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One, Two or Three Feasts? The Brytae, the Maiuma and the May Festival at Edessa¹

(a) The Brytae

In A.D. 501/2 the festival of the Brytae, a popular event in Constantinople, was abolished by the Emperor Anastasius in the wake of bloody disturbances. Very little is known of the festival, save for the rioting which marked its celebration on several occasions in the period leading up to its abolition; only John of Antioch and John Malalas (and, much later, the Suda) ever actually refer to it by name.² The aim of this article is to investigate what shreds of evidence exist concerning the Brytae, and in particular to see if it is to be equated with the pagan festival at Edessa described by Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite. The festival of the Maiuma will also come under scrutiny, since, as will emerge, it is highly probable that it too should be identified with the Brytae.

First, the Brytae. In the year 499 or 500 the celebration of the Brytae was the occasion of serious disturbances in the imperial capital:³

(I) John of Antioch, frg. 214c, *FHG* V, p. 31.

Under Anastasius, a man named Helias held the prefecture of the city; he celebrated the feast of the so-called Brytae, and became the cause of many deaths on account of some evil spell, which had never previously occurred. For when some

1 The authors are grateful to Elizabeth Jeffreys, Cyril Mango, Charlotte Roueché and Renato Roux for help in the preparation of this article. The participants at seminars in the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, Macquarie University, Sydney, and the University of Melbourne also provided useful comments.

2 John of Antioch, frg. 214 in *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, ed. C. Müller, henceforth *FHG* (Paris, 1870), p. 31; John Malalas, frg. 39 in *Excerpta historica iussu imperatoris Constantini Porphyrogeniti confecta* IV, *de insidiis*, ed. C. de Boor (henceforth *Exc. de ins.*), 168, tr. E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys and R. Scott, *John Malalas. The Chronicle* (Sydney, 1986), henceforth Jeffreys-Scott, 222. For the date of the abolition see A. Cameron, *Circus Factions* (Oxford, 1976), 227 and J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire* I (London, 1923), 437–8, both placing it in 502 (on the basis of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, for whose evidence see below (b)).

3 Cameron, *Porphyrius the Charioteer* (Oxford, 1973), 234 for the date.

men of the factions assembled towards evening they set upon one another with swords; and many were the causes of death.

The emperor Anastasius, generally intolerant of factional violence, seems not to have reacted to the disturbance with his customary vigour. By the time that the festival came round again two years later, a new city prefect, Constantine Tzouroukkas, was in office. On this occasion the faction members needed no provocation to create a disturbance:

(II) John of Antioch frg. 214c, *FHG* V, p. 31.

Likewise Constantius (i. e. Constantine), the prefect of the city, having resolved to hold the feast of the Brytae, nearly destroyed the whole populace [which was] cut to pieces in various ways. Consequently the Emperor deprived the cities henceforth of the most beautiful dancing (ὀρχήσεως).⁴

(III) Marcellinus *comes*, a. 501.1-3⁵

While the Prefect of the City Constantius was watching the theatrical games in the middle of the day, the Greens prepared secret ambushes against the opposing Blues in the theatre itself. For they had swords and stones hidden in earthenware jars, and similar weapons concealed by various fruits under the portico of the theatre in the manner of the vendors.

When Constantius was sitting down as was customary, the voices of the citizens grew louder; weapons were being thrown and being heard before being seen, stones were pelted like showers onto unwary citizens, and swords, glistening heedlessly with the blood of friends and neighbours, raged together with those wielding them. The seating of the theatre tottered and creaked; it groaned as it was trampled by the feet of those fleeing this way and that and was polluted with the blood of the slain.

For the imperial city wept for more than three thousand citizens lost to stones and swords, to the crush of spectators and the waters of the stage (*proscenium*).⁶

4 On the city prefect Constantine (Constantius in some sources) see *PLRE* II, *Constantinus qui et Tzourouccas* 13. The word ὀρχηστής was frequently applied to a pantomime actor: see O. Pasquato, *Gli spettacoli in S. Giovanni Crisostomo*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 201 (Rome, 1976), 143 and C. Roueché, *Performers and Partisans at Aphrodisias* (London, 1993), 29.

5 Marcellinus *comes*, *Chronicle*, ed. Th. Mommsen, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi* XI (Berlin, 1894); text and translation in B. Croke, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus* (Sydney, 1995).

6 Tr. Croke, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus*, 31-3 with comments on p. 111.

(IV) Malalas, *Exc. de ins.* frg. 39, p. 168

When Constantius (Constantinus), surnamed Tzouroukkas, was city prefect, a disturbance took place. While Constantius the prefect was watching the afternoon session during the festival known as the Brytai in the theatre, the factions set on each other in the theatre. Many were drowned in the water, wounded or killed in fighting with swords, resulting in the death in the theatre of the emperor's son by a concubine. The emperor grew angry and punished many from both factions, and also exiled the factions' four dancers (ὀρχηστὰς).⁷

Since the emperor banished the leading dancer of each of the four factions – who will have been a *pantomimus* rather than just a *mimus* – it seems plausible to identify this measure with the wholesale abolition of pantomime dancing; that Anastasius took such a step is known from the *Panegyric* of Procopius of Gaza, a work composed around 502.⁸

(V) Suda, ed. A. Adler, III (Leipzig, 1933), 309 (§ 47), following a quotation of (x) below

ἐτέλουν δὲ μέχρις Ἀναστασίου βασιλέως οἱ ἐν Κωνσταντίνου πόλει πανήγυριν τῶν Βρυτῶν· καὶ ταύτην Ἀναστάσιος ἔπαυσε.

The inhabitants of Constantinople celebrated the feast of the Brytae until (the reign) of Anastasius; and this (festival) the Emperor Anastasius abolished.

Thus did the Brytae come to an end in 501. From the notices of John of Antioch and Marcellinus *comes* several aspects of the festival emerge. First, it took place in the theatre. John of Antioch refers to the *theatron*, which could refer to the hippodrome, but Marcellinus' reference to the *theatrum* (rather than the *circus*) clearly indicates the theatre. Constantinople had at least two theatres in late antiquity, the most important of which was said to date from the days of Septimius Severus, opposite the temple of Aphrodite near the Bosphorus; a smaller theatre was situated near the church of St Irene. Given the numbers involved in the rioting during the festival, and its evident popularity, it seems likely that it took

⁷ Tr. Jeffreys-Scott, 222; *contra* the note there, the prefect was not watching the races in the hippodrome at the time; he was clearly present in the theatre in person. See A. Cameron, 'Theodoros Τρισέπαρχος', *GRBS* 17 (1976), App. 2, 285 on the translation of δέχμιον θεωροῦντος as 'at the afternoon session'. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1883), 147 incorrectly dates this episode to 504/5 (A.M. 5997), cf. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire* I, 437 n. 5.

⁸ Following A. Cameron, 'The date of Zosimus' New History', *Philologus* 13 (1969) 109 and n. 5 (from Procopius of Gaza, *Pan. Anast.* 16, ed. and tr. A. Chauvot in *Procopius de Gaza, Priscien de Césarée, Panégyriques de l'empereur Anastase 1er* [Bonn, 1986]), with the commentary on p. 164.

place in the 'Great theatre' of Severus.⁹ Second, water was involved in some way, since some spectators were drowned in the disturbances which led to the festival's abolition. Third, it involved dancing: this is clear from Anastasius' decision to expel the dancers of the factions from the cities.¹⁰

(b) The festival at Edessa

At the same time, far from Constantinople, at Edessa, the metropolis of Osroene, the population was suffering from a famine and plague which, according to the chronicler known as (Pseudo-)Joshua the Stylite, was a divine chastisement for a wicked pagan festival celebrated in the city during the month of May. He attests its occurrence in the years 496, 498 and 499, before its abolition in 502. Pseudo-Joshua's references to this festival are as follows:¹¹

(1) Jos. Styl. §27 [A.D. 496]

On the seventeenth of May this year, when good gifts were liberally bestowed by heaven upon all, the crops were plentiful by the bounty (of heaven), the rain came down, and the fruits of the earth grew in season, the bulk of the citizens cut off hope of salvation to go sinning in public. Revelling in their delights, they gave no thanks to God for his gifts, but were negligent in [thanksgiving] and succumbed to the pestilence of sin. As even the hidden and open sins in which they were engrossed did not satisfy them, they got ready on this specified date, which was a Friday night, when a dancer¹² was dancing, and (this) (lasted)¹³ a period of three days.¹⁴ They lit countless candles in celebration of this festival, a procedure

9 On the theatres see A. Vogt, 'Le théâtre à Byzance', *Revue des Questions historiques* 218 (Oct. 1931) 259-60 (to be treated with caution) with R. Janin, *Constantinople Byzantine*² (Paris, 1964), 196-7 and maps 2-3. C. Mango has suggested (pers. comm.) that the theatre in question may well be the amphitheatre mentioned in the *Notitia Urbis Constantinopolitanae*, ed. O. Seeck (Berlin, 1876), 231.12, in the second region of the city, cf. A. Berger, *Untersuchungen zu den Patria Konstantinupoleos*, *Poikila Byzantina* 8 (Berlin, 1988), 391. On the term *theatron* referring to the hippodrome see Cameron, *Circus Factions*, 227 n. 7.

10 Joh. Ant. frg. 214c. The name Brytae itself might be connected to the verb βρύω, which can have the sense of 'burst forth with, gush with' when connected with the word ὕδωρ: see Ph. Koukoules, *Βυζαντινῶν Βίος καὶ Πολιτισμός* II.1 (Athens, 1948), 25 and *LSJ ad loc.* On the involvement of the partisans in mimes see Roueché, *Performers and Partisans*, 16 (with inscription 1.1.iii).

11 Syriac text (with English translation) in W. Wright, *The Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite* (Cambridge, 1882). New translation by J. W. Watt and F. R. Trombley forthcoming in *Translated Texts for Historians*.

12 ܕܥܚܝܫܬܝܬܝܬ = ὁρχηστῆς, cf. above (II) and (IV).

13 Read ܕܬܕܝܪܐ 'and it lasted'. MS.: ܕܬܕܝܪܐ, 'and it was called'.

14 ܕܬܕܝܪܐ, a word unattested in Syriac apart from this passage. The translation offered here derives it from Greek τριήμερος(-v) or τριήμερον, 'a period of three days'. It is possible that this


without precedent in the city, and arranged them on the ground along the bank of the river from the gate of the theatre and as far as the Gate of the Arches.¹⁵ The burning candles were placed on the ground along the riverbank and hung up in colonnades, the open market-space,¹⁶ the High Street,¹⁷ and many (other) places.

Pseudo-Joshua concludes this section by telling of a 'miraculous sign performed by God' on the statue of Constantine from Friday to Sunday as an indication of divine displeasure at the festival.

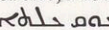
(2) Jos. Styl. § 30 [A.D. 498]

While this was going on, the time came round again for the festival at which the pagan myths were chanted, and (this year) the citizens took even more care over it than usual. For seven days before it they were going up in a crowd from the theatre in the evening, dressed in linen tunics. (Their heads) were covered by *phakiolia*,¹⁸ their loins free, candles burning in front of them. For the whole night they burnt incense and held vigils, walking all round the city and praising the dancer¹⁹ until morning, with singing, shouting, and riotous behaviour. On this account they also gave up going to prayer, and no one took any notice of

rare Greek term was employed, rather than the normal Syriac expression for 'three days', in order to avoid any allusion to the New Testament's 'three days' (Mark 8: 31, etc.), and instead to castigate the festival as 'Greek', and Pseudo-Joshua may have found a way of doing this by alluding to the Septuagint of Amos 4: 4. This possibility is all the more likely if, as A. Büchler, 'Une localité énigmatique', *Revue des Études Juives* 42 (1901), 126, argued, the Midrash connected the voluptuous feast of Amos 6: 1-7 with the Maiuma, and, as we shall argue below, the festival criticised by Pseudo-Joshua is to be equated with the Maiuma. In this connection, one might also note that Pseudo-Joshua employs one expression for candles when used at this festival, and another when used elsewhere (see below). Wright made considerable emendations to the text and translated '(at the place) where the dancer who was named Trimerius was dancing'.

15 , uncertain ('vaults' or 'arches'). On the gates of Edessa and their names see J. B. Segal, *Edessa, the 'Blessed City'* (Oxford, 1970), 185. *Ibid.* 163 for the location of the theatre, 'on the river bank in the east quarter of the city'; see also E. Kirsten, 'Edessa. Eine römische Grenzstadt des 4. bis 6. Jahrhunderts im Orient', *JAC* 6 (1963), 155.

16 ἀντίφορος. On this term see C. Mango, 'The Life of St Andrew the Fool reconsidered', *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi* II (*Miscellanea A. Pertusi* II) (Bologna, 1982), 304, repr. in *Byzantium and Its Image* (London, 1984), VIII. The term may also be found in the *Life of St Andrew the Fool*, vol. 2, ed. L. Rydén (Uppsala, 1995), ch. 7 l. 351 with 309 n. 1: in Constantinople it was situated next to the Forum of Constantine, cf. *De Cerimoniis*, ed. A. Vogt, vol. 1 (Paris, 1935), 154.3. Other references may be found in Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. L. Dindorf (Bonn, 1831), 397.23 (in Antioch) and Evagrius, *Ecclesiastical History*, edd. J. Bidez and L. Parmentier (London, 1898), III.28 (at Daphne). The Edessene Antiphoros was rebuilt by Justinian following the flood of 520, Procopius, *de Aedificiis*, ed. J. Haury, rev. G. Wirth (Leipzig, 1963), II.7.6.

17 , uncertain; possibly 'market place'.

18 'Turbans'.

19 Cf. § 27.

what was proper, but in their arrogance they ridiculed the restraint of their parents, saying, 'They did not know how to do it like us'. They said that the city's inhabitants in earlier times were dunces and idiots, and thus they became arrogant in their wickedness. There was no one who would reprimand, reprove, or advise them, for although Xenaïas,²⁰ the bishop of Mabbug, happened to be in Edessa (at the time), and more than any others he is supposed to take on himself the labour of teaching, he did not speak with them about this matter for more than a day.

Again he ends his account of the celebrations that year with a sign of divine displeasure.

(3) Jos. Styl. §33 [A.D. 499]

A demonstration of God's righteousness was manifested to us at this time, to make us cease our evil way of life. In May of this year, on the day when that wicked pagan festival was to be celebrated, a multitude of locusts came into our country from the south. They did us no damage or harm this year, merely laying a substantial number of eggs in our country, but when the eggs had been laid in the ground, there were dreadful tremors in the earth. These clearly happened to arouse the people out of their sinful torpor, so that they might be spared the chastisement of famine and plague.

(4) Jos. Styl. §46 [A.D. 502]

During this month [May], when the day came on which was celebrated that evil festival of the Greek myths, on which information was given by us above,²¹ an order came from the emperor Anastasius that the dancers should dance no more in any of the cities of his imperial domain. Therefore anyone who pays attention to the outcome of events will not criticise us for having said that the punishments of hunger and plague developed and came upon us because of the evil which the citizens committed at this festival. For consider this: less than thirty days after its abolition, wheat, which had (previously) been sold at four modii a denarius, was being sold for twelve (modii a denarius); and barley, which had been selling at six modii (a denarius), was now being sold at twenty-two. So it was made manifestly clear to everyone that the will of God can bless even a small crop and give plenty to those who repent of their sins. For as I said (above), all

20 The author otherwise known as Philoxenus.

21 Cf. §§ 27, 30, 33.

the corn was scorched,²² but from the small surviving remnant all this alleviation occurred within thirty days. Someone, however, might perhaps still say that I have not reasoned very well, for this repentance, because of which there was mercy, was not voluntary; on the contrary, the emperor compulsorily abolished the festival because he decreed that on no account were the dancers to dance. We say, however, that God, on account of the abundance of his grace, was looking for a pretext to be merciful, even on those who are unworthy.

From Pseudo-Joshua's account it is clear that the festival was regularly celebrated in Edessa in May before its abolition in 502. Certain parts of it took place by night, and were accompanied by candles.²³ Dancing played an important role, and the event was evidently boisterous. Finally, the theatre was involved, as were pagan myths. That Pseudo-Joshua is alluding to the performance of some sort of pantomime seems highly likely. Confirmation comes from the equally severe censures of his contemporary Jacob of Serug, who makes reference to the pagan legends acted out in the theatre in pantomimes, although he makes no reference to any particular festival or indeed to festivals in general.²⁴

Long ago Bury and Stein connected the abolition of the *Brytae* in Constantinople with Pseudo-Joshua's report on the banning of dancing in the cities of the empire.²⁵ But whether the festival described by Pseudo-Joshua can be identified with the *Brytae* is uncertain: it is possible that the two were different, but involved similar ingredients, in particular dancing in theatres in front of rowdy crowds. Never-

22 Cf. §45.

23 Pseudo-Joshua uses the Greek loan word *λ.π.*, and Malalas both the Greek original thereof, *κανδήλα*, as well as *λαμπάδα*, for the processions at the *Maiuma* (cf. below, [i]). The Syriac translation of Severus of Antioch (cf. below, [xviii]) also uses a loan word *λαμπάδα* *ܠܡܡܢܐ* for lamps in a passage which bears striking similarities to Pseudo-Joshua and Malalas. For processions in other contexts, Pseudo-Joshua uses *ܠܡܡܢܐ*. On the mention of linen tunics and incense in Pseudo-Joshua (above, [2]), compare the references to the same in the aforementioned passage of Severus.

H. Drijvers, 'Pagan Cults in Christian Syria', in N. G. Garsoïan, T. F. Mathews and R. W. Thomson, eds., *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period* (Washington, D. C., 1982), 39 (cf. idem, *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa* [Leiden, 1980], 43 n. 10), draws a distinction between (2) above (a 'pagan spring festival') and (3) ('another pagan festival'); yet Pseudo-Joshua's references appear rather to indicate that he is referring to just one event (in May).

24 C. Moss, 'Jacob of Serugh's Homilies on spectacles of the theatre', *Muséon* 48 (1935), 90, 92, with W. Cramer, 'Irrtum und Lüge. Zum Urteil des Jakob von Sarug über Reste paganer Religion und Kultur', *JAC* 23 (1980), 101-3. The texts of these homilies are to be found in Moss's article, along with a translation. On the distinction between mime and pantomime see Vogt, 'Le théâtre', 263-4, Cramer, *art. cit.*, 102 and M. E. Molloy, *Libanius and the Dancers* (Hildesheim, 1996), 84; the latter was somewhat more sophisticated and involved just one person – as Pseudo-Joshua's references to 'the dancer' imply. It also focused on mythical events, while mimes were concerned with more ordinary episodes.

25 Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire* I, 427-8 and 437 n. 5. E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire* II (Amsterdam, 1949), 81 and n. 4; cf. A. Cameron, 'The date', 109.

theless, if Anastasius banned the dancers on account of disturbances at the Brytae, and in Edessa the effect of the ban was to terminate the particular festival described by Pseudo-Joshua – and in his detailed account he makes reference to no other comparable events – it is not unlikely that the two festivals were closely related. The investigation may be pursued further by extending the discussion to the festival of the Maiuma, about which rather more is known.

(c) The Maiuma

References to the Maiuma festival by name are relatively sparse.²⁶ We offer here a collection of all the references to it known to us:

(i) Malalas, *Chronographia*, 284-5

During his [Commodus', A.D. 180-92] reign the landowners and citizens of Antioch sent a message and petitioned the emperor Commodus that by his sacred command he make over to the public treasury the revenues which Sossibios, as mentioned above, had bequeathed to the city of the Antiochenes in order that a varied programme of spectacles and different contests might be celebrated in the city, and that the city's officials should not appropriate the funds but that the public treasury itself might make provision to celebrate the Olympic festival and certain other spectacles in the city of the Antiochenes for the enjoyment of the city ... Likewise for celebrating the nocturnal dramatic festival, held every three years and known as the Orgies, that is, the Mysteries of Dionysos and Aphrodite, that is, what is known as the Maioumas because it is celebrated in the month of May-Artemisios, he set aside a specific quantity of gold for torches (λαμπάδων), lights (κανδήλων), and other expenses for the thirty-day festival of all-night revels.²⁷

26 The word itself occurs more frequently, since it was the name of several places in the eastern empire, on which see K. Mentzu-Meimare, 'Der "Χαριέστατος Μαιουμάς"', *BZ* 89 (1996), 60-3 (henceforth 'Der Maioumas').

27 Tr. Jeffreys-Scott, 151. A reference connecting the festival to Virgil, *Aen.* IV.302-3 follows, then an entry concerning the *venationes* held in Antioch (also abolished under Anastasius: see Chauvot, *Panegyriques*, 164). Mal. was here evidently relying on a local source, but may have made the identification of the Orgies with the Maiuma himself, as L. Robert, 'Epigraphica', *REG* 49 (1936) (repr. in *Opera Minora Selecta*, vol. 2 [Amsterdam, 1969], no. 57), 11-12, suggests; it is accepted, however, by Mentzu-Meimare, 'Der Maioumas', 63.

D. Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* (Princeton, 1947), 37, suggests that a representation of the month of May (Artemisios) in the 'House of the Calendars' may allude to the Maiuma: the female figure holds a torch with the flame pointing downwards in her right hand, while her left hand holds an inverted vase. See pl. 5b in vol. 2.

(ii) L. Robert, 'Epigraphica', *REG* 49 (1936) no. 11, a third century inscription from Nicaea²⁸

4 ----- π[ερὶ τὴν γερουσίαν ἀπο[δεδειγμένου
 - τε τὴν περὶ -- μαιουμᾶν? καὶ τὴν π[όλιν? --] -
 - τ[αῖς μεγίσταις δωρεαῖς τιμήσαντος τοῖς / -----

..... concerning the *gerousia*, having appointed

..... and about Maiuma²⁹ and the ?city

..... having honoured the with the greatest gifts

(iii) Julian, *Misopogon* 362D (A.D. 363)

ὕμῶν δ' ἕκαστος ἰδίᾳ μὲν εἰς τὰ δεῖπνα καὶ τὰς ἑορτὰς χαίρει δαπανώμενος,
καὶ εὖ οἶδα πολλοὺς ὕμῶν πλείστα εἰς τὰ δεῖπνα τοῦ Μαῖουμᾶ χρήματα
ἀπολέσαντας ...

Yet every one of you [Antiochenes] delights to spend money privately on dinners and feasts; and I know very well that many of you squandered very large sums of money on dinners during the May festival [Maiuma].³⁰

(iv) *Codex Theodosianus* XV.6

1. Clementiae nostrae placuit, ut maiumae provincialibus laetitia redderetur, ita tamen, ut servetur honestas et verecundia castis moribus perseveret.

It has pleased Our Clemency to restore to the provincials the enjoyment of the Majuma, provided, however, that decency and modesty and chaste manners shall be preserved (25 April 396).³¹

2. Ludicras artes concedimus agitari, ne ex nimia harum restrictione tristitia generetur. Illud vero quod sibi nomen procax licentia vindicavit, maiumam, foedum adque indecorum spectaculum, denegamus.

We permit the theatrical arts to be practised, lest, by excessive restriction thereof,

28 Robert, 'Epigraphica', 14, for the dating of the inscription. It has most recently been published in *Katalog der antiken Inschriften des Museums von Iznik* I, ed. S. Şahin (Bonn, 1979), no. 63; see also Mentzu-Meimare, 'Der Maioumas', 59.

29 As Robert notes, 'Epigraphica', 10, the reading 'Maiuma' is secure.

30 Tr. W.C. Wright, *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, Mass., 1913), 489.

31 *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. T. Mommsen and P. Meyer (Berlin, 1905). This law is repeated in *Codex Justinianus*, ed. P. Krueger, eleventh edition (Berlin, 1954) XI.46.1.

sadness may be produced. But we forbid that foul and indecent spectacle which under the name Majuma a shameless license claims for its own (2 October 399).³²

(v) J. P. Rey-Coquais, *Inscriptions grecques et latines découvertes dans les fouilles de Tyr (1963-1974) I. Inscriptions de la nécropole* (Paris, 1977) = *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth* 29 (1977), no. 151, 86-7.

Οἱ μαῖουμίζοντες ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τούτῳ καλὰς ἡμέρας ἔχουσιν

Those who celebrate the Maiuma in this place have pleasant days.³³

(vi) Malalas, *Chronographia*, 362.18-21

ὃς παρέσχεν ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ τῇ μεγάλῃ προσθήκην χρημάτων εἰς τὸ ἵππικὸν καὶ τὰ Ὀλύμπια καὶ τὸν Μαῖουμᾶν.

He [Antiochus Chuzon] supplied funds for the horse-races in Antioch the Great and for the Olympic festival and the Maioumas.³⁴

(vii) C. Roueché, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity* (London, 1988), inscription no. 40

1 Τὸν καὶ ἀγωνοθέτην καὶ κτίστην καὶ φιλότιμον καὶ Μαιουμάρχην
Δουλκίτιον, ξεῖνε, μέλπε τὸν ἡγεμόνα

Stranger, sing of Dulcitus, the governor, giver of games and founder and lover of honour and Maioumarch ...³⁵

(viii) An illustrated lead disk, 39 mm in diameter, from Heliopolis (Baalbek)

Side A: a vague collection of buildings, together with word PEKONTIO.

Side B: a temple, with a god in the middle, and the word MAIOY.³⁶

32 Translations from C. Pharr, *The Theodosian Code* (New York, 1952). Both laws are addressed to the serving praetorian prefect of the East, the first to Caesarius, the second to Aurelian.

33 Rey-Coquais, *op. cit.*, 87 sees the καλαὶ ἡμέραι as something mystical, but this is effectively rebutted by L. Robert, *Bulletin Epigraphique* in *REG* 91 (1978), 499. The inscription dates from the late antique period: see Rey-Coquais, *loc. cit.*

34 Tr. Jeffreys-Scott, 198. The date is the 440s; cf. *PLRE* II, Antiochus 10.

35 Tr. Roueché, *op. cit.*, 69, who tentatively dates the inscription to the mid-fifth century (*ibid.* 67).

36 It has been suggested that the former word is a Greek transcription of the Latin term *recognitio*, and that what is being 'inspected' is the Maiuma festival, there being few words beginning

(ix) John the Lydian, *De Mensibus* IV.76 (ed. R. Wünsch [Leipzig, 1908], p. 128)

οὕτως μὲν κατὰ θεολογίαν, κατὰ δὲ τὸν τῆς φυσιολογίας τρόπον τὴν Μαῖαν οἱ πολλοὶ τὸ ὕδωρ εἶναι βούλονται· καὶ γὰρ τοῖς Σύροις βαρβαρίζουσιν οὕτως ἔτι καὶ νῦν τὸ ὕδωρ προσαγορεύεται, ὥς καὶ μηϊουρι τὰ ὕδροφόρα καλεῖσθαι.

In this way (they explain) according to theology, but according to the method of enquiring into the nature and origin of things (physiology) many wish May to be water. For among the Syrians who speak (their) foreign language, still even now water is so called, so that aqueducts are called *meiouri*.³⁷

(x) John the Lydian, *De Mensibus* IV.80 (ed. Wünsch, p. 133)

They call feasting ‘to do the Maiuma’, from which [we get the term] Maiuma. The festival was held in Rome in the month of May. The leading men of the city went down to the shore, to the city called Ostia, to enjoy themselves by throwing one another into the waters of the sea. And so the time of the festival of this type was called Maiuma.³⁸



(xi) *Gerasa. City of the Decapolis*, ed. C.H. Kraeling (New Haven, 1938), inscription no. 279, pp. 470-1.³⁹

3 [ἐ]πετελέσθη ὁ χαριέστατος

4 [Μ]αειουμᾶς διὰ ἐνιαυτῶν

The most delightful Maiuma was celebrated after the lapse of years ... (under the *dux* Paulus).⁴⁰

ΜΑΙΟΥ. The disk has therefore been interpreted as referring to an authorisation of the Maiuma festival, which would point to a period when the celebration of the Maiuma had been banned; and since the style of the letters is attributed to the third or fourth century A.D. by the editor of the disk, the late fourth century seems a promising context for the item. See R. Mouterde, ‘Culte antiques de la Coelé Syrie et de l’Hermon’, *Mélanges de l’université Saint Joseph* 36 (1959), 69-73; the disk is illustrated on p. 70. Mouterde (perhaps optimistically) managed to observe a colonnade leading to an enclosed court on the first side; in the court he saw a small building between two pillars, opening onto ‘quatre parterres (?) ou bassins (?) ou constructions (?) oblongues, parallèles.’ The temple depicted on the disk is almost certainly that of Jupiter Helio-politanus, near which lay a water distribution point.

37 ‘Water is called May’ is simply explained: ὕδωρ = , which sounds like Μαῖα. ‘Aqueducts are called *meiouri*’ is more difficult: perhaps ὕδροφόρα = , sounding like μηϊουρι.

38 This information is repeated in the Suda, quoted above (V). In John the Lydian the passage follows a description of a ritual involving dancing in honour of the earth, apparently unconnected with the Maiuma.

39 Also in Y.E. Meimaris, *Chronological Systems in Roman-Byzantine Palestine and Arabia* (Athens, 1992) no. 81, p. 110 and K. Mentzu-Meimare, ‘Der Maioumas’, 58.

40 The inscription is dated to A.D. 535; the initial M in Maiuma is restored. The translation is by

(xii) Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1883), 451.25-6

ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς ποιήσας Μαΐουμᾶν ἐν Σοφιαναῖς ...

The emperor (Leo VI) held the Maiuma at Sophianae ...⁴¹

(xiii) Scriptor incertus de Leone Bardae filio, in Leo Grammaticus, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn, 1842), p. 337.2

... ἐξῆλθεν ἕως τὰκιδούκτου ποιοῦντες μαιουμάδας καὶ διδόντες χαρίσματα τοὺς ἄρχοντας τοῦ στρατοῦ ...

... they went out as far as Ta Akedouktou, holding Maiumas and giving gifts to the leaders of the army.⁴²

(xiv) Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *de Ceremoniis*, ed. J. J. Reiske (Bonn, 1838), *Appendix ad librum primum*, I.451.10 (cf. 451.17)⁴³

καὶ ἐδίδου αὐτοῖς ἀποκόμβιον, καὶ μαΐουμᾶν τοῖς στρατιώταις ...

To them he [Constantine the Great] gave a purse of money, to the soldiers he gave *maiuma* ...

C. C. McCown, 'The Maiumas Inscription, Pool and Theatre at Jerash', *Atti del XIX Congresso Internazionale degli Orientalisti* (1935) (Rome, 1938), 686. His connection of the inscription with the publication of the second edition of the *Codex Justinianus* (*ibid.* 686-7), in which the permission of the festival in the *Codex Theodosianus* (iv.1 above) was repeated, may be doubted: it is clear from (vi) that the ban was never rigorously applied, though it may have been the case that the festival had not been held in Gerasa for some time. Mentzu-Meimare, 'Der Maioumas', 70-2, prefers to view the inscription as referring to a building which was completed by the *dux*. While the verb ἐπιτελέω is capable of either interpretation, McCown's version seems the more probable. See also H. Lucas, 'Repertorium der griechischen Inschriften aus Gerasa', *Mittheilungen und Nachrichten des deutschen Palaestina-Vereins* 1901, no. 22, pp. 59-61; *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, ed. J. Martindale (Cambridge, 1992), vol. 3, Paulus 3 for the *dux* named.

41 C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor* (Oxford, 1997), 623, translate 'The emperor distributed rewards at Sophianai', and see n. 9. The date is A.D. 778. Mentzu-Meimare, 'Der Maioumas', 65, argues that Sophianae refers not to the palace by this name but to the baths erected by Justin II at the Forum Tauri (reported by Theophanes, 243.21-3).

42 The procession of the Emperor Michael I, the Augusta Theodora and the army took place in May 803, as is clear from Theophanes, 500.14-20, tr. Mango-Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, 684; see Mentzu-Meimare, 'Der Maioumas', 66, for the linking of the two accounts. Ta Akedouktou lies west of Constantinople, between Selymbria and Heracleia: see Mango-Scott, *op. cit.*, 687 n.23.

43 The word is found elsewhere in the *de Ceremoniis*; the occurrences are noted and analysed in Mentzu-Meimare, 'Der Maioumas', 67-8.

These last three references to the Maiuma appear to bear little relevance to our enquiry; by the late eighth century the name had apparently come to be applied to the distribution of presents by the emperor.⁴⁴ From the other sources, however, several features of the Maiuma are apparent. First, it took place in May; both John the Lydian (x) and Malalas (i) try to connect this with the name Maiuma, although this etymology is highly improbable. In fact, as John actually acknowledges (ix), the name is probably of Semitic (Aramaic) origin and formed from *yam* (*yamma*), 'sea', prefixed by *mai* (status constructus), 'waters of', or *ma-* (mem locale), 'place of'.⁴⁵ Second, it took place by night, at least according to Malalas. Third, it involved water, for which reason those celebrating the festival at Rome journeyed down to Ostia. It is significant therefore that the inscription from Gerasa (xi) was found close to the theatre about one kilometre north of the city, close to which lie a pool and a canal; similarly, the inscription at Tyre (v) was found on the wall of a small room which housed the entrance to a water canal, while that at Aphrodisias (vii) was discovered 'above a large collecting pool'.⁴⁶ Finally, it involved theatrical displays of a lewd nature, by which dancing or miming is probably indicated.

44 See Mango-Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, 623 n. 9 with I. Rochow, 'Beiträge der Chronik des Theophanes zum mittellgriechischen Wortschatz', *Klio* 69 (1987), 570-1. But Mentzu-Meimare, 'Der Maioumas', 64-7, argues that even at this late stage some connection with bathing ceremonies may well have been preserved.

45 See Jacoby in *RE* XIV (1928), 612-14, on the etymology of the term (rejecting John the Lydian and Malalas); Roueché, *Aphrodisias*, 72, is prepared to take John's evidence more seriously. The Greek of John's passage (x) actually contains the phrase 'waters of the sea' (ἐν τοῖς θαλαττίοις ὕδασι). Mentzu-Meimare, 'Der Maioumas', 60, is incorrect to state that the Semitic term Maiuma could equally refer to river or source water.

J. Gothofredus, *Codex Theodosianus cum perpetuis commentariis*, vol. 5 (Lyons, 1665), 359 accepts that there was a festival at Ostia (cf. Preisendanz in *RE* XIV [1928], 611-12), but denies any connection with the Maiuma celebrated in the east. His contention (accepted, however, by Robert, 'Epigraphica', 12 n. 2) that the festival was not celebrated in May is based on a mistaken interpretation of the passage from Julian, (iii) above: the procession to Daphne in Loos (August) mentioned at 361D is unconnected with the Maiuma.

Jewish sources also contain references to the Maiuma (condemning the licentiousness of the festival): see A. Büchler, 'Une localité énigmatique', 25-8 and J. Perles, *Zur rabbinischen Sprach- und Sagenkunde* (Breslau, 1873), 1-4.

46 C. C. McCown, 'The festival theatre at the Birketein' in Kraeling, *Gerasa*, 159-60; *ibid.* 470 for the location of the inscription. See also F. Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos 1922-1923* (Paris, 1926), 189 on this evidence, connecting it with the theatre at Daphne (on which see below). On the inscription at Tyre (v) see Rey-Coquais, *Inscriptions ... de Tyr*, 87; on that at Aphrodisias, Roueché, *Aphrodisias*, 72-3. Despite McCown, *art. cit.*, 165 and 'The Maiumas Inscription', 688, it is possible that the *scaena* of the theatre was sufficiently low to allow spectators a view of the pool, as A. Segal, *Theatres in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia* (Leiden, 1995), 71 argues; see R. MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven, 1981), 19. Mentzu-Meimare, 'Der Maioumas', 69-71, prefers to explain the proximity of Maiuma inscriptions to water by arguing that they refer to bath-buildings, rather than the festival.

These clues suffice to allow us to bring further sources to bear. For other writers make allusions to a festival markedly similar to the Maiuma, but without referring to it by name. The following instances may be noted.⁴⁷

(xv) Libanius, *Or.* 10.14

And so those who knew the games of earlier times took pity on these, and gave them the name of that feast in which nothing is not ventured.⁴⁸

(xvi) Libanius, *Or.* 41.16 (ed. R. Foerster [Leipzig, 1906] III.302)

There the theatre led to many deeds contrary to the laws, and some were seized from there and held fast by a few words spoken by a few men. For the love of shouting compels (one) to be a servant in every respect and among other things to run to Daphne and to hold the festival which brings ten thousand evils to the city. For even young men (endowed) with prudence who go up there return having cast it aside. Having witnessed these things, it seems to me, a good emperor suppressed the practice, but it grew up again; and it takes place with some giving the orders, and you leading the way in helping in this felicitous (enterprise). For five days or more the procession (going up) there is seen to continue, with a lack of shame, some of which reflects on the participants, and some on you. And yet if someone were to ask you now as you come back from that varied drunkenness, to what are you devoting so much time?⁴⁹

(xvii) John Chrysostom, *In Matthaeum Homil. VII* (PG 57.79-80)

For tell me, if anyone offered to introduce you into a palace, and show you the king sitting (there), would you indeed choose to see the theatre instead of these things? (...) And you leave this and run to the theatre to see women swimming, and nature put to open dishonour, leaving Christ sitting by the well? (...) But

47 Theodoret, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. G. C. Hansen (Berlin, 1971), III.14 (p. 191), sometimes cited in connection with the Maiuma (e.g. by Preisendanz, *RE* XIV [1928], 611 and G. Traversari, *Gli spettacoli in acqua nel teatro tardo antico* [Rome, 1960], 48) is irrelevant: Julian was not present at Antioch in May of either 362 or 363. As Robert, 'Epigraphica', 10 n. 4, notes, 'On cite souvent encore comme relatifs au Maioumas des textes qui ne s'y rapportent pas.'

48 Cf. the comments of J. Martin, *Libanios. Discours. Tome II* (Paris, 1988), 320 (giving references to other allusions in Libanius to the Maiuma, e.g. *Or.* 50.11 [= *Imp. Caesaris Flavii Claudii Iuliani Epistulae Leges Poemata Fragmenta Varia*, edd. J. Bidez and F. Cumont (Paris-Oxford, 1922), no. 102] and 45.23).

49 See S. N. C. Lieu, ed., *The Emperor Julian. Panegyric and Polemic*² (Liverpool, 1989), 47-8, for the identification of Libanius' festival with the Maiuma, with J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch. City and Administration in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1970), 230-1 and now Mentzumeimare, 'Der Maioumas', 63.

you, leaving the fountain of blood, the awful cup, go your way to the fountain of the devil, to see a harlot swim, and to endure shipwreck of the soul. For that water is a sea of lasciviousness, not drowning bodies, but working shipwreck of souls. And while she swims naked, you, as you behold, are plunged into the depths of lasciviousness ...

For in the first place, through a whole night the devil takes over their souls with the expectation of it; then having shown them the expected object, he has at once bound⁵⁰ them and made them captives ...

If now you are ashamed, and blush at the comparison, rise up to your nobility and flee the sea of hell and the river of fire, (I mean) the pool in the theatre ... And you, when there is a question of precedence, claim to have priority over the whole world, since our city first crowned itself with the name of Christian; but in the competition of chastity, are you not ashamed to be behind the ruder cities?⁵¹

(xviii) Severus of Antioch, *Homily* 95, ed. and tr. M. Brière, *PO* 25 (1935), 93-4 [537-8]

But those who have gone up to Daphne in pagan fashion have had no regard for the truth, which is so terrible (and) on account of which everything moves and trembles. But in the dark moments of the night they even lit lamps (λαμπάδες) of [wax] in the stadium (στάδιον) and added incense, stealthily bringing about their own destruction; and it was certain strangers (ξένοι), take good note, who informed me of this while trembling and crying. Do you not see the nets of the Calumnator and his hidden traps, which on the one hand have as a pretext the joy and pleasure at first sight (πρόσχημα) and lead on the other hand to idolatry (δαισιδαμμονία) and the celebration of festivals in some ways criminal and harmful? And are you not ashamed, when we call ourselves Christians, we who were born on high for the purification which (comes) from the water and the Spirit and call ourselves children of God, to run equally to the solemnities of Satan, which we have renounced by divine baptism? For whenever you change your clothing and afterwards go up to the spectacle, dressed in a tiny linen tunic (χιτών), which hides the arms but not the hands, waving about a wooden stick

50 Note that both Libanius (xvi) and John used the verb δέω in connection with the effect of the festival on the audience.

51 Tr. G. Prevost in *NPNF* 1.10 (Oxford, 1844), 47-8 with emendations; see also Pasquato, *Gli spettacoli*, 131 n. 237. The city referred to at the end is Antioch. John was well acquainted with such events from his youth, on which see B.H. Vandenberghe, 'Saint Jean Chrysostome et les spectacles', *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 7 (1955), 35 and J.N.D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth. The Story of John Chrysostom* (London, 1995), 15. See also Vogt, 'Le théâtre', 275 on the evidence of this homily and Traversari, *Gli spettacoli*, 46-7.

and with all your skin shaved with a razor, so to speak⁵² – look, is it not quite clear that you have made a procession and celebrated Olympian Zeus?

That (xv) and (xvi) relate to the Maiuma is generally accepted. Although Malalas puts the duration of the festival at thirty days, it is not unlikely that this had been reduced to five days by the fourth century: no doubt the revenues provided by Commodus, if still available, had dwindled.⁵³ But the homily of John Chrysostom is harder to place. It clearly refers to an aquatic event in a theatre, which involved naked men and women. The homily itself dates from John's time in Antioch,⁵⁴ before he became patriarch of Constantinople: it therefore must refer to a theatre at or near Antioch, possibly at Daphne.⁵⁵ Severus' homily, dating to his tenure of the patriarchy of Antioch (512–18), confirms this impression: Daphne is explicitly mentioned, as is a procession and a nocturnal spectacle.⁵⁶

A firm linkage between the festival mentioned by the two patriarchs and the Maiuma is impossible. But two further points should be brought to bear, which, it is hoped, will make the connection seem at least plausible. First, the evidence of archaeology. It appears that the first theatre in the Roman empire (for which evidence is available) to convert its semicircular orchestra into a large reservoir for water was that at Daphne; the conversion work is dated to the late first century A.D. It was an example soon followed by theatres elsewhere.⁵⁷ Second, the

52 The dislike of the Antiochenes for bodily hair is noted by the Emperor Julian, *Misopogon* 339A.

53 Cf. Preisendanz, *RE* XIV (1928), 611; Lieu, *The Emperor Julian*, 47–8; Mentzu-Meimare, 'Der Maioumas', 64, seems not to allow for such variation. Robert, 'Epigraphica', 12 is sceptical of Malalas' evidence.

54 The homily was delivered in 390: see Pasquato, *Gli spettacoli*, 131.

55 The link was first made by Gothofredus in *Codex Theodosianus cum perpetuis commentariis*, vol. 5 (Lyons, 1665), 358; it is accepted by (e.g.) A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1964), 1399 n. 88. Roueché, *Aphrodisias*, 73, is more cautious, while Pasquato, *Gli spettacoli*, 132, following Traversari, *Gli spettacoli*, 48–9, denies any connection; Traversari relies heavily on Malalas for his rejection, however, and the fact that Chrysostom fails to name the festival concerned as the Maiuma is not decisive.

56 Severus' mention of a *stadion* may refer rather to the Olympic stadium in Daphne, rebuilt by Diocletian, on which see G. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria* (Princeton, 1961), 325–6 and 649–50. Cf. *Homily* 91 in *PO* 25 (1935), 25–6 [469–70], referring to the celebration of the Olympic Games at Daphne (as noted by R. Lim, 'Consensus and Dissensus on Public spectacles in early Byzantium', *Byzantinische Forschungen* 24 [1997] 169–70). While it is possible that *Homily* 95 might also refer to the Olympic Games, the mention of nocturnal events implies otherwise.

57 Traversari, *Gli spettacoli*, 23 (cf. 27–53 on such theatres elsewhere). See also J. Lassus, 'Le mosaïque de Yakto' in *Antioch-on-the-Orontes* I, ed. G. W. Elderkin (Princeton, 1934), 129–30 and fig. 10 (the depiction of a water-filled theatre in the mosaic) and D. N. Wilber, 'The theatre at Daphne' in *Antioch-on-the-Orontes* II, ed. R. Stillwell (Princeton, 1938), 59–61. The theatre on the mosaic has been identified with the one constructed by Hadrian (reported in Mal. 278), but Downey, *History of Antioch*, 221, considers that it is a reservoir that is depicted. On theatres elsewhere capable of holding aquatic displays, see Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, 1021, Traversari, *op. cit.*, 27–53 and Segal, *Theatres*, 44 and n. 26, 70; also E. Frézouls, 'Recherches historiques et archéologiques sur la ville de Cyrrhus', *Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes* 4–5

last decade of the fourth century was clearly a critical period for the celebration of the Maiuma: suddenly two pieces of (contradictory) legislation are found, the second of which specifically outlaws the Maiuma, while tolerating theatrical spectacles generally. Chrysostom's sermon was delivered in 390, before the two pieces of legislation; eight years later, in February 398 he was enthroned as patriarch of Constantinople, where his fiery sermons earned him a substantial following. It could be suggested therefore that it was not merely coincidence that an outright ban on the Maiuma followed swiftly on his arrival in the capital.⁵⁸

(d) Conclusion

The popularity of the mime and pantomime in ancient Rome, and later in Constantinople, has never been in doubt.⁵⁹ A particular type of mime was developed, at least from the first century A.D., involving a body of water within which swam the performers: Martial records some swimmers, apparently dressed as Nereids, imitating a boat in one of his epigrams *De Spectaculis*.⁶⁰ Archaeology reveals that certain theatres were converted to allow such aquatic displays to be accommodated on stage, as at Daphne. That the Brytae in Constantinople and the festival censured by John Chrysostom involved such spectacles is clear; but for the Maiuma and the festival at Edessa our sources are not explicit. In light of the scantiness of the evidence available, can the three festivals be identified?

It is our contention that they can, although one point must be borne in mind. The Brytae is not attested anywhere save at Constantinople, while the Maiuma is attested principally at Antioch, but also at Gerasa, Nicaea, Aphrodisias and Tyre.⁶¹ The name of the festivities at Edessa is not even known. Hence our argument is not so much one of strict identification as of equivalence, i.e. that an

(1954-5), 124 (with plate IV.3-4) for the discovery of water channels in the theatre at Cyrrhus. K. E. Ros, 'The Roman Theater at Carthage', *AJA* 100 (1996), 471 notes the presence of hydraulic fittings and cisterns in the theatre at Carthage and cites Augustine, *Enarr. in Ps. 80*, 23 (PL 37.1046) – *cras illi habent, ut audivimus, mare in theatro* – for the holding of aquatic displays there in late antiquity.

58 On Chrysostom's influence see K. G. Holm, *Theodosian Empresses* (Berkeley, 1982), 59, 69-70 (on his influence with the imperial family); J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops* (Oxford, 1990), 185-6, sees John's influence in another piece of legislation directed against spectacles (*C. Th.* II.8.23).

59 See e.g. Vogt, 'Le théâtre', 263-75, Cameron, *Porphyrius the Charioteer* (Oxford, 1973), 230-1, 248; also Roueché, *Performers and Partisans*, 25-7.

60 *De Spectaculis*, ed. and tr. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge, Mass., 1993) I, no. 30 (26); see Traversari, *Gli spettacoli*, 59 on this.

61 John the Lydian's reference (x) to the Maiuma at Rome is of doubtful worth (see n. 45 above) while Theophanes' (xii) clearly concerns a quite different sort of event.

aquatic pantomime display held in May in Antioch (and elsewhere) was known as the Maiuma, perhaps also by the same name in Edessa, and as the Brytae in Constantinople. Malalas, it is true, mentions both the Brytae and Maiuma by name (in different places) without identifying them; he also states that the Maiuma occurred every three years and lasted thirty days. Not all the evidence is entirely consistent, and we consider it likely that the frequency and length of the festival varied over time and from place to place. Pseudo-Joshua mentions variously one, three and seven days, while Libanius offers a figure of five or more.⁶² For each of the three festivals, a certain amount of evidence is available; it is the interlocking character of this evidence that gives weight to the argument for equivalence. It may be useful to summarise this evidence schematically in tabular form, before setting forth the arguments in more detail:

	Brytae	Edessa feast	Maiuma
Month	–	May	May
Location	Theatre	Theatre	Theatre
Dancers	Yes	Yes	Yes?
Water	Yes	Yes?	Yes
Nocturnal lights	–	Yes	Yes
Viewed as licentious	–	Yes	Yes
Date of ban	501/2	502	(Repeatedly)

Five arguments may be marshalled in favour of the correspondence of the three festivals.

(i) During the reign of Anastasius, both the Brytae and the Edessa festival were celebrated for the last time in 501.⁶³

62 The Brytae could just have been a local designation of the Maiuma. Hence John might have inferred its occurrence in Rome/Ostia from its celebration in Constantinople. Pseudo-Joshua's evidence, above (b); Libanius (xvi) for his figure. There is no reason why Malalas should have been aware of an equivalence between the Maiuma and the Brytae, especially if he was using a local source (as was suggested by Robert: see n. 27 above); see also E. Jeffreys, B. Croke and R. Scott, eds., *Studies in Malalas* (Sydney, 1990), 59.

63 Severus' homily, dating from 512/18, may indicate either that the Maiuma continued to be celebrated in spite of the emperor's pronouncement (as had happened under Theodosius II) or that the patriarch was referring to a festival which had been held until only very recently; the former alternative is the more probable.

(ii) Both the Maiuma and the festival at Edessa took place in May. Pseudo-Joshua expressly places the celebrations in the month of Iyar, i.e. May, while both John the Lydian and Malalas state that the Maiuma took place in the same month. According to the *Acts of Sharbel*, the traditional local (Mesopotamian) pagan spring festival in Edessa, in honour of Nebo and Bel, occurred in April (Nisan). The coincidence of the Maiuma and the Edessan festival described by Pseudo-Joshua is therefore highly likely to be significant.⁶⁴

(iii) The Maiuma and the Edessa festival were clearly licentious. The criticisms of both Pseudo-Joshua and Jacob of Serug have been noted concerning the Edessene festival, while the *Codex Theodosianus* explicitly testifies to the lewd behaviour associated with the Maiuma; the testimony of the two patriarchs (xvii-xviii) may be taken as further corroboration.⁶⁵

(iv) The festivities of all three had very similar ingredients. Among these were candles, water and dancing; and at least some of the events took place by night. Malalas (i) clearly mentions nocturnal displays and candles, as do Pseudo-Joshua ([1] and [2]) and Severus of Antioch (xviii)⁶⁶ while dancing is present in Pseudo-Joshua (1) and John of Antioch (II). Water is mentioned in Marcellinus *comes*, Joshua (the candles are placed along the river), John the Lydian (ix-x) and John Chrysostom (xvii). All three events took place, for some of the festivities at least, in the theatre. Individually, the coincidence of each of these elements is not a strong argument for identifying the festivals; but their cumulative weight is more significant.⁶⁷

(v) The tenth-century author of the *Suda* thought fit to associate John the Lydian's reference to the Maiuma (x) with a reference to the abolition of the Brytae by Anastasius ([V] above). The reasoning of the anonymous author is unknown, of course, and may have been based on insecure evidence; it does not inspire confidence that he also appends a notice concerning a festival involving the killing of dogs in remembrance of the geese which saved the Capitol from the Gauls.

64 Pseudo-Joshua: see (b) above. Mal. (i) and Joh. Lyd. (x) above, with n. 45. W. Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents* (London, 1864, repr. Amsterdam, 1967), 41: '... it was the great festival on the eighth of Nisan ...' The *akitu* festival was celebrated in Babylon from the second to the twelfth of Nisan. The significance of Iyar against Nisan is noted by A. Luther, *Die syrische Chronik des Josua Stylites* (Berlin, 1997), 152 n. 202.

65 See n. 24 above on the Edessene festival of Pseudo-Joshua (esp. (2)) and the evidence of Jacob (who is more concerned with pantomimes generally, however); (iv) above for the *Codex Theodosianus*. The Constantinopolitan Brytae certainly attracted large, rowdy, crowds, which may be regarded as indirect evidence for a ribald display.

66 See n. 23 above for the similarity of the terms used.

67 Traversari, *Gli spettacoli*, 48, argues against associating John Chrysostom's festival with the Maiuma, on the grounds that the events he is criticising do not take place at night; Severus (xviii), however, clearly refers to nocturnal events, and it is not clear in any case that the Maiuma (or Pseudo-Joshua's festival) was celebrated exclusively by night.

Yet his apparent identification of the two festivals must be taken into consideration; and those wishing to dissociate them must explain why the Suda chooses to treat them together.⁶⁸

To conclude. It is the view of the present authors that a lively festival, involving lascivious aquatic displays, remained popular in a number of cities of the eastern empire in late antiquity. The Antiochene Maiuma was banned, perhaps by Julian, then permitted again, and then forbidden once more by Arcadius and Honorius.⁶⁹ In the reign of Theodosius II it was being held again at Antioch, and probably still under Anastasius, while something very similar was being celebrated at Edessa and Constantinople in the late fifth century, to the disgust of censorious Christians and pagans alike.⁷⁰ The original purpose of the festival remains shrouded in mystery, but the usual assumption that it was a fertility festival of Syrian origin remains quite likely.⁷¹ Whether or not it was ever closely connected to Dionysus and Aphrodite, as Malalas' testimony would suggest, is uncertain; so too is its possible relationship to the spring festival at Mabbug (Hierapolis) in honour of the Syrian goddess described by Lucian in the second century.⁷² The Christians who flocked to the festivities in the reign of

68 The reference to the slaying of dogs contains similar information to John Lydus, *de Mensibus* IV.114 (p. 152), but (unlike the reference to the Maiuma) in quite different terms. Drexler, in *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, ed. W. H. Roscher (Leipzig, 1890-7) II, 2287-8, is, however, dismissive of the connection made by the Suda; so too are Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire* I, 437 n. 5 and Luther, *Die syrische Chronik*, 152 n. 203.

69 Lieu, *The Emperor Julian*, 48, for the suggestion that it was Julian who banned the Maiuma (inferring from [xvi] above with Libanius, *Or.* 50.16). Rey-Coquais, *Inscriptions grecques ... de Tyr*, 87, followed by Mentzu-Meimare, 'Der Maioumas', 64, believes that it was Constantine who first banned the Maiuma, which was then reallocated by Julian, forbidden by Theodosius I, permitted once again by Arcadius and Honorius in 396, then finally disallowed three years later; Lieu's interpretation seems preferable. By the 440s (vi) the festival was clearly legal again, and the fact that the *Codex Justinianus* (XI.46.1) only repeats the milder law of Arcadius and Honorius implies that their edict of 399 did not long remain enforced.

70 Zosimus, *Nouvelle Histoire*, ed. and tr. F. Paschoud, vol. 1 (Paris, 1977) I.6.1 with Cameron, 'The date', 108-9, on these criticisms. The Olympic games also continued to be celebrated in Antioch until 520, as is clear from Mal. 417, cf. Downey, *History of Antioch*, 518. On their abolition see now Lim, 'Public Spectacles', 166-75.

71 So F. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c. 370-529*, I (Leiden, 1993), 73. Note in this connection the opening words of Jos. Styl. §27, above (1). Robert, 'Epigraphica', 10 n. 5, long ago rejected the connection sometimes made between the name Maiuma and the port of Gaza of the same name; see also Mentzu-Meimare, 'Der Maioumas', 61-2, on the port.

72 So G. Goossens, *Hierapolis de Syrie* (Louvain, 1943), 70-1. This festival was held at the beginning of spring (*De Dea Syria*, ed. M. D. Macleod [Oxford, 1980], 49), was accompanied by music and song (*ibid.* 50), as well as fire and lamps (λαμπάδα καλέουσι, *ibid.* 49), and had an overtly sexual element (*ibid.* 51). Lucian also reports that water played an important part in the festivals of Hierapolis (*ibid.* 45-8). Pseudo-Joshua notes that the bishop of Hierapolis/Mabbug was in Edessa during the festival there in May 498 (above (2), Jos. Styl. §30). This observation was probably occasioned by the reputation of Xenaia (Philoxenus), but perhaps it is not too fanciful

Anastasius were probably correctly represented by Jacob of Serug when he made them say in response to 'puritan' critics of the spectacles of the theatre: 'It is a game (i.e. a spectacle), not paganism. ... The dancing of that place (sc. the theatre) gladdens me, and, while I confess God, I also take pleasure in the play, while I do not thereby bring truth to nought. I am a baptised (Christian) even as thou, and I confess one Lord ...'⁷³

As a result of the heavy bloodshed that accompanied the Brytae in the capital in 501, Anastasius abolished the festival. Or, more exactly, he expelled the dancers of the factions from the cities, effectively removing the main attraction from the festival (and from any other such event). This was not the end of the story, however: shortly after his accession, Justin I responded positively to the clamouring of the factions for the return of their dancers. For some years therefore, presumably both in Constantinople and elsewhere, the festival will have returned, to be outlawed once again by Justin in 525.⁷⁴ Since, as has been noted, the *Codex Justinianus* repeats the law of Arcadius and Honorius permitting the celebration of the Maiuma, and the Gerasa inscription (xi) attests its celebration in 535, it appears that it enjoyed a revival for some years under Justinian.⁷⁵ Yet late in Justinian's reign the probable venue of the Brytae, the Great theatre, became a place of punishment, where pagan books and statues were burnt – perhaps a significant repudiation of the previous functions of the building.⁷⁶

to suggest that he might have intended thereby to point in a veiled way to Hierapolis, the ancient cult centre of the Syrian goddess, as the source of this 'wicked pagan festival' at Edessa.

73 Homily 5, tr. Moss, 'Jacob of Serugh's homilies', 108-9, cf. Severus, Homily 95, *PO* 25 (1935), (xviii) above. While any residual unconverted pagans doubtless participated in the festivities (on whom see Trombley, *Hellenic Religion*, II, 55), the criticisms of Jacob, Pseudo-Joshua and Severus are clearly directed towards Christians: see Cramer, 'Irrtum und Lüge', 105-6 and Roueché, *Aphrodisias*, 72.

74 Vasiliev, *Justin I*, 110-12, for the return of the dancers (in 520) from Mal. *De insidiis* frg. 43 (tr. in Jeffreys-Scott, 232). Cameron, *Porphyrius*, 232 on the expulsion of the dancers again in 525 (Mal. 417.1); see also G. Greatrex, 'The Nika riot: a reappraisal', *JHS* 117 (1997), 66-7 and Roueché, *Performers and Partisans*, 29-30.

75 C.J. XI.46.1, (iv) above. The first edition of the *Codex* was published in 529, the second (the text that has come down to us) in 534: see Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, 477. As Lim, 'Public spectacles', 173-4, notes, Justinian was prepared to break with Anastasius' restrictions in the pursuit of popularity; see also *ibid.* 163.

76 Malalas 491 and see Janin, *Constantinople byzantine*, 192-3 (for the identification of the *kyne-gion* there referred to by Mal. with the Great theatre, but see above n. 9). It continued to be used as a place of execution. See A. Cameron, 'Elites and Icons in Byzantium', *Past and Present* 84 (1979), repr. in *Continuity and Change in Sixth-century Byzantium* (London, 1981), XVIII, esp. 7-9, on the changes in attitude taking place during the later years of Justinian's reign.