Religious Transitions

Aphrodite Kamara (Foundation of the Hellenic World)

‘Urban’ and ‘Rural’ Religion in Late Antique Anatolia—From Pagan Diversity to Christian Heresy

Based mainly on archaeological and epigraphic evidence, this paper aims at approaching three issues: a) what were the differences between urban and rural paganism in Late Antiquity (i.e. different cults, different celebrations to the same cults etc.); b) What were the differences between urban and rural Christianity (i.e. administrative, liturgical and/or doctrinal differences)? and c) Do these differences imply strong cultural differences between city and countryside that permeate such areas of daily life and thought as religion? At present I plan to restrict my research in the areas of Lycia, Cilicia and Cappadocia, but further restriction might be recommended by the material itself as preparations for the paper continue.

Dr Rustem Shukorov, Moscow State University

New Evidence on Crypto-Muslims in Anatolia During the Conquests of Tamerlane (ca. 1400-02)

The present paper discusses the relationship between Christianity and Islam in Anatolia on the earliest stages of Turkic conquests, an area that was always within the scope of the scholarly interests of F.W. Hasluck. The piece examines a passage from an unpublished work of Hafiz-i Abur, a famous Persian writer of the first half of the 15th century, which testified that some Anatolian Christians, subjects of Christian states, confessed Islam secretly. As I will try to show, Turkish crypto-Muslims, living presumably, in the Pontos, were implied here. These Turkish Christian communities were an inevitable by-product of both Turkish conquests and defensive activity of the local Christians. At the same time, Anatolian sources (both Greek and Muslim) testify numerous evidences of a relative simplicity of transitions from Islam to Christianity and vice versa and, hence, instability of religious situation in Anatolia in the times of Turkic conquests.

Professor Anthony Bryer, University of Birmingham

F.W. Hasluck and the Crypto-Christians of Trebizond: Some Answers

In his ‘The Crypto-Christians of Trebizond’, Journal of Hellenistic Studies, 41 (1921), 199-202, Hasluck left a posthumous time-bomb (one page of text muffled by three of notes), which still reverberates. Hasluck knew that even in the twilight world of Christianity and Islam under the Sultans, later to be explored by Michel Balivet (1994), there was something exceptional about Trebizond. In 1983 Anthony Bryer, and in 1985 Konstantinos Photiades, published quite different answers to Hasluck’s questions - the former an economic and administrative explanation for crypto-Christianity in 1829-1856, the latter an argument which accounts for why 19 May 1919 is today marked both as a national holiday in Turkey and as Pontic ‘Holocaust’ day in Greece. It is to be hoped that this is the final round.

Simonian Hovann (USC)

Crypto-Christianity and an Armenian-speaking Islamic Community: The Hemshins.

The Armenians of the Hemshin district, located in the eastern section of the Pontos, were affected by forced Islamization at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and today are the only community of Armenian-speaking Muslims. As with the Pontic Greeks and some Albanian communities, conversion was often only external at the outset, so that crypto-Christians (Kes-Kes, Arm. half and half) constituted a majority of the Hemshin population in the following centuries. To this day, the Hemshins celebrate Vartevar, the feast of the transfiguration of Christ, with a festival, although the original religious significance of the event seems to have been lost on them. This paper will examine the historical circumstances surrounding the conversion of the Hemshins to Islam, the subsequent retention of crypto-Christian practices within the converted community, and the emergence of a Hemshin ethnic identity organized around the somewhat contradictory poles of allegiance to Islam and use of the Armenian language.