often avert serious loss of life, this power could not always be

41) Life of St Paul of Latros (as footnote 7) 50, p. 181; Life of St Nil (as footnote 7) cols. 296–297; Life of St Elias Spelaiotes (as footnote 7) col. 857.

42) Life of St Luke of Steiris (as footnote 7) 27, p. 95 (Martini); 44, pp. 99–100 (Martini); Life of St Nikon (as footnote 7) 33, pp. 110–112. Joshua STARR, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire* (Texte und Forschungen zur byzantinisch-neugriechischen Philologie 30, 1939) dates this episode to c. 985, see p. 9. Life of St Sabas (as footnote 7) 28, p. 153; Life of St Luke of Demena (as footnote 7) II, 10–11, p. 340; Life of St Elias the Younger (as footnote 7) 58, pp. 90–92.



exercised in time and thus they could only take a lead in comforting and supporting communities shattered by attack. The Life of St Peter of Argos describes, in traditional rhetorical terms, the grim aftermath of an arab raid into the Peloponnese, probably soon after 924: »Houses, streets, lanes and fields were filled with dead bodies and there were no living men to bury them«. During this time Peter distributed doles of flour, his stocks apparently miraculously increased to cater for the demand. In the late tenth century, St Sabas instructed the *oikonomos* of his monastery to provide for the needs of refugees from muslim attacks in Calabria, even though complaints were made that there was not enough food remaining to cater for the needs of the monks themselves. A large jar (probably a storage *pithos*) was subsequently found full of grain<sup>43</sup>.

There were two other circumstances in which, if the hagiographies are anything to go by, the assistance of holy men was particularly requested by members of local communities; climatic disaster and illness both physical and mental. While the Byzantines had long accustomed themselves to the vagaries of the Eastern Mediterranean climate and made attempts to combat them in terms of habitat and agriculture, what they could not be expected to cope with easily were periodic climatic excesses: freak weather conditions beyond their normal experience or more serious phenomena such as earthquakes and planetary activity. Serious weather variations could disrupt both rural and urban economies for some time afterwards. Many of the hagiographies contain accounts of such difficult times and miracles performed by the saints to alleviate them. We cannot, of course, give credence to the precise details, but the circumstantial evidence indicates that holy men were believed to be able to intervene with the weather. After a particularly serious drought in the region around Miletos in the mid-tenth century, the inhabitants of forty villages assembled for a mass pilgrimage to Mount Latros to request the assistance of St Paul, who, it was said, performed a miracle involving the constant refilling of an amphora with water. St Sabas, in contrast, reportedly diverted the floods in Latium which threatened vineyards and a church by praying before them like Moses parting the Dead Sea. We also possess information which shows saints taking a leading rôle in relief work which had very little miraculous about it. In the aftermath of the »long winter« of 927–8, for instance, the destitute poured into Constantinople where they were fed by imperial food doles distributed by monks. The Life of St Luke the Stylite, in a passage which may well refer to the same period, describes the saint opening up his family's storage pits and distributing 4,000 measures of grain to the needy as well as fodder for their animals. On another occasion in Southern Italy, St Luke of Demena ordered the stores of his monastery to be opened to the needy who had flocked there in time of famine<sup>44</sup>.

43) VASILIEV, Peter of Argos (as footnote 7) p. 112; Life of St Sabas (as footnote 7) 14, p. 135. Life of St Elias the Younger (as footnote 7) 45–46, p. 70 contains a sermon on the virtues of suffering.

44) Climatic extremes were noted with interest by Byzantine chroniclers, like their western counterparts. See, for instance, Skylitzes, Synopsis Historiarum (as footnote 28) p. 347 (freezing rivers and marshes); 400 (drought); 402 (famine of 1037–8); 477 (fierce heat). Life of St Paul of Latros (as footnote 7) 18, p. 53;

The performance of miraculous cures is, of course, part and parcel of every hagiographical account since it was one of the outward signs of sanctity, but the ability to intervene when existing medical skills had failed was one of the means by which holy men came into contact with powerful individuals in the Byzantine State who were, after all, just as prone to illness as humble folk yet more able to request help to combat it. A whole range of diseases is revealed in the hagiography of the tenth and eleventh century. The *kandidatos* Floros was cured of leprosy by St Luke the Stylite; the *protospatharios* Leo Basilitzes had his hand cured by St Lazaros of Mount Galesion; John Kouphalides, from the city of Attaleia, was cured of possession by demons. And the powerful also enjoyed the post mortem miracles associated with holiness. A fragrant oil, which apparently oozed from the corpse of St Nikon in Sparta was successfully used by the *strategos* Basil Apokaukos to cure his servant Gregory and amongst those cured by incubation was the *stratiotes* Michael Argyromites, given to uncontrollable violence, brought on by fits<sup>45</sup>.

Thus even in the more traditional activities of saints, the Byzantine holy men maintained links with those of influence in lay society. We can thus see them as »political« on a number of levels: as local leaders providing an alternative to, or a check upon lay authority, or, indeed, supplying leadership when the state-appointed officials could not; as advisors and confidants of those in the highest positions of authority in the capital and, perhaps most importantly of all as links between the local administrative circles of the provinces and the »charmed circle« of the Byzantine court in Constantinople. Their monastic calling drew them to a higher life – the *angelikos bios* or »life of the angels« – and their holiness made them a bridge between earth and Heaven, yet they still took an active part in the affairs of the world. But we cannot see them, as did Brown, as standing aloof from the nexus of worldly relationships in order to give guidance from an impartial stance. Certainly, they abandoned their own family ties and those which came with their birth into a local community, but in their role as leaders in their adoptive regions and, above all in the creation of spiritual families, such ties were re-created on a spiritual level. What was first held through blood and *patris* was now expressed through faith and the Christian community. And, like all successful members of Byzantine society, the holy men whose reputations lasted and about whom hagiographies and other records survived, were those whose activities and whose contacts, made through these mechanisms, overcame the geographical limits of provincial life in order to play a part on the wider political stage.

Life of St Sabas (as footnote 7) 13, p. 55. For the effects of the 928 famine, see Rosemary MORRIS, *The Powerful and the Poor in Tenth-Century Byzantium: Law and Reality, Past and Present* 73 (1976) pp. 3–27. Life of St Luke the Stylite (as footnote 7) 15, p. 206; Life of St Luke of Demena (as footnote 7) I 7, p. 338.

45) Life of St Luke the Stylite (as footnote 7) 63, p. 262; Life of St Lazaros (as footnote 7) 71–2, p. 531; Life of St Nikon (as footnote 7) 50, pp. 166–168; 65, pp. 222–226.