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The Archaeological Context of Magic in the Early Byzantine Period

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The observant traveler familiar with the byways of southern Turkey will occasionally encounter small trees with their branches festooned with white pieces of cloth. A typical example may be seen near the lip of the Corycian Cave, a site of primeval numen, believed in antiquity to be the home of Typhon (Fig. 1).¹ On the rare occasions that I have seen people actually tying rags to bushes such as these, they were usually elderly women either alone or accompanied by young girls. Since the social constraints of Turkish rural society preclude me from serious discussion with the individuals engaged in the activity, I depend for an explanation of the custom on the remarks of male villagers whose scorn for the practice is barely disguised. There can be little doubt, however, that the custom of tying rags to bushes is very ancient and survives from a time when most people in this region of Turkey were still nomads or at least not yet fully sedentary. The purpose of those who engage in the practice is not in question. They are hoping thereby to secure some desired objective, the cure of an ailment or the ability to conceive a child on the part of a relative. There is much less certainty about the precise magical properties of the tree itself and the rag, or of the site selected for the ritual and the processes by which the desired ends will be achieved. The outsider can only acknowledge the truth of the opinion with which J. P. Roux concludes his discussion of this particular custom: “il faut se résigner, dans le monde des nomades anatoliens, à ne pas expliquer d’une manière satisfaisante des faits qu’ils ont conservés sans bien connaître

¹ Strabo, 14.5.5; Pomponius Mela, 1.13. T. S. MacKay, “The Major Sanctuaries of Pamphylia and Cilicia,” *ANRW*, II.18.3 (Berlin, 1990), 2103–10.

leur signification et que, pour satisfaire leur besoin de comprendre, ils justifient comme ils peuvent.”²

This example of magic in practice in the contemporary setting of rural Turkey serves to illustrate the difficulties that confront the scholar who seeks to comprehend magical beliefs among simple people. Even with the obvious advantage of autopsy and the opportunity to communicate with those familiar with the custom, much still defies explanation. By contrast, students of ancient magic must rely exclusively on the texts of spells and charms and the instructions for effecting them contained in papyri and on what survives of the actual *instrumenta* employed to exercise magic, such as amulets, engraved gemstones, bracelets, and phylacteries. These materials are no substitute for the living practitioners of magic as primary evidence, and their study begs a broad range of questions. Since the magical papyri are predominantly from Egypt, how valid are their contents for the Roman and Byzantine world as a whole? The material apparatus of magic such as amulets, on the other hand, even allowing for the uncertainty of provenance, is clearly drawn from a far broader geographical range, and especially Asia Minor, Syria, and Palestine. This suggests a homogeneity of practice and belief in magic, especially evident in the iconography of devices to ward off the evil eye. How may we account, therefore, for such uniformity, in the absence of any known organizing force or common statement of belief such as the Christian church employed in its unsuccessful efforts to maintain unity of doctrine? Another vexing question is whether the excessive reliance of modern scholarship on the written text gives a distorted impression of magical practices which, if contemporary Mediterranean societies are any guide, probably required little if any literacy on the part of those employing them. In short, is there not a risk of missing the mark when we allow the ancient commentators on Byzantine magic, whether sympathetic, as in the case of those who wrote treatises on the subject, or hostile, as in the case of the church fathers, to stand between us and the largely poor and illiterate inhabitants of small towns, villages, and countryside who actually wore the amulets and uttered the spells and perhaps even tied white rags on bushes?

My interest in these matters originated with a group of objects found dur-

² J. P. Roux, *Les traditions des nomades de la Turquie méridionale*, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie d'Istanbul 24 (Paris, 1970), 208–12.

ing excavations at the small town of Anemurium on the coast of Isauria.³ Though unfamiliar at the time of their discovery, it soon became clear that these objects were devices intended to protect their owners from the evil eye in the course of their daily lives. It also became apparent that they belonged to a time in the community's life when its creative energies were concentrated on the Christian religion, a fact reflected in both the proliferation of church buildings in the city and its surrounding chora and in the wide range of personal benefactions recorded in their mosaic floors.⁴ In this respect Anemurium was doubtless no different from most other communities throughout the eastern Mediterranean in the early Byzantine period. Underlying this devotion to the new faith, however, there clearly remained a deeply engrained attachment to practices inherited from some timeless past involving various forms of magic. Of these none commanded more widespread adherence from the general population than the belief in the bewitching glance of the evil eye, known variously as *phthonos*, *baskania*, *baskosyne*, *baskanos ophthalmos*, or, in Latin, *invidia* or *invidiosus oculus*. This unseen force could maim livestock, blight crops, render women barren, strike down children, or destroy the home, wealth, and health of the unknowing victim of its attention.⁵ Examples of its influence and the measures taken to counter it were, and indeed remain, at least in rural society, ubiquitous throughout the eastern Mediterranean in numerous forms. In antiquity, householders inscribed apotropaic formulae to accompany the

³ For summaries of the history and antiquities of the site on the basis of fieldwork, see J. Russell, "Anemurium—eine römische Kleinstadt in Kleinasien," *Antike Welt* 7.4 (1976), 2–20; and "Anemurium: The Changing Face of a Roman City," *Archaeology* 33.5 (1980), 31–40. Interim reports of field work in progress have appeared regularly since 1966 in *TürkArkDerg*, in "Recent Archaeological Research in Turkey" in *AnatSt*, and in M. J. Mellink, "Archaeology in Asia Minor" in *AJA*. All of the objects discussed are housed in the Anamur Museum.

⁴ See especially J. Russell, *The Mosaic Inscriptions of Anemurium*, *Ergänzungsband zu den Tituli Asiae Minoris* 13, Denkwien, phil.-hist. Kl. 190 (Vienna, 1987).

⁵ The basic study of the evil eye in antiquity remains O. Jahn, *Über den Aberglauben des bösen Blicks bei den Alten*, *Berichte über die Verhandl. der K. sächsischen Gesellsch. der Wissensch. zu Leipzig*, phil.-hist. Kl. 7 (Leipzig, 1855), 28–110. For more recent discussions, J. Engemann, "Zur Verbreitung magischer Übelabwehr in der nichtchristlichen und christlichen Spätantike," *JbAChr* 18 (1975), 22–48 and K. M. D. Dunbabin and M. W. Dickie, "Invidia rumpantur pectora: The Iconography of Phthonos-Invidia In Graeco-Roman Art," *JbAChr* 26 (1983), 7–37.

cross on their doors,⁶ uttered special prayers to avert the danger, sometimes even with ecclesiastical authority,⁷ and addressed their friends or named their children Abascantos: "Immune from the Evil Eye."⁸ Above all, people wore amulets, rings, and other protective devices inscribed with potent symbols and formulae to avert the bewitching glance of the envious.⁹

As a rule such beliefs were frowned on by the authorities, both secular and religious, as is evident from the writings of the church fathers, which abound with strictures against the superstitious fear of the evil eye and the amulets associated with it.¹⁰ No amount of preaching, however, nor even the occasional imposition of penalties on their use by both civil and religious authorities, seems to have had much effect on the use of amulets by the peasant and the artisan.¹¹ Just how widespread their use was may be deduced from the archaeological context of the objects under consideration, which provides a more objective record of how ordinary people coped with the evil eye in their daily lives than the prejudiced testimony of most literary texts.

⁶ The commonest formulae employed are the trisagion, κύρι βοήθι or some variant, Εἰς θεός μόνος, ΧΜΓ (probably Χριστός, Μιχαήλ, Γαβριήλ) and ΙΧΘΥΣ; see W. K. Prentice, "Magical Formulae of Lintels of the Christian Period in Syria," *AJA* 10 (1901), 137–50. For formulae actually averting *phthonos* by name, cf. *IGLSy*; no. 1909 and H. Grégoire, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques-chrétiennes d'Asie Mineure*, I (Paris, 1922), no. 230.

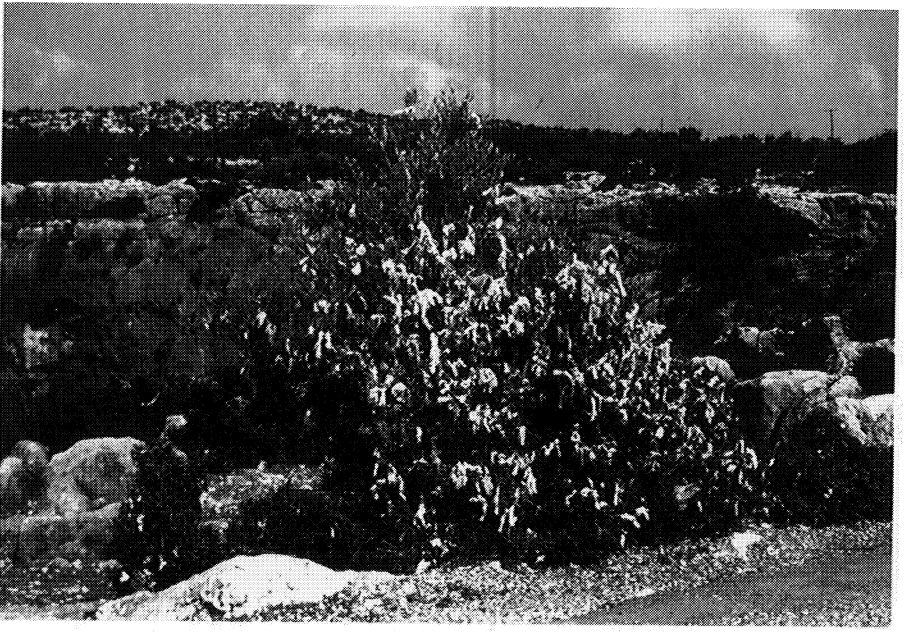
⁷ For examples of prayers, see A. Delatte, *Anecdota Atheniensia*, I (Liège, 1927), 243.11 (prayer of Gregory Theologos). For a prayer with ecclesiastical authority, see *Mikron Euchologion*, ed. M. Saliveros (Athens, n.d.), quoted in French translation by L. Arnaud, "La baskania ou le mauvais oeil chez les grecs modernes," *EO* 15 (1912), 386–87.

⁸ L. Robert, "Hellenica," *RPh* 18 (1944), 41–42; *REG* 64 (1951), 146, no. 55.

⁹ On amulets generally, see H. Leclercq, art. "amulettes," *DAcL*, I.2 (Paris, 1924), cols. 1784–1860; F. X. Kraus, art. "amulette," *Realenzyklopädie der Christl. Alterthümer*, I (Freiburg, 1880), 49–51. The most comprehensive collection of examples appears in C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets* (Ann Arbor, 1950), especially 95–99 on the evil eye.

¹⁰ Representative examples include John Chrysostom, hom. 8 on Col. 3:15, PG 62, cols. 357–58; hom. 4 on 1 Cor. 1:25, PG 61, col. 38; Augustine, *Tract.* 7, §6 on John 1:34–51, CChr 36, 70; Basil of Caesarea on Ps. 45 § 29, PG 29, col. 417; and especially hom. *de Invidia*, PG 31, col. 380; Jerome, *Comm. in Matth.* 4.23, CChr 77, 211–12.

¹¹ Imposition of penalties by civil authorities: Constantius II (Ammian. Marcell., 19.12.13); Valentinian and Valens (*CTh*, 9.16.7); by religious authorities: Synod of Laodicea (C. J. Hefele, *Histoire des conciles*, I.2 [Paris, 1907], Con. 36, 1018–19).



1 Tree with cloth ribbons tied to it, the Corycian Cave, Mersin.



2 Anemurium, inscribed glass paste amulet, front face with trisagion.



3 Anemurium, inscribed glass paste amulet, rear face.



4 Anemurium, inscribed glass paste amulet, drawing of both faces.



5 Anemurium, bronze amulet
with evil eye being attacked.
(photo: Hector Williams)



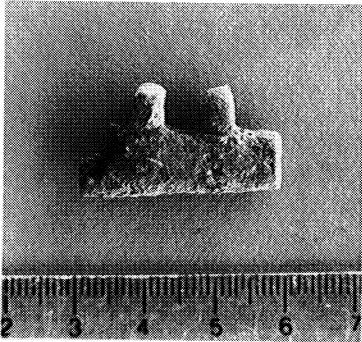
6 Anemurium, bronze amulet
with figure of holy rider (Solomon).
(photo: Hector Williams)



7 Anemurium, terra cotta mould for eulogia of Raphael.
(photo: Hector Williams)



8 Anemurium, bronze with eight-pointed star engraved on bezel.
(photo: Hector Williams)



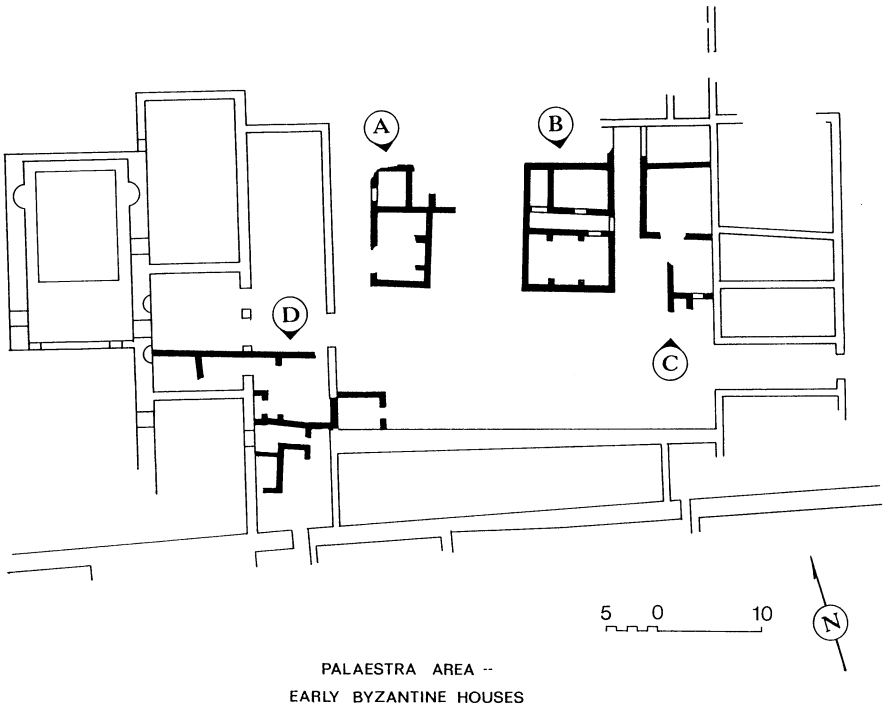
9 Anemurium, bronze tubular container for phylactery.
(photo: Hector Williams)



10 Anemurium, rolled silver phylactery and remains of bronze container.
(photo: Hector Williams)



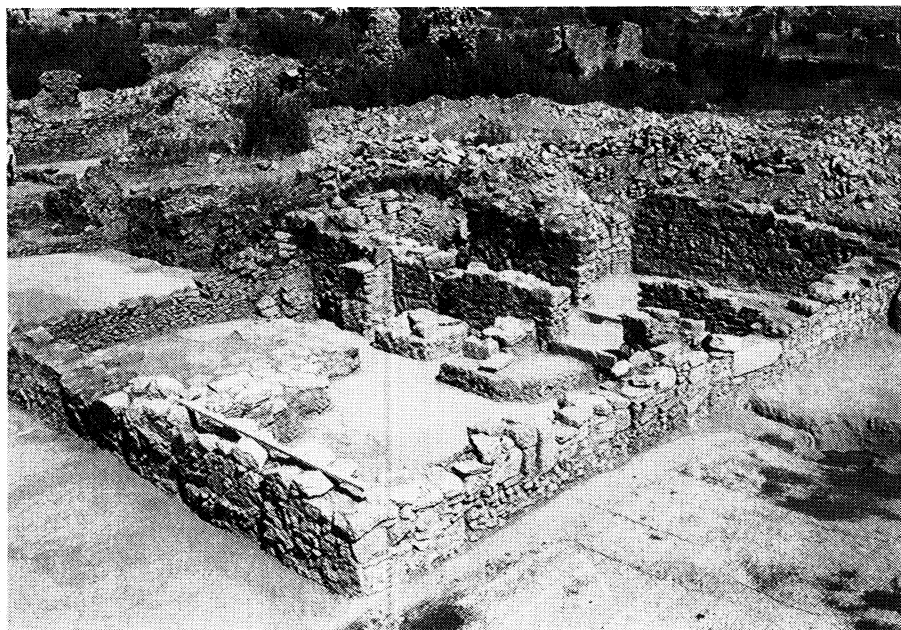
11 Anemurium, small bell (*tintinnabulum*).
(photo: Hector Williams)



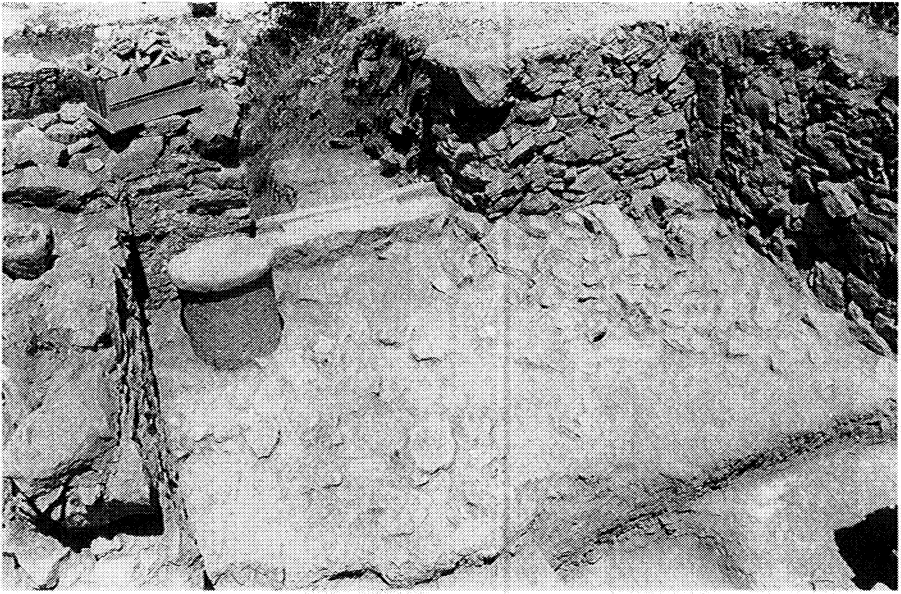
12 Anemurium, plan of baths-palaestra complex (III 2 B) with secondary domestic structures indicated A-D. (drawing by Tom Boyd)



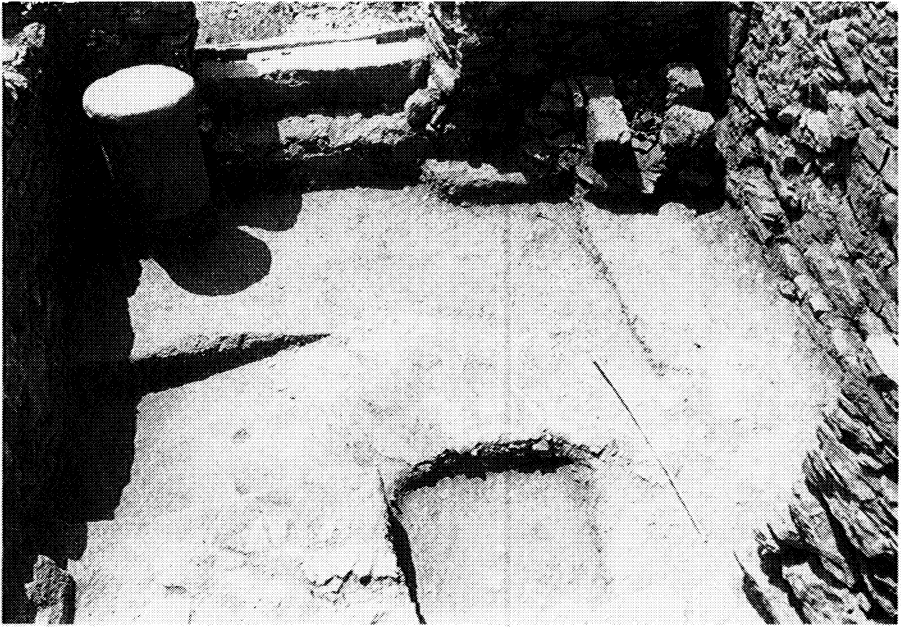
13 Anemurium, general view of secondary domestic structures A-C along north edge of palaestra (E III 2 B) from west. (photo: Hector Williams)



14 Anemurium, late house B overlying north portico of palaestra from southeast. (photo: Hector Williams)



15 Anemurium, late house A overlying north portico of palaestra, central room with destruction debris overlying the floor. (photo: Hector Williams)



16 Anemurium, late house A overlying north portico of palaestra, earth floor of central room after clearing. (photo: Hector Williams)



17 Anemurium, bronze steelyard weight in form of Athena. (photo: Hector Williams)

Though a brief account of most of the pieces found at Anemurium appeared over ten years ago, it is worth reviewing them again as a group in order to appreciate their random diversity, for it is this, together with the reasonably secure context that we can assign for the majority of them, that gives the collection its significance.¹² The first is a glass paste oval amulet inscribed on both faces (Figs. 2–4). On one side appears the trisagion, a standard formula for Jews and Christians to avert evil spirits.¹³ The reverse bore a text, apparently without parallel, proclaiming the efficacy of Solomon's Seal: σφραγις Σολομῶνος [ἔ]χει τὴν βασκανίαν (The Seal of Solomon restrains the Evil Eye). In this context Solomon was the great magician of the universe who wielded control over all evil spirits. According to the *Testamentum Solomonis*, a farrago of magical writings, probably of Jewish origin and datable in its present form no later than the third century A.D., Solomon's most effective weapon in his battles over the demons was a ring with a magic seal received from God through the archangel Michael.¹⁴ This has the power to confine all the demons of earth both male and female. The seal of Solomon thus plays a crucial role in the exorcism of demons.¹⁵ The Anemurium disk presumably was intended to provide its owner with the same magical power as the original Solomon's seal.

Closely related to the inscribed amulet were two oval disks of thin copper sheeting decorated in repoussé, which were found together. Identical in size

¹² J. Russell, "The Evil Eye in Early Byzantine Society," *XVI Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress, Akten*, II.3, *JÖBG* 32.3 (1982), 540–46.

¹³ Inv. no. AN 72/115; the text reads ΑΓΙΟC ΑΓΙΟC ΑΓΙΟC [K]C CAB [ΑΟ]Θ. On the use of the trisagion (Isaiah 6:3) and other formulae to avert evil, see W. K. Prentice, *Greek and Latin Inscriptions, American Archaeological Expedition to Syria in 1899–1900*, III (New York, 1908), 9, 19–25.

¹⁴ C. C. McCown, *The Testament of Solomon* (Leipzig, 1922). This is the only critical edition, but the text is also published in PG 122, cols. 1315–58.

¹⁵ The literature on Solomon's role in Judaeo-Christian magic is vast, but for amulets identified as Solomon's seal see in particular P. Perdrizet, "Sphragis Solomonos," *REG* 16 (1903), 42–61; idem, *Negotium Perambulans in Tenebris*, Publications de la faculté des lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg 6 (Strasbourg, 1922), 32–35; Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 208–13; E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, II (New York, 1953), 227–32; B. Bagatti, "Altre medaglie di Salamone cavaliere e loro origine," *RACr* 47 (1971), 331–42; idem, "I Giudeo-Cristiani e l'anello di Salamone," *Recherches de science religieuse* 60 (1972), 151–60; A. Delatte and P. Derchain, *Les intailles magiques gréco-égyptiennes* (Paris, 1964), nos. 369 ff; G. Vikar, "Art, Medicine and Magic in Early Byzantium," *DOP* 38 (1984), 65–86.

and shape, they were perhaps once joined together.¹⁶ On one appears a poorly executed version of a scene that is more readily intelligible from other examples (Fig. 5). This depicts an eye being pierced by two oblique spears on the left and by a triangular bladed knife from above. Underneath an assortment of creatures, including two serpents, a scorpion, and an ibis in the center flanked by a lion and leopard rampant, are ravaging the eye from below. Above appears the legend κύρι βοήθι. On the second disk is shown a nimbate cavalier in military garb, bearing a lance in his right hand and charging to the right (Fig. 6). With this he transfixes a poorly formed demon, apparently female, lying prostrate beneath his horse. Below the demon an equally ill-formed lion rushes to the right.

The motifs on both plaques are well attested, both individually and in combination, throughout the eastern Mediterranean, not only on oval or round plaques such as these, but also on rings, incised gemstones, and bracelets.¹⁷ The significance of their iconography is well established from the legends drawn for the most part from a limited range of quasi-scriptural formulae that frequently appear on other examples.¹⁸

¹⁶ They are listed as AN 71/277 and AN 71/278 respectively in the excavation inventory.

¹⁷ Examples of both motifs on amulets of varying materials and shapes are collected in Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 302–7, especially nos. 298–303, in which both motifs are combined on the same amulet; for discussion see pp. 96–99 (evil eye), 208–12 (Solomon). For examples not covered by Bonner, see M. C. Ross, *Catalogue of Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection* (Washington, D.C., 1962), 53, no. 60; H. Menzel, “Ein Christliches Amulett mit Reiterdarstellung,” *JbZMusMainz* 2 (1955), 253–61; Bagatti, “Altre medaglie,” 331–42; for examples in gems, see Delatte and Derchain, *Intailles magiques*, 261–64 (nos. 369–77); for bracelets, see M. Piccirillo, “Un braccialetto cristiano della regione di Betlem,” *Liber Annuus* 29 (1979), 244–52; E. D. and H. P. Maguire and M. J. Duncan-Flowers, *Art and Holy Powers in the Early Christian House* (Urbana-Champaign, 1989), 212–17, nos. 133–36; also 25–28 for discussion of holy rider.

¹⁸ The most instructive example is a copper amulet from Smyrna. Not only is the exact character of each scene clearly defined, but the legend on each face provides a vivid commentary. Around the image of the horseman the text reads, in part, Φεῦγε μεμισμένι, Σολομὼν σε διόκι (“Flee, thou loathsome demon: Solomon pursues thee”). This is complemented on the reverse by the legend σφραγίς Σολομῶνος ἀποδιόξον πᾶν κακὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ φοροῦντο(ς) (“Seal of Solomon, drive away all evil from him who wears it”). Associated with this is a well-executed version of the discomfiture of the evil eye, identified by the legend ΦΘΟΝΟΣ immediately above it: G. Schlumberger, “Amulettes byzantins anciens,” *REG* 5 (1892), 74–75; also P. Perdrizet, “Sphragis,” 47–48.

From these it is clear that the horseman is Solomon, the magician warrior, who pierces the female demon that represents whatever ills might beset the wearer. The reverse scene depicts a generic evil eye representing the malignant glance of the φθονεροί (the envious) whether in the form of malicious humans or demons. The evil power embodied in the eye is cancelled by the magical effect of the suffering it undergoes from the various hostile forces depicted attacking it in the amulet.¹⁹

A further object of unmistakable apotropaic character is a rounded terracotta mold decorated with a Latin cross and an inscription around the border (Fig. 7). When reversed, as it would appear in a cast, this reads εὐλογία τοῦ ἁγίου Ῥαφαήλ (Blessing of St. Raphael).²⁰ Eulogia stamps depicting a saint and his symbols along with a legend identifying him are commonly associated with pilgrim sanctuaries. Once generally believed to be mere tokens acquired by pilgrims as souvenirs, they were more probably employed by their owners as instruments of magic with power to effect cures.²¹ In the case of Raphael and the other archangels, however, such stamps were apotropaic, reflecting their efficacy as agents of exorcism, a power well attested in papyrus texts and on amulets.²² We may thus assume an amuletic function for whatever disks were produced from this particular mold, whether of metal or terracotta.

Although amulets constitute the most conspicuous means by which individuals sought to ward off the unseen evil around them, there were other de-

¹⁹ This is clearly indicated in the *Testamentum Solomonis* (McCown, *Testamentum*, 58*).

²⁰ Excavation inv. no. AN 76/110.

²¹ On the medicinal efficacy of saints' eulogia tokens, see Vikan, "Art, Medicine, and Magic," 67–74. These, usually depicting the figure and symbols of the saint, were acquired by pilgrims at regional shrines such as those of St. Menas in Egypt or St. Phokas in Cherson.

²² For Raphael and the role of angels generally in early Christian magic, see J. Kubinska, *Faras*, IV: *Inscriptions grecques chrétiennes* (Warsaw, 1974), 152–54, 170–73, nos. 122–24; C. Detlef G. Müller, *Die Engellehre der koptischen Kirche* (Wiesbaden, 1959), 52–53. Of particular interest for the apotropaic significance of Raphael is an amulet from Cyzicus depicting the usual repertoire of motifs, the prostrate demoness, the bounding lion, the eye, the trisagion, and the holy rider. The scene includes an angel identified as Araaf, a variant form of Raphael, whose name is also invoked on the reverse together with three other angels; Perdrizet, "Sphragis," 46–47. For other amulets with Araaf and variants, see Schlumberger, "Amulettes," 75–78 and Bagatti, "Altri medaglie," 335–36.

ices with magical properties that could prove effective. Rings equipped with a bezel engraved with a cryptic formula or mystical symbol could protect the wearer from harm. Both types have been found at Anemurium, a silver ring with its bezel incised with unintelligible letters and another of bronze, having its bezel engraved with an eight-pointed star, a device similar to the more common pentalpha widely employed in amulets of the early Byzantine period (Fig. 8).²³ Even more explicit in its apotropaic function was the phylactery, a thin sheet or lamella of silver inscribed with a magical text frequently unintelligible and often accompanied by cryptic signs and symbols. These were tightly rolled and fitted into a cylindrical tube provided with two pierced lugs for a chain which was worn round the owner's neck. Anemurium has produced two examples of this kind of object, one a bronze tube lacking its scroll (Fig. 9), the other an unrolled lamella along with a fragment of its bronze tube (Fig. 10).²⁴

Small bells, known as *tintinnabula*, have appeared in some numbers at Anemurium. The cruder examples were probably employed to keep track of animals while grazing, but there is ample evidence from literature for the use of bells as apotropaic devices when placed above cradles to protect infants, at doorways to secure the entrance to the home, and also to accompany the dead to the grave. The fine quality, as well as the domestic context of the findspot,

²³ Inv. nos. AN 76/69 (inscribed silver ring) and AN 71/280 (bronze ring with incised eight-pointed star). For the pentalpha as the device engraved on the seal ring that God presented to Solomon enabling him to "lock up all the demons," see McCown, *Testamentum*, 10*, 100*. In the actual practice of medicine, the pentalpha symbol, sometimes specifically identified as *hygieia*, appears to have served a medical function: Perdrizet, *Negotium*, 35–37; Vikan, "Art, Medicine and Magic," 76 note 67.

²⁴ Inv. nos. AN 76/107 (bronze suspension tube) and AN 70/15 (silver scroll and fragment of bronze casing). The scroll has been unrolled, but the markings on it are unintelligible and will require the attentions of an expert. Gold and silver lamellae of similar character are occasionally sold through the antiquities trade. Recent published examples of this sort include D. R. Jordan, "A Silver Phylactery at Istanbul," *ZPE* 28 (1978), 84–86; R. Kotansky, "A Silver Phylactery for Pain," *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 11 (1983), 169–78; R. Kotansky and C. A. Faraone, "An Inscribed Gold Phylactery in Stamford, Connecticut," *ZPE* 75 (1988), 257–66. Presumably most phylacteries appearing on the market were found in graves. Examples with well-documented provenance are very rare. Two recent finds are significant, one found in a metalworker's shop in a Dacian city site (Kotansky and Faraone, *op. cit.*, 257 note 2) and the other, a gold lamella tightly rolled in a hexagonal tube of silver, found in an early 5th-century context at the late Roman villa of San Giovanni di Ruoti in the Lucanian Apennines. I am indebted for this information to Professor C. J. Simpson, who will publish the piece.

suggests that some of the bells from Anemurium belong to the latter category (Fig. 11).²⁵

Taken individually there is nothing remarkable about this collection of apotropaic objects from Anemurium. Close parallels for most pieces could be cited at the time of their discovery in the 1970s, and the intervening years have produced further examples of each genre. In this respect amulets and other apotropaic apparatus are no different from the many other types of *instrumenta domestica* that have flooded the antiquities market in recent years, the result presumably of the illicit use of metal detectors on archaeological sites throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Certain German coin dealers in particular now routinely include considerable quantities of such items in their auction catalogues. In one recent catalogue, for example, the early Byzantine material, running to several hundred lots, includes a variety of glass vessels, lead seals, bronze censers with suspension chains and hooks, bells, decorated handles from vessels, ladles, spoons, belt buckles and fibulae, incised crosses, numerous keys, a complete polycandelon with suspension apparatus, bronze lamps, steelyard weighing equipment, lead weights, bread stamps, and a wide selection of rings, earrings, and other jewelry.²⁶ Also included is a lot of two bronze amulets, one with the typical motif of Solomon on horseback and the other part of an inscribed disk. Most of these items will end up in private collections, thereby taking them permanently out of the reach of scholars. Thus the only record of these two amulets is likely to remain the small and inadequate illustrations in the catalogue.²⁷

Despite the dubious circumstances of their acquisition, the proliferation

²⁵ Bells from Anemurium include inv. nos. AN 71/128 (illustrated here as Fig. 11), 73/298, 76/109, and 76/302. In general on bells as protection against the evil eye, see E. Espérandieu, art. "tinnabulum," C. Daremberg and E. Saglio, *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Grecques et Romaines*, V (Paris, 1919), 341–44, especially no. 23; of special interest is a golden bell found at Rome bearing the inscription τοῖς ὀμμοσιν ὑποτέταγμα ("I am set against eyes"); Prentice, *Greek and Latin Inscriptions*, 20. For bells of the same period found in context at El Jish (Gischala) in Galilee, see N. Makhoul, "Rock-cut Tombs at El Jish," *QDAP* 8 (1939), 45–50, pls. 21–22; and at Amman, L. Harding, "A Roman Family Vault on Jebel Jofeh, Amman," *QDAP* 14 (1950), 81ff, with interesting comments on contemporary use of bells by fellaheen children to frighten off evil spirits. For opposition to their use for apotropaic purposes, see John Chrysostom, hom. 12.7 on 1 Cor. 4:7, PG 61, col. 105.

²⁶ G. Hirsch, *Münzen und Medaillen Antiken: Auktion 175*, München, 23–26 Sept. 1992.

²⁷ Hirsch, *Auktion 175*, cat. no. 2129, pl. 74.

of new material of this sort certainly promises to refine our knowledge of the epigraphy and iconography of amulets, rings, and similar objects and, at least in the case of those items that find their way into public collections, to widen the data base for studying the technology of the crafts involved in their manufacture. Unfortunately, because of the complete lack of any record of their provenance, this new material is largely useless in providing any regional, social, and cultural context for the individuals who actually owned them. To provide this we depend on material whose findspot is known and which preferably has been recovered in the controlled conditions of a careful archaeological excavation. Regrettably such material is rare. Until relatively recently, archaeologists working in the eastern Mediterranean did not pay much attention to objects such as amulets, rings, and bracelets unless they were of gold or silver. Yet amuletic and related objects, along with many other categories of *instrumenta domestica*, have been found at some of the major excavations of the first half of this century, such as Antioch, the Athenian Agora, Corinth, Gerasa, Pergamum, and Beth-Shean. The total recorded, however, is small, and they remain either unpublished (as in the case of Antioch, Athens, and Gerasa) or, if published at all (as in the case of Corinth), they are listed with few details of archaeological context.²⁸ Major excavations still in progress or recently concluded, such as Ephesus, Sardis, the Pamphylian cities of Side and Perge, Ashkelon, Stobi, and Salamis on Cyprus—all large city sites with substantial populations in late antiquity—have produced considerable quantities of Byzantine small finds. Yet only one amuletic piece has been published from all of these sites combined.²⁹

The only sites from an earlier generation that have yielded an appreciable accumulation of apotropaic material *in situ* are tombs in Palestine and Jordan. Two rock-cut tombs at El Jish, for example, excavated in 1937, contained a large assemblage of grave goods, including fourteen bells, ninety-one bronze rings, some with bezels engraved with apotropaic texts or symbols, an intri-

²⁸ This situation is discussed in greater detail by J. Russell, "Byzantine *Instrumenta Domestica* from Anemurium: The Significance of Context," in *City, Town and Countryside in the Early Byzantine Period*, ed. R. L. Hohlfelder (New York, 1982), 133–64. For amulets at Corinth, see G. R. Davidson, *Corinth, XII: The Minor Objects* (Princeton, 1952), 260, nos. 2100–4.

²⁹ From Salamis, an intaglio gem depicting the figure of a monster with anguiform legs and the head of a cock, bearing a shield with the magical letters ΙΑΩ: M. J. Chavane, *Salamine de Chypre*, VI: *Les petits objets* (Paris, 1975), 152–54, no. 439.

guing bronze chain with five rings and a bronze hand attached, and five amulets, all depicting well-attested scenes, including the familiar motives of the nimbate holy rider and the discomfiture of the evil eye by the usual assailants.³⁰ The juxtaposition of these pieces with a whole range of common objects certainly suggests that the apotropaic material was nothing out of the ordinary, and as much a part of everyday life as the cooking pot, terracotta juglets, clay lamps, glass unguentaria, spoons, belt buckles, kohl sticks, tweezers, beads, bracelets, dagger, and key also found in the tombs. A similar *mélange* of material occurs also in a late Roman family vault at Amman where a phylactery tube, bronze bells, and two gold plaques in the shape of an eye appear side by side with household gear comparable to that from the funerary material from El Jish.³¹

The presence of such a variety of objects in graves may fairly be presumed to represent the kind of possessions that people found useful in their daily activities here on earth, but they have little to tell us about the social and domestic setting in which they passed their lives. Only the homes of the living can supply that sort of information. This is what makes the amuletic material from Anemurium significant, for this undistinguished small Isaurian town is the only excavated site of the early Byzantine period to have produced such a variety of apotropaic objects in contexts that enable us to visualize the physical setting of the people who owned them.

Most of the objects of an amuletic nature were found in well-defined contexts in secondary buildings occupying the area of a spacious palaestra that once belonged to the largest baths of the city (Fig. 12). This complex dates from the mid-third century but had functioned for less than a century before falling out of use. The colonnade that surrounded the open area on three sides was dismantled soon after, and by the late fourth century its mosaic floor was covered by a shallow film of earth. For a time the entire area seems to have been left open, perhaps serving as a kind of market area with temporary stalls erected as need dictated. Eventually more permanent buildings, though of

³⁰ The tombs were originally dated by Makhoul ("Rock-cut Tombs," 46) to the 4th-5th century, but their contents, especially glass, are consistent with a 6th-century date: L. Y. Rahmani, "On Some Byzantine Brass Rings in the State Collections," *Atiqot* 17 (1985), 168 note 4.

³¹ Harding, "Roman Family Vault," 81ff. Also from a known archaeological context, dated by the excavators no later than 325, is a bronze amulet with the familiar combination of holy rider and the much suffering evil eye found at Beth-Shean: Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 303, no. 303.

coarse construction, began to encroach on the open piazza and adjacent buildings to the west. The date when this process began is uncertain, but by the late sixth century a considerable portion of the palaestra, especially along its northern and western margins, was given over to domestic buildings, which formed a small community extending northward beyond the boundaries of the palaestra. The buildings along the west end of this complex seem to have covered most of the space once occupied by the original suite of three halls that stood in front of the bath building as well as the intervening courtyard that separated them from the palaestra proper to the east. The precise distribution of this complex into individual units remains unclear, perhaps because the principal living quarters were at the second floor level. Nevertheless, it is possible that the secondary structures occupying the southern part of the forehall and adjacent limestone paved court of the former palaestra (Fig. 12, D) constituted a single establishment. Large amounts of pottery were found, as well as a heterogeneous array of household objects. These included the two oval bronze plaques, the silver phylactery, and the inscribed glass paste amulet, each of which was found lying on the floor along with pottery and coins dating from the late sixth and first half of the seventh centuries.

Much easier to distinguish was a sequence of three houses standing more or less in line from west to east overlying the mosaic of the long dismantled north portico of the palaestra (Fig. 13). The middle house (Fig. 12, B) has the most readily identifiable plan of the three. Measuring 12.40 m in length from north to south by 9.30 m in breadth, it is entered from the east through a doorway leading into a corridor from which two smaller rooms open to the right and a large one to the left (Fig. 14). This latter was evidently the kitchen with a well-preserved chimney and enclosed hearth covered by a cooking slab constructed against the north wall.³² Sealed beneath the destruction debris of this room was found the usual quantity of broken pottery and glass, as well as an interesting range of artifacts of daily life, including even the fire-lighter, with a small flint flake by its side ready for insertion, left lying at the edge of the fire-place. The material recovered from this room did not include any amuletic objects, but the well-preserved condition of its interior gives a readily intelligible impression of the domestic setting that produced such items in the other houses.

Although less well preserved than the central house in this northern range of buildings, its neighbor to the west (Fig. 12, A) provided excellent stratigra-

³² J. Russell, *TürkArkDerg* 20.1 (1973), 204–5, figs. 1, 7, 10, 11.

phy for the nature of its destruction and a fine illustration of the circumstances in which household objects were found lying on the floor still in situ from the time of the building's abandonment.³³ In this case the walls were standing in places to a height of over one meter, but the entire building was concealed by a deep accumulation of almost sterile surface fill. The removal of this brought to light numerous stones from the collapse of the upper courses of the room's wall as well as hundreds of broken tiles from the fallen roof (Fig. 15). With the removal of this debris, the room's latest floor level came to light under a thin film of dirt that must have drifted in through the door and other openings in the interval between the departure of the last occupants and the roof's collapse (Fig. 16). The clearing of the floor produced a total of thirty-two inventoried objects, including a small fragment of belt buckle, five lamp fragments, one bronze bracelet, one lead seal, a bronze object pierced by three holes, perhaps a metalworker's hammer head, a circular drilled stone that was probably a spindle whorl, a fragment of a worked bone disk, and a fish vertebra, an object that appears frequently in similar domestic contexts elsewhere at Anemurium, which suggests that they served some function, perhaps as gaming pieces. For our purpose, however, the most significant find was the terracotta mold with the invocation to Raphael. Coins formed the most numerous group of objects, a total of twenty identifiable being recorded. With one exception, these covered a period ranging from 589 to 656. The latest date is especially significant, for it provides a clear *terminus post quem* for the abandonment of the house, a date in fact that corresponds closely to the picture we have from the entire coin series for the site as a whole. This shows a very heavy concentration of coins for the reigns of Heraclius and the first two-thirds of Constans II's reign, diminishing to a mere trickle in the later third.³⁴ The remaining coin found on the floor, a second-century bronze issue of either Marcus Aurelius or Lucius Verus from the Anemurium mint, caused initial concern, until it became apparent from the hole pierced through it that at the time of its loss it was no longer in use as a medium of commerce but as some form

³³ In the account of this house I have relied heavily on the detailed record of the excavation maintained by the excavator, Professor John Humphrey, now of the University of Calgary. I wish to record my appreciation of his work.

³⁴ It is assumed that the abandonment of Anemurium was precipitated by Arab raiding of the coast of Asia Minor during the 650s after the capture of Cyprus, a mere forty miles distant, in 649/50.

of pendant.³⁵ It is easy to imagine the special appeal that a coin bearing the city's name on it could have for its owner who might well have regarded it as a lucky charm. Other coins pierced in a similar manner have appeared on the site, but none from a context as clearly defined.³⁶ One might note John Chrysostom's condemnation of Christians who draped chains composed of bronze coins of Alexander the Great around their heads and feet as a form of charm, suggesting that the practice was widespread.³⁷

One final illustration of an object of undoubted apotropaic significance discovered at Anemurium in a well-defined context is a bronze steelyard counterpoise weight molded in the shape of a bust of Athena (Fig. 17). It was found outside the easternmost of the northern range of late houses in the palaestra (Fig. 12, C), at a level about 20 cm above the third-century mosaic pavement of the palaestra's east wing. At this level a beaten earth surface formed the ground level of the area in the early Byzantine period. Although the details of the stratigraphy were not as well defined as those in other parts of the complex, coins and pottery found in the vicinity at the same level point once again to a date in the late sixth and first half of the seventh century.³⁸ There are a number of parallels for counterpoise weights in the shape of a bust of Athena with an arresting apotropaic Medusa head, including a handsome example in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, but only the one excavated in controlled conditions from the Byzantine shipwreck at Yassi Ada, dated around 625, provides a reliable parallel.³⁹ The same may be said also for the cultural

³⁵ Inv. no. AN 76/12.

³⁶ One other city coin of Anemurium, a bronze issue of Valerian Sr. (AN 82/10), was pierced, presumably for suspension. Other perforated coins include bronze issues of Carus (AN 78/10), Licinius I (AN 76/318), a Roma Urbs issue with she-wolf and twins scene on the reverse, dated 330–335 (AN 76/44), and a follis of Justinian I dated 541–542 (AN 79/25).

³⁷ *Ad illuminandos catechesis* II, 5, PG 49, col. 240. Perforated coins are frequently found in tombs, e.g., at Beth-Yerath all coins found in the early Byzantine tombs were pierced, while not a single perforated coin was found elsewhere in the excavation. P. Delougaz and R. C. Haines, *A Byzantine Church at Khirbet al-Karak*, University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications 85 (Chicago, 1960), 50.

³⁸ C. W. J. Eliot, "A Bronze Counterpoise of Athena," *Hesperia* 45 (1976), 163–70.

³⁹ G. F. Bass and F. H. van Doorninck, Jr., *Yassi Ada, I: A Seventh Century Byzantine Shipwreck* (College Station, Tex., 1982), 212–17. For the classical Gorgon head in late antiquity as opposed to the more stylized version associated with Chnoubis, see Vikan, "Art, Medicine and Magic," 77, 79, especially notes 70 and 91.

context of the objects, information irrecoverable in the case of examples of unknown provenance, but for those from Anemurium and Yassi Ada providing the possibility to restore a social ambience for their use.

The picture that emerges at Anemurium is of a small community living in reduced circumstances in the shadow of the long-disused remains of the Roman city's largest public baths. The aqueduct system had ceased to function, probably damaged beyond repair by an earthquake that seems to have afflicted the city around 580. The inhabitants had thus to resort to a well dug next to Building D in the palaestra (Fig. 12). Their homes, though coarse, were of solid enough construction and their economy still varied enough to employ a wide range of trades, to judge from the tools found beneath their collapsed walls. Farmers and fishermen are predictable, but there is also evidence in the form of their tools for a tailor, a leatherworker, and a jeweler.⁴⁰ Heavier industry seems to have been conducted in the vaulted halls of the great baths, which were now stripped of their furnishings to accommodate a lime kiln, pottery kilns, and a grain mill. Commerce, too, seems to have been reasonably vigorous, to judge from the numbers of weights and fragments of steelyard apparatus found. With their beaten earth floors and poorly mortared walls except at corners, their homes offered little comfort, though the number of hasps, hinges, lockplates, and small keys suitable for wooden chests indicate some need for security, probably to store cloth and other valuable commodities. Houses were lit for the most part by clay lamps produced on the site, but bronze lamps were employed also, as well as conical glass lamps intended for insertion in polycandela, a form of lighting usually associated with churches.⁴¹ Kitchen utensils were predominantly ceramic, but handles and other attachments of bronze indicate the use of vessels of greater luxury. Loom weights, spindle whorls, and hooks demonstrate how women occupied their time, while bone dice and gaming counters suggest how men wasted theirs. That women were concerned with their appearance is evident from the substantial numbers of copper and bone hairpins, kohl sticks, cosmetic ligulae, and spatulas recorded.

⁴⁰ A good example of jewelry, probably manufactured locally, was found in a grave in one of the city's four churches: J. Russell, "Excavations at Anemurium, 1982," *Classical Views* 27 (1983), 179, pls. 13–14.

⁴¹ Evidence for a local lamp industry takes the form of molds for terracotta lamps found close to a pottery kiln in the large baths and a hoard of over seven hundred lamps found concealed in the hypocaust system of another of the city's baths. The latter includes some of the same type as the mold. H. Williams and P. Taylor, "A Byzantine Lamp Hoard from Anamur (Cilicia)," *AnatSt* 25 (1975), 77–84.

Private adornment of some quality is reflected in various objects of jewelry, silver earrings, and various bronze finger rings in addition to those with magical connotation already described. Christian devotion was expressed through pendant crosses in gold, silver, and bronze, though they number considerably less than the objects known or suspected to have apotropaic powers.⁴²

What strikes us forcibly from what we can piece together of life in the cluster of houses occupying the old palaestra at Anemurium is that magic for their humble residents was no abstract belief or perversion of true religion practiced in secret, as the sermons of the church fathers would have us believe, but was as common a function of daily existence as any other activity represented among the small finds. Given the circumstances of their discovery, in which they appear at random along with other *dissecta membra* of people's lives, there is surely nothing inherently special or remarkable about the various *instrumenta magica* found at Anemurium. The measures taken to cope with the unseen menace of demons constituted a domestic necessity as familiar as cooking, working, playing games, or bringing up children. The worship of Christ and his cross was certainly an essential part of their lives, but it is hard to escape the impression that the control of the unseen force of the evil eye by the time-honored instruments of their ancestors was of more immediate concern to them. It is an attitude that survives in remote corners of the Greek countryside even today, where people might still proclaim with the poet:

We are neither Christians nor pagans,
With crosses and pagan symbols
We are trying to build the new life
Whose name is not yet known.⁴³

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⁴² A representative selection of these objects is illustrated in Russell, "*Instrumenta Domestica*," 155–62.

⁴³ Δεν είμαστε ούτε Χριστιανοί
κι εἰδωλόλατρες ούτε
ἀπὸ σταυροῦς κι ἀπὸ εἰδῶλα
να πλάσσουμε ζητάμε τη νέα ζωή
που εἶν' ἄγνωρον ἀκόμα τ' ὄνομά της.

Kostas Palamas