

THE TWO LIVES OF ST. THEODORE OF KYTHERA

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Abstract

The life of St. Theodore of Kythera, who was an ascetic monk active in the southern Peloponnese during the early 10th century, is the elaboration of an earlier *Life*, which no longer exists in its original form. By separating which aspects of this text are the contribution of each author, it is possible to identify the development of two distinct traditions. This article argues that the increased reputation of St. Theodore evident in the second version of the *Life* was the result of his becoming associated with the reinhabitation of the island of Kythera in the decades following the Roman conquest of Crete in 961. Furthermore, this article suggests that the composition of the *Life* and the promotion of the saint's cult were at the behest of individuals from the town of Monemvasia who had developed economic interests on Kythera.

Keywords: St. Theodore of Kythera, Hagiography, Kythera, Monemvasia, Conquest of Crete

Resumen

La vida de San Teodoro de Citera, que fue un monje asceta activo en el sur del Peloponeso a principios del siglo X, es la elaboración de una *Vida* anterior, que ya no existe en su forma original. Al estudiar por separado ciertos aspectos de este texto como contribuciones de diversa autoría es posible identificar el desarrollo de dos tradiciones distintas. Esta contribución argumenta que la creciente reputación de San Teodoro, que se evidencia en la segunda versión de la *Vida*, fue el resultado de su incipiente asociación con la repoblación de la isla de Citera en las décadas posteriores a la conquista bizantina de Creta en 961. Además, este artículo sugiere que la composición de la *Vida* y la promoción del culto del santo se produjeron a instancias de personas de la ciudad de Monemvasía, que habían desarrollado intereses económicos en Citera.

Metadada: San Teodoro de Citera, Hagiografía, Citera, Monemvasía, Conquista de Creta

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In the early 920's, an ascetic monk named Theodore arrived in the town of Monemvasia seeking passage to the abandoned island of Kythera.¹ He hoped to find there a place beyond the reach of society where he could practice his asceticism in solitude. However, he was forced to remain in the town for approximately a year, since no one was willing to risk the journey to the island because of the Arab-Cretan raids which had regularly beset the Peloponnesian coastline. While the monk waited in Monemvasia, he inhabited a small room in a local church wherein he practiced an intense form of asceticism.² During this period, he was noted neither for his preaching nor his healing, and he seems to have interacted very little with the local community. The monk eagerly boarded the first ship that offered to take him to Kythera and eventually took up residence in a small, abandoned church.³ He was accompanied by an older monk, named Antony, who departed from the island after approximately three months since he was unable to bear both the difficulty of the Kytherian wilderness and the strictness of their ascetic lifestyle. Theodore spent the remainder of his life in solitude, perishing in the eleventh month of his stay on Kythera. The body of the saint, which was entirely preserved, was discovered twice in the following years – once by a group of passing-by sailors and a second time by a group of hunters from Monemvasia. Despite Theodore's rather uneventful year-long stay in Monemvasia, he began to be venerated as a saint and his memory was preserved by a local Monemvasiot man who produced a short and unadorned account of his life.

¹ This article makes use of the chronology proposed in N. Oikonomides, “‘Ο βίος τοῦ Ἁγίου Θεοδώρου Κυθήρων”, *Τρίτον Πανιώνιον Συνέδριον, Πρακτικά* (1967) 264-291, and 278 for a summary. The translation and pagination used in this study is that provided by A. Kaldellis and I. Polemis, “The Life of St. Theodore of Kythera”, *Saints of Ninth and Tenth Century Greece*, Cambridge 2019, 257-293. Later texts and some of the *akolouthies* mistakenly date the saint's time on Kythera to the reign of Romanos II (959-963). See L. Petit, *Bibliographie des Acolouthies grecques* (Subsidia Hagiographica 16), Brussels 1926), 278-279.

² This was the church of “our all-holy Lady, the Theotokos, who is called Diakonia.” *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 4.1.

³ This was the church of the “holy and glorious martyrs of Christ Sergios and Bakchos.” *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 5.4.

In the decades that followed, likely by the turn of the 11th century, significant innovations had become attached to the tradition of this solitary ascetic monk. St. Theodore was now revered as the “founder (*οἰκιστής*)” of Kythera, a powerful patron of the Kytherians and protector of the island.⁴ The initial *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* was elaborated upon and stylistically enriched by a hagiographer named Leo.⁵ This new version of the *Life* was augmented by an epilogue that better reflected the increased popularity of the monk and placed him within a long tradition of important biblical figures and saints. The epilogue refers to the many miracles posthumously attributed to St. Theodore, the most emphasized of which was making the island of Kythera able to be inhabited. This part of the texts also promotes the area surrounding the saint’s tomb as an effective center of healing and protection, and the place of his tomb would later develop into an important site of religious activity on the island. The construction of a small monastery was eventually sponsored on the place of his burial by some of the inhabitants of Monemvasia, whose patronage signified that the cult had increased in fame and importance in the decades following the saint’s death.

It is the purpose of this study to situate the changes in the tradition of St. Theodore within the context of the southern Peloponnese in the years following the Roman conquest of Crete in 961 and the rising influence of Monemvasia in the region during the 10th and 11th centuries. I demonstrate that by separating the two versions of this little-known hagiography, the *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera*, it is possible to identify how the cult of St. Theodore developed from a Monemvasiot phenomenon to a strictly Kytherian one. Although the dual authorship of this text has been noted by modern scholars, it has not been analyzed in such a way that distinguishes between the content of the two versions.⁶ The delayed prominence of the saint and the innovations present in the epilogue of the *Life* provide insight into the improving conditions of the region following the conquest of Crete, for it is only in this period that St. Theodore becomes associated with making Kythera safe for inhabitation. Moreover, although both versions of the *Life* appear to have a Monemvasiot provenance, the second hagiographer Leo especially emphasizes the relationship between St. Theodore and Kythera. The promotion of his cult by members of the Monemvasiot community provides early evidence for their activity on Kythera, and it likely reflects this town’s interest in resettling the island and developing the monastery

⁴ For St. Theodore as “founder,” see *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 6.4.

⁵ The second version of the *Life* is the edition used in this article and included in Kaldellis and Polemis, *Saints of Ninth and Tenth Century Greece*. The original *Life* is not extant, and it is only known through Leo’s mention of it in the epilogue. For the references to this lost work, which the present article discusses further below, see *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 6.1.

⁶ Oikonomides, “Ο βίος του Ἁγίου Θεοδώρου Κυθήρων”, 265-266; Kaldellis and Polemis, *Saints of Ninth and Tenth Century Greece*, xx-xxi.

that they would establish there. Thus, such a reading of the *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera*, which makes use of the difference between the two versions of the text, allows for a local perspective to the return of communities into previously uninhabited spaces in the decades following the Roman conquest of Crete and to the developing relationship between Monemvasia and the island of Kythera.

The Authorship and Dating of the Life

The dual authorship of the *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* offers two problems of interpretation: when to date the two versions of the text and which aspects of it are original, as opposed to the additions of the second hagiographer Leo. However, there are a few certainties that allow for the text to be read in a manner that distinguishes between the two versions. The first version of the *Life* has a *terminus post quem* of 945, for the author records that St. Theodore's companion, the monk Antony, remained in a small hermitage for 23 years after leaving the saint on Kythera.⁷ Beyond this date, it becomes more difficult to place the text. In part, this is because it is unclear whether two historical events that are mentioned in the *Life* were in the original version, or if they were the explication of Leo. The text states that St. Theodore reached Kythera during the reign of Romanos I (920-944) "who was emperor at that time (τοῦ διέποντος τότε τὴν Βασιλείον ἀρχὴν Ῥωμανοῦ τοῦ γέροντος)."⁸ Elsewhere, it is said that the island was "desolate and uninhabited at the time due to the raids... of those who were then inhabiting Crete (ἔρημον καὶ ἀοίκητον τότε οὖσαν διὰ τὰς ἐπιδρομὰς τῶν τότε... ὁὶ ἐν Κρήτῃ οἰκοῦντες)."⁹ If these statements about Kythera "at that time (τότε)" are the inclusion of the original author, then the first version of the text must be placed after the year 961 when the island of Crete was conquered by Nikephoros Phokas.¹⁰ It would also suggest that Kythera was already in the process of being reinhabited.

However, it is more probable that such explicative statements are later additions to the *Life*. The original author, in describing the formative years of the saint, writes that he

⁷ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 5.3. For this church, dedicated to the Dormition of the Virgin (Κοίμησις τῆς Θεοτόκου), see A.G. Kalligas, H.A. Kalligas, and Ronald S. Stroud, "A Church with a Roman Inscription in Tairia, Monemvasia", *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 97 (2002) 469-490.

⁸ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 5.1.

⁹ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 3.7.

¹⁰ Oikonomides suggests, tentatively, that both versions of the text were written after 961. Oikonomides, "Ὁ βίος τοῦ Ἁγίου Θεοδώρου Κυθήρων", 279. Kaldellis and Polemis also note the significance of this passage for the chronology, they suggest a late 10th century date for the text if these lines are an original inclusion. Kaldellis and Polemis, *Saints of Ninth and Tenth Century Greece*, xxi-xxii.

learned this information from someone who was told it directly by St. Theodore during what must have been the early part of the reign of Romanos I, if not the years before it.¹¹ Leo, the later author, adds that the first version of the text had been written by one “obtaining part of the information from this man of blessed memory [St. Theodore] and part of it from those who knew him.”¹² It is unlikely that the original author, who had inquired of those who knew the saint in the early 920’s and who appears to have met the saint personally, would need to remind or explain to his audience events as significant as the reign of Romanos I (920-944) and the conquest of Crete (961). Rather, it seems as though Leo in the late 10th or 11th century added these statements in order to situate his audience within the chronology of the 10th century and to clarify for them the reason that Kythera was abandoned at the time of St. Theodore’s arrival. Even if such passages are the inclusion of the original hagiographer, he could not have been writing too long after the year 961 since he was present in the early 920’s and had personal knowledge of other sources from that period. Thus, in either case, Leo produced his elaboration of the text in a later period (perhaps as early as the beginning of the 11th century) when a new community on Kythera had become established.

As for which aspects of the remainder of the text are the contribution of the two hagiographers, we are on surer ground. It is in the epilogue of the text that the voice of Leo most clearly appears. He writes that “someone wrote all this down in simple style” and “I have tried to embellish the text to a small degree, although my style is rough and uncouth. Never omitting anything that was true, nor adding anything myself, I have expounded his life for the sake of all those who want to imitate it and save their souls.”¹³ According to Leo, no inclusions were made to the previous version of the *Life* and his treatment of the text was limited to the beautification of its language. Some of the simpler style of the original hagiographer remains and is especially apparent in the narrative section.¹⁴ The most obvious additions of Leo are limited to the epilogue — with the exception of the potential explicatory statements discussed above — which includes an encomium of St. Theodore, references to his posthumous miracles, and a petition for his continued mediation on behalf of Kythera. The discussion below demonstrates that the original sections of the *Life* and the epilogue of Leo preserve varying traditions of

¹¹ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 2.2.

¹² *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 6.1. The original hagiographer does not indicate that he met the saint personally - this is only the assertion of Leo.

¹³ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 6.1.

¹⁴ Oikonomides, “Ο βίος τοῦ Ἁγίου Θεοδώρου Κυθήρων”, 266-268; Kaldellis and Polemis, *Saints of Ninth and Tenth Century Greece*, xx. In *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 6.1, Leo says of the original hagiographer that he “ἰδιωτικῶς ἀπεγράψατο.”

the saint and that the innovations present in the epilogue are the result of the different context in which the second hagiographer wrote. That is, the later version of the *Life* was produced during the period of improving conditions in the southern Peloponnese following 961 and the growing influence of Monemvasia on Kythera.

The “First” Life of St. Theodore

A short introduction precedes the narrative of the *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera*, which clarifies for the audience the reasons that St. Theodore spent a rather short time as a monk. The hagiographer borrows a passage from Gregory the Theologian, stating that “our late invitation to the vine dressing is the reason for our belated entrance into the vineyard, the short duration of our efforts can likewise be imputed not to us but to the decision of Christ our God.”¹⁵ Here, and in the lines that follow, the hagiographer validates the brevity of St. Theodore’s ascetic career for those who “want to verify the truthfulness of my words even further,” as though he is anticipating the objections of those who might be skeptical of the saint’s efficacy and importance.¹⁶ He argues that despite the short duration of St. Theodore’s labors he was nevertheless blessed by God, in a way comparable to St. Demetrios.¹⁷ The justification for the brevity of this career is continued in the narrative section that follows. The hagiographer explains that although St. Theodore’s ascetic career was delayed by his marriage and his children, “even after he was married, his mind was not attached to it; he was neither bound by love for his wife, nor affection for his children” and instead these relationships were imposed upon him.¹⁸ Almost immediately in the *Life*, the hagiographer preempts potential criticism of the length of St. Theodore’s asceticism.

The introduction then praises the saint’s qualities as a mediator, suggesting that his “eagerness to help us in difficult circumstances” was comparable, or even superior, to St. Nikolaos.¹⁹ The hagiographer is not specific in what aid he believes has been

¹⁵ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 1.1. For the reference to this passage of Gregory Nazianzos, and its Biblical source, see Kaldellis and Polemis, *Saints of Ninth and Tenth Century Greece*, 339.

¹⁶ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 1.1. For examples of skepticism in hagiography and how it is addressed by hagiographers, see A. Kaldellis, “The Hagiography of Doubt and Scepticism”, in S. Efthmiadis (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography. Volume II*, Farnham 2014, 453-477.

¹⁷ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 1.2.

¹⁸ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 2.2.

¹⁹ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 1.4. On St. Nikolaos, see the critical edition and English translation of his *Life* prepared by I. Ševčenko and N. P. Ševčenko, *The Life of St. Nicholas of Sion*, Brookline 1984. See also, N. Ševčenko, *The Life of St. Nikolaos in Byzantine Art*, Torino 1983.

offered, but he refers to “a fountain of miracles” that occurred in the period both before and after the saint’s asceticism began.²⁰ Acts of healing are also mentioned, but no specific instances are provided. Instead, the hagiographer, much like he addresses the shortness of the saint’s career, seems to be accounting for the lack of miracles that were clearly attributable to St. Theodore. Although the author alludes to miracles that were performed in the period before the saint’s asceticism, none are revealed in the narrative section of the text. The miracles performed in the period afterward are referred to as “hidden struggles (τοὺς ἀποκρύφους πόνους)” and appear to be a reference to the saint’s eleven month period of isolation on Kythera.²¹ The hagiographer adds that the saint himself “revealed to us only a faint notion of his laborious achievements... those which could not be kept secret from those who were close to him and spent their time with him.”²² The lack of known miracles is compared to St. Paul, who “indicated that his omissions were more numerous or even greater” than those achievements which were known.²³ The impression gathered from this introduction is that of a saint who spent very little time as an ascetic and who was not renowned for his miracles. The hagiographer anticipates and defends these two aspects of St. Theodore’s tradition which appear to be lacking.

The narrative section of the *Life* that follows this introduction shares many similarities with other hagiographies of the “middle-Byzantine” period. For example, St. Theodore, like other contemporary saints, was born of respectable parents, fled from his family members in order to find complete solitude, and travelled extensively — even going so far as Rome.²⁴ The inclusion of such topoi situate St. Theodore beside the example

²⁰ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 2.3.

²¹ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 1.3.

²² *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 1.3.

²³ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 1.3.

²⁴ For discussions of these contemporary literary conventions, see R. Browning, “The ‘Low Level’ Saint’s Life in the Early Byzantine World”, in Sergei Hackel (ed.), *The Byzantine Saint* (University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies), London 1981, 117-127; R. Morris, *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium, 843–1118*, Cambridge 1995, 58-62; F. Curta, *Edinburgh History of the Greeks, c. 500 to 1050*, Edinburgh 2011, 266-270; W.R. Caraher, “Constructing Memories: Hagiography, Church Architecture, and the Religious Landscape of Middle Byzantine Greece: The Case of St. Theodore of Kythera”, in L.J. Hall – W.R. Caraher (eds.), *Archaeology and History in Roman, Medieval, and Post-Medieval Greece: Studies on Method and Meaning in Honor of Timothy Gregory*, Aldershot 2008, 267-280. The narrative is particularly similar to the *Life of St. Theokiste of Lesbos*, in that both stories make reference to the desertion of their respective islands and to hunters discovering the bodies of their respective saints. See the translation of this text by A. Hero in A.M. Talbot (ed.), *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints’ Lives in English Translation*, Washington D.C. 1998, 95-116.

of other holy figures and provide evidence of his holiness for the audience.²⁵ Although much of the text is certainly a product of its contemporary literary environment, there are a few ways in which the *Life* diverges from such themes. These differences reveal the peculiarity of this saint and the initial reasons for the development of his cult.

The most significant way in which the *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* varies from other contemporary examples is in the manner of the saint's isolation on Kythera. The search for an abandoned location in which one could successfully withdraw from society is one of the most common features of the hagiographies of this period. However, actual isolation was not usually achieved, and even solitary saints became part of a larger social network.²⁶ St. Luke of Steiris, for example, searched for increasingly desert places where he could practice his asceticism, eventually reaching the uninhabited island of Ampelon.²⁷ According to his *Life*, the presence of the saint immediately transformed the space, allowing for a new population to thrive under his protection. See also the case of St. Nikon, whose time in Sparta quickly allowed the community to flourish.²⁸ In many cases, although the saint sought solitude and an escape from society, society inevitably followed. Communities formed around the saint, who has made safe previously dangerous or abandoned places.

In the *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera*, this is not the case, for the island was not made safe upon St. Theodore's arrival nor was the harsh landscape transformed by his presence. Rather, in the first version of the *Life*, the saint was successful in his search for isolation and the island of Kythera remained deserted, despite his activity there. The *Life* states that, at the time the saint departed for Kythera, the island was "desolate and uninhabited at the time due to the raids of the Hagarenes [Arabs]. For the people who were then inhabiting Crete hid out there as if in a lair, attacking those who passed by. Even when they attacked other places in order to plunder them, they sailed past Kythera and so no one dared to live there."²⁹ This passage suggests that as long as Crete was inhabited by the Arabs, and despite the arrival of St. Theodore, Kythera could not

²⁵ Browning, "The 'Low Level' Saint's Life in the Early Byzantine World", 124; Caraher, "Constructing Memories", 270-274.

²⁶ R. Morris, "The Political Saint of the 11th Century", in Sergei Hackel (ed.), *The Byzantine Saint* (University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies), London 1981, 43-50.

²⁷ *Life of St. Luke of Steiris* 50-52. See this text and an English translation in C.L. Connor and W.R. Connor, *The Life and Miracles of Saint Luke of Steiris: Text, Translation and Commentary*, Brookline 1994.

²⁸ *Life of St. Nikon*, 34. See this text and an English translation in D. Sullivan, *The Life of Saint Nikon: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, Brookline 1987.

²⁹ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 3.7.

be reinhabited. The *Life* even provides an example of the threat posed by the Arabs of Crete. It records that the Roman ships that brought St. Theodore to Kythera soon afterward contended with an Arab ship, which had been discovered near another part of the island.³⁰ It is evident in the remainder of the narrative section of the *Life* that the island continued to be abandoned in the years after St. Theodore's arrival. The text states that hunters from Monemvasia came to the island and discovered the body of the saint approximately three years after his death.³¹ It was only possible for the hunters to approach the island because of a brief period of peace, during which the Arabs and Romans were exchanging prisoners.³² The hunters then departed after burying the body of the saint, an event which marks the conclusion of the original hagiographer's narrative. Neither the initial presence of St. Theodore on Kythera nor his rediscovery led to the formation of a new community on Kythera, but the island remained unpopulated. The saint was not drawn into a local community, nor did one form around him. Nor did St. Theodore leave behind any monastery or spiritual successors. The only person who accompanied the saint during his time on Kythera, the monk Antony, left him after less than three months.³³ The solitude of St. Theodore transcended beyond mere literary convention and was a genuine aspect of his tradition. According to the *Life*, Kythera continued to be deserted both during his eleven month stay and in the three years after his death, and perhaps remained uninhabited until the conquest of Crete in 961 — almost 40 years later.

The abandonment of Kythera in the period before the arrival of St. Theodore, as well as in the decades that followed, is also demonstrated by the archaeological record. Although much of this record remains unclear in the so called “Dark Ages” (seventh to ninth century) and throughout much of the 10th century, as is the case for much of southern Greece in this period, the broad trends of the island's settlement history can be discerned.³⁴ There is general agreement that the island experienced a period of abandonment, or at least severe depopulation, from the early 8th century into the final decades of

³⁰ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 5.2.

³¹ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 5.4. According to the text, there is another discovery of the body two years before this. It has been suggested that the double finding of a body is reflective of some sort of confusion as to the series of events. Kaldellis and Polemis, *Saints of Ninth and Tenth Century Greece*, xix.

³² This is perhaps a reference to the *allagion* of 924/925. Oikonomides, “Ο βίος τοῦ Ἁγίου Θεοδώρου Κυθήρων”, 278.

³³ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 5.3. Earlier in the *Life*, some of those who knew and loved St. Theodore promised to accompany him into the monastic life, but they too abandoned the saint due to “their attachments to the affairs of this life.” *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 3.7.

³⁴ For the “Dark Age of Greece,” see Curta, *Edinburgh History of the Greeks*, 97-134.

the 10th.³⁵ Excavations undertaken in the southern part of the island indicate the abandonment of sites as early as the 7th century.³⁶ Another survey project, working in the northern part of the island, has found similar discontinuity in settlement during this period.³⁷ As is discussed below, it is only towards the end of the 10th and 11th centuries that the return of communities to the island can be established. Again, these developments occurred at least 40 years after the activity of St. Theodore on Kythera — and probably several decades later than this — supporting the notion that he was not initially credited with the island's settlement.

³⁵ There is some disagreement about whether the island was entirely abandoned or experienced impermanent settlement, perhaps by Arabs from Crete. For these discussions, see T.E. Gregory and L. Tzortzopoulou-Gregory, *The Archaeology of Kythera*, Sydney 2018, 57-58; Herrin, *Byzantine Kythera*, 139-140; P.A. Giannopoulos, “Τα μεσοβυζαντινά Κύθηρα. Μεθοδολογική προσέγγιση των πηγών και ιστορική πραγματικότητα”, in P.A. Giannopoulos – A.K.G. Savvidis (eds.), *Μεσαιωνική Πελοπόννησος. Βυζάντιο, Λατινοκρατία, Πρώιμη Τουρκοκρατία*, Athens 2013, 211. For the effects of Cretan Arab raids on the islands of the Aegean, see V. Christides, *The Conquest of Crete by the Arabs ca. 824: a Turning Point in the Struggle between Byzantium and Islam*, Athens 1984; V. Christides, “The Raids of the Moslems in Crete in the Aegean Sea: Piracy and Conquest”, *Byz* 51 (1981) 76-111; and K.M. Setton, “On the Raids of the Moslems in the Aegean in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries and Their Alleged Occupation of Athens”, *American Journal of Archaeology* 58.4 (1954) 311-319.

³⁶ Coldstream and Huxley, *Kythera: Excavations and Studies*, 42-48. Judith Herrin's article “Byzantine Kythera” was born of this project. See also the Kythera Island Project (or KIP); A. Bevan and J. Conolly, “GIS, Archaeological Survey and Landscape Archaeology on the Island of Kythera, Greece”, *Journal of Field Archaeology* 29 (2004) 123-138; A. Bevan, C. Frederick, and N. Krahtopoulou, “A Digital Mediterranean Countryside: GIS Approaches to the Spatial Structure of the Post-medieval Landscape on Kythera (Greece)”, *Archeologia e Calcolatori* 14 (2003) 217-236.

³⁷ The Australian Paliochora-Kythera Archaeological Survey (or APKAS) is currently in the process of completing their final report. For some of their earlier work, and work by members of this project, see C. Coroneos, L. Diacopoulos, T. E. Gregory, I. Johnson, J. Noller, S. A. Paspalas, and A. Wilson, “The Australian Paliochora-Kythera Archaeological Survey: Field Seasons 1999-2000”, *Mediterranean Archaeology* 15 (2002) 125-143; T.E. Gregory, “Contrasting Impressions of Landuse in Early Modern Greece: Kythera and the Eastern Korinthia”, in Sirlol Davies – J.L. Davis (eds.), *Between Venice and Istanbul: Colonial Landscapes in Early Modern Greece*, Athens 2007, 173-199; T.E. Gregory, “Churches, Landscape, and the Population of Northern Kythera in Byzantine and Early Modern Times”, *First International Congress of Kytherian Studies*, Kythera 2003, 219-236. Gregory expresses some skepticism in using the literary sources to support the possible desertion of the island, because of their use of the topos of abandonment, though he does note the lack of archaeological findings clearly datable to this period. T.E. Gregory, “Landscape and Cultural History in Medieval and Early Modern Kythera”, *VIIIth International Panionian Conference*, Kythera 2006, 102-123; T.E. Gregory, “Narrative of the Byzantine Landscape”, in John Burke – Ursula Betka – Penelope Buckley – Kathleen Hay – Roger Scott – Andrew Stephenson (eds.), *Byzantine Narrative: Papers in Honor of Roger Scott*, Melbourne 2004, 481-496.

The idea of St. Theodore's tomb being perceived as a frequent source of miracles receives a similar delay. The power of a saint's tomb is a feature frequently present in contemporary hagiographies, and these spaces can become renowned for their effectiveness in healing and protecting those seeking aid. In the *Life of St. Nikon*, the tomb of the saint was quickly renowned for its effectiveness in healing and protecting the inhabitants of Sparta, who considered the saint to be their own personal patron.³⁸ Likewise, the relics of St. Athanasia of Aegina and St. Arsenios displayed miraculous power almost immediately after burial.³⁹ While the tomb of St. Theodore receives much attention in the epilogue of the text, it is absent from the original *Life*. There is no list of the posthumous miracles of the saint, which are a common inclusion in hagiographies and which would become a more prominent aspect of St. Theodore's later reputation. This text simply ends with the burial of St. Theodore's preserved body by the Monemvasiot hunters, three years after his death outside the church of saints Sergios and Bakchos.

With such limitations to St. Theodore's story, it is difficult to identify why he was initially venerated and why his memory was preserved between the period of his death and the production of the second version of the *Life*. However, a few suggestions can be made about what St. Theodore's popularity was originally based upon. First, there is the year long period that the monk stayed in Monemvasia. The hagiographer's description of the manner of St. Theodore's asceticism is not unusual. St. Theodore "was dressed in a ragged garment made of hair. He devoted himself to a life of fasting and contrition in the church, always deep in thought and with downcast eyes."⁴⁰ It seems that St. Theodore's ascetic stay made an impression on the Monemvasiot populace. Some of them "sent him a cloak, a shirt, and a pair of shoes so that he might cope with the cold, he commended those who had sent these things for their good intentions and prayed for them, but he did not accept the gifts... if someone sent him some bread or something else to eat, he just tasted the food and sent the leftovers to those in need."⁴¹ With the exception of the monk Antony, these are the only interactions with the townspeople that the *Life* relates. Second, there is the monk's departure for Kythera. As discussed above, the island of Kythera appears to be a perilous and distant place in the *Life*, which is uninhabitable because of the threat of Arab raids. Soon after St. Theodore and Antony reached the island, a group of

³⁸ *Life of St. Nikon* 76 et passim.

³⁹ *The Life of St. Athanasia of Aegina* tr. 14-18. See the translation of this text by L.F. Sherry in A.M. Talbot (ed.), *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in English Translation*, Washington D.C. 1998, 137-158. For "The Commemoration of Arsenios," see Kaldellis and Polemis, *Saints of Ninth and Tenth Century Greece*, 297-305.

⁴⁰ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 4.2.

⁴¹ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 4.2.

Arab sailors fleeing the Romans hid in the forests there.⁴² To the dismay of the Roman soldiers and the Monemvasiots, the fate of the two monks was left unknown. The hagiographer states that the saints were kept safe “for he who had protected Daniel inside the lions’ den kept his saints intact too, since the Lord knows how to protect pious men from their trials.”⁴³ Lastly, the *Life* records that twice in the years following the saint’s death his body was found uncorrupted and that he had placed beside himself a ceramic sherd on which he inscribed the predicted date of his death.⁴⁴ The saint’s relics were kissed and honored with tears, before finally being buried.

It is likely from this combination of events that St. Theodore was deemed worthy of his initial veneration and the miracles discussed above receive much of the attention of the first version of his *Life*. His strict asceticism may have left an impression upon the townspeople during his yearlong stay in Monemvasia. These same people feared for the saint’s safety while on Kythera and their feelings were further deepened by the reports of his asceticism that were brought back by Antony after his departure from the island. Then, in the years that followed, the saint’s body — or a body — was discovered on Kythera and recognized by the Monemvasiots as that of St. Theodore.

That this *Life* has its origin in Monemvasia is evident in the author’s knowledge of the particulars of the saint’s time there, as well as in the specific knowledge of some of the town’s landmarks, such as the church of the Theotokos Diakonia and the small hermitage in Terea. Likewise, it has been argued that the *Life* reflects the contemporary literary environment of Monemvasia, as it shares some similarities with variations of the story of Mary of Egypt which were produced there.⁴⁵ Thus, the original *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* was a text written in Monemvasia, after 945 and either before 961 or soon after, and which was mostly focused on the saint’s ascetic stay in Monemvasia and on Kythera, followed by the miraculous preservation of his body.

The “Second Life” of St. Theodore of Kythera

The elaboration of the *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* by the hagiographer Leo includes significant innovations to the tradition of the saint that were not present in the original

⁴² *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 5.2.

⁴³ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 5.2.

⁴⁴ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 5.4. The saint anticipated that he would die on the 12th of May. On the preservation of bodies, see A. Angenendt, “Holy Corpses and the Cult of Relics”, in M. Räsänen – G. Hartman – E.J. Richards (eds.), *Relics, Identity, and Memory in Medieval Europe*, Turnhout 2016, 13-28.

⁴⁵ Caraher, “Constructing Memories”, 271-273.

Life. In the epilogue of the text, the saint now appears as an active patron of the island and his tomb as a powerful source of miracles - both of which allow for Kythera to be inhabitable again. Leo begins his epilogue with a direct address of the saint, some of which reflects traditions already present in the initial hagiography. For example, the author proposes that St. Theodore is like a “new Abraham, because you departed from your fatherland” and a “new Antony, a citizen of the desert and a wonder worker” — in reference to his travels and solitude on Kythera.⁴⁶ After these comparisons, Leo praises the qualities of St. Theodore, and it is here that the innovations are evident. He states that “it is right to call you a gift from God. God indeed sent you to that very small island, which, through the fountain of miracles, you made illustrious and well-known to all people. You not only became its founder, but also its adornment through the abundant stream of cures that you provide.”⁴⁷ Already there are references to traditions which must have come after the commissioning of the first *Life*. St. Theodore is named the “founder” of the island and an allusion is made to his care for the inhabitants of the island. Neither of these aspects were apparent in the original version of the text. The island remained uninhabited for at least 40 years after the death of the saint and so these must be later developing aspects of his veneration.

The focus on St. Theodore as founder and protector of Kythera becomes even more apparent in the lines that follow and it is worth quoting them in full. The hagiographer writes that:

“The island is more adorned by your miracles than an emperor takes pride in his crown. You keep it safe from the attacks of the godless barbarians. The island having your most long-suffering body as a protective wall and your intercessions to God as its guardians, does not fear their invasions. Holding before itself as a weapon against our enemies, our island mocks their frightful formations and armies as if they were children’s toys. Your servants use your name as a double-edged sword against the enemy, and defeat them solely through their own spirited rush: they manage to put to flight a multitude of well-armed fighters, as if they were wild beasts, by throwing rocks and sticks at them. The island has you, my saint, as a secure anchor, and thus it crosses the tempestuous sea of this life safely, weathering its storms.”⁴⁸

Much of the attention is placed specifically on the saint’s localized relationship with the island – which is no longer a distant and dangerous place but is now blessed

⁴⁶ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 6.2.

⁴⁷ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 6.4.

⁴⁸ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 6.4.

and made safe by his mediation.⁴⁹ Because of the presence of St. Theodore, who both serves as an active defender of this space and as an inspiration for those who live within it, the island is safe from external threats. The relationship between St. Theodore and the island is extended to its inhabitants as well. The passage above depicts a community that has returned to the island and that specifically looks to the saint for its protection. This sentiment continues in the lines that follow, when the author writes that “all the faithful take refuge in you with all their heart, and are rewarded with the fulfilment of their requests, calling you a haven and a worthy refuge from all the adverse circumstances of this life.”⁵⁰ St. Theodore no longer remains in solitude, but is now the effective patron of a new community of Kytherians. All of this is in contrast to the characterization of Kythera in the first *Life*, in which the island remained inhospitable and no community was formed.

Furthermore, much of the miraculous activity that is referred to by Leo is centered around the tomb of St. Theodore. Again, this is a departure from the original narrative, which ends with the burial of the saint by the Monemvasiot hunters, suggesting the addition of a later developing tradition. For other contemporary saints miracles occur soon after their burial, but for St. Theodore this miraculous activity does not occur for several decades, until the resettlement of the island. Leo writes “is there anyone who is attacked by illnesses and pain and is not cured after running to your church with all his heart? Is there anyone who, after seeing and touching your holy relics, is not helped by you and does not enjoy your protection in all times and places?”⁵¹ The power of St. Theodore is mostly confined to the island of Kythera, and these lines place special emphasis on the place of his tomb and church. Leo again returns his attention to this space, saying that “as soon as someone in distress comes to pay due honors to your reliquary and touch your holy relic, he is delivered from all distress and sadness and is filled with pleasure, delight, and spiritual joy.”⁵² These lines show that the site of St. Theodore’s tomb had developed a reputation for its efficacy as a source of miracles in the years following the resettlement of the island and the reference to his church anticipates, and perhaps refers directly to, the monastery that would be constructed there.

⁴⁹ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 6.4. Gregory, “Narrative of the Byzantine Landscape”, 495-496; M. Leontsini-Anti, “Όψεις του κυθηρικού τοπίου: από τους σχολιαστικούς υπομνηματισμούς στην αγιολογική του αναπαράσταση”, A. Glykophrydi – G. Leontsinis (eds.), *Α Διεθνές Συνέδριο Κυθηραϊκών Μελετών, 20-24 Σεπτεμβρίου 2000* (Κύθηρα: Μύθος και Πραγματικότητα 4), Kythera 2003, 309-326.

⁵⁰ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 6.5.

⁵¹ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 6.5.

⁵² *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 6.5.

Both of these developments in St. Theodore's tradition occur after a delay of at least forty years subsequent his arrival in the 920's and probably longer. Even after the region was made more secure by the conquest of Crete in 961, it would likely take some time for new communities to arrive and settle.⁵³ The earliest sites after the supposed period of abandonment, or severe depopulation, have been dated to the late 10th and early 11th century. The wall paintings of St. Andreas at Livadi (in the south-central part of the island) have been dated to the end of the 10th century.⁵⁴ Later literary evidence suggests a late 10th century founding for a settlement at St. George Kolokythias (the "pumpkin").⁵⁵ Such an early date for this site is confirmed by the 11th century ceramic material recovered in its vicinity.⁵⁶ A conservative count of the island's churches suggests that at least eight were active by the end of the 12th century.⁵⁷ This evidence supports the notion that St. Theodore's association with the prosperity of the island was delayed, since the earliest traces of resettlement do not appear until the late 10th century.

It is likely that these later innovations to the reputation of St. Theodore appeared during this period of increasing prosperity on Kythera and at the encouragement of Monemvasiots who sought to develop their economic interests on the island.⁵⁸ It is well established that leading families from this town were involved in both the process of resettling the island and of founding the monastery of the saint.⁵⁹ Much of the evidence for the relationship between Monemvasia and Kythera is evident in the archaeological record,

⁵³ Herrin, *Byzantine Kythera*, 140.

⁵⁴ M. Chatzidakis and I. Bitha, *Corpus of the Byzantine Wall-Paintings of Greece: the Island of Kythera*, Athens 2003, 73.

⁵⁵ For this evidence and for Kythera from the mid-tenth to early 13th century, see Herrin, *Byzantine Kythera*, 139-144. This epithet may be related to the bay of Kolokythia on the eastern side of the Mani peninsula.

⁵⁶ Gregory and Tzortzopoulou-Gregory, *The Archaeology of Kythera*, 61 and 273-276; Gregory, "Landscape and Cultural History in Medieval and Early Modern Kythera", 107-111.

⁵⁷ Gregory and Tzortzopoulou-Gregory, *The Archaeology of Kythera*, 62-64.

⁵⁸ For Monemvasia during this period and their early interest in Kythera, see H.A. Kalligas, *Monemvasia: A Byzantine City State*, London 2010, 8-26; *Byzantine Monemvasia: The Sources*, Monemvasia 1990, 45-70.

⁵⁹ The works of Chryssa Maltezu are especially important in understanding the periods of Monemvasiot and Venetian control of Kythera. See Maltezu, "Άπο τα βυζαντινά στα βενετικά Κύθηρα", in M. Chatzidakis – I. Bitha (eds.), *Ευρετήριο βυζαντινών Τοιχογραφιών Ελλάδος: Κύθηρα*, Athens 1997, 305-314; Maltezu, "Le familie degli Eudaimonioianni e Venier a Cerigo dal XII al XIV secolo. Problemi di cronologia et prosopografia", *RSBS* 2 (1982) 205-217; Maltezu, "Ειδήσεις για ναούς και μονές στα Κύθηρα από αρχαιακές πηγές", *Πρακτικά του Ε' Διεθνούς Πανιονίου Συνεδρίου, Αργοστόλι-Ληξούρι, 17-21 Μαΐου 1986*, Argostoli 1989, 269-288. See also Oikonomides, "Ο βίος του Άγιου Θεοδώρου Κυθήρων", 279-280.

which becomes clearer in the 12th century.⁶⁰ By this period, powerful Monemvasiot families, such as the Eudaimonians, had founded many of the island's churches and its largest town (now known as Paliochora), which would serve as a base for their piratical and mercantile interests.⁶¹ The Monemvasiot presence is also recorded in later literary traditions. A Venetian chronicle from the 16th century, *L'antique memorie dell'isola di Cerigo*, describes a rivalry between the Spartans and Monemvasiots for the governorship of the island during the early years of its resettlement.⁶² The author of the text does not provide a specific date for these events, but it refers to the settlement of St. George Kolokythias as the place from where the island was first governed after it became reinhabited. After this governor was murdered by his Kytherian subjects, the island was handed over to a Monemvasiot man named George Pachys and then to the Eudaimonians family. Another text, the *Chronikon of Cheilas*, a 15th century document written by a monk in the monastery of St. Theodore, demonstrates a continued Monemvasiot interest in Kythera and the monastery.⁶³ Again in reference to an unknown period, the text states that the monastery was founded by the leaders of Monemvasia.⁶⁴ Some have suggested that there remains evidence for the late 10th century phase of this monastery, but it cannot be argued with a great degree of certainty.⁶⁵ Monemvasia would remain invested in the condition

⁶⁰ In addition to the works of Maltezos, see D. Knipp, "Patrons and Paintings on the Island of Kythera in the Early Palaeologan Period", *Byz* 83 (2013) 161-200.

⁶¹ Gregory and Tzortzopoulou-Gregory, *The Archaeology of Kythera*, 62-66 and 250-262. See also, G.E. Ince, Th.G. Koukoulis, and D. Smyth, "Survey of a Byzantine City on the Island of Kythera. Preliminary Report", *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 82 (1987) 95-106; G.E. Ince, Th.G. Koukoulis, A.N. Ballantyne, and D. Smyth, "Paliochora: Survey of a Byzantine City on the Island of Kythera. Second Report", *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 84 (1989) 407-416; G.E. Ince and A.N. Ballantyne, *Paliochora on Kythera: Survey and Interpretation*, Oxford 2007.

⁶² Cerigo, or Tsirigo, is the name by which the Venetians referred to Kythera and it remains in use in reference to the island and its inhabitants. For the text, *l'antique memorie dell'isola di Cerigo*, see C.N. Sathas, *Documents inedits relatifs a l'histoire de la Grece au Moyen Age*, Paris 1880-1890, 299-307.

⁶³ The text was written by a monk of the monastery of St. Theodore of Kythera in the mid-15th century. See the *Chilas Chronicon monasterii S. Theodori in Cythera insula siti*, in C.H. Hopf, *Chroniques greco-romanes inedites ou peu connues*, Paris 1873, 346-358. See also, Chryssa Maltezos, "Το Χρονικό του Χειλά. Κοινωνικά και ιδεολογικά προβλήματα στα Κύθηρα τον 15^ο αϊ", *Σύμμεικτα* 8 (1989): 15-25; I. Beloudos, *Χρονικόν περί τοῦ ἐν Κυθήροις μοναστηρίου τοῦ ἁγίου Θεοδώρου νῦν τὸ πρῶτον ἐξ ἀνεκδότου χειρογράφου μετὰ σημειώσεων δημοσιευθέν*, Venice 1868.

⁶⁴ *Chronikon of Cheilas* 346.

⁶⁵ Gregory and Tzortzopoulou-Gregory, *The Archaeology of Kythera*, 242-244. Others, such as Herrin, suggest a late 10th century date based upon a reading of the *L'antique memorie dell'isola di Cerigo*. Herrin, *Byzantine Kythera*, 141.

of the monastery, and many of the island's other churches, especially in the 12th and 13th centuries.⁶⁶ The island would eventually fall under the jurisdiction of the bishopric of Monemvasia in the 12th century.⁶⁷ Thus, Monemvasia had interests both in the island of Kythera as a whole and specifically in the monastery of St. Theodore.

Evidence from the epilogue of the *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* alludes to Monemvasiot promotion of the monastery, and potentially to the settlement of the island, likely in its early stages. That this elaboration of the text by Leo likewise has a provenance in Monemvasia has been suggested by William Caraher, who has connected the *Life* to a Monemvasiot attempt to “invent tradition” as part of its rivalry with other cities of the Peloponnese with more established authority in the region.⁶⁸ Much of this argument is based upon a reading of the thematic elements and the prominence of Monemvasia preserved in the narrative sections of the original text, as well as the contemporary literary environment of Monemvasia in the 10th and 11th centuries. That the text was produced in Monemvasia, or at the behest of some of its influential citizens, is also suggested by Leo's familiarity with the first version of the *Life* and its author.⁶⁹ The specific interests expressed by the epilogue further support that this is the case.

Leo's focus on the area of St. Theodore's tomb and the surrounding church is likely an indication of Monemvasiot influence, for it is in this place that a monastery would be constructed by some of the leading members of that town. Leo's enumeration of the posthumous miracles emanating from the relics of the saint, as well as his ready mediation for those in need, promotes the belief in this site as a source of miraculous power. The increased reputation of the tomb would bring increased patronage to the church of St. Theodore, as was the case for the churches of other contemporary saints – such as the previously mentioned St. Nikon and St. Luke of Steiris.⁷⁰ The hagiographer makes clear that, although the saint has a special relationship with Kythera, his mediation could be extended to those beyond the island. He writes that salvation was found by those who “traveling by sea and in danger of being wrecked by a tempest who invoked your name,”

⁶⁶ Oikonomides, “Ο βίος τοῦ Ἁγίου Θεοδώρου Κυθήρων”, 279-280; Chatzidakis and Bitha, *Corpus of the Byzantine Wall-Paintings of Greece*, 24; *Chronikon of Cheilas*, passim.

⁶⁷ Kalligas, “Monemvasia”, 37-38.

⁶⁸ Caraher, “Constructing Memories”, 267-280. Caraher suggests that the *Life*, similar to texts such as the *Chronicle of Monemvasia*, “appeals to an alterity of continuity,” connecting the city of Monemvasia with older traditions.

⁶⁹ See again *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 6.1.

⁷⁰ See again *Life of St. Nikon* 48 and *Life of St. Luke of Steiris* 68. See also P. Armstrong, “The Monasteries of Saint Nikon: the Amyklaion, Sparta and Lakonia”, in C. Gallou – M. Georgiadis – G.M. Muskett (eds.), *Dioskouroi: Studies presented to W. G. Cavanaugh and C. B. Mee*, Oxford 2008, 352-369; C. Conner, “Hosios Loukas as a Victory Church”, *GRBS* 33.3 (1992) 293-308.

as well as by those who see and touch the relics and “enjoy your protection in all times and places.”⁷¹ The protection afforded to these individuals is advertised by Leo and specifically tied to their interactions with the relics of the saint in the place of his church. What exactly the author means by the “church” of St. Theodore is unclear. It is certainly possible that he is referencing the monastery which came to be constructed here and may have its origins in the late 10th or early 11th century, but he could also be describing the previously abandoned church of saints Sergios and Bakchos, in which the saint had initially found refuge. In either case, the author emphasizes the blessings that are derived from this specific place for all those who approach it, promoting the reputation of St. Theodore’s tomb as a center of miraculous activity.

There is some evidence in the *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* that suggests the increased reputation of the saint helped to attract new settlement to Kythera, or to encourage those who had already settled there. The island itself is not a particularly hospitable environment. Much of Kythera is composed of rocky cliffs and gorges which branch out from the central spine and limit the availability of arable land.⁷² With the exception of a few more fertile areas, mostly in the central and southeastern parts of the island, agricultural productivity is difficult and extensive terracing is necessary. During the Venetian period of rule (1204 until early 1797) the island’s low population was combated with great difficulty and, in a notable example of Kythera’s reputation, Monemvasiot refugees in 1540 were cautioned against settling on the island due to its rocky dry soil and vulnerability to attack.⁷³ Such deficiencies would have been exacerbated after a prolonged period of discontinuity on the island from the 8th to 10th century. The author of the *Life* admits as much, saying that “since the island has in you a consolation, it can endure its own unforgiving nature and the attacks of its enemies, and can bear the various adverse circumstances of life without pain.”⁷⁴ This passage refers back to earlier in the epilogue, when Leo writes how St. Theodore inspires the islanders to ward off potential invaders, but it also admits the difficulty of the Kytherian environment. The experiences of the saint, and the dangers which he wards off, are connected to the realities of life on Kythera.⁷⁵ The hagiographer ends his elaboration of the text, asking that the saint does “not now stop praying to the Lord on our behalf” and that he

⁷¹ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 6.5.

⁷² Gregory and Tzortzopoulou-Gregory, *The Archaeology of Kythera*, 15-18.

⁷³ Chryssa Maltezou records a number of similar instances in “A Contribution to the Historical Geography of the Island of Kythera during the Venetian Occupation”, in A.E. Laiou-Thomadakis (ed.), *Charanis Studies: Essays in Honor of Peter Charanis*, New Brunswick 1980, 151-175. See also Kalligas, *Monemvasia*, 62-63.

⁷⁴ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 6.5.

⁷⁵ Gregory, “Landscape and Cultural History in Medieval and Early Modern Kythera”, 113-114.

“remember this land.”⁷⁶ St. Theodore in the epilogue is depicted by Leo as a special patron and comfort to the island and all those who either lived there or intended to, in what appears to have remained a period of relative uncertainty on Kythera.

Conclusion

In the centuries following the death of St. Theodore, the veneration of the saint would become entirely tied to the island of Kythera. The aspects of the saint for which he remains an important figure on the island are reflective of the tradition expressed in the epilogue. Two of the texts mentioned above, *L'antique memorie dell'isola di Cerigo* and *Chronikon of Cheilas*, describe a Kythera that was abandoned until it was made inhabitable again by the arrival of St. Theodore. A short account of another local Kytherian saint, St. Eles, whose story only becomes known in *synaxaria* from the early 19th century, is based heavily upon the tradition of St. Theodore.⁷⁷ She too becomes famous for fleeing to a purportedly abandoned Kythera in the 4th century and her death attracted new communities to settle the island. A small monastery was likewise built on the place of her tomb, from which miracles kept the island safe and the population protected.⁷⁸ Depictions of St. Theodore — both in the medieval period and the modern — commonly show him holding the castle of Kythera in his hands to symbolize his patronage of the island.⁷⁹ Even today St. Theodore is associated with the protection of Kythera. Most recently, the local priest responsible for his monastery credited the saint with keeping it safe when it was surrounded by dangerous forest fires.⁸⁰ These later traditions have more in keeping with the material presented in the second version of the *Life*, than they do with the first.

⁷⁶ *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* 6.6.

⁷⁷ Gregory and Tzortzopoulos-Gregory, *The Archaeology of Kythera*, 55-56; G. Metallenos, “Θεολογικές κριτικές προβάσεις στην αγιολογική ταυτότητα των Κυθήρων”, A. Glykophrydi – G. Leontsinis (eds.), *Α Διεθνές Συνέδριο Κυθηραϊκών Μελετών, 20-24 Σεπτεμβρίου 2000* (Κύθηρα: Μύθος και Πραγματικότητα 4), Kythera 2003, 257-270.

⁷⁸ For the monastery, see Gregory and Tzortzopoulou-Gregory, *The Archaeology of Kythera*, 205-206.

⁷⁹ See, for example, the late 13th century wall-painting in the church of St. Theodore of Kythera at Spasteras. Chatzidakis and Bitha. *Corpus of the Byzantine Wall-Paintings of Greece*, 187. See also the icon of St. Theodore, alongside St. Rocco, in the church of the Panayia Myrtidiotissa in Chora. E. Gkini-Tsophoroulou, “Σκόλια σε εικόνα από ναό του κάστρου της Χώρας Κυθήρων”, *Αρχαιολογικόν δελτίον* 44-46 (1989-1991) 179-190; J. Bennet, “Fragmentary ‘Geo-metry’: Early Modern Landscapes of the Morea and Cerigo in Text, Image, and Archaeology,” in Siriol Davies – J.L. Davis (eds.), *Between Venice and Istanbul: Colonial Landscapes in Early Modern Greece*, Athens 2007, 199-217.

⁸⁰ Per personal communication with this priest, Father Petros. There was an especially large forest fire on Kythera in the summer of 2017, much of which devastated the area in the

These two traditions, St. Theodore as protector of Kythera and his tomb as a source of miracles, which remain the core aspects of his veneration on Kythera, are initially absent and are only able to develop in the decades following the Roman conquest of Crete in 961. This reading of the texts shows that the improving conditions in the southern Peloponnese allowed for the island of Kythera to be reinhabited and simultaneously increased the prominence of the saint. In this way, the case of St. Theodore is comparable to St. Luke of Steiris, whose own fame was greatly increased by the successful expedition against Crete.⁸¹ These innovations to the *Life* also demonstrate the beginning of the relationship between Kythera and Monemvasia, whose promotion of the saint likely reflects the early stages of the resettlement of the island and the foundation of the monastery of St. Theodore. Only by separating the *Life of St. Theodore of Kythera* by its authorship does the ways in which the cult developed and the reasons for this development become observable in a way that would not otherwise be possible should one read the *Life* as though it were merely a singular and uniform text.

vicinity of the monastery, which is located in the north-central part of the island in between the modern-day villages of Lianianika and Pitsinades.

⁸¹ St. Luke had prophesied the eventual conquest of Crete during the reign of an emperor named Romanos. See again Conner, “Hosios Loukas as a Victory Church”, 293-308.