



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

- This work is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, which are retained by the thesis author, unless otherwise stated.
- A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.
- This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author.
- The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.
- When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

Place Experience of the Sacred: Liminality, Pilgrimage and the
Topography of Mount Athos – Volume I

Christos Kakalis

PhD
The University of Edinburgh
2013

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis has been composed by me and is my own original work.

Contents

Volume I

Abstract.....	4
Acknowledgements.....	6
Introduction.....	8

Part 1: Theoretical Framework

Chapter One: Sacred Topography. Place, Body, Boundaries and Liminality	22
--	----

Part 2: Movements

Chapter Two: Liminality and the Movement of the Athonian <i>Hesychast</i> . <i>Xeniteia</i> , Communal Ritual and Silence.....	51
Chapter Three: The Journey of the Strangers.....	78

Part 3: Liminality and the Natural Environment of Mount Athos

Chapter Four: The General Periphery of Mount Athos. Boundary VS Border.....	94
Chapter Five: The Mountain, the Cave and the Hermitage.....	121
Chapter Six: The Footpaths. Being <i>Mapped</i> and Remaining <i>Unmapped</i>	148

Part 4: Liminality and the Athonian Coenobitic Monastery

Chapter Seven: Temporal Limits of Coenobitic Monastic Life.....	174
Chapter Eight: The Organisation of the Monastery and the Cell.....	186

Volume II

Chapter Nine: The Main Church. “Voiceless” Presences and Communal Rituals.....	224
Chapter Ten: The Refectory.....	283
Chapter Eleven: The Cemetery and the Grave.....	299
Conclusions.....	315
Bibliography.....	321
List of Figures.....	353
Appendix I: A Short Description of Mount Athos.....	360
Appendix II: Ritualisation and Performativity.....	375

Abstract

This thesis explores the embodied topography of Mount Athos, emphasizing the conditions of liminality – the nature of different kinds of boundaries and intermediate zones within it. Mount Athos is a valuable case study of sacred topography, as it is one of the largest monastic communities and an important pilgrimage destination. Its phenomenological examination in this study highlights the importance of embodiment in the experience of religious places advocating also for a deeper understanding of the boundaries in it. The thesis seeks to convey a more primary insight into the phenomena found there, examining also how ritual and pre-reflective embodied movements explore the topography in a meaningful way. Combining elements of different disciplines (philosophy, theology, anthropology, and architectural history and theory) with primary sources from archives and fieldwork, the thesis constitutes an original contribution to both Athonian studies and sacred topography scholarship. By focusing on the spatial, temporal and aural boundaries and intermediate zones as perceptual phenomena of an embodied topography, it suggests an alternative to the usual art-historical, objectifying examination of the case study.

Liminality refers to the intermediate zones between two or more components of a sacred place. It allows the reciprocal communication between them, carrying the character of both departure and return. In using liminality as a focus of investigation, the thesis provides a new understanding of the way religious places are interconnected through cyclical rituals, the strangers' travel and silent meditation. Following the archetype of the journey, these movements are also studied according to their particular power to "map" places in a more primary way than the modern cartographic method. Starting from the periphery of Athos, the study presents a variety of in-between zones, the passage through which contributes to the sensual realization of a multi-layered meaningful topography. Annual pilgrimages to the peak of the mountain, silent meditation in isolated caves, wandering asceticism and walking along the footpaths provide different ways to *narrate* the natural landscape of the peninsula. Moreover, ritual choreographies being inscribed in the courtyard and church of a coenobitic monastery, meals and death services ritually *perform* the place. Through their investigation, this study illuminates important aspects of the topography, such as its multi-sensual aural environment in which silence plays a key role. The analysis concludes that the different liminal zones of Mount

Athos are always undergoing a condition of penetration, alteration, and even violation, allowing the integrity of the topography to be enacted.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to the Onassis Scholarship Public Foundation that supported me financially during the four years of my doctoral studies. The Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture provided a dynamic context for the development of my research questions. I am truly grateful to my principal supervisor Dr. Dagmar Motycka Weston for her enlightening and thought-provoking guidance. Her vast knowledge on the phenomenological understanding of place and the way this influences architectural history and theory were very valuable. I should also thank my second supervisor Prof. Richard Coyne for his feedback, constructive advice and encouragement. In parallel, I would also like to thank the University of Edinburgh for rewarding my study with the David Willis Prize (2010) and Richard Brown award (2011).

Being an interdisciplinary project this thesis needed the advice of academics from different areas such as philosophy, theology and anthropology. Hence, I would like to thank Dr. Dimitri Tsintjilonis (Department of Social Anthropology, University of Edinburgh), Prof. Jeff Malpas (Department of Philosophy, University of Tasmania), Prof. Andrew Louth (Department of Divinity, University of Durham), Dr. Alain George (Department of History of Art, University of Edinburgh) and Dr. Vassilis Ganiatsas (Department of Architecture, National Technical University of Athens). The creative conversations with them helped me to understand important aspects of my research, something that enhanced the final result.

Furthermore, I am also grateful to the brotherhoods of Gregoriou and Simonopetra monasteries that allowed me to conduct my fieldwork there. Special thanks go to their abbots, Georgios and Elisaïos respectively. I also want to thank the monks of Gregoriou: Antonios, Luke and Kallistos and the monks of Simonopetra: Myron and Kosmas. They all creatively supported my work through long conversations and offering of valuable archival material.

During the first seven months of my doctoral studies my father, Petros N. Kakalis, was fighting against leukaemia at the Sismanogleion General Hospital (Athens, Greece). Therefore, I would like to express my gratitude to the doctors and nurses of the Haematological Clinique of Dr. G. Kokkini (Sismanogleion General Hospital, Athens – Greece). In addition, I would also like to

thank Mr. & Mrs. Massalis, Mr. & Mrs. Sioufa and Mr. & Mrs. Tsevrenis who, helped my family to take care of my father while I was trying to deal with a new stage of my life. Furthermore, I am really grateful to all the people that gave their blood and platelets to support my father's unstable health from May 2009 to May 2010. They all contributed to my feeling that I still had a secure nest back home while I was starting my studies in Edinburgh.

I would also like to express my deep gratitude to my parents Petros and Elisabeth for their support and love. They have been consistently cultivating in me a love for knowledge, creativity and critical thought. After the death of my father, my mother covered his absence by being both a mother and a father, constantly encouraging my efforts and sharing my everyday concerns and problems. The thoughtful presence of my siblings Nikolaos and Sophia and of my niece Elisabeth enhanced this journey. The presence of my good friends Ms Elena Papadaki, Dr. Lambrini Psiouri, Dr. Anne Galastro, Ms Katerina Naiske, Mr. Andrew Paterson, Dr. Vasiliki Fotaki and Mr. Oscar Mesalles Naranjo as well as the everyday interaction with my colleagues in Minto House greatly supported my efforts.

Introduction

A space is something that has been made room for, something that has been freed, namely, within a boundary, Greek peras. A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its essential unfolding.

Martin Heidegger¹

Life on Athos is always an interaction with different kinds of boundaries, spatial, temporal, written and unwritten, even bodily ones. The aim is the harmonic orchestration of the different components of the events repeatedly taking place every day.

(Athonian Monk, Fieldwork – August 2012)

This study examines the sacred topography of Mount Athos, a peninsula in north-eastern Greece and a world heritage UNESCO monument since 1988. It is a semi-independent realm that belongs to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and in which a male monastic community is organised in a network of different structures ruled by twenty coenobitic monasteries. Entrance regulations enhance the clarity of the boundary between the inside and the outside, allowing only a specific number of male visitors to enter and interact with the natural landscape, the architecture and the ascetic life. The Athonian topography, thus, acquires a character of a distant, sacred/other place in which ascetics seek to practise *hesychasm*, an austere way of life based on the dynamic combination of silent prayer and communal rituals.

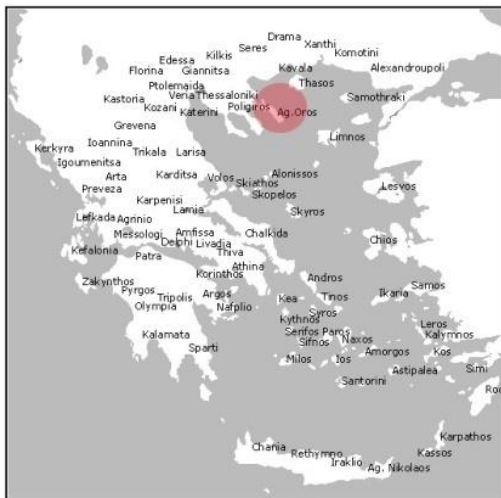


Figure 1 (Left): The map of Greece with the Athonian peninsula highlighted in red.

Figure 2 (Right): The Athonian Peninsula.

¹ Martin, Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking", in Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. by David Farrell Krell, (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 356.

My interest in Mount Athos begun with numerous pilgrimages there, over many years. During these, I was always struck by the difference between modern, everyday life and the Athonian one: a difference in the structure of space and time that either reminds the individual of older forms of rural life or communicates an unfamiliar character, connected for the monks to the service of the sacred. They are constantly doing the same things in the same places, access to which is not always allowed to the outsiders. Moreover, “otherworldly” liturgical sounds are combined with long periods of silence, creating an atmosphere worthy of examination. My interest in sacred topography was further enhanced by the conduct of my MSc thesis that investigated the evolution of the interaction between the Egyptian desert, the monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai and the travellers who went there during the last century. This research gave me the opportunity to realise how a religious place today becomes a *field of contesting discourses*. The intense touristic character of Saint Catherine’s monastery, for example, is combined with the *hesychast* tradition, imposing the museumisation of some of its parts and creating areas of “front-stage” and “back-stage” character.

Mount Athos is a characteristic example of a sacred topography with strong connections to Byzantine and *hesychast* traditions that is also visited by a number of outsiders with various motivations. The unique conditions of this environment raise a number of questions that this thesis seeks to answer. What is the role of embodiment in the experience of sacred places? What is the role of spatial, temporal and aural boundaries and intermediate zones in the peninsula? How are the constant repetition of the same ritual actions, silent prayer, and the journey of the outsider reflected in the organisation and embodied performance of the Athonian landscape?

Dealing with these questions, my research seeks to develop a new interpretation of the embodied pilgrimage topography of the Athonian landscape, contributing to the hermeneutical discussion of it in other disciplines, such as anthropology, geography and theology. Taking into consideration the results of these academic dialogues, it illuminates new aspects of Athonian religious architecture and natural context. It suggests an alternative to the conventional historical examination of the case study that mostly relates to the collection and objective presentation of clear facts. Examining the role of embodiment in the phenomena there, it highlights the importance of human movements as meaningful ways to explore the topography.

Focus is placed on the different kinds of boundaries or liminal zones (spatial, temporal and aural), whose inscription and penetration dynamically characterises Mount Athos. In particular, reading Athonian topography through its boundaries and highlighting also the role of an aural environment as an important liminal zone aims at the investigation of *liminality* in a religious site, whose character is based on the reciprocal relationship of polarities such as sacred/profane, visible/invisible, initiated/uninitiated, and spoken/ineffable.

Built and *unbuilt* spatial boundaries (walls, specific intermediate spaces, the coastline, footpaths, caves and so forth) demarcate the field of personal and collective ascetic practice, opening also to the interpretation of the stranger. Moreover, the use by Athonian monastics of the Julian calendar is combined with a festive one, enhancing a sense there of an “other space”. The programmed life in this place is based on monastic rules and the hierarchical organisation of monkhood. Furthermore, the use of a number of musical instruments (wooden or metal ones) to signal or follow daily rituals (church services, meals) contributes to the uniqueness of the aural experience.

Previous Work on Athonian Studies and the Current Thesis

Research on historical/archaeological documentation of specific Athonian monuments and extensive mapping of the existing condition of some of the twenty monasteries has been conducted and published since the early 20th century. A number of publications deal with the preservation of the monuments and the protection of the Athonian natural environment, especially after the peninsula’s nomination as a UNESCO heritage monument.² This historical

²Hence a number of different types of books of documentary character are used in this thesis to support its arguments. These can be divided in:

- a. Biographies of the founders of the monasteries such as:
Saint Simon the Athonite (Athens: Akritas Publications, 1987).
The Holy Monastery of the Annunciation, Saint Athanasios the Athonite (Ormilia, Macedonia: The Holy Monastery of the Annunciation, 2003).
- b. Historical Books, such as:
Gerasimos, Smurnakis, *The Holy Mountain*, (Mount Athos: Panselinos, 2005), (First Published in Greek: 1903).
Dionysia Papachrysanthou, *The Athonian Monasticism: Beginning and Organisation*, (Athens: Educational Institution of the National Bank of Greece, 1992).
- c. Books on architectural and historical documentation of specific monasteries such as:
Nikolaos Charkiolakis, *Tradition and Development in the Architecture of the Holy Monastery of Stauronikita*, (Mount Athos: Holy Monastery of Stauronikita, 1999).
The Holy Monastery of Vatopedi (Mount Athos: The Holy Monastery of Vatopedi, 1996).

documentation and layering of the monasteries' palimpsest provide this research with valuable material.³

A number of recent publications examine Mount Athos more critically than these traditional historical studies, introducing new ways of understanding. Human geography is one of the disciplines in which Athonian topography has been investigated. The geographers Giorgos Sidiropoulos and Veronica della Dora examined the topography of Mount Athos through a combination of historical, social and cartographical data, arguing about the importance of an interdisciplinary investigation.⁴ In addition, a number of anthropologists and comparative theologians have dealt with life on Mount Athos, trying to interpret the way humans interact with the unique context of the peninsula. The comparative theologian Renè Gothoni describes the results of his fieldwork on Athos during 1980s through his writings.⁵ In them he interprets

d. Books on Geographical Documentation:

Euaggelos Livieratos (ed) *Όρους Άθω, Γης και Θαλάσσης Περίμετρον. Χαρτών Μεταμορφώσεις/Mount Athos: Between the earth and the sea. Its transformations through maps*, (Thessaloniki: National Map Library, 2002).

³ In this sense, the mapping of all the monasteries by the architect Paulos Mylonas in 1963 is used in the thesis for the illustration of different points. Moreover, material from the historical editions on the architecture of the monasteries of Gregoriou and Simonopetra is also used to support the examination of the thesis' case studies. On this see:

Ioannis, Volanakis, *Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory. History-Art-Architecture*, (Mount Athos: Private Edition of the Monastery of Gregoriou, 2003). (Also privately published in a limited number of copies, access to which was given to me in the monastery)

The Holy Monastery of Saint Gregorios, *The Wall-paintings in the Katholikon*, (Mount Athos: Gregoriou Monastery Editions, 1998).

Stilianos Papadopoulos (ed), *Simonopetra: Mount Athos*, (Athens: Hellenic Industrial Development Bank ETBA SA, 1991).

⁴ In particular Sidiropoulos studied how the multiple layers of social relationships influence the formation and development of the Athonian topography illuminating also the important role that the notion of distance, and the preserved architectural and natural environment play in it. Moreover, Veronica della Dora re-examined different aspects of the Athonian history and life through the investigation of the geographical depictions of the peninsula and the mountain of Athos from Homeric times to World War II. On this see the books:

Giorgos, Sidiropoulos, *Mount Athos. References to its Human Geography*, (Athens: Kastaniotis Editions, 2000).

Veronica Della Dora, *Imagining Mount Athos. Visions of a Holy Place from Homer to World War II*, (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2011).

⁵ In his first book the description of the monks' life and the outsider's journey is followed by their interpretation according to basic theological concepts and Victor and Edith Turner's ideas on pilgrimage. In his second book, he re-defines his argument, presenting a number of travel accounts (from 1420 to 1954) and arguing about the inner dimension of the pilgrim's quest (seen as the soul's journey towards God) which follows his circular journey to the peninsula (departure-stay-return). This approach was further enhanced by Gothoni's later essays in which he interpreted the pilgrimage to Athos through the hermeneutic approach of Hans Georg Gadamer. On this see the following titles:

Rene, Gothoni, *Paradise within Reach: Monasticism and Pilgrimage on Mount Athos*, (Helsinki, Finland: Helsinki University Press, 1993).

Rene, Gothoni, *Tales and Truths: Pilgrimage on Mount Athos Past and Present*, (Helsinki, Finland: Helsinki University Press, 1994).

Rene, Gothoni, "Pilgrimage as dialogue", in Rene Gothoni & Graham Speake (eds), *The Monastic Magnet. Roads to and from Mount Athos*, (Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Brussels, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Vienne: Peter Lang), pp. 97-108.

the general framework of the life of the coenobitic monks and the journey of the pilgrims according to theological ideas, anthropological theories of pilgrimage and philosophical approaches to religious experience. The scheme of examining both the “insiders” and “outsiders” is also used by the historian Graham Speake in his book, where a historical review of the peninsula is followed by the description of the contemporary state of the above polarity.⁶ Moreover, the anthropologists of tourism, Konstantinos Andriotis and Filareti Kotsi, investigated the experience of the visitors to Mount Athos. The former examined the way male outsiders interact with the topography, and the latter the “floating pilgrimage” of women around the peninsula.⁷ Connections to architecture and natural landscape are not examined in a thorough way in the accounts of these writers, in which focus is placed on the motivations of the different groups of people, internal processes, the objective transfer of different procedures and the historical-sociological interpretation of cartographic representations. Nevertheless, they underline a number of different aspects of the spatio-temporal experience of Athos that are investigated in this study, providing the researcher with comparative material, including walking, crossing the general periphery, participation in the everyday life of a monastery, initiation procedures, touristic and museum-like experiences.

Describing how embodiment adds to the meaning of religious *topoi*, the thesis provides a new understanding of Athonian topography as an agglomeration of different place-events. The investigation of their experience through ritual and freer movements freshly enhances the examination of the case study. Moreover, the exploration of *liminality* in this thesis contributes to this interdisciplinary discourse, highlighting the importance of boundaries and intermediate spatio-temporal zones in the synthesis of the different events of Athonian topography. It is based on the way Victor and Edith Turner talked about this concept in the framework of social rituals and pilgrimages. The writers introduced a tri-partite division of the pilgrims’ journey (departure-liminal-return), underlining the importance of a *liminal*, anti-structural phase during

⁶ Graham, Speake, *Mount Athos: Renewal in Paradise*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002).

⁷ Andriotis, Konstantinos, “Sacred Site Experience. A Phenomenological Study”, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 36, 1, (2009), pp.64-84.

Filareti Kotsi, *La communication enchantée. Une anthropologie réflexive du tourisme religieux autour du Mont Athos(Grèce)*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Sciences de l’ Information et de la Communication, Ecole Normale Supérieure Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Lyon, 2003.

Tore Tvarno Lind , *The Past Is Always Present: The Revival of the Byzantine Musical Tradition at Mount Athos*, (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2012): The ethnomusicologist Tore Tvarno Lind argued for a kind of Byzantine musical revival on Mount Athos in which silence is dynamically incorporated.

which the individuals interact with the sacred site.⁸ *Liminality*, thus, is an event *between-and-between* two different planes, playing the role of both an entrance and an exit. In this sense, focus is on the different boundaries of the peninsula as phenomena and not as conceptual lines that clearly divide different spaces. They are considered to be important penetrable intermediate zones of places, the experience of which dynamically contributes to the topography. This thesis also emphasizes the aural environment as a zone between the different components of an eventful place, investigating religious topography also through the different qualities of a shared *atmosphere* that fills the gaps between humans, buildings, natural landscape and movable items.⁹

Another question that this study seeks to answer relates to the role of the experiential spatiality of boundaries and liminal zones in the Eastern Orthodox tradition of Christianity, adding to the relevant publications of artistic and architectural history and theory.¹⁰ A number of scholars

⁸ Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1978. The writers built upon Arnold van Gennep's approach to rites of passage. On this see: Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, (London: Routledge, 1960).

Moreover, parts of the thesis are also interpreted according to Mary Douglas' theory of "pollution" examined in her book: *Purity and Danger. An analysis of pollution and taboo*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).

⁹ This suggests a new way of examining contemporary religious topography, expanding an understanding of the *liminality* of (Christian) sacred architecture of other historical periods. Little is published on the role of *liminality* in sacred art and architecture. The most recent publication is the edited volume: Sharon, E.J. Gertel (ed), *Thresholds of the Sacred. Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens*, (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 2006) in which the notion of the "screen" between the sacred and the profane is examined in Eastern and Western Christian tradition in different periods (Early Christian, Byzantine, Gothic, Renaissance).

Other works on the role of liminality in religious architecture are:

Alexei, Lidov (ed), *Iconostasis: Origins, Evolution, Symbolism*, (Moscow, 2000).

Christopher, Stroik, *Path, Portal, Path. Architecture for the Rites*, (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1999).

Dan, Vasiliu, "On the threshold of bliss: translating sacred space in early Gothic Cathedrals", *Translation Studies: Retrospective and Prospective Views*, 1, (2008).

Tara, Kathleen, Gaskin, *Interpretation and Conservation of Sacred Space: A Ritual Based Approach*, Unpublished MSc Thesis in Architecture, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, July, 2012.

Nancy, Ann, Bandiera, *The Medieval Labyrinth Ritual and Performance: A Grounded Theory Study of Liminality and Spiritual Experience*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2006.

Tony Ulyyat, "Gestures of approach: aspects of liminality and labyrinths", *Literator*, 32:2, (August 2011), pp. 103-134.

Edward, Peters, "Omnia Permixa Sun: Where's the Border?", *The Medieval History Journal*, 4:9, (2001), pp. 109-127.

Moreover, the theologian Thomas A. Tweed has recently introduced a theoretical approach to religious topography, basing his argument on the dynamic combination of crossing boundaries and dwelling places. On this, see: Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling. A Theory of Religion*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2006).

¹⁰ Publications on Eastern Christian liturgical culture mainly focus on the symbolism of different elements of it (chanting, church, iconography). See, for example, the following pieces:

P.A. Michelis, *Aesthetic Examination of Byzantine Art*, (Athens, 1978).

Leonid, Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of the Icon*, (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999).

Linda, Safran (ed), *Heaven on Earth. Art and the Church in Byzantium*, (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 1997).

investigate the way different liturgical elements (chanting, church iconography, incense) were interconnected into meaningful rituals in the built context of the Byzantine church, basing their arguments on Neo-Platonic theories of religious aesthetics. This approach has been recently extended to include in its theoretical framework phenomenological and hermeneutical ideas.¹¹ As traces of these processes are still found in contemporary religious practice, this thesis explores the possibility of a new approach to Eastern Christian monastic space, laying emphasis on the development of *hesychast* practice.

Finally, the examination of the role of the strangers in the topography aims at a further illumination of its *liminal* qualities, as by definition they are related to the acts of entering-into and exiting-from another sphere. While the aim of this thesis is not to examine in an ethnographic, anthropological way how the visitors interact with the Athonian space and the activities in it, it takes their presence into consideration. Building upon a critical approach to the anthropological studies of the role of the stranger in pilgrimage sites, it explores their movement of gradual familiarization that is different from the habitual life of the Athonian ascetics.¹²

Fabio, Barry, "Walking on Water: Cosmic Floors in Antiquity and the Middle Ages", *The Art Bulletin*, 89:4, (Dec. 2007), pp.627-656.

Svetlana Popovic, "Dividing the Indivisible: The Monastery Space – Secular and Sacred", *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta*, 44, (2007), pp. 47-65.

Svetlana Popovic, "The 'Trapeza' in Cenobitic Monasteries: Architectural and Spiritual Contexts", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 52 (1998), pp. 281-303.

¹¹ For example, basing her argument on the Platonic notion of *Chora*, the art historian Nicoletta Isar, introduces the idea of a **liturgical choreography**, fulfilled through the meaningful combination of the rituals and the space of the church. Moreover, the art historian Bissera Pentcheva extended the notion of the Byzantine liturgical choreography to include also the icons, the incense and the chanting. Similarly, in his essay "Space, Time, Liturgy", Prof. Andrew Louth also tries to link the idea of a liturgical space to the notion of *Chora* and the thought of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite and Saint Maximus the Confessor. On these approaches see:

In Adrian Pabst & Christoph Schneider (eds.), *Encounter Between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy: Transfiguring the World Through the Word*. (Surrey: Ashgate, 2008).

Alexei, Lidov, *Hierotopy. Spatial Icons and Image-paradigms in Byzantine Culture*, (Moscow, 2010).

Isar, Nicoletta, "Chora: Tracing the Presence", *Review of European Studies*, 1:1, (June 2009), pp. 39-55.

Isar, Nicoletta, "Chorography – A Space for Choreographic Inscription", *Bulletin of the Transylvania University of Brasov*, 2:51, (2009), pp. 263-268.

Pentcheva, Bissera V., *The Sensual Icon. Space, Ritual and the Senses in Byzantium*, (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008).

See also Alexei, Lidov, "Hierotopy. The creation of sacred space as a form of creativity and subject of cultural history", in Alexei Lidov (ed), *Hierotopy. Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, (Moscow: Progress – Tradition, 2006), pp. 33-58.

¹² The Turnerian theory was first questioned by the anthropologist Alan Morinis who argues about the importance of an inner journey that is connected to an actual sacred place, focusing on the notion of personal experience. Also questioning the universality of Turners' approach, John Eade and Michael Sallnow suggested that pilgrimage is a "field of contesting discourses", a place where different attitudes towards the sacred (permanent residents and visitors)

Methodology

The research of this thesis is based on a combination of primary and secondary sources. Parts of the Athos peninsula were examined through repeated fieldtrips and archival work. The travel process towards the peninsula was also examined through in-situ observation and interviews. Furthermore, as mentioned above, studying and investigating the connections between the phenomenological approaches of place, anthropological theories of pilgrimage and the theological context of Athonian life dynamically supported the formation of my argument through an interdisciplinary approach applied in the contemporary understanding of the sacred topography of Mount Athos.¹³

In particular, I conducted three fieldtrips to Mount Athos during which I worked on recording the architecture and the landscape and their experience by monks and strangers.¹⁴ During these trips it was decided that the research was going to be focused on the part of the peninsula included in the area between Simonopetra and Gregoriou monasteries and also in a more “deserted” part of the realm, the periphery of the actual desert of Mount Athos, *Karoulia*. This gave me the opportunity to examine two representative examples of Athonian coenobitic monasteries and also to observe the intense qualities of the natural landscape and life of the southern part of the peninsula. Moreover, the footpath that connects the two monasteries offered the possibility of an interesting case study, as it includes all the different qualities of Athonian paths (dirt road-cobble stone path, steep rocky path, path through thick vegetation). During my fieldtrips I also used practices of an “ethnographic” survey, interviewing monks and strangers and recording what was happening there through notes, sketches, diagrams and

coexist. This conflict is also connected to *liminality* as its character is not clear and hence can always be characterised either as an entrance or an exit. On this see:

John Eade and Michael Sallnow (eds), *Contesting the Sacred. The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, (London: Routledge, 1991).

Alan, Morinis, *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, (Greenwood Press, 1992).

¹³ Comparisons with other religious traditions (Christian Catholics, Hinduism and Buddhism) are also made, underlining similarities and differences in the performance of architecture and landscape, written in the form of a number of “comparative footnotes”.

¹⁴ The fieldtrips were held during July 2010, August-September 2011 and August 2012. Whereas the first fieldtrip was more about my familiarisation with the landscape and the mapping of the architecture of Gregoriou monastery, the second and third ones were about the detailed investigation of parts of Athonian topography according to *hesychast* life and the journey of the outsider.

I conducted one more fieldtrip to Crete to meet with a brotherhood that had lived in the *Kellion* (a small monastic structure) of Saint Prokopios (Mount Athos) two years ago in order to interview them.

photographs which are also included in the visual material of my thesis. In addition, I also read the books of guests' impressions of Gregoriou Monastery for the period 2000-2006, a usual ethnographical survey practice that contributed to the support of my arguments. Eventually, for methodological purposes it was decided that my arguments were going to be illustrated through one of the two monasteries, the Gregoriou, and a comparison between them would be included in the thesis only where necessary. Furthermore, the reading from four archives enhanced my work through unpublished visual and written material connected to the main case study and the history of the travel to Athos.¹⁵



Figure 3: The Monastery of Gregoriou.

¹⁵ The archives of the Centre for the Protection of the Athonian Culture (K.E.D.A.K., Thessaloniki-Greece), the Technical Chamber of Greece (Athens, Greece) and the Archive of Gregoriou monastery provided a series of drawings of the complex (and other monastic structures) that creatively supported the illustration of my arguments. They were combined in order to create the experiential diagrams of a number of different rituals and silent-scapes. On the other hand, reading the collection: "Five Centuries of Peregrinations to Mount Athos, 15th century-1930" of the archive of Mount Athos Centre (Thessaloniki, Greece) gave me the opportunity to have a more holistic understanding of the movement of the outsiders to Athos during that period.

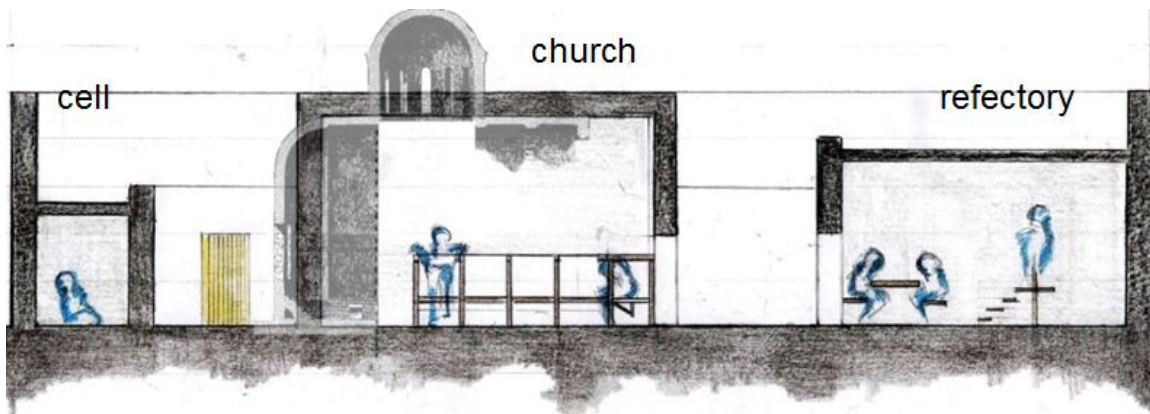
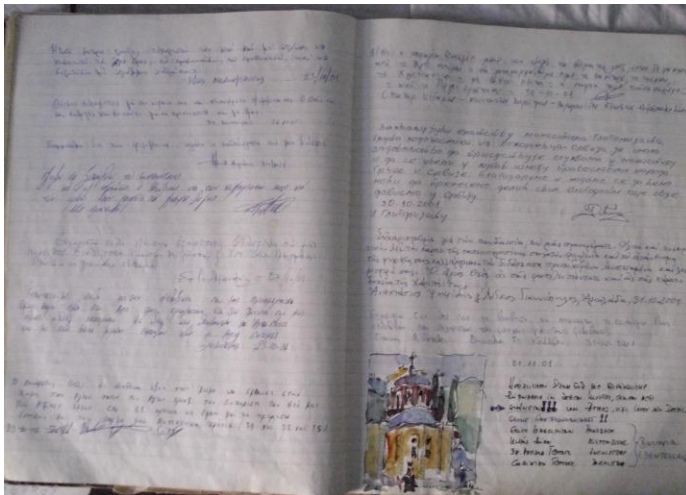


Figure 4: Fieldwork Sketch of the different attitudes of the monk's body in the monastery.



Figures 5 & 6: A page from the Guests' Books of Gregoriou Monastery.

Arguing that topography is something more than what is represented in conventional modern maps, this thesis also illustrates its points through “experiential diagrams” of different movements and aural qualities (ritual sound, silence, ritual movements). These are based on observation, actual experience of the topography and interviews with monks and visitors, rather than on conventional and abstract data. This approach is harmonized with the theoretical framework of the study based on the phenomenological understanding of place, as this was expressed in Martin Heidegger’s writings and its later interpretation by human geographers and philosophers such as David Seamon, Edward S. Casey and Jeff Malpas.¹⁶ The aim of this

¹⁶David Seamon & Robert Mugerauer (eds), *Dwelling, Place and Environment: Toward a Phenomenology of Person and World*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), (First Edition in English: 1985).

approach is to depict the way different qualities of the aural environment of Mount Athos are performed and perceived by the individuals, illuminating the role of spatial, temporal and aural boundaries in this environment.

I also examined published narratives of visitors who travelled to Mount Athos during the last hundred years and transformed them into a kind of a research field, focusing mainly on the period after 1970.¹⁷ My fifty interviews with visitors on Mount Athos were only partly helpful. Whereas I could clarify their attitude at specific parts of their experience, I could not have a complete view of their movements, as they were in the middle of their trip. The writers of the published narratives gave me the opportunity to follow them in their journey through their recollections. At the same time these narratives had the validity of testimony, as they were published under the writers' names and described past events connected to real places and persons. I also tried to find and interview the writers. Communication with two of them, Christopher Merrill and Scott Cairns, was very helpful in the progress of my research, as it made me understand obscure parts of their accounts.

Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-world*, (United States of America: Indiana University Press, 1993).

Edward, S. Casey, *Representing Place: Landscape, Painting, Maps*, (Mineapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

Jeff, Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: MIT Press, 2006).

In these representations the silent-scapes of a coenobitic monastery and a footpath are also included. A silent-scape regards the negative condition of a sound scape highlighting the important role of silence in the Athonian aural environment.

¹⁷ After 1970 there was a gradual renewal of Mount Athos after around forty years of decline. Today, Athonian topography experiences the consequences of this regeneration. Nevertheless, material from older sources was also used when necessary.

No.	Author	Date of Publication	Nationality	Religion
1	Christopher Merrill	2005	American	Catholic
2	Ralph Harper	1987	British	Protestant
3	A.I.B.	-	Greek	Orthodox
4	Scott Cairns	2007	American	Orthodox
5	Robert Byron	1927	British	Non-Orthodox
6	Lorenzo Diletto		Italian	Catholic
7	I.M. Panagiotopoulos		Greek	Orthodox
8	Theodoros Malavetas	1943	Greek	Orthodox
9	Johann Guenther	2003	German	Non-Orthodox
10	Alexandros Moraitidis	1923	Greek	Orthodox
11	Konstantinos Kavarvos	1957	Greek	Orthodox
12	Nikos Koufos	1997	Greek	Orthodox
13	Neil Averitt	2006	American	Non-Orthodox
14	Takis Papatsonis	1963	Greek	
15	Nikos Kazantzakis	1920s	Greek	Agnostic
16	Aggelos Sikelianos	1920s	Greek	Agnostic
17	N. G. Pentzikis		Greek	Orthodox
18	Eleni Ladia (by boat)	1992	Greek	Orthodox
19	Luiz Rocha	2009	Brazilian	Christian Catholic
20	Rene Gothoni	2006	Finnish	Orthodox
21	Bruce Chatwin	1985	British	Agnostic

The names, dates of travel or publication, nationalities and religious status of the travellers studied.

I also examined books with biographies of ascetics who have lived on Athos since 1900 that are still used as paradigms of a successful *hesychast* life.¹⁸ Focus is on their interaction with the topography. They are written by other Athonian monks and their aim is to guide monks and lay devotees. In them, I had the opportunity to see how the insiders interpret their life. Therefore, these biographies emphasize the individual embodied practice of *hesychasm*, letting us cross implicit boundaries by describing the use of the cell, the cave and the role of the stall, which add to the difference between the insiders and the outsiders.

Mount Athos was also examined through secondary sources, mainly connected to its history, architecture, natural landscape and its experience by monks and visitors. In parallel, the study of three theoretical areas - phenomenology of architectural experience and religion, anthropology of travelling (pilgrimage and tourism), and theology of the Orthodox Christian church – illuminated the research.

¹⁸ The choice of these biographies was also the result of my fieldwork, as the aim was to investigate the “mythical examples” of the modern period, whose hesychast practice Athonians are still trying to follow.

The Structure and the Contents of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into four parts comprising a total of eleven chapters. In Part 1 *liminality* is introduced in the context of the experiential spatiality of religious topography. As by definition *liminality* includes embodied movement, Part 2 examines the different movements in the peninsula: communal rituals, the practice of silence and the journey of the outsiders. In Part 3, the *liminal* character of different natural (or quasi natural) elements of the Athonian peninsula – the general periphery, the mountain, the cave and the footpaths – are studied. Finally, Part 4 explores the way the architecture and the natural landscape of a coenobitic monastery can be read as a narrative of boundaries and liminal zones, penetrated through a number of movements contributing to the meaning of the setting.

In particular, in Chapter 1 the key concepts of the thesis are introduced. The event of the religious place, the role of the body in the ritual play and the journey, the notion of the embodied topography, the role of the boundaries and their *liminality* are theoretically examined. In Chapter 2, the place qualities of *hesychasm* are studied. This practice is investigated as a *mystical* eastern tradition aiming at the encounter with the ineffable through the alienation of the individual from his mundane sphere (*xeniteia*) and the combination of communal rituals and silence. Focus on the role of boundaries in these processes aims to clarify the way these movements are harmonically orchestrated in an eventful embodied topography. In chapter 3 the journey of the different kinds of strangers on Athos (pilgrims, existential tourists, religious tourists, tourists with cultural and naturalistic interests) and the organisation of their experience are studied in relation to the way they deal with the liminal dynamics of the peninsula.

Based on a combination of the ideas of a clear official border and a more penetrable boundary, Chapter 4 examines the liminal role of the Athonian periphery in the embodied experience of the topography. Chapter 5 investigates the role of the mountain and the cave in embodied topography, focusing on the way important theological meanings are realised through individual and communal practices. Moreover, the liminal dynamics of the desert and its hermitages are examined through their

connection to wanderer asceticism. Chapter 6 explores the experiential spatiality of the Athonian network of footpaths which are most accurately mapped only through walking. Emphasis is on the role of footpaths as important intermediate zones in the life of the monks and the experience of the travellers.

Introducing Part 4 of the thesis, Chapter 7 examines the way monastic life is organised according to the combination of different calendars, monastic rules and daily and annual programs. Starting from the gradual, hierarchical organisation of the monastery, Chapter 8 examines the way communal rituals and silence connect the different parts of the complex in an embodied whole, illuminating the *liminality* of the built boundaries and the inscription of temporal, sonic and aural ones. The reciprocal relationship between these movements and the silent sphere of the monk's cell is also examined. Similarly, Chapter 9 explores the way the traditional, hierarchical organisation of the main church of an Athonian monastery is re-defined through the embodied interconnection of "voiceless presences" (iconography, silent presence of participants, light, incense) and noisier components ("actors", choir, movement of the censer, instruments discussed in the previous chapter). Chapter 10 examines the refectory and its liturgical connection to the main church, underlining the importance of the space between them. Finally, Chapter 11 investigates the importance of the monastic cemetery to the community. Placed along the periphery of the monastery, it is interconnected to the rest of the complex through the funeral rituals and the various memorial services.

Chapter One

Sacred Topography: Place, Body, Boundaries and Liminality

Introduction

The individual and collective experience of the Athonian landscape relates to a number of different levels of familiarity experienced in a spatio-temporal field of diverse discourses. The ritual qualities of monastic life interact with the temporary experience of the strangers. They are both engaged in a dynamic process during which *physical* and *psychical*, *material* and *immaterial*, *built* and *unbuilt* are not experienced as different qualities, but rather as equal components in the same procedure.

The synthesis of monastic structures and the mountainous landscape of the Athonian peninsula in which it is organised opens a field of experience for monks and strangers. The life of the monks is based on a strict daily programme which divides the day into periods of work and worship. On the other hand, the visitors approach Mount Athos carrying elements of their everyday life and past, and participate up to a point in the monastic life there.

This chapter examines how the notion of place opens the dynamic research field of embodied experience. This is followed by the investigation of (sacred) landscape as an agglomeration of different (religious) places that are interrelated through a network of transportation (footpaths, roads). Finally, focus is placed on the role of boundaries and the notion of *liminality* in the topography as an embodied narrative mapping of the landscape.

Place

Martin Heidegger suggests that the *opening disclosure* of a place happens through the gathering of the *Fourfold (Geviert)* of the earth, the sky, the gods and the mortals.¹⁹ Place, through the dynamics of “gathering”, becomes the *happening* of the mutual interconnection between its components. Focus is on the interrelation between man and the world. As Edward Casey, says, “phenomenology (...) [underlined that the] Heideggerian ‘being-in-the-world’ is indeed being in

¹⁹Martin Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking”, in Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings. Revised and expanded edition* (Edited by David Farrell Krell), (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 344-363.

a place-world” and thus place is “that in which ‘being-in-the-world’ is grounded”.²⁰ It is an open and at the same time clearly demarcated region in which the individual is interrelated with other individuals and things.²¹ He/she opens to the world and the world opens to him/her.²²

In this phenomenal framework of the constant interaction between man and the world the previously Cartesian distinctive entities of *psychic* and *physiological* are unified through a holistic engagement of the human being to an intentional experiencing of a ‘there’ (*Da*). Acting specifically orientated in relation to objects, locations and events, the individual is always an active agent who intentionally experiences space and time as inter-dependent parts of the whole of which he/she is part. Intentionality implies a motivating power that opens the subject to the possibility of a dynamic interaction with the environment. At the same time he/she experiences an *ec-static* (according to Heidegger) temporality in which past memories and future expectations co-exist in the present. Through my intentional actions I am in a state of *waiting*²³ during which, according to Yi Fu Tuan, “the expected event appears to move towards [me] ... and the co-ordinate spatial feeling is one of contraction”.²⁴ In parallel, I am able to recollect past events, uniting the three temporal dimensions into one.

The nature of place, thus, is directly related to the *gathering* character of a thing (built or unbuilt, of small or large scale, etc.). The *thingness* of the thing implies on the one hand the possibility of the disclosure of what is already present, and on the other the ability of the thing to dwell in its being as it is, in relation to the way it actually functions. In this sense, “man-made” and “natural” things gather the fourfold in a similar way.²⁵ For example, a bridge is a structure that gathers the landscape and the fourfold as an active passage. It connects the landscape around the stream and allows the passage of mortals from one bank to the other under the constant

²⁰ Edward S. Casey, “Jeff Malpas’ Place and Experience: A philosophical topography”, *Philosophy and Geography*, 4:2 (2001), p. 226.

²¹ Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger’s Topology: Being, Place, World*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006), p. 219.

Edward S. Casey, “Jeff Malpas’ Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography”, p. 226.

²² Jeff Malpas, p. 219.

²³ One could possibly combine this “waiting” with the movement towards *Gelassenheit*, discussed in Martin Heidegger’s “Conversation on a Country Path”, an essay of the same period of his work. On this please see also: Barbara Dalle Pezze, “Heidegger on *Gelassenheit*”, *Minerva – An Internet Journal of Philosophy*, 10, (2006), p.97.

²⁴ Yi Fu Tuan, “Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective”, in S. Gate and G. Olsson (eds), *Philosophy of Geography*, (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1979), p. 400.

²⁵ Jeff Malpas, pp. 234 & 235.

presence of the *divinities*.²⁶ At the same time natural “things”, such as a tree placed along a footpath leading towards Heidegger’s family home, also gather the fourfold. The tree provides a shadowy shelter for a bench to be used for rest, reading, prayer and recollection.²⁷ According to the philosopher Jeff Malpas, these shared gathering qualities of the bridge and the tree testify to the mutual co-existence of *natural* and *man-made* as part of a dynamic landscape in which events of place happen.

Therefore, the thing’s gathering of the fourfold has to do with its interconnection with the world in which it is situated. The whole process is something that happens spontaneously. The ‘I’ is gathered with the ‘Other’ (‘We’) and the things forming a complex which has its own uniqueness, character and coherence in its own boundaries. As Christian Norberg-Schulz says, place is “a qualitative ‘total’ phenomenon which we cannot reduce to any of its properties, such as spatial relationships, without losing its concrete nature out of sight”.²⁸ Being an event and not something static, place is a vibrating synthesis of the individual’s embodied relations to locales experienced during his/her dwelling of the world.²⁹ This gathering-process relates to the character of place, the general comprehensive *atmosphere* of the experienced concrete spatio-temporal environment.³⁰ Character is an open *function of time* following the rhythms of the seasons, the day, and the weather and is also part of an on-going, open to the future, tradition.³¹

Mortals, according to Heidegger, dwell in places “in the way they preserve the fourfold in its essential being, its presencing”.³² Man is interrelated with places and through them with spaces as his/her dwelling is about preserving the fourfold by staying *near* things. Dwelling relates, thus, to the degree of the individual’s engagement in the happening of a place. Building plays an important role in the dwelling of mortals as it is through the construction and organization of a

²⁶ Martin Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking”, p. 355.

²⁷ Malpas, p. 237.

²⁸ Christian Norberg-Schulz, “The phenomenon of place”, in *Designing Cities. Critical Readings in Urban Design*, Alexander R. Cuthbert (ed), (Oxford, Melbourne, Berlin: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), p. 122.

²⁹ Arnold Berleant, *Aesthetic Experience of Environment*, translated from English to Greek by Murto Antonopoulou and Nicolaos Gogas, edited by Georgia Apostolopoulou, (Athens: Foundation of Panagiotis and Efi Micheli, 2004), (First edition in English: 1992), pp. 40-63.

³⁰ Christian Norberg-Schulz, p. 122.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 122.

³² Martin Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking”, p. 328.

structure that a shelter to their situated experience is provided. Thus building opens the possibility of gathering's preservation by human experience:

From the simple oneness in which earth and sky, divinities and mortals belong together, building *receives the directive* for its erecting of locations. (...) The edifices guard the fourfold. They are things that in their own way preserve the fourfold. (...) In this way, then, do genuine buildings give form to dwelling in its presencing and house this presence.³³

Place is thus conditioned by the notions of familiarity and participation as the person is invited to be engaged in its constitution: the happening of its organization and dwelling, both as an individual and as a member of a community. According to Edward Casey, these ideas have a number of similarities with the ancient Greek mythical couple, Hestia and Hermes. Its examination in this chapter aims to illuminate further various specificities of the Athonian topography. After deciding to remain a virgin, **Hestia** was appointed by Zeus to the special role of sitting in the middle of the house and keeping the fire burning, becoming the goddess of the hearth. Thus her presence signalled the core of cities (*prytaneum- πρυτανεῖο*), temples (altar - *βωμός*) and houses (hearth - *εστία*). Casey suggests that Hestia's role is not a static/passive one as she relates to the habitual movements of domestic life.³⁴ She is connected to all the repetitive movements that follow the natural cycles (seasons, days, festivals) of the life of the house directly connected to its common hearth. In this hestial model, mortals are actively engaged in the happening of a place, gathered around the core of the built *Oikos* (House). The opening of a religious place is often connected to the ritual configuration of natural elements, pieces of art and built structures into a meaningful whole, with intense hestial qualities. For example, the general organization of a coenobitic monastery is regarded as a materialization of the interaction between the members of an active community. The individual cells are organised circularly around the common hearth of the church (Hestia). At the same time the stalls of the monks are also organised circularly around the central dome, testifying to the active character of the above model of community. The whole complex is liturgically united through communal ascetic life (ritual hestial movements), opening to the possibility of the happening of a sacred place.

³³Martin, Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking", p. 349.

³⁴Edward S. Casey, *Getting back into place – Toward a renewed understanding of the Place –World*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 140.

People today usually tend to distance themselves from such an understanding of place, dealing with space and time in a more superficial and abstract way.³⁵ Nevertheless, through human experience of mathematically defined spaces, the *stay near them* and the *dwelling in them*, the individual is open to the possibility of his/her active participation in the happening of places. The passage through the boundary that defines its horizon becomes very important.³⁶ In this sense, the periphery is a dynamic field of action in which, according to Casey, “time and space join forces” signalling the simultaneous opening and ending of a region.³⁷ The boundary of a place is clearly distinguished by a “border” which is usually connected to cartographic approaches as a line of distinction. As we will see later, it is through their intense *liminal* qualities that the limits act as events of a unique character, being at the same time both place and non-place and allowing their crossing by the embodied subjects.³⁸

From the above, one can realize that a landscape is a network of locales³⁹ demarcated by certain boundaries and dynamically interrelated through a network of transportation (roads, paths, entrances, sea communication). The landscape follows the natural rhythms of the seasons and the changing qualities of light and shade. The individual moving in it, either through habitual hestial movements or pre-reflective ones, has the opportunity to participate in a “happening of place”. His intention to bridge a gap between a locale A and a locale B gives meaning to his interaction with the world. The path or the road becomes part of a whole with the man moving through it. Being inside a landscape, therefore, he/she is involved in a dialogic relationship to it. This embodied encounter involves a dynamic inter-connection of soundscapes, visionscapes,

³⁵ Edward S. Casey, “How to get from space to place”, in *Senses of Place*, Steven Feld and Keith Basso (eds), (Santa Fe, Mexico: *School of American Research Press*, 1996).

See also: Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place – Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*, pp. 29 & 38.

³⁶ Bernard Tschumi, *Event-Cities*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 1994), pp. 246-247, as quoted in Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place – A Philosophical History*, (Berkeley; California: University of California Press, 1997), p. 276.

³⁷ Edward S. Casey, “Boundary, Place, and Event in the Spatiality of History”, *Rethinking History*, 11:4, (December 2007), p. 508.

³⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 508-509.

About the notion of “boundary” see also: Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place – Towards a Rneewed Understanding of the Place-World*, p. 16:

To be is to be bounded by place, limited by it. “Boundary” (horos) or limit (peras) is not the nugatory notion of mere cutting off; nor is it the geometric concept of perimeter (itself the linear reduction of placial limit to an abstract residue comparable to the time-line). Boundary or limit, construed cosmologically, is a quite positive presence. (...) [It] determines its place.

³⁹ Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape. Places, Paths and Monuments*, (Oxford/ Providence, USA: Berg, 1994), p. 18: Locales are “places created and known through common experiences, symbols and meanings”.

touchscapes, smellscapes and tastescapes. The different sensual qualities direct the individual's movement enhancing the meaning of his/her experience which is also influenced by an active "corporeal intentionality".

In this sense, if Hestia is more related to the habitual movements in and around the place, the ancient myth of **Hermes** is connected to the freer movement along the network of transportation, something that will be examined in detail later in the chapter.⁴⁰ Hermes was the god of motion and communication, usually situated in the *agora*. Being a "political god" he was related to columns (hermes heads) and stones that signalled the entrances of an ancient Greek city, gave directions at roads' intersections and were worshipped through donations made by walkers.⁴¹ Hermes becomes, thus, an expression of the encounter between the self and the other, the familiar and the stranger. He is, therefore, also found outside the house to protect it from dangerous travellers and to guide *Xenoi* to the central core. *Xenoi* are strangers. Whereas they are not part of the domestic hierarchy, they are received as equals.⁴² As Jean Pierre Vernant argues, the mutual interrelation of Hestia and Hermes depicts an "archaic conception of space", the dynamics of which is diachronically expressed in the experience of landscape.

Hestia implies, as her complement and her contrast, the swift footed god who rules the realms of the traveller. To Hestia belongs the world of interior, the enclosed, the stable, the retreat of the human group within itself; to Hermes, the outside world, opportunity, movement, interchange with others. It could be said by virtue of their polarity that the Hermes - Hestia couple represents the tension which is so marked in the archaic conception of space: space requires a centre, a nodal point, with a special value, from which all directions, all different qualitatively, may be channelled and defined (...).⁴³

Mount Athos could thus be seen as a landscape in which different locales of sacred/ascetic character are combined through a network of footpaths and roads. The individual, monk or visitor, deciding, for example, to go from a hermitage to a monastery of the Athonian desert follows a certain route, mostly unmapped, trying to reach his destination. Whether combined with a sacred/pilgrimage character or not, this process is an opening of man to natural and

⁴⁰ See in this Chapter, Section: Boundaries and Liminality, pp. 41-45.

⁴¹ Giannis Gikas, "The Paths of Mount Athos (Where all the mystical Athonian history has walked)", in *Anthology of Literary texts about Mount Athos*, Ioannis Xatzifotis (ed), (Athens: Iolkos, 2000), (In Greek), p. 115.

⁴² Jean Robert, "Hestia and Hermes: the Greek Imagination of Motion and Place", *Unpublished manuscript*, (pudel.uni-bremen.de, 1996), p. 3.

See also, Jeane-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*, (London: Routledge, 1983), pp. 335-336.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 326.

constructed things of the world and at the same time an opening of the things towards man. The intentional use of the path stands as a stage of preparation towards a possible future distinct experience, a possible entering into a place of both personal and collective significance. The body of the individual plays an important role in the whole process as it moves from place to place mapping the landscape and dynamically interacting with its *hestial* and *hermetic* qualities.⁴⁴

Sacred place is thus a “corporeal-reality” that happens when a “**space between**” opens during the reciprocal relationship between an I and a (divine) Thou. This is a gap, a distance that has to be bridged, based on the model of a community in which the individual is one of its active members and at the same time he/she has its own individual *hypostasis*.⁴⁵ The individual’s interaction with a concrete environment in which the *divine* may be manifested plays a nodal role. Therefore, according to Mircea Eliade, a sacred place, clearly demarcated from the profane space, is a “centre”, an *Axis Mundi*, where hierophanies and theophanies may occur, allowing the possibility of the connection between the levels of earth and heaven.⁴⁶ Whereas sacred place refers to a *cosmic* event, the profane world is a *foreign chaotic space*.⁴⁷ This dichotomy is expressed in a dialectical way, as different (built and natural) *things* can be active *receptacles* of the sacred while still part of their more profane environment.⁴⁸ This dialectical relation between the sacred and the profane also supports the opening of the religious locales to the reception of the stranger: the outsider who enters carrying his own personal sphere and who interacts dynamically with the sacred environment, with the possibility of engagement in the *hierophanic* events occurring there.

The reciprocal relationship between the “I” and the “We” (*space-between*) and the sacred and the profane are also connected to the notion of **paradox** and the important role that it plays in

⁴⁴ As we will also see later in the chapter, the term “hermetic” is used in this thesis to express the moving dynamics (model of Hermes) of embodied topography and it is not connected to the mystical associations attributed to the term during the Renaissance.

⁴⁵ Michael Kunzler, *The Church’s Liturgy*, (London – New York: Continuum, 2001), pp. 24 & 25.

In Christianity, the “space between” reaches its perfection in the relationship between the three Persons of God (Holy Trinity).

⁴⁶ Mircea Eliade, *Patterns of Comparative Religion*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1958), p. 373.

⁴⁷ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane, - The Nature of Religion, The significance of religious myth, symbolism and ritual within life and culture*, (A Harvest/ HBJ book, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich), p. 29.

⁴⁸ Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols. Studies in Religious Symbolism*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1952) pp. 84 & 178.

the experience of a religious place, such as the Athonian peninsula.⁴⁹ Etymologically, paradox stems from the Greek word “*paradoxè*” that means a conflict idea/opinion (*doxa*: opinion) that is “beyond” (*para*).⁵⁰ Therefore paradox is the area where two discordant qualities dynamically co-exist. For Mircea Eliade, paradox is connected to “the mystery of the [primordial] totality” of which the Creation is considered to be the fragmentation. Rituals and mystical techniques are ways to approach this ineffable realm, to acquire divine knowledge. As he characteristically says: “the *Grund* can only be grasped as a mystery or a paradox (...) these myths, rites and theories involving the *coincidentia oppositorum* teach men that the best way of apprehending God in the ultimate reality is to cease, if only for a few seconds, considering and imagining divinity in terms of immediate experience; such an experience could only perceive fragments and tensions”.⁵¹

In this sense, examining the relation between paradox and religion, Matthew Bagger argues that paradox is connected to worship when “a metaphysical doctrine that generates (...) is constitutive of religious beliefs and practices in which thinkers are heavily invested”.⁵² The worship of a paradox is related most of the time to what Bagger calls “cognitive practices”, which are embodied “techniques of self-transformation” aiming to change the individual’s *inner-space* and are theologically related to the notions of *alienation* and *union*. The individual is trying to alienate himself/herself from the mundane sphere and at the same time is aiming at a union with a cosmic environment. The most common cognitive practice for the writer is “meditation”.⁵³ Bagger’s ideas are included in a Neo-platonic framework. For him the worship of the paradox may be either part of a “self-annihilating” “perpetual martyrdom” to God, or of a mystical or ascetic process, during which these cognitive practices become part of a preparation for the communion with God who remains hidden.⁵⁴ Preparation and martyrdom usually relate to different stages, divided by boundaries. Crossing or transgressing these boundaries becomes an important part of this process contributing to the character of the place either through the notion of “initiation” or allowing entry to outsiders. Besides this approach to religious paradox, there is also another one, more connected to the so-called “eastern” traditions (such as

⁴⁹ Matthew Bagger, *The Uses of Paradox (Religion, Self-Transformation and the Absurd)*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p.1.

⁵⁰ George Kalamaras, *Reclaiming the Tacit Dimension: Symbolic Form in the Rhetoric of Silence*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 6.

⁵¹ Mircea Eliade, *The Two and the One*, translated by J. M. Cohen, (London: Harvill Press, 1965), p. 82.

⁵² Matthew Bagger, p. 6.

⁵³ *Ibid*, pp. 8 & 9.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, Chapter 2: “Credo Quia Absurdum: Cognitive Asceticism and Kierkegaard”, pp. 15-30 and p. 9.

Buddhism), that relates to an embodied experience of the reciprocal relationship between the *conceptual* and the *nonconceptual* aiming at a union with nature and God; a holistic embodied divinization, a participation in the divine itself called “full-emptiness”. In the case of the eastern traditions, paradox becomes a way of embodied knowledge of God based on the simultaneous co-existence of polarities such as: sound and silence, place and non-place.⁵⁵

Eliade includes Athonian monastic life in the paradoxical ways of encountering the divine “unknown” that are different from the “western rationalist tradition”.⁵⁶ In this sense, paradox plays an important role in the case of the experience of Athonian topography, as the Eastern Christian Church is based on the combination of a “positive theology” and an “apophatic theology”, in the framework of which God can be simultaneously known and unknown. Communal rituals and mystical practices of silent prayer are reciprocally combined to serve this model of conflicting ideas. The natural landscape and the monastic architecture of Mount Athos dynamically interact with the service of the combination of these two traditions of paradoxical worship, performing the interaction between the self and the (divine) other and between the local and the stranger.

The buildings and the natural landscape of Athos’ peninsula co-form the active context of the liturgical movement of the individuals. The mountain of Athos that geomorphologically characterizes the peninsula is actively associated with the sacred through traditions, pilgrimages of monks and outsiders to its peak, and annual celebrations of the event of the Transfiguration of Christ (6th August). Even though it is not centrally located, this mountain is still an *Axis Mundi*, “a region impregnated with the sacred, a spot where one can pass from one cosmic zone to another”.¹ This mountainous landscape has been the shelter of the *ascetic* practice of hermits for more than a thousand years now. The aforementioned organization of the Athonian coenobitic monastery around the central main church is also included in this phenomenal exploration.

These different sacred locales are experienced through a ritualistic way of life that can be characterised as a liturgical one. **Liturgy** relates to the service(s) held in a church. In Eastern

⁵⁵ On this see: George Kalamaras, *Reclaiming the Tacit Dimension: Symbolic Form in the Rhetoric of Silence*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

⁵⁶ Mircea Eliade, *The Two and the One*, Section: Palamas and the Light of Tabor, pp. 61-64.

Christian theology, liturgy is also extended to every aspect of everyday life, trying to unite its material and immaterial components into a cosmic religious event of human experience. Jean Yves Lacoste argues that this liturgical life is a movement of the individual from the familiarity of daily experience to his/her real condition of “foreignness”.⁵⁷ As a foreigner, the individual tries to reach his/her *homeland* through liturgy. Basing his thesis on Martin Heidegger’s idea, Lacoste argues that this infinite relation is expressed in the “archi-place” of the Fourfold.⁵⁸ In it, “a fundamental order of relations [between the four elements]”⁵⁹ comprises a liturgical rhythm of life. The body plays an important role in this process as liturgy involves the embodied, ritual experience of this movement towards a Homeland, the *Absolute knowledge* of the divine, that in the case of Orthodox asceticism is never fully realised (negative theology).⁶⁰ Liturgy’s character is thus both “worldly” and “historical”. On the one hand it relates to the participation in a worldly ritual event dynamically connected to the place, and on the other hand it is an active manifestation of the distance-between the I and the divine and ineffable Thou.

One of the most important aspects of such liturgical expressions of religious space-time is its dynamic interaction with the movement of the **sun**, experienced as a sensual bridging of the paradoxical distance between man and God. The natural opposition *light-darkness* influences the orientation of a religious locale that is mostly related to an east-west axis: the daily path of the active sun that symbolically represents the presence of the deity in our mundane life. Therefore, the holy altar of a church is placed on its eastern side from where the “sun of righteousness” (God) rises during the morning service of the Holy Eucharist calling the circularly seated monks to communicate with Him. In parallel, the division of monastic time according to the natural changes of hours, days and seasons contributes to the experience of this sacred event. As the philosopher Ernst Cassirer argues: “the division of space into directions and zones runs parallel to the division of time into phases; both represent merely different factors in that

⁵⁷ Jean Yves Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute. Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man*, translated by Mark – Raftery – Skeban, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), (first publication in French: 1994), p. 12.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 12.

His argument is based on a combination of Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time* and later periods of his work.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.17.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.8 & 33.

See also: Marco Totti, “The Inner Dimension of Pilgrimage to Mount Athos”, in Rene Gothoni and Graham Speake (eds), *The Monastic Magnet: Road to and from Mount Athos*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008):

(...) the pilgrim-stranger needs to incessantly break the worldly relationships through a continuous iter which is an endless inner progression, to use Gregory of Nyssa’s words an epektasis (a Greek word meaning a sort of ‘infinite tension’ directed towards achieving Christian perfection), with the beginning, along the path and at the end of the world (p. 116).

gradual illumination of the spirit which starts from the intuition of the fundamental physical phenomenon of light”.⁶¹ Therefore the “mythical-religious” character of Athonian landscape is organised and performed through a daily liturgical programme of work and worship that is harmonically included in the wider horizon of orthodox Christian festive calendar. A number of different elements are configured according to a spiral movement towards the future: the natural cyclical repetition of time is liturgically connected to the future fulfilment of the eschatological goal of Christianity.

At the same time, practices of **silent prayer** are dynamically interconnected with the above scheme. As we will see later, silent prayer is not something static. It is an embodied movement (a kind of vibration we could possibly say) that plays the role of a language performed for the communication both between the individuals in a monastic community and between them and the ineffable God. In this sense, each monk conducts his silent prayer in the cell and he is supposed to do the same during the liturgies while communal ritual is taking place. In this thesis we will investigate how these different qualities are interconnected, focusing on the role of the different boundaries (such the spatial and temporal ones mentioned in the previous paragraph) in this dialogue.

Art, architecture and their natural context become part of the happening of a religious landscape. Their interconnection is fulfilled through the paradoxical experience of different boundaries, during which human senses⁶² play an important role as the interpreter becomes a *receptive beholder*.⁶³ Religious art and architecture is thus part of a *playful*, interrelation between the embodied subject(s) and the world that finds its expression in a paradoxical interrelation of communal rituals and silent prayer.

Body

Maurice Merleau Ponty underlines the primordial openness of an embodied subject towards the world through its active everyday movement. This relates to a *corporeal intentionality*: his/her

⁶¹ Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Volume 2: Mythical Thought, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 107.

⁶² Steven Kepnes, “Buber as Hermeneut: Relations to Dilthey and Gadamer”, *The Harvard Theological Review*, 81:2 (April, 1988), p. 203.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p.204.

available ability and potential to be engaged in an intentional sensual interrelation to the world.⁶⁴ The individual thus participates in the event of place through the inter-communication of his/her senses, making the whole process a *project* towards movement. “The body is a potentiality of movement and the perceptual field is an invitation to action” through the response to which the body-subject contributes to the “existential constitution of a spatial level”.⁶⁵ In this sense, movement involves any displacement of the body or bodily parts, examining the “habitual nature of everyday environmental behaviours”.⁶⁶ Thus the body-subject is open to a dynamic inter-communication with the world:

(...) for the normal person every movement has a background, and (...) the movement and its background are “moments of a unique totality. The background to the movement is not a representation associated or linked externally with the movement itself, but is immanent in the movement inspiring and sustaining it at every moment. The plunge into is, from the subject’s point of view, an original way of relating himself to the object, and is on the same footing as perception.”⁶⁷

Movement may be either “abstract” or “concrete”. Concrete movement is the actual movement that occurs in a given background. On the other hand, “abstract movement” relates to the possibility of a projection as “the subject of movement keeps in front of him an area of free space in which what does not naturally exist may take on a semblance of existence”.⁶⁸ I will focus here on the nature of “concrete movement” in the framework of which we access a familiar situation in the world through the body. The body communicates with the other components of the world through a *praktognosia*, a practical knowledge of its field of action.⁶⁹ In this sense, our “habitual body” involves the body gestures that delineate a familiar individual space contributing to a habitual movement of the subject from the past towards the future. It is

⁶⁴ Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, pp. 231-232.

See also, David Seamon’s approach to embodied *lifeworld* in David Seamon, “A Way of Seeing People and Place: Phenomenology and Environment-Behaviour Research”, in *Theoretical Perspectives in Environment-Behavior Research* S. Wapner, J. Demick, T. Yamamoto, and H. Minami (eds.), (New York: Plenum, 2000), through [K-State Research Exchange](http://krex.kstate.edu/dspace/handle/2097/1697), (<http://krex.kstate.edu/dspace/handle/2097/1697>), p.159.

⁶⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated from the French by Colin Smith and Kegan Paul, (London, 1962), pp. 97- 147.

⁶⁶ David Seamon, “Interconnections, Relationship and Environmental Wholes: A Phenomenological Ecology of Natural and Built worlds”, in *Phenomenology and Ecology: the Twenty-Third Annual Symposium of the Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center : lectures*, Melissa Geib (ed.), (Pittsburgh: Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center, Duquesne University Press, 2006,) through [K-State Research Exchange](http://krex.k-state.edu/dspace/handle/2097/1692) (<http://krex.k-state.edu/dspace/handle/2097/1692>), p. 3.

⁶⁷ Maurice Merleau Ponty, p. 110-111.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 110.

⁶⁹ Liu Shengly, “Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology of Space – Preliminary Reflection on an Archeology of Primordial Spatiality”, in *The third BESETO Conference of Philosophy*, session 5, p. 135.

a middle layer of human experience being placed between intentionality and the embodied everyday performance of the world.⁷⁰ Thus Athonian hermits and monks practise *hesychasm*, an ascetic way of life that also includes embodied techniques underlining the role of the body in prayer. This ascetic practice becomes their habitual way of relating to the Athonian built and natural context.

Therefore, our body has a “near sphere” and a “far sphere”. The first is the nexus of the reachable, actual and potential things that are available to us.⁷¹ The “far sphere” has to do with the broader horizon of our movement.⁷² Horizon plays an important role in embodied experience as it is the wider perimeter of the landscape encompassing the places of both spheres.⁷³ Hence, **body**, **horizon** and **place** create a dynamic complex in which “near” and “far” interact in the most effective way:

In my embodied being I am just at a place as its inner boundary; a surrounding landscape, on the other hand, is just beyond that place as its outer boundary. Between the two boundaries – and very much as a function of their differential interplay – implacement occurs. Place is what takes place between body and landscape. Thanks to the double horizon that body and landscape provide, a place is a locale bounded on both sides, near and far.⁷⁴

Thus, for example, a pilgrim enters the “far sphere” of Mount Athos. He can freely choose the monasteries he wants to visit during the four days of his stay there, being involved from the beginning in the intentional embodied conduct of his journey. On the Athonian horizon, he will walk along the paths that connect some of the monastic structures and interact with the real liturgical life in them (‘near sphere’).⁷⁵

The body evidently plays an important role in the liturgical life of a religious locale through the conduct of daily rituals. Rituals are *participational* performances of the reciprocal relation between man and the world of the Other. Movement and counter-movement contribute to the

⁷⁰Maurice Merleau Ponty, p. 104.

⁷¹ Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, p. 60.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 60.

⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 61.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 29.

⁷⁵This process is also going to be influenced by his personal (embodied) memory.

liturgical dramas in which the bodily active man is trying to reach God.⁷⁶ Thus, rituals are something more than mere recollections of past events. They are the *re-actualisations* of these events through the embodied experience of the participants.⁷⁷ According to Nick Crossley, rituals involve bodily activity through the combination of patterned movements, whose meaning may be different from their accurate mechanical conduct.⁷⁸ In this framework, the importance of ritual is illuminated by Merleau Ponty's "habitual" way of relating to the world: "[rituals] manifest a practical grasp upon or embodied understanding of our incarnate, subjective or psychological state of potentialities (...) of both our own subjectivity in an embodied way of being-in-the-world and those of social world (...)"⁷⁹.

In this sense, religious space and time are experienced through the ritual movement of the body-subjects aiming at a spiritual knowledge, the achievement of which relates to a corporeal realization of the world. Ritual becomes a means of liturgical experience. Its performance influences the building of a space that has to provide a shelter for the *gathering* of the individuals, according to certain symbolic and spiritual qualities. At the same time, the concrete formation of a locale affects the participation in rituals by indicating different ways of (liturgical) inhabitation.

Being-in-the-world of Athos, therefore, the monks participate in everyday rituals that relate to the prefiguration of the Second Coming and their possible communication with God. Athonian landscape becomes a field of ritual actions, in which repetitive conduct supports the organization of an ascetic experience of the *space-between* the profane and the divine. At the same time, the moving body-subject of the *outsider* is allowed to attend these liturgical activities and actively participate in them, if involved in a process of familiarization and more holistic engagement. As Lindsay Jones argues, during the course of these *ritual-architectural events* the "actual built form", the "human beings" and "the ceremonial occasion" are

⁷⁶ Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation: a Study in Phenomenology*, translated by J.E. Turner, (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1938), p. 339.

⁷⁷ Hans Georg Gadamer's approach to ritual play and ritual field see: Flemming, Lebeck, "The Concept of the Subject in the Philosophical Hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer", *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 14:2, p. 230.

⁷⁸ Nick Crossley, "Ritual, Body Technique and (Inter)subjectivity", in Kevin Schilbrack (ed), *Thinking through Rituals. Philosophical Perspectives*, (New York: Routledge), 2004, p. 33.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 40 and 47.

dynamically interconnected.⁸⁰ Through the “juxtaposition and interplay” between tradition and “variation” the individuals find themselves interrelated with their context through a process that is connected to an active religious tradition and the possibility of an inner transformation.⁸¹

The life of the Athonian coenobitic monastery thus follows a specific daily programme of work and prayer based on the first foundational documents of the tenth century. Individual and collective prayer play a key role in this programme. The typical day has at least three common ceremonies (morning – afternoon – evening). Meals are related to them and are performed in a ritualistic way. Moreover, the monks have to conduct their canon, their personal silent prayer, in their cells. Rituals relevant to the services are also held in the courtyard of the monastery (the *talanton*-procession or the blessing of the Holy Water) and confirm the sacredness of the whole monastic complex.⁸² The constant focus on the meaning of the Jesus Prayer (even during manual work) becomes a ritual connection between all aspects of life there.

Religious Topography

According to Casey, etymologically, “topography” combines the Greek word for place (*τόπος-topos*) with the one for writing (*γράφειν-graphēin*), relating lived spatiality with the notion of inscription. In the traditional use of the term, *topos* is connected to a specific mathematically defined location and *graphēin* relates to “the model of a [two-dimensional] flat surface on which are inscribed images as well as words”.⁸³ Thus, traditionally, topography is “the science or practice of describing a particular place, city, town, manor, parish or tract of land; the accurate and detailed description or delineation of locality”.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Lindsay Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison*, (Cambridge: Mass Distributed by Harvard University Press for Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, 2000) pp. 214-215.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 219.

⁸² Always playing an active role, the individual in the coenobitic monastery passes through the following stages: newcomer, novice, monk, *lesser habit*, *great habit*. The three latter ones are different stages of the monk’s identity that correspond to his spiritual progress.

⁸³ Edward S. Casey, *Representing Place: Landscape Painting and Maps*, (Mineapolis – London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 160.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 153.

But if a place (*'topos'*) is the embodied event discussed above, then this chapter investigates the widening of the traditional definition of topography to include even the expression⁸⁵ of an experiential approach to the interaction between the individual and the world. This possibly follows Edward S. Casey's concept of an embodied mapping of place: "Being in the centre of things my body can always move here or there, up or down, this way or that. (...) A spontaneous **corporeal mapping** or **somatography** arises in which, as on an actual map, meaningful alternative directions are available at each important juncture".⁸⁶

Human Geographers (such as Edward Relph, Yi-Fu Tuan, Anne Buttimer and David Seamon) have been working on such an understanding of topography since the 1970s. Their approach involves the illumination of the aforementioned "gathering" character of place, trying to understand how this event can be described (space) and narrated (time) at the same time.⁸⁷

In this sense, one could argue that the topography of the Athonian landscape is the expression of its experiential spatiality. Historical documents, maps, paintings, monks' biographies, travel testimonies or even elements from internet sources can provide a variety of aspects of the environment's meaningful character. All combined would resemble a palimpsest of different co-present layers of its expression that still cannot be as genuine as an *embodied inscription*.

The distinction between **cartography** and Ptolemaic **chorography** as this was examined by Casey offers a creative framework to interpret the case of Mount Athos. On the one hand, cartography relates to maps that represent the earth's relief through abstract, schematic models such as hatching, contour lines and physiography. The most usual way of relief representation in contemporary maps are the contour lines that "give accurate information

⁸⁵Ruth Webb, "The Aesthetics of Sacred Space: Narrative, Metaphor and Motion in "Ekphraseis" of Church Buildings", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 53(1999), pp. 59-74. : Ruth Webb examines the 'rhetorical tradition of ekphrasis', a type of Byzantine literal representations of ritual architecture, in the framework of which the interaction between a 'static' building and a moving visitor is narrated 'in a progression not just from the exterior to the interior of the church, but from the evidence of the senses to the final mysteries and secret places'.

⁸⁶Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back Into Place – Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place –World*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 48.

The underlined part is my focus.

⁸⁷ Anne Buttimer and David Seamon (eds), *The Human Experience of Space and Place*, (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1980).

Yi Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*.

Edward Relph, *Place and Placeness*.

See also: Edward S. Casey, *Representing Place: Landscape Painting and Maps*, p. 163.

about the absolute height and angle of slope by the relatively simple method of drawing lines that connect all points located at the same distance from a standard ‘datum’ point typically mean sea level”⁸⁸. On the other hand, ‘chorography’ derives from the term *chora* included in the *Timaeus* of Plato. ‘Chorography’ focuses on the diversity of place into concrete sub-places. For the chorographer, a region is something more than a unit of space. It is always “ready-to-hand already in individual places”⁸⁹.

In particular, *Chora* for Plato is the intermediate womb between the *being* (forms) and the *becoming* (kinds). It is connected to the transition from the intelligible and invisible world to the perceptual one. The receptacle dynamics of *Chora* allow the kinds (visible objects and images) to become. The four elements of fire, air, water and earth come into *Chora*, and are shaken up (movement) until they are separated into regions. *Chora* thus relates to the notions of space and place, providing the situatedness of all the perceptual kinds through the combination of *stasis* and *movement*.

Chora can be manifested in the visible world through its “moving trace” as only moving things are visually perceptible and leave their trace in the visible.⁹⁰ Thus, according to Casey, “choric space is at once *hestial* (it is said to be the ‘seat’ of the emerging cosmos) and *hermetic*, topological-participational (since it is elemental and pregeometric)” that is open to possible contact with the stanger (*xenos*).⁹¹ The term ‘hermetic’ will therefore be used in this thesis in connection with the moving dynamics of topography, not with the mystical associations attributed to it during the Renaissance. Adding to this, *Chora* is etymologically related to the Greek verb *choreo*, which means to be in motion, always trying “to make room for the other”. It is also connected to the word *choros* (dance), with regard to “a collective coordinated

⁸⁸Edward S. Casey, *Representing Place: Landscape Painting and Maps, Ibid*, p. 144.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 167.

See also: Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back Into Place – Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place –World*, p.19:

(...) *chora* [is] the very word with which Plato characterises the initial state of the universe in his account of creation in the *Timaeus*. Choric space has its own determinacy. Not only is it characterised by “necessity” (*ananke*); it is also filled with sensible qualities grouped loosely into four “regions” (*chorai*) that correspond to the ancient elements of fire, air, earth and water. Plato’s cosmogonic model, is enormously influential to subsequent Western accounts of regions but also traces out their progressive concretization into particular “places” (*topoi*). In Plato’s synoptic vision cosmogenesis occurs as topogenesis.”.

⁹⁰ Nicoletta Isar, “Chorography – A space for choreographic inscription”, *Bulletin of the Transylvania University of Brasov*, 2:51, (2009), p. 264.

⁹¹Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back Into Place – Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place –World*, p. 142.

movement”, usually of a circular form. Therefore, *Chora* for Plato is this paradoxical intermediate place in which movement and stasis are dynamically interrelated, and a choric space is the one whose formation is directly connected to the inscription of the moving trace of the agents’ experience.

In this sense, chorography questions the possibility of more meaningful expressions of the combination of different kinds of movement in the life-world. Thus, chorography can be considered as in-between cartography and extended embodied topography. Therefore, cartography is connected to clear lines and borders; chorography underlines the importance of dynamic boundaries and thresholds, and embodied topography (that includes qualities of the other two) to the gathering event of the place.

Mapping the Athonian landscape, therefore, deals with the expression of different kinds of embodied experience. On the one hand, as mentioned above, the embodied experience of monks is conditioned by the notion of ritual and silent prayer, on which life in the ascetic structures is based. On the other hand, the journey of outsiders and the freer movement along the footpaths of the peninsula is also an important aspect of life there, through which the different religious locales are connected. In this sense, outsiders conduct a circular journey, passing through the general periphery of the peninsula twice, signalling the beginning and the end of their temporal interaction with the topography there. As already mentioned above, regulated allowing of entry to strangers is also an expression of the character of the place, underlining the importance of the stages of both departure and return.

Moreover, the system of paths that connects the different places of monastic activity (monasteries, sketes, cells, desert, natural cavities) of the Athonian landscape is difficult to map in a traditional cartographic way, as it is mostly organized in quite a dense natural environment and it changes according to the frequency of use and the climatic fluctuations. As Christopher Tilley suggests, an analogy between the walking process and writing arises through the inscription and preservation of the path or the track. The path preserves previous repetitive passages and is open to the possibility of future ones.⁹²

⁹² Christopher Tilley, pp. 29-30.

In this sense, embodied topography implies a narrative understanding of landscape through the interconnection of different places, past and present experiences, spatial and textual stories of personal and collective identity.⁹³ Narrative has the ability to re-open a past experience through the synthesis of a number of different events into an intelligible whole. According to Paul Ricoeur, through narrative a number of past events are recollected and connected into a meaningful whole due to the dynamics of plot. Plot refers to the *configurational arrangement* of heterogeneous events that is based on their causal relation.⁹⁴ In this sense, emplotment is placed on the intersection of temporality and narrativity, as the transferred acts happen in the framework of our temporal existence.⁹⁵ Narrative thus bridges the phenomenological understanding of time with the cosmological one. On the one hand, there is the experienced time that is inscribed on worldly life and is recorded in narratives. In this framework, stories and memories of the countless everyday experiences of life are included. On the other hand, there are the collective memories of every culture that also influence the way the former are experienced.

This meaningful synthesis of experiences is directly related to the spatio-temporal event of place. Narrative is a self-contained element and at the same time is involved in the situation of interdependence of the different elements of place. Thus it shares with place the notions of *horizon*, *pathways* and *things*.⁹⁶ As place, narrative is situated in the framework of an external horizon (encompassing places, regions and things⁹⁷) expressed through the coherence of its 'emplotment' (seen as "the episodic-temporal equivalent of a landscape"⁹⁸) in which a number of different spatio-temporal events are interrelated through a number of *pathways* of entry ("access", "retrieval") or egress (moving from one to another, or reaching their end).⁹⁹ As Tilley says:

⁹³ Jeff Malpas, p.184.

⁹⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Volume One, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 64-70.

⁹⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *The Function of Narrative/Η Αφηγηματική λειτουργία*, translated in Greek by Vangelis Athanasopoulos, (Athens: Kardamitsas Editions, 1990), (First Edition in French: 1979), p. 123.

⁹⁶ See: Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, pp. 203-205: The writer explains how place and memory share these three elements, the "horizon", the "pathways" and the "things".

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p.204.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*.

⁹⁹ For an approach of the "pathway" please see: Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, p. 204-205.

Narrative is a means of understanding and describing the world in relation to agency. It is a means of linking locales, landscapes, actions, events and experiences together providing a synthesis of heterogeneous phenomena. (...) In its mimetic or phenomenological form narrative seeks to capture action not just through description but as a form of re-description.¹⁰⁰

Narrative is also connected to crossing, transgressing or even flowing-through different boundaries that define natural and built environments underlining the paradoxical qualities of the “discordant-concordant” dynamics of a plot. As we will see later, ritual movement, silent prayer, walking along the paths, the journey of the outsider but even the flowing of light, sound and gas can become different movements-narratives that penetrate a number of boundaries (spatial, temporal, sonic, imaginary) combining the different places of the peninsula into a whole.

In the case of Mount Athos every sacred locale, therefore, becomes an ‘event’, either of the life as a kind of **pilgrimage** of the monk or as the **journey** of the outsider. Athonian topography is open to interpretation through a number of different (embodied or not) narratives. The character of every sacred locale, hence, is based on the conditions of its foundation, its building and ritual dwelling, its connection to a tradition and its opening towards the stranger. Focus, as we will see, is on the encounter of the self and the other (divine or not) that mostly follows the movement through a boundary that connects and divides at the same time two different (material or immaterial) realms. The interpretation of the topography by the permanent and temporary dwellers is being inscribed on the concrete environment through their embodied movement, that creatively interacts with the architecture, activating at the same time a *communicative* environment.

Boundaries and Liminality

“A space is something that has been made room for, something that has been freed, namely, within a boundary, Greek *peras*. A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something *begins its essential unfolding*.”

Martin Heidegger¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Christopher Tilley, p. 32.

¹⁰¹ Martin Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking”, p. 356.

Interpreting Jacques Derrida's approach to *Chora*, Richard Coyne connects Plato's third realm to paradox and boundaries. He underlines its role as a *threshold* between the Intelligible and the Sensible, illuminating its *hestial-hermetic* dynamics. For the writer, *chora* as a paradoxical space is also related to the notion of journey, the reception of the stranger, contemplation and participation.¹⁰² The interaction between Hestia and Hermes therefore may creatively contribute to the discussion about the role of boundaries in the experience of the Athonian topography. Focus should be on the role of Hermes as a model of *eccentric* movement. We have already briefly examined Hermes' moving presence along the roads and in the house through the protection of the entrance and the guidance of strangers to the Hestial core. We will now see how these aspects are combined with other qualities of his profile to synthesize the embodied expression of a topography as an interrelation of *hestial* centres through *hermetic* gestures.

Even etymologically Hermes is connected to boundaries. He takes his name from the word "Herma", a pile of stones set on roadsides or on roads' intersections to mark different boundaries. Each passerby threw a stone on the pile, gradually creating the "Herma" that was carrying tracks of previous walks and was open to the future as a sign of the specific boundary. Over the heaps there were usually placed square pillars of the god with a human head on top, called "herms". The "herms" were also used to signal the entrance to a city or a house and to define the boundaries of a market or a territory.¹⁰³ Crossing and transgressing these boundaries are parts of Hermes' dynamic role, connecting his character to the notions of threshold and interpretation.

Therefore for a number of scholars the fourth Homeric Hymn to Hermes depicts an archetypal rite of initiation. Hermes is presented as a new-born baby that grows fast through the transformation of a tortoise's shell into a lyre, the invention of fire sticks and the theft of his brother Apollo's cow, all done during the first night of his life. The next morning he is called to apologize in front of the Gods and during this process he **passes to** another state of maturity

¹⁰² Richard Coyne, *Derrida for Architects*, (London and New York: Routledge), 2011, pp. 61-73.

¹⁰³ Walter Otto, *The Homeric Gods: The Spiritual Significance of Greek Religion*, translated by, Moses Hadas, (Great Britain: Thames & Hudson, 1979), p. 114.

and social status, from a divine childhood to a divine adolescence.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, in the same myth Hermes is connected to a number of other threshold-situations such as trickstering, the production of sound and night-experiences.¹⁰⁵ He is a trickster, a *deconstructor* and a creator of another world through the breaking of rules and the multiplication of meanings.¹⁰⁶ At the same time, his presence allows silence and speech to be engaged in a reciprocal, complementary relationship through the transformation of the tortoise's shell into a lyre and the lyre into a syrinx.¹⁰⁷ For the classisist Sarah Isles Johnston if the lyre is connected to the production of speech, then the syrinx prevents the man who plays it from speaking.¹⁰⁸

Furthermore, he also inhabits the dark passage from one day to another, always accompanying solitary walkers, thieves and dead people. Space and time play an important role in this nocturnal experience, as distances vanish and everything seems "mysteriously remote".¹⁰⁹ Darkness contributes to this experience. Everything is part of an ambiguous void, which the individual knows is not empty, but he/she is always in a state of waiting for a sense of guidance, orientation and navigation. Darkness makes him/her feel either insecure or protected by the things or situations that he/she can experience during the day. Silence also plays an important role in night experience. All seem quite voiceless. Absence of vision makes it difficult for the human to express himself through speech. As Walter Otto says, night makes the individual whisper and sleep, keep quiet and try to feel the environment through his/her hearing, touch and olfaction. As there is no clear boundary between the silent night and the noisier day, Hermes relates himself to this gradual birth of the latter from the former through his constant ability to move and guide during the course of both. In parallel, the connection of Hermes to silence and visibility is also supported through his wearing of the cap of invisibility, also known

¹⁰⁴ See also: Nanno Marinatos, "Striding Across Boundaries: Hermes and Aphrodite as Gods of Initiation", in David B. Dodd and Christopher A. Faraone (eds), *Initiation in Ancient Greek Rituals and Narratives. New Critical Perspectives*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 130-151:

Marinatos also connects Hermes to the initiation rites of puberty held in the sanctuary of Kato Syme on Crete, underlining also his important relation to Aphrodite.

¹⁰⁵ *The Homeric Hymns*, translated with an Introduction, Notes and Glossary of Names by Michael Crudden, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), verses 76-79, p. 47.

¹⁰⁶ See: Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth and Art*, (New York: North Point, 1998).

Hermes is also connected to trade even from the second day of his life when he bargained the lyre with Apollo for the knowledge of prophecy. Bargaining and trade also involves the dynamic interaction between two realms and the distraction of a pre-set order.

¹⁰⁷ *The Homeric Hymns*, verse 420, p. 58.

¹⁰⁸ Sarah Isles Johnston, "Myth, Festival and Poet: The Homeric Hymn to Hermes and Its Performative Context", *Classical Philology*, 97:2 (April 2002), p. 120.

¹⁰⁹ Walter Otto, pp. 118-119.

as the “cap of Hades”. Hermes was able to become invisible: not to be seen and therefore not to be heard. He could observe but not be observed. Hermes is therefore mainly a *guide*, moving fast and showing humans (strangers, walkers, thieves, shepherds, dead) and animals their way day and night.¹¹⁰ He is also a *messenger*, transmitting the messages of Zeus to human beings. Moreover, he is the “Psychopompos” transferring the souls from earth to Hades, and therefore crossing the boundary between life and death.¹¹¹

Hermes’ model thus becomes a way to realise how back-and-forth movement through boundaries influences the experience of a topography, contributing to its division in different episodes and at the same time to its unification through his movement and his influence in the creation of its aural context. In this sense, sound and silence, light and wind flow through natural and artificial boundaries of the Athonian topography, the openings of which define the intensity of their movement, producing different qualities of aural environment and underlining a dialogical interrelationship between the areas that are divided (and at the same time also united). Human movement and/or non-movement through and/or between the boundaries play an important role in this process. This movement is also connected to the passage from the familiar to the unfamiliar, from the self to the interpretation of the other, something found in the case of the strangers at Athos. In parallel, it may also include the return process to the familiar and the self again.

Therefore Martin Heidegger relates *hermeneutics* (interpretation) to Hermes as he crosses or transgresses the boundaries carrying a *hidden message* from the one realm to the other and vice versa. Hermes is not only about the encounter between a self and another, but also about their dynamic interaction. In this sense, for Heidegger “hermeneutics means not just the

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 109-110: The shepherds of Ithaca make offerings to him and in Iliad, Phorbas’ possession of rich flocks is connected to Hermes’ expression of sympathy.

¹¹¹ In this sense, in Odyssey he guides the dead suitors to the place of the underworld assigned to them. At the same time, he is also the one that leads an individual from the underworld to the mundane world. In the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, for example, we read about the return of her daughter Persephone from Hades under the guidance of Hermes. On this see: *The Homeric Hymns*, verses 335-340, p. 16:

He [Zeus] sent the Slayer of Argos who bears the rod of gold/
To bring Hades round with soft words and holy
Persephone lead/From the murky gloom to the light amongst the other gods,/So that her mother, or seeing
her, might desist from her wrath./ Hermes did not disobey, but speedily hurtled down/ At once from
Olympos’ seat to the hidden places of earth;

See also Walter Otto, pp. 116-118: The writer argues that for ancient Greeks, the dead were also wandering during the night, gathered at the edge of the roads or on their intersections, always guided by Hermes adding to both his nocturnal and silent qualities.

interpretation but even before it, the bearing of message and tidings".¹¹² Hermeneutics is about a dialogue of constant inquiry.¹¹³

The expression "hermeneutic" derives from the Greek verb *hermeneuein*. That verb is related to the noun *hermeneus*, which is referable to the name of the god Hermes by a playful thinking that is more compelling than the rigor of science. Hermes is the divine messenger. He brings the message of destiny; *hermeneuein* is that exposition which brings tidings because it can listen to a message.¹¹⁴

Passing through a threshold set on a boundary the individual is able to interpret the world of the other side, opening a dialectical relationship with it, during which he tries to read and understand the events which are different from his own sphere. In this sense, hermetic dynamics of the topography's experience are also connected to the notion of *liminality*, as this was presented and connected to social rituals by the anthropologists Victor and Edith Turner.¹¹⁵

In particular, Victor Turner connects social rituals and dramas with the theory of the rites of passage of the Belgian folklorist Arnold Van Gennep. Rites of passage are rituals "which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age".¹¹⁶ According to van Gennep they are divided in three different stages: departure, *liminal*, return. *Limen* means threshold, and thus *liminality* refers to the spatio-temporal event of the passage through the threshold(s) that connect(s) and divide(s) two social structures (*structure* and *antistructure* according to his words). *Liminality* is directly connected to a number of different boundaries of a sacred topography.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, translated by Peter D. Hertz, (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper and Row Publishers, 1971), p. 29.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p. 31.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.29.

¹¹⁵ For the "liminal" character of Hermes see also: Paul Friedrich, *The Meaning of Aphrodite*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), Appendix 8 "Hermes and Aphrodite; Odysseus and Helen", pp. 205 & 206.

¹¹⁶ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-structure*, (Chicago, Illinois: Aldine, 1969), p. 94.

¹¹⁷ For Turner these boundaries are closer to the definite character of the border, as he also believes that the distinction between "secular" and "sacred" is quite clear. This research underlines also that the boundaries between these qualities are blurred creating also hybrid experiences in which the character of the inside comes closer to that of the outside and vice versa. Nevertheless, the notion of *liminality* is worthy of examination here to help clarify the way different kinds of movement penetrate the boundaries of Athonian topography.

Turner also introduces the term liminoid phenomena, to describe those quasi-liminal phenomena that play an important role in contemporary societies, saying "they are collective, concerned with calendrical, biological and social process; they reflect the collective experience of a community over time; and they may be said to be "functional" or "eufunctional", even when they seem to "invert" status hierarchies found in the nonliminal domain" (p 491). Their presence became dominant in developed and developing countries mainly after industrialization and mechanization. According to the writer, such a phenomenon may be an art-exhibition or the painting of a portrait and the writing of a novel (p 492).

Entering the *liminal* phase the individual is *betwixt* and *between* all familiar lines of classification".¹¹⁸ Passing through this "threshold" he/she is neither in his/her former framework nor in his/her destination's one.¹¹⁹ He/she is in an intermediate state during which he/she is able to be actively engaged in the whole process, aiming most of the time at participation in a shared event of ritual place during which the sense of the community is redefined from a more objectified to a more inter-subjective one. He/she aims to experience *communitas*, a kind of social "communion of equal individuals".¹²⁰ During this process the individual interacts with the other elements that penetrate the boundaries (sound, light, smells, silence), experiencing the hermetic dynamics of a place that can be seen as an essay of different penetrable limits.

The creation of a "sensory code", therefore, conditions the performance of a religious place/landscape in which gestures, ritual movements, music and also the flow of light and incense interact with the presence of the participants creating a dynamic field of discourse.¹²¹ Notions such as improvisation and interpretation play an important role in this process, as different groups of people may be embodied attendants of the activities.¹²² The "framing" process always plays an important role in the event. Spatial, temporal, sonic and imaginary boundaries demarcate the field in a dynamic way.

Victor Turner also connected van Gennep's theory to pilgrimage, a major component of Mount Athos' character.¹²³ In respect to the rites of passage, pilgrimage is also divided into the three main phases of separation, journey to and stay at the sacred place and re-integration into everyday life. Pilgrimage therefore is also a peripheral phenomenon that regards this movement from a "familiar place" to a "far place" and the return to the former one. Peripherality of pilgrimage is connected to the notion of liminality, as the "negation of many of the features of

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 2.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 3.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 127.

¹²¹ Victor Turner, Victor Turner, "Frame, Flow and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality", *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 6:4 (December, 1979), p. 469.

¹²² *Ibid*.

¹²³ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-structure*, (Chicago, Illinois: Aldine Publishing Company), 1969 p. 94.

preliminal social structures and an affirmation of another order of things, stressing generic rather particularistic relationships”.¹²⁴

In this sense, according to Casey, boundaries are *intrinsically permeable and porous edges* that can be divided into three main categories: the elemental boundaries, the external boundaries and the internal ones. The first category comprises the four basic parameters of place-worlds: the horizon, the sea, the sky and the earth that usually constitute a natural landscape or seascape. Moreover, the external boundary is an integral part of a natural scene, coinciding most of the time with its outer natural edge. Finally, the internal boundaries relate to an edge or a set of edges that inscribe different elements of the interior of a landscape and can be both natural and constructed.¹²⁵

The thesis also suggests the important role of the aural environment of the topography as a shared zone between the perceiver and the perceived. The philosopher Gernot Böhme uses the term “atmosphere” to describe this intermediate zone that plays an important role in embodied perception.¹²⁶ According to his words: “atmosphere (...) is the reality of the perceived as the sphere of its presence and the reality of the perceiver, insofar as in sensing the atmosphere s/he is bodily present in a certain way”.¹²⁷ Standing between subjects and objects, atmospheres become of vital importance for the experience of the topography. Hence, the aural environment is an important liminal zone that characterises the experience of the topography synthesizing

¹²⁴ Victor Turner, “The Centre Out There: Pilgrim’s Goal”, *History of Religions*, 12:3 (Feb., 1973), pp. 213-215. Focusing on the example of the pilgrim the writer describes in a characteristic way the liminality of his/her experience:

As in the liminality of initiation rites, such an actor-pilgrim is confronted by sequences of sacred objects and participates in symbolic activities which he believes are efficacious in changing his inner and, sometimes, hopefully, outer condition from sin to grace, or sickness to health. He hopes for miracles and transformations, either of soul or body. As we have seen, in the pilgrim’s movement toward the “holy of holies”, the central shrine, the route becomes increasingly sacralized as he progresses: at first it is his subjective mood of penitence that is important while the many long miles he covers are mainly secular, everyday miles; then sacred symbols begin to invest the route; while in the final stages the route itself becomes sacred, sometimes mythical journey until almost every landmark and ultimately every step is a condensed, multivocal symbol capable of arousing much affect and desire. No longer is the pilgrim’s sense of the sacred private; it is a matter of objectified collective representations which become virtually his whole environment and give him powerful motives for credence.

¹²⁵ See both of the essays: Edward, S. Casey, “The Edge(s) of Landscape: A Study in Liminology”, in Jeff Malpas (ed), *The Place of Landscape. Concepts, Contexts, Studies*, (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2011), pp. 91-110 and Edward S. Casey, “Border versus Boundary at La Frontera”, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29:3, pp. 384 – 398.

¹²⁶ Gernot Böhme, “Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics”, *Thesis Eleven*, 36 (1993), pp. 113-126.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 122.

sounds, light, wind, incense, (natural or artificial) material objects and human movements. It opens the opportunity of *attunement* between the different components of a place-event. Transgression qualities of this intermediate zones are connected to “sudden” entering of “outside” entities that are experienced as dissonances at the beginning and may gradually be harmonically incorporated or expelled.

In the case of Mount Athos, we can find the hermetic interconnection of these categories of liminal zones that is also theologically supported by the patristic approach to the liminal character of *ascesis*. Hence, the early Christian writer Clement of Alexandria underlines the parallels of the dynamic combination of positive and negative theologies to the role that Hermes played in the Ancient Greek religious tradition (*Stromata*, 6). In the same way that Hermes has the ability to conceal hidden meanings by “breaking the code”, negative theology gives the individual the opportunity to penetrate the mystery through a negative deconstruction. The paradoxical coexistence of knowledge and not-knowledge of God becomes a way to realize (also in an embodied way) the possibility of another world. For Clement this is also connected to the ancient Greek initiatory rituals of purification. In both cases a process of “abstraction” is fulfilled, aiming at a paradoxical understanding of things that seem incomprehensible, and “beyond” the experienced reality.¹²⁸ As we will see later, these ideas were gradually incorporated into the writing of later Christian writers and evolved into hesychasm, the ascetic way of life mainly practised on Mount Athos.

In this sense, the external periphery of the semi-independent peninsula is a combination of the natural coast-line and an artificial fence along its neck, the crossing of which is controlled by a number of rules. Furthermore, movement through a number of internal (natural and artificial) boundaries dynamically enhances the experience of the topography. The silent ascetic inhabitation of the natural caves and walking along the footpaths are active parts of this experience. In addition, different artificial boundaries also play an important role in the topography. These may be spatial, as in the case of the built walls of the church or the surrounding wall of a coenobitic monastery. They may also be of temporal character as the difference between “sacred” and secular time has always been connected to notions such as

¹²⁸ On this see: Raoul Mortley, *From Word to Silence: The Way of Negation, Christian and Greek*, Volume Two, (The University of Michigan Press, 1986), 1986. Electronic publication: <http://epublications.bond.edu.au>, Chapter 2: The First Christian Negative Theology: Justin and Clement.

eternity, repetition and cosmogony. In this sense the Christian Festive Calendar divides the Athonian year according to the recollection and celebration of specific feasts, giving time a more sacred, ritual character. Moreover, the liminal zone of Athonian aural atmosphere includes a number of sonic markers, as for example the ringing of a bell may signal the beginning of a ritual, or different kinds of chanting may follow the organisation of the sub-rituals of a service. Furthermore, *hesychast* practice also fires the creation of meaningful silent atmospheres that reciprocally interact with the former ones. Finally, a number of imaginary boundaries are also crossed during the interaction of the individual with the topography, sometimes coinciding also with the crossing of other kinds of boundaries. The two main imaginary boundaries are the one dividing the sacred from the profane (usually realised by the monks and some of the pilgrims), and the other between the unfamiliar and the familiar (mostly experienced by the strangers).

Georg Simmel's model of the door as an expression of a *liminal* experience illuminates the way the closing or opening of a door may allow or block the entrance to a field.¹²⁹ Therefore, whereas in the case of the open door the threshold functions as part of the penetrable boundary, when the door is closed this boundary may be transformed into a clear border: a limit the crossing of which is not allowed. It is usually the insider that controls the closing of the door leaving the outsiders (or some of them) outside the territory that belongs to him/her. In this sense, an area can be clearly demarcated by what is beyond it or/and divided into different zones in which not everyone or everything is allowed to enter. For example, the rules that control the crossing of the general periphery of Mount Athos make it closer to the character of a border. At the same time the cells of the monks are the places where they practise silent prayer and therefore outsiders and "aimless" noises are not allowed to cross its boundaries.

Human dwelling and penetration (crossing, transgressing, and flowing-through) thus become the two components of the Athonian topography on which this study aims to focus to underline important qualities of a sacred topography. As indicated in the first section of this chapter, dwelling is more connected to a Hestial sense of a bounded place that is open to different possibilities of human experience. This opening is supported by the hermetic qualities of penetrating the different boundaries that define the sense of belonging of the local ascetic community and allow the stranger to enter.

¹²⁹ Georg Simmel, "Bridge and Door", *Theory, Culture & Society*, 11 (February 1994), pp. 5-10.

Therefore, for the Athonians the dwelling is mostly connected to silence and communal rituals as these are included in the framework of hesychasm, an ascetic way of life that is based on the silent recitation of a short prayer. Moreover, the liturgical chorography of the communal rituals interrelates the embodied movement with the flow of chanting, incense and music through different boundaries. Furthermore, the journey of the strangers (either of pilgrimage character or not), based on the penetration of the general periphery as entrance and exit through its ports, becomes part of the aforementioned three-partite division of their experience. During the liminal stage of their travel, interaction with the bounded spaces (access to some of which is not allowed) is also part of their stay, involving them in a process of interpretation: to encounter the different (liturgical) environment and possibly open an embodied discourse with it.

Chapter Two

Liminality and the Movement of the Athonian *Hesychast. Xeniteia, Ritual and Silence.*

Introduction

This chapter examines the role of embodied movement in *hesychasm* through the notions of *xeniteia*, communal ritual and silence. Focus is on how the different aspects of eastern ascetic tradition enhance the liminal dynamics of sacred topography, either through the penetration of a number of different boundaries or through the creation of a religious aural environment that is always in-between the different components of place.

According to the philosopher Karsten Harries, the story of the Fall relates to the “lure of freedom that challenges the binding power of place”.¹³⁰ Adam and Eve refused to stay in their *assigned place* and chose to open themselves to the unknown.¹³¹ This opening to uprootedness, described in the Old Testament, was transformed in the Christian tradition into the search for the homeland of Paradise with the birth and life of Jesus Christ, as described in the New Testament. Through His life, from the Incarnation to the Resurrection, the New Adam prefigured, in Christian theology, an ideal life-path that monks and laymen have to follow. This search for an “authentic” dwelling influences the way Christian architecture has been conceived and developed since medieval times. Through the embodied interpretation of natural boundaries, such as the peaks of mountains as part of the skyline, or caves and man-made boundaries (walls, roofs, floors), sonic (bells) and temporal (festive calendar), human beings have tried to open the possibility of a place, the interaction with which could contribute to their movement.

¹³⁰ The basis of the patristic approach to the human being is the story of the fall of Adam and Eve and their ejection from Eden. The individual is trying to **bridge** the distance that separates him/her from God, through his/her spiritual struggles following the paradigm of the new Adam, Christ.

On this see:

Nonna, Verna, Harrison, “The human person as image and likeness of God”, in Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (eds), *The Cambridge Companion of Orthodox Christian Theology*, (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 78.

Homily attributed to St Symeon the New Theologian, *Homilies, First Oration*, third Russian Edition, (Moscow, 1892), p. 23 as quoted in: Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, Volume 1, translated by Anthony Gythiel with selections translated by Elizabeth Meyendorff, (Crestwood NY, 10707 – 1699: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1992.

¹³¹ Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1997), p. 168.

This is also connected to *hesychasm*, an ascetic way of life characteristic of Athonian monasticism. There, the monk seeks to distance himself from the mundane world and to communicate with the *divine*. The body plays an active part in this process, as it is not considered to be the “prison” of the soul but is included in the process of a holistic *transfiguration*, fulfilled through solitary and communal ascetic life. Religious places “speak” about this possible experience of the “authentic” (also ineffable and unapproachable) by materializing a sense of *belonging* to a community.

Encounter with the other, either the wholly (divine) Other, or the human-other, becomes of major importance for Christian theology which is also connected to the notions of distance and boundary. Encounter is fulfilled after an “I” has bridged the distance that separates him/her from the other and is usually related to the passage through a (mystical) *threshold* event and the interpenetration of his/her sphere with the other. Therefore, the experience of the natural landscape and the monastic architecture on Mount Athos is based on an embodied practice of *hesychasm*, mainly expressed through silent prayer and communal rituals. In this sense, focusing on the ritual performance at the heart of the monastery, the main church, the whole complex is organised to support an ascetic life in which a “*liturgy after the Liturgy*” is held on all its different levels, such as individual and collective prayer, daily work or meals.¹³²

The Movement of the Ascetic: *Hesychasm* and *Xeniteia*

Hesychasm derives from the Greek word for calmness or tranquillity (*ησυχία-hesychia*) and it is based on the ceaseless repetition of the *Jesus prayer* (‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, the sinner’). By the repetition of this 12-word phrase, the prayer may be used any time, whether the individual is alone or with other people. Its simplicity allows it *to turn* easily *inward*, leading to the desired silence that is considered to be a path towards God with intense mystical qualities.¹³³

¹³² The limit that defines the personal sphere of each individual (monk, ascetic) is not a clear one as it is included in this idea of this liturgical “me and we”. For the Athonians, each monk has his/her own cell, stall and grave. These units have specific built boundaries that are connected to the personal, silent, mystical movement of the monk towards God. At the same time the limits of these units are to a point penetrable interacting with the communal experience of the topography in which they belong.

¹³³ Graham Speake, *Mount Athos. Renewal in Paradise*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), p.3.

Mysticism involves the religious experiences that aim at the *encounter with an ultimate (divine) reality* and in which a sense of unity plays an important role.¹³⁴ The term derives from the ancient Greek word for initiate, *myein*, meaning ‘to conceal’, that was connected to ‘secret’ religious events in which people were initiated by passing through a number of trials. The term was later connected in Christian theology with the hidden meanings of religious texts, divine presences in religious events and the above transformative experiences. Difficult to orient historically, the birth of mysticism can be placed, according to the theologian Robert Ellwood, in the so-called ‘eastern’ religious traditions, such as Shamanism, but also in Ancient Greece with the Pre-Socratics and the following tradition of different mysteries, such as the Eleusinian.¹³⁵ Gradually, all the “founder religions”, like Christianity and Buddhism, and also Judaism and Hinduism, incorporated mystical qualities that in some cases evolved into important parts of their religious expression.¹³⁶ In this respect, the theologian Geoffrey Parrinder makes an interesting categorization of mystical experiences.¹³⁷ He argues that mysticism can be divided into three different types. First, there is “theistic mysticism” in which the individual seeks a gradual union with God but not identity (*communion*). This is mainly found in Christianity, Judaism and Islam.¹³⁸ The second one is “monistic mysticism” in which the individual tries to be united with a universal principle that may be considered as “divine”. This is mainly found in eastern traditions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism. Finally, there is also a “nonreligious mysticism”, in which the individual seeks union with someone, or something, rather than being alone.¹³⁹ Mysticism is also connected with the idea of paradox which refers to the notions of unexpected, illogical and contradiction, used as a way for the different traditions to interpret the movement

¹³⁴ Robert Ellwood, *Mysticism and Religion*, (New York & London: Seven Bridges Press), p. 39.

For a critical approach to the term “mysticism” see also: Richard Coyne: “Mystery philosopher fakes own death” and “The One and the Many” in his blog: <http://richardcoyne.com>.

¹³⁵ For the philosophy of the Pre-Socratics read: Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers*. (USA & Canada: Routledge, 1982), (First Publication: 1979).

¹³⁶ For a brief history of mysticism see: Robert Ellwood, pp. 54-74.

¹³⁷ This categorization incorporates previous approaches such as the one of Rudolf Otto that distinguishes two types of religious experiences: the numinous and the mystical, with the latter into two further categories: the introspection of soul mysticism and the unifying vision of God mysticism. On this see: Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism: East and West. A Comparative Analysis of the Nature of Mysticism*, (London: MacMillan and Co. Limited, 1932), pp 38-42.

¹³⁸ On Neoplatonism and Christian Religion see: Andrew, Louth, *The Origins of Christian Mysticism*, (Oxford University Press, 2007).

On Neoplatonism and Jewish Religion see: Lenn E. Goodman (ed), *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, (New York: State University of New York, 1992).

On Neoplatonism and Muslim Religion see: Parviz , Morewedge (ed), *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, (New York: State University of New York, 1992).

¹³⁹ Geoffrey Parrinder, *Mysticism in the World’s Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 15.

It has to be underlined at this point that interpenetration between these categories is common, as mystical experience is a complex phenomenon with an intense personal character.

towards the ineffable, something bodily realized through different techniques, both on the personal and communal level. On the one hand, personal techniques usually include the practice of silence followed by rhythmical breathing, a certain body posture or the repetition of a specific word or phrase. On the other hand, mystics are usually part of a wider (religious) context that dynamically interacts with their efforts through the conduct of communal religious actions. These actions are also based on the interpretation of the paradoxical movement towards the *invisible* and its relation to the specific dogma. They use an intensely symbolic language (textual, architectural, musical, choregraphical) mostly based on the dynamic combination of polarities such as (ritual) movement-stillness and (ritual) sound-silence. Athonian hesychasm includes a mystical dimension as individual and communal practices aim at a psycho-somatic transformation.

This thesis examines how the mystical qualities of Athonian life influence the formation and experience of the topography. Communal rituals and silence are dynamically interconnected through the practices of monks and pilgrims combining the built structures and the natural landscape into a harmonic whole. Either connected to personal meditation or to communal initiation rites, mysticism as a transformative process aiming at a communion with God enhances the arguments of this thesis and illuminates the role of embodied movement in the peninsula.¹⁴⁰

Hence *hesychasm*, which is mainly connected to the Eastern Christian church, is theologically based on the paradoxical combination of a positive and a negative, or *apophatic*, theology according to which God is simultaneously known and unknown, experienced and not-experienced.¹⁴¹ The final stage of a *hesychast* experience is believed to be an embodied realization of this paradox.¹⁴² This philosophical framework was gradually introduced by

¹⁴⁰ In a discussion that I had with Andrew Louth, Professor of Patristic and Byzantine Studies of the University of Durham, he underlined the difference between Eastern Christian mystical qualities and one of the other eastern traditions (i.e. Buddhism). He suggested that hesychasm includes mystical elements in terms of “a transformative embodied process aiming at a communion with God”.

¹⁴¹ After the schism, during the eleventh century, the Christian Catholic church rejected *hesychasm* as focusing more on the communal experiences of the divine.

¹⁴² An important academic debate on the relation between paradox and the negative language of Pseudo-Dionysius is held between the philosopher Jacques Derrida and the philosopher of religion Jean Luc Marion that uses the works of Pseudo-Dionysius to bring back the issue of the “unthinkable” and “impossible” in the post-modern era. In particular, through his theory of deconstruction and “différance”, Derrida argues that the “essential trait” of negative theology is “passing the limit, then crossing a frontier”. For him apophaticism is about the desire of going-beyond and

Christian writers such as St. Dionysius the Areopagite, St. John the Climacus, and St. Symeon the New Theologian and was established as the main ascetic practice of Eastern Christianity during the 14th century through the life and the writings of St. Gregory Palamas.¹⁴³ According to Eastern Christian theology, God is a “mystery”, for which humans *should eternally search*, a mystery that cannot be fully disclosed and fully hidden at the same time.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, during the pivotal moments of the communication with the divine, the individual is on the threshold of knowing and not knowing, on that intermediate zone that polarities dynamically coexist, open to a possible *divine contemplation (theosis)*.¹⁴⁵ This is theologically related to the event of the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ. [Figure 2.1] In particular, in the New Testament it is mentioned that Jesus asked the apostles Peter (Πέτρος), John (Ιωάννης) and James (Ιάκωβος) to follow Him towards the peak of a mountain. Arriving there, they witnessed Christ’s *transfiguration*. As he

experiencing that which is above language, the ineffable. The work of Pseudo-Dionysius or Meister Eckhart open the way for Derrida towards a general apophaticism. The “impossible” is preserved in the refusal of language to name it; it is a constant striving to the fulfilment of the desire for the Other, a desire that cannot be really expressed through language (silence).

On the other hand, Jean Luc Marion rejects the term “negative” and replaces it with the word “mystical”, arguing that “mystical” theology is about the combination of three different “qualities” of language: positive, negative and “praise”, that “concerns a form of speech which no longer says something about something (or a name of someone), but which denies all relevance to predication rejects the nominative function of names, and suspends the rule of truth’s two values” “Praise” is directed to God that surpasses Being. It focuses on the reference to the Other “without securing any final meaning for God”, illuminating the importance of the notion of “distance” and connecting it to a “theology of absence” (a calling, a reference, a direction towards). For Marion the theologian is listening to the call of the Other; it is to “silence the Name and in this way let it give us one”. For Marion this allows the individual to have a paradoxical, “counter-experience”, a non-ordinary experience during which he/she has the ability to feel a spiritual presence. For this debate see also:

J. Derrida, *On the Name*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), (First publication in French: 1993).

H. Coward and T. Foshay (eds) *Derrida and Negative Theology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998).

J.D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 51.

J. L. Marion, “In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking of “Negative Theology”, in John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon, *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, The Indiana Series of the Philosophy of Religion, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 20-42.

J.L. Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, translated by T.A. Carlson, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002),.

Louise Nelstrop, Kevin Magill and Bradley B. Onishi, *Christian Mysticism. An Introduction to Contemporary Theoretical Approaches*, (Surrey, England: 2009), the Chapter: “Exploring Negative Language through Pseudo-Denys: Derrida and Marion”, pp. 225-240.

¹⁴³ Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite*, (London: Continuum, 2001).

John, Chryssavgis, *John Climacus – From the Egyptian Desert to the Sinaite Mountain*, (England: Ashgate, 2004).

Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, (New York: Routledge, 1999).

John, Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality*, translated by Adele Fiske, (Crestwood, New York 10707: St. Valdimir’s Seminary Press, 1998).

¹⁴⁴ Paul, Evdokimof, *Orthodoxy*, (Athens: Rigopoulos Editions, 1965), p.17.

See also: Vladimir, Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1991), (First Publication: 1957), pp. 36 & 38.

¹⁴⁵ Payne, Paul, Daniel, *The Revival of political Hesychasm in Greek Orthodox thought: A study of the Hesychast basis of the thought of John S. Romanides and Christos Yannaras*, PhD thesis, Institute of Church – State studies, Baylor University, 2007, p. 140.

was praying, “his face was illuminated resembling the sun and his clothes became white as the light”, disclosing part of his holiness to his disciples. Moreover, he was flanked by the prophets Moses and Elijah. After a while, Peter suggested building three tents for Jesus and the prophets in order to stay there and eternally preserve the revealing event. Suddenly, they were overshadowed by a cloud and a voice was heard: “This is my beloved Son. He is the one you should listen to”. The cloud and the prophets disappeared and the disciples started going down the mountain listening to Jesus’ commandment not to tell anyone about their experience until his resurrection. (Mark 9:2-13) According to St. Gregory Palamas, Christ’s transfiguration paved the way for the possibility of *theosis*. *Theosis* for St. Gregory can be part of the devotee’s life and it usually involves the experience of the “uncreated light”: a *white* light that can be felt, according to him, on both the material and psychological levels.¹⁴⁶ Thus, as we will see in the following chapters these ideas are also conveyed through the formation and experience of art and architecture but also through the different qualities of the Athonian aural environment. For example, Byzantine icon painting is based on the event of the transfiguration and on the way hidden religious meanings can be communicated through the painting and the veneration of an icon, adding to the dynamics of the walls on which frescoes are painted.



Figure 2.1: Christ’s Transfiguration (Icon, Twentieth Century).

¹⁴⁶ This non-dualistic approach of embodied experience is also connected to the writings of St. John of the Ladder that distinguishes the body from the flesh (*σάρξ* – *sarx*). On St. John Climacus, see: John, Chryssavgis, *John Climacus – From the Egyptian Desert to the Sinaite Mountain*, (England: Ashgate, 2004).

For *hesychasm*, this transfiguration is also fulfilled through *xeniteia*. *Xeniteia* derives from the Greek word for stranger (*xenos*) and relates to the detachment from the mundane sphere, being also connected to the ancient Greek notion of ‘*amerimnia*’ (lack of worries) and the Latin one of *peregrination* and therefore to pilgrimage.¹⁴⁷ The gradual movement from the familiar self to the unfamiliar Other, searching for a divine homeland is also found in the Scriptures. In particular, in the Old Testament Abraham followed God’s commandment and left his country and his relatives, going to an unknown land.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, in the New Testament Jesus connects peregrination to the eschatological aim of Christian life: “And everyone who has left houses of brothers or sisters or father or mother, or wife, or children or lands, for my name’s sake will receive a hundredfold and inherit eternal life” (Matthew 19:29).¹⁴⁹

In this *hesychast peregrination* embodied **movement** and **stability** are interconnected, as detachment from everyday life is believed to be a *continuous roaming* aiming at *stability in God*.¹⁵⁰ Repetitive (individual or communal) rituals and silence express the above coexistence of polarities, opening also to the interpretation of the stranger. The archetype of the journey experienced through the daily repetition of the same rituals is combined with the Neo-Platonic linear progression towards a higher existential realm. Their combination results in a spiral spatio-temporal movement. Each service is an embodied re-reading of a ritual that aims at a new understanding that is hopefully closer to a *theosis* experience.¹⁵¹ This is expressed in the

¹⁴⁷ A *peregrinus* was a “man wandering far away from his home and relatives, in strange countries”. Its origin is the word *peregre* which means “faraway, beyond lands”. This word is a compound constituted by the word *per* which means “through” and the word *ager* which means “field, country, land”. Hence, a *peregrinus* was a *stranger* coming from his homeland and *passing through* a foreign land. The notion of pilgrimage derives etymologically from the word *peregrination*. In this sense, during pilgrimage the individual **moves through** foreign landscapes trying to fulfil an existential search for the sacred. While conducting a pilgrimage he/she redefines his/her relationship to the past through participation in processes that have been held for a long period of time and are usually based on the reactualisation of religious past events. On this see: Bertalan, Pustzai, *Religious Tourists. Constructing Authentic Experiences in Late Modern Hungarian Catholicism*, (Jyvaskylan: JYVASKYLAN YLIOPISTO, 2004), p. 27.

¹⁴⁸ Marco, Toti, “The Inner Dimension of Pilgrimage” in Rene Gothoni and Graham Speake (eds), *The Monastic Magnet: Roads to and from Mount Athos*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008), pp.110-111.

¹⁴⁹ As quoted in Marco, Toti, p. 111.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 116.

¹⁵¹ On the distinction between the “Ideas” and the sensible things in Plato see: Plato, *Timaeus*, translated by R. G. Bury, (London: Harvard University Press, 1981), paragraphs 27-29, pp. 48-55.

On this movement from the natural world to the “One” in the Neoplatonic tradition see:

Plotinus, *Enneads*, translated by Stephen McKenna, (London: Faber and Faber, 1956), Especially the First Ennead, Third Tractate, entitled: “On Dialectic” and the Second Tractate of the same Ennead, entitled: “On Virtue”.

Thomas Whittaker, *The Neo-platonists. A Study in the History of Hellenism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1918), Chapter IV: The Mysticism of Plotinus, pp.98-106.

For a general framework on Neo-platonic aesthetics see:

way the coenobitic monastery is organised to allow both the conduct of circular, repetitive communal rituals and the more static silent meditation of the monks. Both of these bodily actions are always in a reciprocal relationship depicting the spiral qualities of the ascetic life and illuminating the important role of boundaries in the orchestration of the different movements.

This is also connected to the way the anthropologists Victor and Edith Turner interpreted pilgrimage through its relationship to the rites of passage. The writers also suggest the dynamic interrelation of pilgrimage and monasticism. Mysticism is an inner pilgrimage from earthly-mundane life to communion with God. Monks left their homes, conducting a life-long pilgrimage during which they experience “transition” and “potentiality” through the *liminal* phase of daily ‘journeys’ of prayer. The Turners see in pilgrimage a vivid co-existence of human inner processes and external sacred context. This idea is also found in the story of Jesus’ transfiguration which clearly includes the three stages of departure, liminality and return. As is well known, the monks organise their environment according to the service of their “pilgrimages”. Following the archetype of journey, this kind of life has an intense liminal character, during which the individual passes through different stages aiming to reach a kind of spiritual purification. The final stage of *theosis* is usually connected to a sense of boundlessness, the encounter and union with a realm that seems unapproachable from the mundane, everyday world. At the same time, return to the bounded world is considered to be part of such an experience, giving a new meaning to the passage through the return-threshold (as the individual is considered to be transformed). Furthermore, this model is also connected to a re-definition of different boundaries that the perpetually moving body-subject may cross or transgress and leave behind.¹⁵² This is very important for the *topoi* examined in this thesis as they are by definition

Liana De Girolami Cheney and John Hendrix (eds), *Neoplatonic Aesthetics. Music, Literature and the Visual Arts*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004).

¹⁵² See Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with the Thousand Faces*, (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004):

These ideas also follow the “archetype of hero’s journey” as this was presented by Joseph Campbell in the sense of a mythological adventure during which the individual is called to an existential quest moving from the known realm to the unknown one. The model has the characteristics of a rite of passage, being also divided into three main stages: departure – initiation – return. In this sense, the hero is called to adventure by an external event or messenger. If he/she is committed to the quest, he/she usually receives a “supernatural aid” from a guide or a mentor that prepares him/her to go through the adventurous journey. The hero, then, *crosses the threshold*, passing from the light of the known to the darkness of the unknown, a process that ends with the stage of the “belly of the whale”, the final separation from the everyday world and self and the opening to the possibility of new ones (womb-like image: a sphere of rebirth). From this point, the phase of initiation starts with the “road of trials”, during which the hero deals with a number of trials and tests on his way to a future fulfilment of his/her quest.¹⁵² Gradually the hero/heroine reaches “apotheosis”, or “deification” as he/she gains a kind of divine knowledge, experiencing a transformation in the way he realises and interprets the different parts of his/her experience. His/her quest is fulfilled at the stage of

connected to a sense of a bounded field of embodied action. As we will see later, the dynamic character of their periphery is also supported by the silent or ritual movements through it.

One of the most important spatial boundaries in Christian tradition is the “veil” placed between the Holy of the Holies and the rest of the Tabernacle built by Moses in the desert according to the instructions of God.¹⁵³ (Exodus 25-40). With the passage of time, this veil-paradigm has been transformed. In the New Testament we find the tearing of the veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of the Holies of Solomon’s Temple (an iconic translation of Moses’ Tabernacle) during Christ’s death (Luke 23:45). This tearing symbolizes the new ways of the communication between God and humans that were introduced by the Incarnation of Christ and the opening of Paradise (Heavenly Jerusalem) to all the people. The transformation of the veil into a more transparent surface is also included in the way hesychast tradition has dealt with the role of boundaries in Christian life. Starting from the important role of the iconostasis in the church, the paradigm of the veil is carried by different liminal events, such as the walls of a monastery or the general periphery of Mount Athos, the sonic boundaries of the daily programme and so forth.

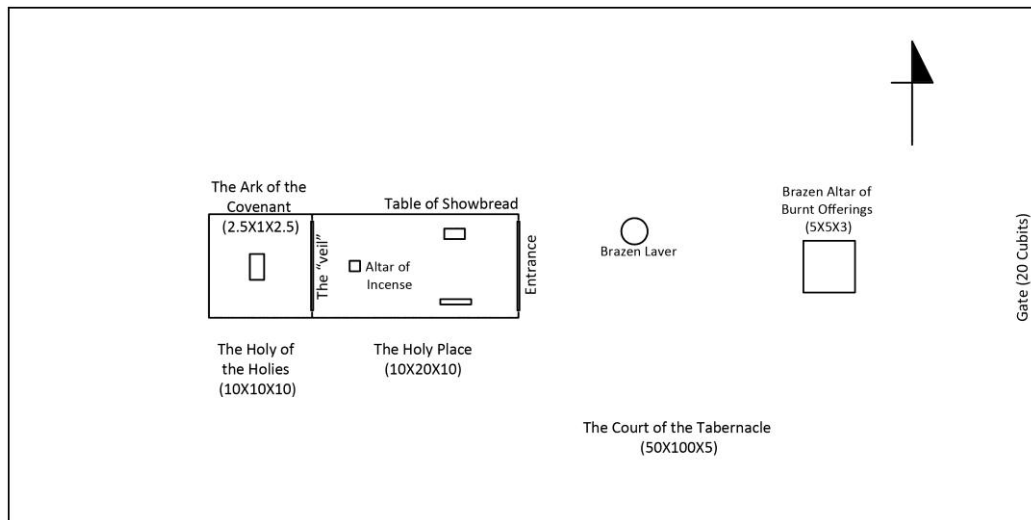


Figure 2.2: The Tabernacle (drawing by author).

the “ultimate boon”, the preparation for which was served by the previous ones. At this point and after a specific critical event (i.e. a final battle) he/she meets the goal of his/her adventure. From this point onwards the return process begins. Passing through the threshold again he/she “carries” the “boon” and is usually also guided by someone. Re-entering the known world he/she has to remember the wisdom of his/her adventure and share it with the rest of the world.

¹⁵³ See: Exodus 26:31-33:

"You shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen; it shall be made with cherubim, the work of a skillful workman. You shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, their hooks also being of gold, on four sockets of silver. You shall hang up the veil under the clasps, and shall bring in the ark of the testimony there within the veil; and the veil shall serve for you as a partition between the holy place and the holy of holies".

Including hesychast qualities in his treatises, therefore, St. Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite (early sixth century) describes in detail the role of boundaries in both the mundane and the angelic spheres, underlining also the co-existence between positive and apophatic theology. In particular, in his essay “The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy” he presents the movement of *the Divine Light* from God to humans in the three stages of purification, illumination and perfection.¹⁵⁴ In this sense, according to Dionysius, the community includes two main categories of people, each of which is further divided into three more groups: the “teaching church” (bishops, priests, deacons), and the “learning church” (the monks, people and the class of catechumens, energumens and penitents). Each of these groups depicts the different stages of a human hierarchy, all the members of which can communicate with God in different ways, depending on their capacity to do this.¹⁵⁵ This was characteristically depicted for St. Dionysius in the organization and experience of the church. In this sense, the church building was already, since his time, divided into a sanctuary and a main church. Only the three orders of ministers were allowed to enter the sanctuary. The monks sat close to the sanctuary and the catechumens, penitents and possessed had to leave the building for the liturgy.¹⁵⁶ Traces of such a hierarchical organization of religious space can still be found in the Athonian topography, especially in the way programmed life is set and expressed in the human interaction with the spaces of the main church, the refectory and the courtyard of a coenobitic monastery.

Liminality is also found in St. Dionysius’ treatise “Mystical Theology”, in which he describes the mystical aspect of the way towards the communion with the “darkness” of God, basing his argument on the Prophet Moses’ ascent of Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments and listen to the description of the Tabernacle. [Figure 2.3] Moses’ ascent to the peak was followed by a movement from what could be seen and felt by the people to what was invisible to them due to a cloud that surrounded the peak (Exodus 24). For Dionysius the passage through this cloud signifies the passage from the mundane to the divine that is the result of a “mystical ascent”, during which the devotee (similarly to Moses) is actively involved in a number of liturgical practices combining his personal struggle with a shared, communal one.¹⁵⁷ This event

¹⁵⁴ Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite*.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 53.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 54-55.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 102-103.

can be considered as a rite of passage with Moses departing from the mundane world, having a liminal transformative experience at the peak and returning to the desert carrying the plaques of the Ten Commandments and building the Tabernacle. A number of different boundaries played a key role in the latter's organization, working as metaphors for the above liminal experience. The "veil" was the most important of them. This is directly connected, for the theologian Vladimir Lossky, to the interrelationship between the positive, embodied realizations of divine knowledge and the dark, negative mystery of God. The search for the latter is followed by the gradual detachment of the visible and his/her possible encounter with the invisible, an *ec-static* (boundless) status, during which the individual is thought to be aware of the "incomprehensibility" of God.¹⁵⁸

Dionysius' emphasis on apophatic theology, liminality and boundaries influenced to a great extent later fathers' lives and works, such as the fourteenth century hesychasts St. Symeon of Thessaloniki and St. Gregory Palamas, and is still found in Mount Athos.¹⁵⁹ Both, Symeon of Thessaloniki and St. Gregory Palamas also underline the importance of a "liturgical veil" that is expressed through different components of a sacred place, the most important of which is the iconostasis. Highlighting the way these "veils" allow the reciprocal interaction between the different planes that they divide, they discuss about the importance of a non-visual communication, illuminating the intangible qualities of a place-event, such as sound and light. For St. Gregory Palamas and the hesychast tradition, while the divine is unknowable in its essence, it can be experienced through a number of manifestations and activities (*ενέργειες*). This paradoxical idea is about liminality and the way polarities co-exist on the peripheries of different planes. Building upon Dionysius' approach to Moses' ascent, Palamas says:

¹⁵⁸ See: Vladimir Lossky, p. 38.

See also St. Maximus the Confessor's approach to human existence, according to which man is a microcosm being *united with* and at the same time *divided from* the macrocosm of the world in which he exists. His/her life may be divided in three phases. First, there is the coming to the perceptive world, then is the **movement**-towards-God and finally his/her constant stay in God. This movement, according to Andrew Louth, is both physical and spiritual.

For Saint Maximus the Confessor see also:

St. Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogia*, Introduction: Dimitru Staniloae, (Athens: Εκδόσεις της Αποστολικής Διακονίας της Ελλάδος/ Apostoliki Diakonia Editions, 1997).

Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy. The Universe according to Maximus the Confessor*, (San Francisco: Communio – Ignatius Press, 1988).

Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, (New York: Routledge, 1999).

Moreover, this idea is directly connected to the Neo-Platonic concept of unity as "the many and the one" at the same time. On this see: James A. Coulter, *The Literary Microcosm. Theories of Interpretation of The Later Neoplatonists*, (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1976), pp. 73-77.

¹⁵⁹ Alexander Golitzin, "Hierarchy versus Anarchy? Dionysius Areopagita, Symeon the New Theologian, Nicetas Stethatos and their Common Roots in Ascetica Tradition", *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 38(1994), pp. 131-179.

When Moses entered the sacred cloud, he saw not only the immaterial tabernacle (which he copied by means of matter) but the very hierarchy of the Thearchy and its properties which through carious material means were depicted by the priesthood of the law. For the tabernacle and everything in it, such as the priesthood, and that which pertains to it, were perceptible symbols, veils of the things that Moses saw in the cloud, but the things themselves were not symbols for “to those who have transcended both impurity and purity” and have entered the mystical cloud, “they appear uncovered” for how could those things be symbols which appear devoid of very covering? And this is why Dionysios begins the Mystical Theology by saying “O Trinity beyond, being, direct us to the highest summit of mystical, where the simple, absolute, and unchanging mysteries of theology are veiled in the brilliant darkness of the cloud”.¹⁶⁰

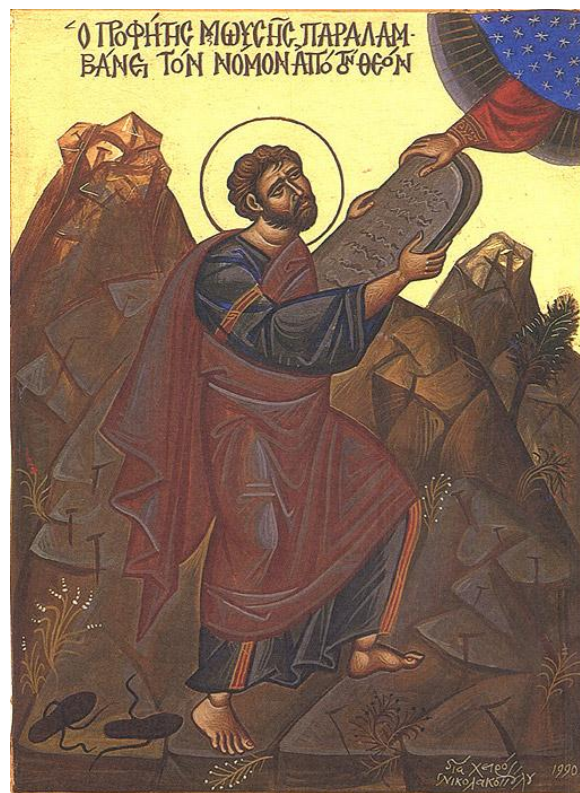


Figure 2.3: Moses Receiving the Ten Commandments at the Peak of the Mountain (Icon, Twentieth Century).

¹⁶⁰ St. Gregory Palamas, *Triads*, 2-3-55, Meyendorff ed. – 2:501 – 3, lines 20-27, 1-9, as quoted in Nicholas Conostas, “Symeon of Thessalonike and the Theology of the Icon-Screen”, in Shara E.J. Gerstel, *Thresholds of the Sacred. Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens*, (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks), 2006, pp. 163-184.

On how St. Dionysius the Areopagite’s ideas about hierarchy and apophatic theology were incorporated in later hesychast writers and applied on the iconostasis boundary see, Nicholas Conostas, pp. 163-184.

This work on the role of boundaries and liminality in the hesychast tradition can be further examined.

Therefore, boundaries and various intermediate zones play an important role in the experience of Athonian topography. They can be considered as metaphors for the above liminal qualities of the hesychast tradition, always open to their gradual transformation through re-telling or deconstruction.¹⁶¹ They are not always depicted in material form, but can be carried and shared through sacred embodied topographies. Therefore the intermediate zones found in Mount Athos support the creation of a general framework in which a sense of hierarchy (lower-higher, visible-invisible, mundane-divine), repetition (sonic and temporal boundaries, rituals) and regulation (monastic rules) is experienced. On the other hand, their penetration through different components (monks, strangers, music, incense etc) is also of major importance, interpreting in an embodied way a *constant union and division* that becomes the heart of the monk's life. It highlights the simultaneous coexistence of the individual and communal aspect of each human that is also a *being-in-relation*, an active member of the monastic community. Communal and individual spaces are kinds of communicative vessels, the penetrable boundaries of which define the realization of the topography.¹⁶²

Playing a key role in the development of Christian asceticism (and thus also *hesychasm*), therefore, Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesaria (370-379), set down a number of **monastic rules** in his treatises: *Longer Rules* and *Shorter Rules*.¹⁶³ They are a set of responses to the questions of his disciples, regarding the way that coenobitic monastic life should be organized. Regulations of admissions and departures, personal property, the role of the superior and the

¹⁶¹Alexei Lidov, "Holy Face, Holy Script, Holy Gate. Revealing the Edessa Paradigm in Christian Imagery", in A. Calderoni Mazetti, C. Dufour Bozzo, G. Wolf (eds), (Venezia, 2007), pp. 129-130.

¹⁶²This is also connected to the idea of "prosopo" (meaning face) and the Trinitarian model of existence, that plays a key role in Christian Orthodox theology. On this see Chapter Nine: The main church (*katholikon*): "Voiceless Presences" and Communal Ritual, Section: The icons on the walls, p. 249.

See also: Aristotle Papanikolaou, "Personhood and its Components in Twentieth-century Orthodox theology", in Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2009, (First Published: 2008), pp. 232-245.

John Zizioulas D, *Being as a Communion in Personhood and the Church*, (Crestwood, New York 10707: St. Vladimir's Press, 1985).

¹⁶³*Hesychasm's* principles can also be found in the biographic accounts of the Desert Fathers of the fourth century and the gradual composition of the first monastic rules, traces of which can also be found in contemporary Athonian *hesychast* practice.

On this see:

Anthony the Great (251-356) combined both solitary and interactive life through semi-anchoretic groups of monks gathered around a spiritual father ('Elder').

Joseph Patrich, Sabas, *Leader of Palestinian Monasticism. A comparative Study in Eastern Monasticism, Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, (United States of America: Dumbarton Oaks, 1995).

Philip Rousseau, *Pachomius. The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt*, (Berkeley – Los Angeles – New York: University of California Press, 1985).

daily life of the monks (including advice on silence, the relation of the monk to the external world, manual work, meals and clothes) organize the general context of monastic life through the setting of a series of boundaries. This model of organized life was also followed by the later Byzantine monasteries through the writing of the foundational documents, the *typika*, which included information about their foundation and daily life. Even today Athonian monasteries live according to these documents which have changed little.¹⁶⁴

Thus, entering the context of a monastic structure, a novice or a visitor has to interact with a different environment from his everyday one. Monastic habits, based on the rules of the foundational documents, organize a general framework of life that relates to a kind of initiation. Programmed life and obligatory participation in communal actions (obedience to the abbot's will, rituals and manual work) create an environment that does not remind the individual of the freer "outside world". Whereas in our everyday life even if we have a number of daily habits (often also called by contemporary scholars rituals), we usually find a way to break this repetition of acts and incorporate in our lives moments of entertainment. In the context of a monastery it seems quite difficult for this to happen, as the life is different but at the same time also connected in its own way to the outer, more "profane" one. Hence, whereas boundaries clearly indicate a general framework of liturgical life, a sense of flexibility in their penetration creates a feeling of fluidity. Characteristically a monk argues: "the different boundaries (even the built ones) are always re-defined through the interaction of the different members of the community. The Abbot plays an important role in this process as he is in charge of the way we live".¹⁶⁵ The monks should live according to the writings of the fathers and the foundational documents, but some of them feel that the role of the boundaries indicated in them is threatened due to the opening of the peninsula to the outside world. This is often the case for the older monks. On the other hand, younger monks feel that Athonian topography is still a place different from the mundane sphere they left, in which the programmed life of communal rituals and personal prayer is served, also allowing interaction with outsiders. This controversy is an expected one, as the changes in the peninsula since 1980s are intense in terms of visitation and technological advance. Even during the three years of my research differences were

¹⁶⁴ Monastic Rules are also found in Western Christianity, the most important of which are the Rules of St. Benedict (480-540) and also in other religious traditions, such as the The Monastic Rules of Theravada and Mahayan Buddhism. On this see: Shanker Thapa, *Buddhist Monasticism in Theory and Practice*, (Walden Book House, 1995).

¹⁶⁵ Third Fieldtrip to Mount Athos: August 2012.

observed in the numbers and kinds of visitors, the experience of the main church and the way silence was experienced in the open spaces.¹⁶⁶

Hence, Athonian topography is an eventful territory that, besides visual interaction, also involves what we feel through the rest of our senses: hearing, smell, touch. Spatial boundaries open a field of communal interaction in which different temporal limits organise a programmed communal life of repetitive rituals. Stillness, solitude and silence are active components of this complex, as Athonians believe that their practice leads to the paradox of positive and negative theology discussed above. Athonian topography is a landscape of *departures* and *arrivals*, as ascetics are preparing themselves to depart from mundane life and move to the divine, a movement during which they usually return to a mundane sphere and redirect themselves again towards the divine. It is an essay of boundaries whose character is always redefined through their penetration. Silent moments in this topography are not considered to be voids, but find their meaning through their mystical dynamics. This sensory topography will be analysed in this thesis through the examination of the *hesychast* qualities of parts of the Athonian natural landscape (desert, mountain, paths), the quasi natural context of the cave and the hermitage and built environment of the coenobitic monastery.

Communal Rituals

Therefore this thesis also examines the role that communal rituals play in the way Athonian topography is bodily realised. It argues that they synthesize different parts of the landscape through the choreographed penetration of built and aural boundaries, also enhancing its liminal dynamics. The Christian orthodox word for sacraments is *mystery*. Whereas a sacrament derives from the Latin word “sacramentum”, meaning a “holy thing or act”, and relates to the distinction between the sacred and the profane, mystery derives from the Greek word for initiate: *myein* referring to a “secret rite; secret worship; a secret thing”, a processional way to achieve participation in the knowledge of the ineffable. This second term is closer to a religious interpretation of the aforementioned “paradox”, also referring to the embodied role of *mystes* (the initiated) who were only allowed to talk and see after their initiation. In this sense, the word mystery also conveys the process towards communication with the invisible, during which

¹⁶⁶ Third Fieldtrip to Mount Athos: August 2012.

the individual crosses a number of limits. The opening of the ears and eyes of ancient Greek *mystes* is conveyed in the way Athonian topography is experienced through the conduct of communal rituals, the routes of which involve the passage through a number of built and unbuilt boundaries.

We have to clarify here that the only organised communal ritual held in the natural landscape of Athos is the annual ascent to the peak of the Mountain of Athos on the 6th August, when the event of the Transfiguration is celebrated. This will be discussed in depth later. Communal rituals are mainly held in the hermitages (huts) and the *kellia* that have a chapel, in the *kyriakon* of the *Skete* and in the wider territory of the coenobitic monasteries. For the latter, the services in the main church play a key role in the programme of everyday life, as it is organised according to their performance.

Connecting Christian liturgies to the Turners' theory, the theologian Douglas Davis argues that a ritual is a communication between a number of individuals wanting to share common meanings and also to receive the benefits of personal ones.¹⁶⁷ Space and time play an important role in this process as "spatiality and locality are highly significant in this regard, not only because ... [van Gennep] acknowledged the influence of place upon personal identity, but also because he underlined the "magico-religious **aspect of crossing frontiers**".¹⁶⁸ Of course, this is the case for the monks and the pilgrims on Athos, as people who are not religiously motivated during their journey cannot understand from the beginning the qualities of collective identity that Davis describes.

Hence, the notion of *communitas* can be a creative beginning to interpret monastic ritual processes as quests (and hence ritual movements) for communion or *koinonia*. The movement of the monks-*peregrines* to *theosis* (Transfiguration) relates to the Turnerian theory, as "*koinonia* is a sacrament for Trinitarian love [and] *communitas* is a natural sacrament of *koinonia*".¹⁶⁹ Monks are trying to open themselves to the shared embodied anticipation of

¹⁶⁷ Rodney Needham, *Exemplars*, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1985, p.177, as quoted in Douglas Davies, *Anthropology and Theology*, (Oxford-New York: Berg, 2002), p. 116.

¹⁶⁸ Douglas Davies, *Anthropology and Theology*, (Oxford-New York: Berg, 2002), p.123.

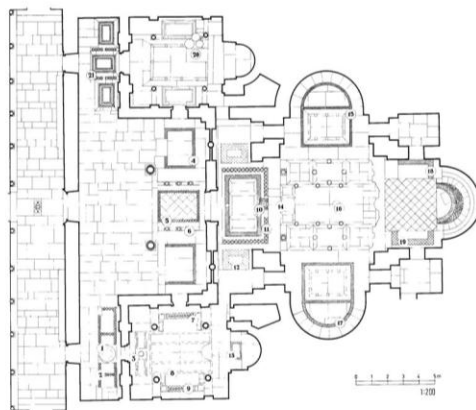
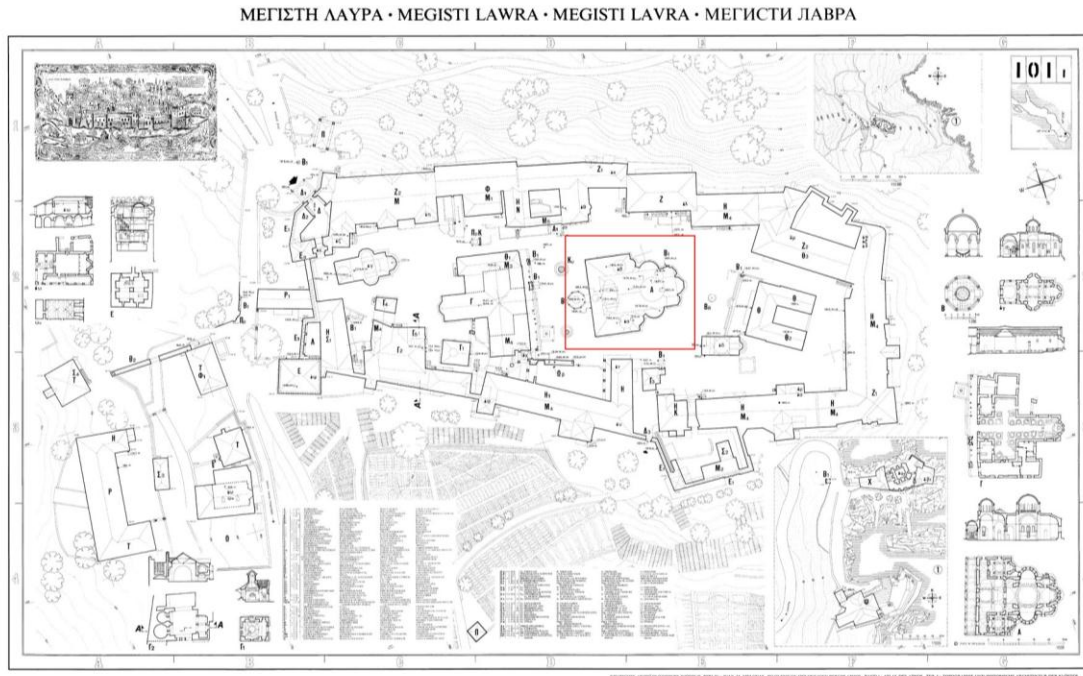
My emphasis.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

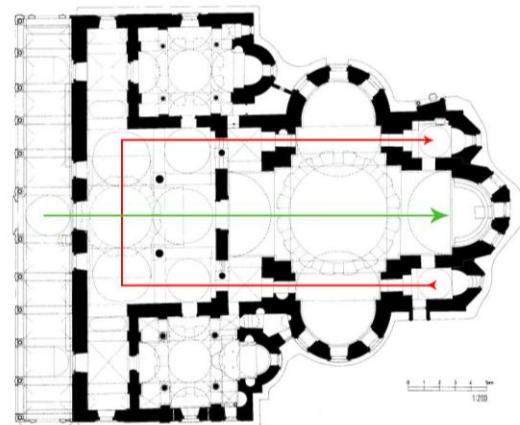
Paradise, during which they believe that they may have the opportunity to conduct *mystical pilgrimages* there through *theosis*.

Therefore, included in the general framework of the archetype of journey, the Turners' approach to liminality is both spatial and temporal. On the one hand, it is connected to an in-between place (both geographical and metaphorical), and on the other can be also related to specific moments of the ritual actions.¹⁷⁰ In this sense, religious liminality is about the interconnection of places and rites focusing on the importance of their liminal characteristics. Spatial, sonic and temporal boundaries are all interconnected through the different movements. Ritual movement also "marks" the places through its choreographical character. The routes are predefined for both the monks and the visitors and changes in them happen very rarely. **Circular** rituals are held, combining the *built* and the *unbuilt* into a whole, recollecting a desired movement from earth to heaven and including the possibility of the **return** back to the former. This is directly related to the way the buildings were conceived and organised in the territory of the monastery, the heart of which is the church, as depicted in the following drawings of Great Laura monastery. The idea of "entrance" plays a vital role in the process. The whole life of the monastery is connected to these communal services as the liturgical life of a community is, for the Eastern Orthodox Church, connected to the Holy Eucharist. [Figure 2.4]

¹⁷⁰Ronald L. Grimes, "Jonathan Z. Smith's Theory of Ritual Space", *Religion*, 29:3 (1999), pp. 261-273.



ΔΙΠΛΩΟ ΚΑΘΟΙΚΟΥ: ΔΙΑΤΑΞΗ ΜΑΡΜΑΡΟΘΕΤΗΜΑΤΩΝ
GRUNDRISS DES KATHOLIKON (HAUPTKIRCHE): MARMORNE FUSSBÖDEN AUS OPUS SECTILE
GROUND FLOOR OF KATHOLIKON (MAIN CHURCH): MARBLE FLOOR LAYOUT IN OPUS SECTILE
ПОЛ КАФОΛΙΚΟΝ: ΜΡΑΜΟΡΝΟΕ ΜΟΨΗΕΙΟ (OPUS SECTILE)



ΚΑΘΟΙΚΟ: ΚΑΤΟΡΗ
KATHOLIKON (HAUPTKIRCHE): GRUNDRISS
KATHOLIKON (MAIN CHURCH): PLAN
КАФОΛΙΚΟΝ (СОБОР): ПЛАН

Figure 2.4: The Great Laura Monastery (10th century): The central position of the church in the complex and the way the openings on its walls allow the liturgical performance of the idea of the “Entrance” (circular rituals and importance of the middle entrances).

In particular, the Holy Eucharist is based on the event of the Mystical Supper. During this ritual the bread and wine are symbolically unified into the Body of Christ which is received by the devotees in the Holy Communion.¹⁷¹ The internal walls of the main church play an important

¹⁷¹ George Florofsky, *Issues of Orthodox Theology*, (Athens: “Artos Zois”, 1973), p. 166.

role in its liturgical performance. Their openings allow the interconnection of the different components of the rituals (body movements, censing, chanting, and lighting) in a circular choreography. Thus, during the Holy Communion the devotees in procession approach the main entrance of the iconostasis (departure), receive the body and blood of Christ (liminal stage) and return to their seats. This happens in most of the rituals included in the services, such as the censing, the ritual of the *antidoron* and *the lite* that will be examined later. All the services are combined with the Eucharist, activating through their performance the dynamic and creative interaction between personal and collective prayer.¹⁷² For the Eastern Orthodox Church, liturgy is not only connected to the church services, it extends to all the different levels of personal and communal Orthodox Christian life:

The dynamics of the Liturgy go beyond the boundaries of the Eucharistic assembly to serve the community at large. The Eucharistic liturgy is not an escape into an inner realm of prayer, a pious turning away from social realities; rather it calls and sends the faithful to celebrate the sacrament of the brother outside the temple in the public marketplace (...).¹⁷³

This understanding of Orthodox life conditions the creation and liturgical performance of Athonian topography, in which the different buildings of a monastic complex are interconnected to support their liturgical communication. The predefined programme of monastic life enhances these ideas as it guides the monks to move according to a specific ritual way that emphasizes the union with God, materially re-actualized through the Holy Communion and bodily recollected through other rituals also. Starting from the morning service, all the different aspects of the liturgical life are considered to be connected to the Eucharist and the achievement of the physical-spiritual communion with God.¹⁷⁴ For example, the meals follow the services and they are performed in a ritual way through the combination of processional movements, scriptural readings and sometimes even chanting. Moreover, the courtyard is also connected to these processes, through the circular hammering of wooden instruments or the ringing of the bell, the sonic signals of the services.

See also: Ion Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy. Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective*, (Geneva: WCC Publication, 1996), p. 1.

¹⁷² George Florofsky, p. 173.

¹⁷³ Ion Bria, p. 20.

¹⁷⁴ In the case of the Eucharist the processional approach to the Main Entrance and the actual communal eating from the same chalice and spoon is an embodied movement that narrates in a characteristic way the pilgrimage of the monk (and the devotee) from earth (from narthex to the iconostasis passing under or around the dome) to God (Holy Communion) and then back to earth (going back to the *stasidi*).

Deviations from this model, such as the increasing number of visitors in the main church which is disturbing for the monks, change the reality of this choreographed performance. Another problem is the changing of the rhythm of the rituals that sometimes makes the monks feel uncomfortable with a familiar rite, disturbing also the temporal boundaries of the rest of the day. Therefore, Athonian topography today is a field of “contesting discourses”, which different groups of people constantly re-interpret through their body-movements, in an environment whose religious aspect is strongly based on hesychast tradition.

Silence

This thesis also examines the role of silence in the Athonian topography. As a necessary means of initiation and meditation it is a key component of the aural environment, contributing to the definition of the spatial, temporal and sonic boundaries. Silence is one of the key practices of the *hesychast* experience of Mount Athos, directly connected to the paradoxical approach to God that is both known and unknown, as it is also considered to be a language to express and realize this contradiction.¹⁷⁵ As already mentioned above, in parallel with participation in the communal rituals, the individual practises silence combined with ceaseless prayer, seeking to open a path towards the encounter of the ineffable. Starting from the elimination of external noise, therefore, the *hesychast* aims at the acquisition of an internal silence, as this is considered to be the **threshold** towards communion with God. This is an embodied process based on the ceaseless repetition of the Jesus prayer.

¹⁷⁵ Hesychasm is not the only Christian religious tradition that practises silence. The Catholic Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance (O.C.S.O) also known as Trappists who follow the Rule of St. Benedict also try to keep silence in order to concentrate on prayer. They have also created a sign-language to avoid disturbing their silence.

In 1974 Thomas Keating, a Trappist Monk and priest at St. Joseph’s Abbey, Spencer, Massachusetts asked his brotherhood to start reciting an inner prayer while keeping silent. This gradually evolved into what is called: The Centering Prayer, a new mystical way of life that has a number of similarities with hesychasm. For the Centering Prayer please see: Gustave Reininger (ed), *The Diversity of Centering Prayer*, (New York: Continuum, 1999).

For the role of silence in different religious traditions see also: George Kalamaras, *Reclaiming the Tacit Dimension: Symbolic Form in the Rhetoric of Silence*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994):

Based on the paradox relationship between polarities such as: visible and invisible, profane and sacred, the practice of silence is connected to the achievement of a “mystical consciousness”. Kalamaras distinguishes the traditions into “western” (Christianity) and “eastern” (Buddhism, Hinduism), underlining similarities and differences between them. Hence, for all the religious traditions that include mystical qualities, silence is believed to be a way to divine knowledge, through the paradoxical process of purification and experience of union with the sacred. Nevertheless, there is a specific difference between them that changes the way they are experienced and interconnected to the rest of the religious activities in a sacred (or not) place. In this sense, for the “western” traditions, silence relates to a process of interior emptying and waiting for God to dwell within oneself. On the other hand, for the “eastern” traditions, silence becomes a way of harmonizing oneself with the rest of the universe.

According to the theorist of linguistics Kris Acheson, silence is an embodied gesture, an “active human performance” through which we can realise both space and time. Either *human* or *atmospheric*, silence can be both a space ready to be filled or a substance filling a specific space in a meaningful way. Its meaning is connected to the way it is performed (rhythmical, melodic, intervening) and to the context in which it takes place. Moreover, silence is by definition a temporal phenomenon, connected both to an objective and a subjective sense of temporality.¹⁷⁶ This is also enhanced in the case of *hesychasm* by a sense of rhythm produced by the recitation of the same phrase. Through our embodied feeling of silence, therefore, we can better understand ourselves, being open to the production of “emotional and physical symptoms in our phenomenal bodies, both when we encounter it and when we ourselves produce it”.¹⁷⁷ Silence is therefore another way of understanding our being-in-the-world and our embodied dwelling, as through its experience we can connect with the surrounding context and communicate with other individuals in the dynamic framework of “the texture of communicative praxis”.¹⁷⁸ This is also the case for the Athonian topography in which silence plays an important role, as since the fourteenth century it has been connected to *hesychasm*. Connecting the silence to religious worship, in his seminal work *The World of Silence*, the theologian Max Picard also underlines the ability of the embodied phenomenon of silence to transmit messages of holiness, memory and anticipation.¹⁷⁹ According to the writer, silence manifests itself through different aspects of the topography, such as the silent presence of nature, the silence of the night and the silence of the emptiness of the cathedrals and museums.¹⁸⁰ Written in 1948, Picard’s piece highlights also the danger that silent phenomena faced during that period from an always progressing modern technology that “contaminated” the world with *noise* (idle sounds), such as the one produced by the uncritical use of radio.¹⁸¹ Today, that post-modern era leaves its traces in the area of “telesthetic” interaction in an intense way, the examination of the hesychast qualities of Mount Athos contributes to the

¹⁷⁶ Kris Acheson, “Silence as Gesture: Rethinking the Nature of Communicative Silences”, *Communication Theory*, 18 (2008), p. 546.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 547.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 548.

¹⁷⁹ Max Picard, *The World of Silence*, translated by Stanley Godman, (London: The Harvard Press), (first published in German in 1948).

See also: Robert Wood, “Silence, Being and the Between. Picard, Heidegger and Buber”, *Man and World*, 27, pp. 121-134.

¹⁸⁰ Max Picard, pp. 108, 141 & 169.

¹⁸¹ Max Picard, p. 198.

relevant academic discourses, reintroducing the importance of silence in the experience of embodied topography.

The theologian, Kallistos Ware, trying to approach the meaning of *hesychia*, thus talks about an experienced silence working at different levels, from the more external to the more inward. In particular, the *hesychast* – hermit has to define his spatial relationship with other human beings and seclude himself in places of solitude, such as the caves of Mount Athos’ Desert (First Level: *Hesychia and Solitude*). The monk who is a member of a coenobitic community has the ability to depart from it and practises the silent prayer in his cell (Second Level: *Hesychia and the spirituality of the cell*). Having demarcated the outward framework of their spiritual struggles, both hermits and monks seek to “confine their incorporeal within their bodily house”, striving to discover “the ladder that leads to the Kingdom of God” (Third Level: *Hesychia and the “return into oneself”*).¹⁸²

The above levels of *hesychia* illuminate the role of silence in the Athonian topography. Silence demarcates the personal sphere of the monks who prefer quiet places such as the desert or their cells. They try not to talk nor to hear more words than necessary. Silence is not similarly perceived in all the parts of the peninsula.¹⁸³ Hence, whereas silence in the desert is intense (only connected to “natural” and for some outsiders even “unbearable”), in the case of a coenobitic monastery silence is mixed with various sounds (chanting, instrumental, conversations), creating a different sound-scape. [Figures 2.5 & 2.6] This distinction is also found in the territory of a *skete*, as the area where the huts are spread is more silent than its communal core. This is also influenced by the presence of the strangers, whose number has increased greatly since 1980s. In any case, silence is still intensely perceived in the peninsula, even being an important part of the experience of some of the visitors.

¹⁸²Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Inner Kingdom*, Volume 1 of the Collected Works, (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2000), pp. 89-98.

¹⁸³ See also: Philip Sherrard, *Athos. The Mountain of Silence*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 92: Quoting the sayings of a Christian “father” in his book *Athos: The Mountain of Silence*, Philip Sherrard described how the Athonian embodied *hesychast* experience is fulfilled through this “way of silence”:

By means of silence you must thoroughly cleanse the mind and give it constant spiritual exercise; for as the eye is turned upon sensory objects and marvels at what it sees, so the pure mind turns to intelligible things, and is ravished by spiritual contemplation, and it becomes hard to tear it away. (...) Therefore you should separate from the whole world, and tear the soul from its sympathy for the body, and become cityless, homeless, without possessions, heedless of money, unburdened, without dealings, ignorant of human affairs humble, compassionate, good, gentle, quiet, ready to welcome in the heart the impressions of divine knowledge as they are produced.



Figures 2.5 & 2.6: The silent-scape of Gregoriou monastery during the morning hours and the evening ones (after Vespers).

Hence, in her book *Silence in the Land of Logos*, Silvia Montiglio underlines the difference between the role of silence in ancient Greek religion and the Christian tradition. For the writer, in Ancient Greece vocal prayer was more important than moments of silence, as “a prayer was (...) an attempt to hit the ears of the gods, that they may ‘listen’”.¹⁸⁴ Silence was mainly used as a preparation for vocal prayer or a process of purification of the unfit members of the ancient Greek community.¹⁸⁵ A similar negative approach is also found in the Old Testament, in which silence is connected to powerlessness and human defeat by death. Yahweh was “a communicator who usually expresse[d] himself through emphatic noise”. This resulted in silent prayer being “controversial and debatable”.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Silvia Montiglio, *Silence in the Land of Logos*, (Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 11.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 17-23.

¹⁸⁶ Diarmaid MacCulloch, “Voices and Silence in Tanakh and Christian New Testament”, Gifford Lectures 2012, University of Edinburgh, Lecture One.

This attitude changed in the New Testament, in which silence is described both as a method of prayer and spiritual preparation, and also as a way for Jesus to convey to men messages about himself. In this sense, Zechariah was struck dumb by the Archangel when he reacted with uncertainty when hearing of the future birth of his child, asking for a sign of confirmation. This dumbness ended unexpectedly when he wrote on a table the name of his new-born son, John, on the eighth day after his birth. (Luke, 1:5-79). Moreover, in the stories of his Passion Jesus kept silent several times, revealing his holiness. Therefore, in front of Pontius Pilate he answered the priests' accusations through a "patient silence" and in the Garden of Gethsemane he silently prayed to God, preparing himself for the coming passion. Furthermore, his forty-day silence at the peak of a mountain was interrupted by a dialogue with Satan, a "battle with his thoughts".¹⁸⁷ Hence, moving from the Old Testament to the New, silence gradually became a positive gesture of Christian worship and was socially accessible during the fourth century as its fruitful practice by the desert fathers confirmed its dynamic contribution to worship. Noise and speech always played an important role in the practice of faith, either through community worship or through the interaction between the ascetics and the inhabitants of the villages near which they practised solitude. Weeping and groaning were also included in their embodied prayer.¹⁸⁸

Montiglio also introduces the notion of the "silence of the sight" when describing the Eleusinian Mysteries, in which silence had a double character connected to both sound and sight as part of a process of initiation.¹⁸⁹ According to her, the Greek word for initiation, *muesis* (μύησις), is connected both to the closing of the mouth and to the closing of the eyes as the *mustes* were the lower initiates who did not have sensual access to the final mysteries.¹⁹⁰ While the argument that the ineffable qualities of Christian rituals are directly connected to Eleusinian rites is questionable, there is a definite bond between them in *hesychasm*, where we also find this double silence with the emphasis on the visual aspect and the physical-spiritual experience of uncreated light.¹⁹¹ According to Diarmaid MacCulloch, this relates to the way icons were

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Diarmaid MacCulloch, "Catholic Christianity and the Arrival of Asceticism", 100-400, Gifford Lectures 2012, University of Edinburgh, Lecture Two.

¹⁸⁹ Silvia Montiglio, Paragraph: Closing one's lips, closing one's eyes: silence in the initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries, pp. 23-32

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29:

connected to a “contemplative silence” after the iconoclastic defeat of 843, allowing the Eastern Christian Church to offer different routes towards *theosis* along with the communal liturgy. Silence, therefore, became a way of multi-sensual individual ascetic experience that for the Eastern Orthodox Church is open to all the members of the church and also to lay people.

Contemporary practice of *hesychast* silence on Mount Athos carries elements of the above qualities regarding a dynamic combination of solitude, the elimination of sound and sight, and the repetition of prayer. Hence, Athonian monks believe that silence has two interconnected levels: the external and the internal. The former is the one that the individual can *listen to*, and relates to the elimination of intense (idle) sounds. This level of silence is directly connected to the inner one, as for the monks *xeniteia* is related to the sensual detachment from the everyday world. For them, external silence results in internal silence, and at the same time, through the benefits from the internal, the external is re-interpreted. The aim of the process is *theosis*. During these moments the monks argue that the individual “goes beyond even the boundaries of its own body”. The Athonian monks also use the word “grasp” to describe this state, something that includes a sense of violent/forcible detachment from the mundane/monastic sphere, and underlines the intensity of the experience.

During my fieldtrips, most of the monks of Gregoriou monastery kept silent and tried to avoid any interaction with the visitors by passing in front of them quickly with their heads bowed. During the three years of my research, I have observed differences in the way silence is perceived in the monastery. For example, whereas in my first trip in 2010 it was common to see a monk alone walking back and forth to the port in prayer, in 2012 this was no longer happening, as the monks argue that they now feel quite disturbed by the presence of the visitors. Nevertheless, I had the opportunity to hear ascetics reciting the Jesus Prayer, while walking along the path, interacting with the silent qualities of the environment. Moreover, outsiders are still asked to keep quiet while in the courtyard of the monastery. Therefore, silence demarcates

Many ancient sources stress the dominance of sight also when they allude to the ceremony as a whole. So do the late rhetoricians as well as Clement of Alexandria: transplanting the experience of the mysteries into the religious life of a Christian, Clement retains the vision of a pure light as the strongest emotion that the initiates supposedly felt. Certainly the evidence that these late sources provide is not unquestionable owing to the generalized preference for sight over hearing in these late periods. Furthermore, in the case of Clement, we may suspect that he emphasizes the visual aspect of the mysteries because light effects can be salvaged by Christianity much more easily than verbal formulas. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore that already in the classical period the Eleusinian experience was commonly epitomized by the phrase “To seem the mysteries”.

to a point the general sonic context of the monastery, and at the same time (re)enhances the need for further solitude for the monks. It becomes an active language with different intensities and a strong rhetorical quality that is sensually perceived and communicated in different ways. In some cases, the boundary of silence was crossed, leading to short conversations between the insiders and the outsiders, something that is happening now more often than in the past.

As we will also see later, the monk's cell and the stall play a vital role in the experience of silence. Having a direct or indirect relation to the church, the sacred centre of the monastic city, the cells are considered to be part of the monk's necessary physico-spiritual introversion,¹⁹² symbolizing the possibility of turning into himself in seeking a personal encounter with God, while in parallel being an active member of a living community. One could say that their structural diversity is an architectural inscription of this process. It is included in the evolution of the general Athonian model through the ages, being combined with the movement of different *hypostases* towards the future (eschatological aspect) through the practice of silence.¹⁹³ This is also supported by a number of bodily techniques, taking place mainly during the conduct of the daily individual prayer of the monk in his cell, or in a remote place like a cave or a secure part of a steep slope. These psychosomatic techniques of *hesychasm* are the result of the co-operation of different components. The posture of the body co-operates with the breathing to help the monk to "practise inner exploration, to search for the place of the heart".

The body, according to St. Gregory Palamas, has to stand in a "circular post" during prayer. The monk sits on a low stool, turns his body slightly forward and his head to the left. Thus he sees his chest or his belly. This posture is related to the Old Testament's descriptions of the life of Prophet Elijah who is said to have prayed with his face lowered between his knees. The aim is the "constant supervision of the whole psycho-somatic man" by allowing separation of the individual from the passions of the heart and flesh. The scope of the *hesychasts* is the addiction

¹⁹² It is inside this rectangular room that he is going to practise the aforementioned physico-spiritual technique of *hesychasm*.

¹⁹³ See also: Patrick J. Quinn, "Drawing on Mount Athos: The Thousand Year Lesson", *Places*, 2:1 (1985): "The monks' cells illustrate the possibility of personalization of one's own space/world within the larger world of an impersonal, communal life-style". (p. 40).

See also: Svetlana Popovic, "Dividing the Indivisible: the Monastery Space – Secular and Sacred", *Recueil des travaux d' études byzantines*, XLIV (2007): "...individual cells may become a path to Heaven and thus acquire a higher status in the hierarchy of sacredness..." (p. 47).

See also: John Chryssavgis, *John Climacus – From the Egyptian Desert to the Sinaite Mountain*, (England: Ashgate, 2004), p.159.

to constant prayer even while their body is doing some everyday tasks.¹⁹⁴ Moreover, the breathing acquires a slow rhythm co-ordinated with the words of the Jesus prayer. According to Ware: “in modern Orthodox practice it is common to say the opening words of the Jesus Prayer ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God’, while breathing in, and the remainder –often with the words a ‘sinner’ added at the end- while breathing out”.¹⁹⁵ These body-techniques are still in use.

In addition, sitting in their stalls while participating in the liturgy, monks keep *silent*. Keeping their heads down (in order not to be disturbed by what they see) and focusing on the repetition of the prayer, usually holding its rhythm through the playing of the prayer rope, becomes the way that they should experience their stall, which some of them call the “earthly grave”. In this case the spatial boundary of the *stasidi* coincides with the one created by the silent aura of the monk, making his personal sphere more visible and even tangible. During this process, the readings and chantings of the Liturgy dynamically contribute to the aural environment that is not something void but also becomes an in-between zone.

From the above examination we can understand that embodied movement in hesychasm carries intense mystical qualities expressed through the reciprocal interaction between communal rituals and silent meditation. This is also depicted in the way art and architecture is formed and experienced. Focusing on how these movements influence the liminal qualities of the topography, the chapter also underlined the importance of boundaries and aural environment in Eastern Christian ascetic practice. This liturgical context has been connected with the possibility of the outsider’s participation in it, something that will be examined in the next chapter.

¹⁹⁴ Saint Gregory Palamas, *Triads*, I (§2, §12) and II (§22).

¹⁹⁵ Kallistos Ware, “‘My Helper and my Enemy’: the Body in Greek Christianity”, in Sarah Coakley (ed) *Religion and the Body*, (Oxford University press), p. 107.

This is strictly combined with the status of Christ’s Incarnation and Resurrection. In relation to this see also Kallistos Ware, “‘My Helper and my Enemy’: the Body in Greek Christianity”, p.93.

Chapter Three

The Journey of the Stranger at Athos

The Stranger at Athos

Since the middle 1970s a number of philosophers, human geographers and architectural theoreticians have been involved in an academic discourse on the possibility of an “authentic” place-event.¹⁹⁶ They base their arguments mostly on the combination of different periods of Martin Heidegger’s work, Maurice Merleau Ponty’s theory of embodied perception and later phenomenological and hermeneutical investigations of experiential spatiality. In their discussions, the intentional movement of the body-subject plays an important role in an “authentic” experience of place, along with the notions of belonging, home(land), character and identity. Thus, according to Edward Relph, an “authentic attitude to place” involves the *genuine* interaction with the world in which the individual exists and the gradual development of *being inside and belonging to your place, both as an individual and as a member of a community and to know this without reflecting upon it.*¹⁹⁷ On the other hand, “inauthenticity” relates to a sense of uprootedness in which the individual is entrained by a “total dictatorship of the ‘They’”, during which the possibilities of the ‘being’ are reduced and the places are mostly seen in terms of usefulness.¹⁹⁸ This follows Heidegger’s *Being and Time* approach, according to which the individual (*Dasein*) exists as already being-in-the-world in an inauthentic way, being absorbed by the “They” during the everyday “being-with” others. It is through this “inauthentic” interaction with his/her world (things and other *Daseins*) that s/he has the ability to live an “authentic” existence. This happens rarely and when the individual realises that death is the only undeniable possibility of his/her existence experiences the feeling of the “uncanny”. The whole process is included in the framework of a **Care** (*Sorge*) about one’s practical position in the world but also a care about his own being as a body-soul entity. For Heidegger care is the essential existential quality of *Dasein* that opens him/her to a process of self-examination in parallel with his/her inauthentic life in the world.¹⁹⁹ Between *inauthentic* and *authentic* there are a number of different kinds of experience, a degradation of care, during which the individual interacts with

¹⁹⁶ On this see, for example:

Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci, Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980).

Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, (London: Pion, 1976).

¹⁹⁷ Edward Relph, p. 65.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, pp.61-121.

¹⁹⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 180-286.

the world in a meaningful way, either on an individual or a communal level. The possibility of an “authentic” place seems impossible, especially today when people tend to deal with their environment in terms of a “displacement” that is the result of technological, cultural and scientific developments. On the other hand, opening to this meaningful engagement in the eventful world is always possible for the individual. As Edward Casey highlights, whereas modern and post-modern man tends to understand his environment in more “spatial” terms, he always has the ability to follow a movement from this kind of “modernist space” to place and be involved in its *gathering* dynamics.²⁰⁰ Therefore, this chapter focuses on the way embodied topography is influenced by the outsider’s “search for authenticity”. During this quest he is able to be an active component of a place-event in the peninsula that makes him/her to turn into him/herself, and/or be interconnected with other individuals through the embodied sharing of a collective meaning.

In this sense, monks open themselves to the possibility of religious *communitas* through their participation in communal rituals and also to the silent/mystical experience of *theosis* that they believe to be the most authentic part of their lives and which actually expresses their inability to fully experience authenticity (negative theology). Liminality and the archetype of journey illuminate this way of life as each daily re-enactment of the same ritual or silent practice aims at a new (more thorough) embodied understanding of the interaction with the divine. In parallel, the strangers decide to leave their everyday lives and temporarily interact with the topography of the peninsula. Mount Athos is an intermediate place for them. The regulations of stay there define their experience up to a point, both in the spatial and temporal levels. During his stay the visitor may also be engaged in an event of personal or collective significance. As he knows that his “home” is waiting for his return, he can only partly share the *hestial* qualities of the place and convey them back to his everyday life. If he decides to stay for the rest of his life on the peninsula, he becomes part of the community’s liminal search for the “authentic”. Hence, in the Athonian topography we can only find a **search** for “authenticity” that is never fully realised and clearly defined. The individual is usually confronted with a process of (unexpected or not) bestowal of (personal or collective) meaning to the place. In it *liminality* also plays an important role for the outsiders, whose presence is by definition connected to the crossing or

²⁰⁰ Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place – Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place –World*, p. 29. See also: Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, (Massachusetts: MIT Press), p.152.

transgression of boundaries in the circular context of an *excursion*. Athonian topography is a very interesting example of how different kinds of visitors experience “dwelling” in a sacred topography, in which interaction with part of the actual *hesychast* life is also included.

Today, not all visitors to Athos are pilgrims. A number of different motivations lead travellers there. People of different nationalities and religions decide to visit this place which is outside their everyday life, and spend some days interacting with the landscape. The general periphery is crossed by different kinds of travellers who are received by the Athonian community as potential pilgrims. This adds to the periphery’s dynamics, as the boundary between the sacred and the profane becomes even more porous. In parallel, the different communal/public and individual/private monastic spaces and the natural landscape are open to the interpretation of people of different backgrounds, whose movement is still conditioned by the notions of *untrodden*, communal ritual and silence. The investigation of the topography of Mount Athos, therefore, involves the study of the (inter)relation with all kinds of outsiders and not only of pilgrims. Anthropological studies of tourism can contribute to the answer to these questions.

The more public spaces of the Athonian topography are connected to communal rituals and the more private ones to the personal *ascesis* of the monks, their solitude and silence, as presented in the previous chapter. The mountain and the caves, the monastery and the cell of the monk, the church and the stall, the refectory and the seat of the monk in it are characteristic pairs of spaces in which the one is harmonically incorporated in the other, a model that expresses the mutual spatio-temporal interaction between independent *hypostases* that coexist in the same ascetic community. Boundaries and peripherality also play an important role disclosing the *liminal* dynamics of the landscape. Communal complexes, individual ascetic places and the natural environment are open to the interpretation of the pilgrims, the temporal orchestration of which is based on a number of rules. Their presence is also included in the *typika* of the middle Byzantine period. Therefore, the visitors enter the peninsula and are allowed to stay at a monastic structure for one night. An extension is possible with the abbot’s permission (or the elder’s in the case of a hut or a *kellion*). They are asked to dress properly and not speak loudly. Moreover, access to some areas of topography is forbidden, to secure the silence and isolation of the ascetics.

Mount Athos is not the only pilgrimage site that is visited today by a variety of tourists. An extreme case study is the monastery of Saint Catherine of Mount Sinai, which receives around a thousand outsiders daily, most of whom can be characterised as “day-trip” visitors. Very few of them come independently due to the length of travel and the passage through the desert. Collective tours are therefore organised by tourist agents. The travellers interact with the monastery largely through a museological narrative, led either by the agents or by a monk who takes them to the most important places of the monastery (church, burning bush, museum). After that, the pilgrims are allowed to spend the rest of the evening in the surrounding area and in the simple hotel run by the monastery.²⁰¹ The experience of Mount Athos is different, as the entrance regulations aim to prevent up to a point a possible *musealisation* of the site’s experience. This issue is very important for the Athonian embodied topography. On the one hand, it is clear that we are not talking about a museum-like experience, as the different events happen in the hesychast/monastic situation that was initially opened to receive them. On the other hand, the increasing number of tourists with cultural, naturalistic or recreational motivations transforms these events into spectacles, adding to the theatrical qualities of the space that are not intentionally created and preserved by the monks.

In this sense, according to E. Goffman, everyday action is performed in two basic regions – the “front regions” and the “back regions”.²⁰² The former are the places where hosts and guests meet, and the latter are “the places where members of the home team retire between performances to relax and prepare”. Architecturally supported, this division is mainly a field of social processes during which the performers, the performed landscape and the outsiders co-exist.²⁰³ According to the sociologist Dean McCannell a “staged authenticity” or a “staged intimacy” has gradually become part of a site’s offered experience.²⁰⁴ “Staged intimacy” involves

²⁰¹ Myra Shackley, “A Golden Calf in Sacred Space?: The Future of St. Katherine’s Monastery, Mount Sinai (Egypt)”, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 4:3-4 (1998), pp. 124-134.

²⁰² Dean McCannell, “Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings”, *The American Journal of Sociology*, 79:3 (November, 1973), pp. 589-603.

See also: E. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1959).

²⁰³ Performers are the people that “appear in the front and the back region”. Performed or the “audience” appear only in the front region and outsiders are “excluded from both regions”.

²⁰⁴ See also Ning Wang, “Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience”, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26: 2 (1999) p. 353:

According to McCannell (...) the tourism involves “the search for authenticity of experience” or of “authentic experience”, his tourists are concerned with the state of authentic feelings. However, when he refers to “staged authenticity”, then his tourists turn to the quest for the authenticity of the original and consequently

space for the outsider who is permitted to “view details of the inner operation of an (...) institution”, allowing people to experience a sense of discovery and of “being half in and half out of society”.²⁰⁵ This happens in the “front-regions” and is directly connected to the different boundaries of a topography that define the fields that strangers are allowed to enter. In the case of Mount Athos we do not have a “staged authenticity” as the visitors are allowed to participate in the actual events of the more communal areas: the churches, the refectories, the courtyards and the footpaths.²⁰⁶ The limited number of male visitors, selection of services and the rules that visitors have to follow contribute to this.²⁰⁷ Andriotis also underlines this, arguing that:

Although most religious shrines offer “a commodified version of heritage”, what MacCannel (1973) calls staged authenticity, this is not the case in Mount Athos. Mount Athos combines past and present, conveying a causal relationship. It is a land of challenge, adventure socialization, culture, learning, and for most, religious, offering disdain for materialism through a desire for a simpler, unencumbered life. More in tune with the Byzantine monastic rhythms of life, the Holy Mountain allows visitors the opportunity to escape their normal pace of life and enter into an existential experience of unmeasured and uncontrolled time, or timeless, by sharing a temporary sense of communal life, sacred in its own right.²⁰⁸

Therefore, the character of a number of Athonian areas is also influenced by the interpretation of the outsiders. **Entering** the peninsula, the stranger **encounters** an environment that is different from his everyday sphere. Interaction with it is included in a quasi-liminal or *limnoid*, according to the Turners, phase of gradual familiarization with the unknown environment.²⁰⁹ This encounter may be followed, therefore, by a dialogue between the traveller and the topography in which both of the sides are involved in a “give and take” interrelationship during which the interpreter may arrive at a new understanding. As Snodgrass and Coyne argue, this happens in two phases, “one in which the foreignness of the other’s horizon is highlighted,

become the victims of staged authenticity. Thus their experience cannot be counted as authentic even if the tourists themselves might think that they have achieved such experiences.

²⁰⁵ Dean McCannel, p. 597: “Touristic consciousness is motivated by its desire for authentic experiences and the tourist may believe that he is moving in this direction, but often it is very difficult to tell for sure if the experience is authentic in fact. It is always possible that what is taken to be entry into a back region is really entry into a front region that has been totally set up in advance for touristic visitation”.

²⁰⁶ Konstantinos Andriotis, “Sacred Site Experience. A Phenomenological Study”, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 36:1 (2009), p. 66.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p. 66.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 80.

²⁰⁹ See Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 36.

See also: Chris Ryan, “Stages, Gazes, and Constructions of Tourism”, in Chris Ryan (ed), *The Tourist Experience*, (London: Thomson, 2002), p. 4.

followed by the fusion of that horizon with our own".²¹⁰ During this fusion of horizons the two sides are asking questions of each other, trying to answer them. This idea of the "fusion of horizons" of the two components of a dialogue (the author and the reader, the painter and the observer etc) was introduced in the hermeneutics of Hans Georg Gadamer. The horizon involves all the prejudgements that each part carries. A "horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular standpoint".²¹¹ The values, ideas, memories and representations of ourselves that characterize our horizon are open to the reciprocal relationship with the horizon of another person/entity. This process has an intense transformative character and usually includes tensions and conflicts, questioning the integrity of the Self.

Entering the unknown horizon of the other, the individual finds himself wandering "in unexplored territory not with the intent of annexation, but of returning home to ...[his/her] own familiar horizons and seeing them in a new way because of what we have seen earlier".²¹² Hence, the individual asks the topography questions through his embodied experience and at the same time he is also asked different questions by the unfamiliar topography. Only when he is trying to answer the latter is he involved in the understanding of the topography, and thus fully engaged in the happening of place. Always in a process of interpreting the context in which he enters, he redefines himself with the presence of the boundaries and the possibility of their penetration.²¹³

Entering Mount Athos, the outsider is therefore initially confronted with the typical process of reception at the guest house of one of the twenty monasteries, a *Skete* or a *Kellion*. The newcomers are directed to the guest house's lounge by the *archontaris* who checks their identification documents and their visas – *diamonitiria*.²¹⁴ After this typical process they are treated to a cup of coffee, a traditional Greek sweet (λουκούμι – loukoumi), a glass of raki (a traditional Greek drink) and a glass of water, and given a room. At the beginning, the *archontariki* was the same as the guest house, including all the spaces needed for offering hospitality to the travellers: a number of rooms, sanitation, a lounge used for the initial

²¹⁰ Adrian Snodgrass and Richard Coyne, *Interpretation in Architecture. Design as a Way of Thinking*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 161.

²¹¹ Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, (London: Continuum, 1989), p. 302.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-43.

²¹⁴ *Diamonitiria* (διαμονητήρια): Derives from the greek word *diamoni-διαμονή* which means stay.

reception and treatment of the guests, a kitchen for the preparation of meals and the house of the *archontaris*.²¹⁵ The arrangement and the function of a guest house at Athos has been almost the same since the 19th century. The *archontariki* is usually found near the entrance of the monastery so it does “not disturb the smooth function of the monastic life by the newcomers.”²¹⁶ In most of the monasteries the guest house is an independent complex of spaces integrated in one of the ranges of the main wall. During the last decades in some of them new guest houses were built outside the main core, due to the increasing number of visitors at the peninsula. The interior of this building is mostly organised linearly. A long corridor with rooms on each side and the lounge just next to the entrance is the basic model.

In the case of Gregoriou Monastery the visitors stay at the two guest houses: the upper one and the onshore one, which was recently built (during the 1990s) to cover the needs of the increasing number of strangers.²¹⁷ They are connected through the day-to-day functional programme of the guests’ reception which is abstractly depicted in the catalogues of the distribution of visitors to the different rooms. Asking some of the visitors to stay outside the monastery redefines the role of the boundary between the inside and the outside, as the priority is to host in the monastery these visitors who have spiritual or other social connections with the community. The upper guest house opens onto the central courtyard and is situated opposite the *katholikon*-refectory complex. It is a two-storey building with an interesting section-plan as a number of intermediary levels were built to cover increasing need for extra

²¹⁵ Archontaris: The guest-master.

²¹⁶ Ploutarchos, Theocharides, Miltiadis Poliviou, “The Archontariki and the Hospitality in the Monasteries of Mount Athos”, *Archeologia*, 50 (1991), p. 29.

²¹⁷ See also: Aim-Report for the Completion of the Onshore Guest House of the Holy Monastery of Gregoriou, Archives of K.E.D.A.K.: In the Aim-Report of the project (signed in December 1987) we read:

At the moment the Holy Monastery of Gregoriou can host 40 visitors.

Even from the Mylonas’ project (already having the ability to host 40 people) the need for 66 new beds in 1970 was underlined, with a linear projection for 110 in 1980 and for 150 in 1990.

Moreover, even since 1970 until now the monks of the Monastery are over-doubled, from 25 to 64, while the area of beneficial space remaining the same, highlighting also the need for new monastic cells.

The contemporary needs of the Monastery are: During the summer (May-September): 70-100 visitors daily, while the rest of the year around 20 people daily. Exceptions in this are the day of the festival of Saint Nicholas with 200 visitors, the day of the festival of Saint Anastasia with 150 visitors, Easter Sunday with 150 visitors and 70-80 visitors during Christmas.

Until the new guest house is built the monastery is going to host visitors in a number different places (other than the guest house) such as: the lounge of the guest house, the cells of monks that happen not to be at the monastery, in storage rooms or in the house of the monk that is in charge of the port (*arsanaris*).

Whereas the onshore guest house was built the situation is still quite difficult with about 1300 visitors per month during the summer (almost 35-45 per day).

space. A kitchen and a living room are the communal spaces of this building. Two levels of rooms are the dormitories flanking an L-shaped corridor. During the summer, from sixty to a hundred visitors enter the monastery daily and are welcome to spend a night there for free. The number falls to about twenty visitors per day for the rest of the year. On the days of the main feasts of the monastery there are more than a hundred outsiders.²¹⁸ The need for an effective orchestration of their presence becomes very important for the monastic community (approximately 80 monks) in order to keep its hesychast life undisturbed.

In some of the monasteries, besides the ban on entrance to the more private spaces of the monks, the non-Christian-Orthodox visitors are also confronted with the refusal of admittance to the main church during the rituals. This means that they either have to view the rituals from the exo-narthex or stay outside. Though questionable, these regulations are applied to the interior of the peninsula in order to protect the personal sphere of the monks and elements of the communal religious identity of the place, limiting the movements of the outsiders to very specific areas of the monastic structures.

The mountainous natural landscape also plays an important role, either as the context of the monastic complexes or the setting of the paths. Walking may be included in a process of initiation during the existential quest of a traveller or as a way to interact with the unique natural environment. Footpaths become, therefore, internal liminal zones along which the outsider can experience basic qualities of the Athonian life. Connecting one monastic structure to another, they enable the individual to recollect his experiences and interpret them. While walking the visitor sees, hears, smells, feels the wind, prays, remembers his past and is interconnected with this topography through his moving body.

Pilgrims

Mount Athos attracts a number of pilgrims who want to experience a *more undisturbed practice of hesychast life*.²¹⁹ Participation in the daily community rituals, interaction with the ascetics and walking along the Athonian network of footpaths are always included in their aims. Thus, the

²¹⁸ Fieldwork at Mount Athos: August – September 2011 and August 2012.

²¹⁹ Fieldtrip to Mount Athos: August-September 2011.

pilgrim is more open to interaction with the sacred associations of the landscape and the life there, as he is closer to the language of the ritual, artistic and architectural metaphors used in the activities held in the places where he is allowed to enter (natural environment, church, refectory, courtyard).²²⁰ He is able to read the events of a religious place and also participate in them.

The circular Turnerian scheme is helpful in interpreting the movement of the pilgrims.²²¹ A *social separation* from their everyday structural sphere is signalled by the obtaining of a visa at Ouranoupoli, while a *physical separation* is experienced through the journey and the crossing of the periphery of the peninsula. Travel *motivation* enhances the visitor's movement during both the departure from everyday life and the *liminal* stages connected to the notions of *expectation* and *fulfilment*. During the return stage of the pilgrimage, elements of the liminal phase may be carried back to everyday life, transforming the individual's interaction with his structural sphere.²²²

To speak about the *liminal* stage of the pilgrimage on Mount Athos, we have to introduce the Greek term for pilgrimage, that is "proskinima".²²³ "Proskinima" means "kneel and worship" and focuses on the general embodied movements of worship that are not connected to a specific

²²⁰ See: Rene Gothoni, "Pilgrimage as Dialogue" in Rene Gothoni and Graham Speake (eds), *The Monastic Magnet. Roads to and from Mount Athos*, (Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Brussels, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Vienne: Peter Lang), p.98.

And in the same, pp. 102-104: The visitors' intentional movement through the sacred landscape narrates an encounter between the Self and the world of the Other. Based on Hans Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics of 'play', Gothoni argues that pilgrims open themselves to the world of Athos, aiming at a participation in the life-drama there. Thus, monks and pilgrims attend "the meaningfulness of ...[a ritual] play" held either in a church or the refectory of a monastery, that may lead to the transformation of the whole process through the (re)interpretation of the events by the latter ones.

²²¹ And also the spatio-temporal movement of the religious tourists that we doubt are open enough to share the communal dynamics of the *liminal* stage.

²²² This is also testified through different travel testimonies, the aim of which was to describe a "unique" experience that played an important role in the traveller's life. The writers decided to re-visit the place through the organization of their memories into a new narrative of their journey.

²²³ This is not the first time that the term "proskinitis" is used to clarify the meaning of a pilgrimage site's experience. In this sense, see:

Jill Dubisch, *In a Different Place: Pilgrimage, Gender and Politics and a Greek Island Shrine*, (Princeton University Press, 1995).

Rene Gothoni, *Paradise within Reach: Monasticism and Pilgrimage on Mount Athos*, (Helsinki, Finland: Helsinki University Press, 1993).

Rene Gothoni, *Tales and Truths: Pilgrimage on Mount Athos Past and Present*, (Helsinki, Finland: Helsinki University Press, 1994).

Konstantinos Andriotis, "Sacred Site Experience. A Phenomenological Study", *Annals of Tourism Research*, 36: 1 (2009), pp.64-84.

processional way of approaching and interacting with a religious place. Thus, whereas the journey towards Mount Athos has the important character of a passage through a *threshold*, emphasis for the *proskinites* is more on the embodied movement in the peninsula. Even if it is defined by the above restrictions of entrance, it also includes a degree of freedom that is mostly expressed through the important role that walking along the paths plays in it. At the same time, participation in the services of the church and receiving Holy Communion after Confession with one of the Athonian *hesychasts* is a common aim of a *proskinita*. For that reason the pilgrim and author Nikolaos Koufos visited Mount Athos in the middle of the 1990s to spend Holy Week there. He hoped to find a more “genuine”, hesychast approach to the relevant services and also to interact with the ascetics. Walking along the footpaths and attendance at the daily rituals were included in his journey, which lasted for six days and is characteristically described in his book *A Holy Week on Mount Athos*.²²⁴

Besides participation in the communal rituals, interaction with silence plays an important role for the visitors, either as part of their pilgrimage (hesychast) experience or as a boundary set for the protection of the silent qualities of Athonian topography. In this sense, silent prayer may also be part of a pilgrim’s journey, conducted either in the liturgical environment of the church or in the silent qualities of the natural environment. For example, a thirty-four-year old baker from a small town of Greece claimed that the aim of his pilgrimage was to feel tranquillity, to “*hesychasi*” through the change of the rhythms of life and the participation in rituals and prayer. During parts of the day he sat in an isolated corner of the port and prayed.²²⁵ Furthermore, reading and the preparation for participating in Holy Communion is included in the visitors’ journey as part of a number of trials of initiation.

Pilgrimage, thus, still plays an important role in the experience of the peninsula, which was gradually developed from a deserted ascetic environment to a contemporary **pilgrimage** site. Initially it was a place of *hesychast* isolation mostly serving the **peregrination** of the hermits towards God. Through the passage of time, Mount Athos has become one of the most

²²⁴ Nikolaos Koufos, *Holy Week on Mount Athos*, (Mount Athos: The Holy Monastery of Iveron, 1997).

²²⁵ Fieldtrip to Mount Athos (August 2012). This is not the only case of pilgrims seeking to find “*hesychia*”. A number of other visitors too were trying to meditate, or pray either while walking or while interacting with communal life in the monastery.

important **pilgrimage** sites in which the “search of authenticity” of the pilgrim is interconnected with the movement of the monks and the experience of other kinds of travellers.

The movement of the pilgrims also became evident through my research in the books of guests’ impressions of Gregoriou Monastery for the years 2001-2006. They articulate in an interesting way the fusion of the horizons of different kinds of people. In them, we read how Mount Athos was experienced as a sacred place, intensely different from their everyday sphere, which the writers entered in order to have contact with a more authentic Christian life:

In your sheltered port we found hospitality and warmth during the journey of our sinful souls to the Truth – God. We attended the simple and meaningful liturgies with devoutness. We felt touched during the Holy All-night Vigils of Saint Gregory. We saw the sea from the Holy Rock of the Holy Monastery in awe. We felt wistful during the talk of father Gennadios in the archontariki. We are all looking for the next time that the Mother of God will allow (and help us) to come again (8.2.2006)

The sacred associations of the environment played an intense role in the journey of most of the writers. They felt that Mount Athos was a pre-experience of Paradise, a place that is “between the Heavens and the Earth”. Some others included Mount Athos in the Holy Lands, even if it is not related to their geographical context. Finally, some of the writers use the phrase “holy soils” to talk about the peninsula.²²⁶ Characteristically a pilgrim who went there during August 2002 writes:

In this earthly paradise the Lord made a secret and very beautiful garden, full of flowers, the fragrance of which fills us with love, respect, humility and spirituality. The Highest builds, thus, a spring wall of flowers against every evil that threaten us, a bastion of worship, of ultimate ascesis and elevation of the human splendour. Let this Garden be eternal, giving us its marvellous fragrances, to set the good example for us and to protect us. Its flowers, the ascetics, adorn our souls.

Tourists

On the other hand, the experience of the tourists is quite different from the above, as their motivations and hence the way they interact with the environment is not always connected to

²²⁶ Other expressions that pilgrims use to characterise Mount Athos is: *blessed, God-trodden, Holy place, the Garden of the Mother of God.*

the religious qualities of the Athonian realm.²²⁷ Eric Cohen's typology of tourists, thus, is a creative framework to examine how non-pilgrims co-exist with the monks and pilgrims on Mount Athos.²²⁸ He bases his approach on the archetype of "Centre" and the Turners' theory of the "Other". Searching for a *centre-out-there* is an embodied action that combines the characteristics of both the Centre and the Other. In accordance with the pilgrim, the tourist seeks freedom from structure in a *liminoid* or quasi-liminal state of being "out of time and place".²²⁹ Cohen suggests that travellers vary according to the intensity of their *quest for authenticity*, as today many people are alienated from their spiritual centre, seeking for *something else*. In this sense, he introduces five types of tourists, the recreational, the diversionary, the experiential, the experimental, and the existential.²³⁰

Those entering the peninsula include religious tourists, existential tourists and tourists with cultural and environmental interests (eco-tourism). These different groups of people enhance the *liminal* dynamics of the topography, changing the character of the interaction between the insiders and outsiders, and adding new interpretations of the topography. Distant observation and non-religious existential quests contribute to a dynamic network of relationships that sometimes even include a sense of contest and controversy.

²²⁷ The word tourism derives from the Latin word *tornus* (tornus – tour – tourist) which refers to the person who goes on a circular journey, starting from a place A going to a place B and returning to place A. The Latin word meant "a turn, trick, round, circuit, circumference," and it was first used as a "sense of 'a traveling around, journey'" in 1643. Whereas the geographical journey is the same as that of the pilgrim, the more secular intention of the tourist influences his dwelling there in a different way.

²²⁸ Erik Cohen, *Contemporary Tourism. Diversity and Change*, Tourism Social Science Series, (Elsevier, 2004).

See also: Valene Smith, "Introduction – The Quest in Guest", *Annals of Tourism Research*, 19 (1992), p. 4.

See also: Bertalan Pustzai, *Religious Tourists. Constructing Authentic Experiences in Late Modern Hungarian Catholicism*, (Jyvaskylan: JYVASKYLAN YLIOPISTO, 2004), p. 27

²²⁹ Erik Cohen, p. 125.

This approach is also connected to Eade and Sallnow's interpretation of pilgrimage. On this see: John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, "Introduction" in John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow (eds) *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 1-30.

²³⁰ A brief description of the five models:

- a. The *recreational mode* refers to tourists who do not seek for authenticity but only the restoration of their "physical and mental powers" and endowment "with a general sense of well-being".
- b. The *diversionary mode* has to do with the loss of the "recreational significance" of the trip of people who merely escape from their everyday sphere.
- c. The *experiential mode* is combined with "those moderns who try to break the bond of their everyday existence and begin to "live". They aesthetically observe and accept the "authenticity" of others but never want to participate in, to go through the phase of *communitas*.
- d. Tourists of the *experimental mode* "engage to the authentic life, but refuse fully to commit themselves to it". Questing, experiencing and comparing the alternatives, they are "hoping eventually to discover one which will suit their particular needs and desires".
- e. Travellers that are "fully committed to a spiritually **elective centre**" refer to the *existential mode*.

The existential tourists “emphasize the spiritual connection to a place, by focusing on those travelling to remote centres and sacred shrines for a quest of spirituality”.²³¹ Cohen underlines a phenomenological analogy between this existential travelling and pilgrimage, as they both include the notion of an *existential quest*. On the one hand, pilgrims arrive at a centre which, although geographically ec-centric, still carries *hestial* qualities of a centre which gives meaning to their religious quest. On the other hand, the existential tourist chooses a centre to live in (either totally foreign to his mundane sphere or a rediscovered centre of his “people”) and converts it into his elective-spiritual centre.²³² The journey of the existential tourist to Athos is more connected to an “open form” process that also includes the possibility of *unexpected* events. Whereas generally he has already booked specific places to stay, he may change his mind and try to spend more time in a monastery. He may change direction while walking and reach a different destination to the one he intended. The unstable character of his journey is not a constant characteristic as he may not feel the need to transform its predefined order. Walking and interaction with the communal rituals also play a very important role in his trip, combined with conversations with monks and visitors.²³³

The experience of the existential tourists underlines the importance of the interrelation between the *actual* and the *possible* in the reality of an embodied topography that is based on the combination of collective and personal identity. Through their embodied co-existence at a travel destination, away from their everyday sphere, they open themselves to the possibility of being engaged in a meaningful event of place. The choice of the specific place is the result of the character of the peninsula that is clearly demarcated by the rest of the world and is connected to the embodied existential quest of the ascetics. The aim of the existential tourists is to distance themselves from their everyday sphere which cannot cover their existential needs, enter the peninsula and try bodily to communicate with the meanings of the natural environment and architecture. Therefore, it is common to read in their travel accounts about

²³¹ Konstantinos Andriotis, p.70.

²³² Erik Cohen, p. 77.

²³³ Konstantinos, Andriotis, pp.79-80.

According to the writer, at the moment the most important group of tourists are the existential ones who open themselves to their possible engagement in what is happening there, not excluding the possibility of their travel changing into a pilgrimage. This is questionable though, as his sample is very small. Whereas the aim of my fieldtrip wasn't the statistical measurement of the different groups of people, but to observe and discuss with them the experience of boundaries, space and time, it seems that religious tourists also have an important presence in the peninsula. Nevertheless, we have to admit that the distant and “quasi-untouched” character of Mount Athos attracts a number of existential travellers whose experience adds to the topography, including “transformative” qualities.

moments during their journey in which feelings of the sublime and uncanny followed their participation in the rituals or the walk along the paths. A characteristic case is the poet and reporter Christopher Merrill who went to Athos for the first time in 1998. The aim of his journey was to deal with the complications of his life through the interaction with the unfamiliar environment of the religious topography. Arriving at the peninsula he decided to move entirely on foot. He had no specific programme. He stayed there for the four days of his visa walking from place to place, and trying to combine his experience with a process of self-examination. His first trip was followed by a number of other journeys, whose character was gradually transformed from existential to pilgrimage.²³⁴

Moreover, *religious tourists* constitute one of the common groups of visitors at pilgrimage sites today. They are “travellers in ‘package tour groups’ who are pilgrims and may be travelling because of ‘recreational’ motivations”.²³⁵ Tourism and pilgrimage mix so that the journey’s character becomes ambiguous. Nevertheless, “religious tourists” are related to religion, the framework of which gives meaning to the sacred place, and hence have the ability to transform their travel into a pilgrimage. In the case of Mount Athos, religious tourism is not organised by tourist agents. It is mainly connected to communal journeys organised by local churches, formal institutions such as the Friends of Mount Athos or informal groups of people who conduct regular journeys there.²³⁶ Hence, religious tourists follow a predefined programme that is related to participation in the communal rituals and discussions with monks. The aim of their journey is mostly the blessing received from the stay at this “holy place”, and therefore most of them repeat it annually.

Furthermore, tourists with cultural or environmental interests also visit the peninsula. Interaction with the Byzantine monuments and the natural landscape is also included in the

²³⁴ Christopher Merrill, *Travelling to Athos*, translated by Nikos Koutras, (Athens: Metaichmio Publishers, 2004).

²³⁵ Mary Lee Nolan and Sidney Nolan, “Religious Sites as Tourism Attractions in Europe”, in *Annals of Tourism Research*, 19 (1992), pp. 69-74.

²³⁶ Robert Stoddard, “Tourism and Religious Travel: A Geographic Perspective”, *Comunicacao apresentada na Conferencia Tourism, Religions and Peace*, Milano, 30 May – 2 June, 16 pages, described: in Maria de Graca Mouga, Pocas, Santos, “Religious Tourism: Contributions towards a Clarification of Concepts”, in Fernandes, C. McGettigan, F. and Edwards, J. (eds), *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage – Atlas: Special Interest Group*, (1st Expert Meeting), Tourism Board of Leiria, Fatima, Portugal, p.32: The anthropologist Robert Stoddard proposed a research scheme in which he tries to describe this “not being tourist nor pilgrim” condition by relating different types of travellers (secular, religious, pilgrim) to their motives, connecting them with “two categories of movement in space”, recreational and religious.

framework of “alternative tourism”. People go there to see well preserved monuments, experienced by the permanent dwellers according to the rules of Byzantine monastic life.²³⁷ The cultural tourist keeps a distance from the events in the buildings that allow him to interact with them, focusing on their historical and social value. This distance thus becomes a new liminal zone, one between the drama and the audience or even sometimes the exhibit and the observer. This imaginary boundary changes the interaction with other boundaries and intermediate zones, during which focus may be more on their aesthetic value or on the observation of the “picturesque”, transforming the event into a spectacle. Moreover, a number of mountaineering clubs and amateur groups of individuals conduct journeys there to walk along the network of paths and interact with the natural landscape.

In parallel, the participation of female travellers in one-day cruises that sail between Ouranopolis and Athonian Desert is another interesting case of interacting with the peninsula. These journeys are organised either by touristic offices or local churches and monasteries. The tourists participating in these journeys vary from religious to recreational. Today, men and children also participate in them. This process is about a distant interaction with the peninsula, experienced both in the physical and immaterial levels. The whole peninsula becomes a kind of exhibit, demarcated by the route of the ship, repeatedly inscribed during the day. As we will see

²³⁷ Mount Athos has started being connected to tourism through the media very recently. Articles in newspapers and on the internet and also tourist guides describe the peninsula trying to attract the gaze of recreational tourists. For example, Mount Athos was presented for the first time in Norway as “a major tourism destination” at the International Tourism Fair “Raiseliv” in the city of Lillestrom in March 2012. (See: <http://theorthodoxchurch.info/blog/news/2012/03/mt-athos-presented-at-international-tourism-fair-in-norway/>) Moreover, a 10 member group of Dutch agents conducted an educational tour in Northern Greece, including Mount Athos peninsula. The tour was organised by the tourist office Polyplan Reisen, during May 2012. Another visit of the representative of Dutch tourism office DJEM Tours was also held in the same period. Furthermore, in the workshop “Greece 2012”, organised by the GNTO of Italy and TTG Incontri and held in Rome the peninsula was presented as an “ideal walking and pilgrimage destination” in the framework of a “polymorphic tourism product of the region”. (See: <http://www.mountathosarea.org/en/news/article/article/i-periochi-toy-atho-se-ollandiko-toyristiko-katalogo/>)

Intensively touristic is the character of the “cruises” along the western side of the peninsula in the framework of which female religious tourism and pilgrimage take place. Well structured web-sites present the three hours package of the cruise (that begun in 1954 with wooden boats for 40 people). Ships seating 300 sail along the western side of the peninsula and the participants have the possibility of seeing the monasteries of Saint Panteleimon, Dochiariou, seven more monasteries and the port of Daphni and the Skete of Saint Anne and then return. (<http://www.athos-cruises.gr/>) In the case of a religious tourist event the veneration of holy relics can also be included. (<http://www.in-chalkidiki.com/mountathoscruises.htm>)

A conference on “The contribution of Mount Athos to Europe’s Religious and Intellectual Tradition” held in Austria by the “Dialogue of Civilizations” international forum (May 2012) underlined the need to “to preserve the unique world of the Holy Mount for generations to come. This world has been created by the hands of a multinational monastic community with their special way of life, diversity of monastic achievements, warm hospitality towards pilgrims and strict internal silence”. (Metropolitan Hilarion, head of Moscow Patriarchate’ department for external church relations, greeting messages, See: <http://barthnotes.com/2011/07/22/world-public-forum-conference-saves-mount-athos-from-tourists-and-women/>).

in the next chapter these routes influence the character of the general periphery of Mount Athos, underlining the importance of its border-like characteristics.

Hence, tourists (religious and recreational) follow a predefined programme, according to which they will visit certain places at specific times of the day. This is different from the opening to the *unexpected* that pilgrimage and existential experiences include. Space and time play a vital role in this process.²³⁸ The inherent dynamics of a place interact with the motivations of the travellers, creating new forms of sojourners' experiences and redefining the character of the topography.²³⁹ In this sense, pilgrims and existential travellers travel towards another place, hoping to find a *Centre*, a common place of belonging and *being inside*, while feeling alienated in relation to their structural environment. On the other hand, other kinds of tourists reduce the possibilities of participating in a *liminal/liminoid* event, as they tend to approach the topography in a more superficial way.²⁴⁰ Both the insiders and the outsiders are in a "search for authenticity" in various degrees, depending on their motivations and *careful* involvement in the place-events of the Athonian topography. For the monks this search is never fulfilled due to the negative or apophatic qualities of their hesychast praxis. Similarly, the temporary character of the visitors' presence on the peninsula in combination with their varying motivations always calls into question their possible engagement in a more "authentic" experience.

²³⁸ See also: Mary Lee Nolan and Sidney Nolan, "Religious Sites as Tourism Attractions in Europe", in *Annals of Tourism Research*, 19 (1992), pp. 69-74.

²³⁹ See Maria de Graca, Mougá, Pocas, Santos, "Religious Tourism: Contributions towards a Clarification of Concepts", in Fernandes, C. McGettigan, F. And Edwards, J. (eds), *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage – Atlas: Special Interest Group*, (1st Expert Meeting), (Fatima, Portugal: Tourism Board of Leiria, 2003):

The religious tourist is also, in a way, seeking the supernatural, although he may be doing so in accordance with a way of thinking and acting that are common in contemporary societies. (...) "religious tourism" (...) includes movements in which genuinely religious motives may co-exist simultaneously, with others common to different types of tourism.

It seems that pilgrimage demands a religious commitment and intensity of motivation (thanksgiving, vows, spiritual asceticism, etc) that is not easily found in the religious tourist. While he may participate in acts of worship and visit religious sites, the religious tourist does not usually reveal all these characteristics..., (p.36)

²⁴⁰ On the quest for authenticity and existential travelling see also: Ning Wang, "Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience", *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26:2 (1999), pp. 356-365.

Chapter Four

The General Periphery of the Peninsula: Border VS Boundary

Introduction

Examining the case of La Frontera in Mexico, Edward S. Casey describes the difference between a border and a boundary and how these may co-exist. On the one hand, a border is a clear frontier between two territories, the constitution of which is based on formal texts (“conventional agreements”, oral and written laws) and can be clearly represented in traditional maps (border-line).²⁴¹ The crossing of the border is carefully controlled by rules that highlight the importance of its clear inscription. For example to cross the border of a country you need to carry with you specific documents of identification or to have already acquired a visa. On the other hand, a boundary is a porous membrane, either natural or artificial, that allows the passage of different elements through it in a freer way than borders, carrying an intense sense of *liminality*.²⁴² According to Casey, “borders are always already in a process of becoming boundaries” as open to a possible (legal or illegal) penetration or ruination.²⁴³ Starting from this idea of the frame of a territory that can be both a border and a boundary due to social, historical and cultural conditions, this chapter investigates the role of the general periphery of Mount Athos, arguing that it can be also characterised as a hybrid border/boundary, the literal, visual, imaginary or virtual crossing/transgressing of which has played an important role in the experience of the topography.

Avaton

The general framework of the Athonian realm is constituted by the natural coastline of the peninsula and an artificial fence along its neck, following an imaginary line from Ierissos Bay to Cape Prosfori through the Megali Vigla mountain range. [Figures 4.1 & 4.2] Its creation and preservation has always been based on formal documents and historical-cultural events that enhanced the renegotiation and development of the initial rules of entrance, always connected

²⁴¹ Edward S. Casey, “Border versus Boundary at La Frontera”, *Environment and Planning, D: Society and Space*, 29 (2011), pp. 384-398.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 385.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 390.

to the unique sacred character of the peninsula. Dividing the inside from the outside, therefore, the general frame of the Athonian realm is an active part of its topography, being both a border and a boundary. The coastline, a seazone of 500 metres around it and the artificial frontier on the neck of the peninsula define the territory of Mount Athos either as a realm of ascetic practice or as a travel destination.



Figures 4.1 & 4.2: The fence along the neck of the peninsula.

The formal nomination of the peninsula as “a place of dwelling absolutely for [Christian] ascetics” in a “*Chrysovoulon*”, (a formal document) of Emperor Vasileios I, in 885,²⁴⁴ was followed by the official inscription of its boundaries by Imperial ambassadors in 943. Hence, in the tenth century the Athonian realm became an independent male monastic city where a number of monks practised spirituality.²⁴⁵ During that period the *Avaton* (Αβατον) of the peninsula was also established. *Avaton* means “untrodden”, and relates to the refusal of entry to a monastery to people of the opposite sex from the monastic community, either male or female. It found its final expression during the 6th century in formal documents signed by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian. In the case of Mount Athos, the *avaton* was not only limited in the context of the monasteries, but was also applied to the whole peninsula, in which only male visitors were and are still allowed to enter, after following a specific process. The first *avaton* regulation is found in the *Typikon* of 969, written by Saint Athanasios the Athonite. It was also

²⁴⁴ Graham, Speake, *Mount Athos: Renewal in Paradise*, (Yale University Press, 2002).

²⁴⁵ Dionysia Papachrysanthou, *The Athonian Monasticism: Beginning and Organisation*, (Athens: Educational Institution of the National Bank of Greece, 1992), pp. 232-233.

confirmed by a series of formal documents signed by different emperors such as John Tzimiskes (925-976), Constantine IX Monomakhos (1000-1055) and Manouël II Palaiologos (1350-1425).²⁴⁶

According to Eastern Christian tradition, the notion of the *avaton* is connected to different events from the Old and New Testaments. In this sense, once, when Moses was grazing the sheep of his father-in-law, Jethro, at Mount Chorev, he saw an angel in a flame coming from a bush that miraculously was not burnt. Moses was surprised and went closer. When he heard God telling him to take off his shoes in order not to contaminate the sacredness of the place of the miracle (Exodus 3:6), Moses took off his shoes and turned his face to the side as he did not “dare” to see God. Moreover, in the New Testament (John, 20:1-18) we read about an event that happened the first Saturday after the death of Christ when Mary Magdalene went to his grave and did not find his body in it. She started crying, thinking that the corpse was stolen, when suddenly Jesus appeared in front of her. She tried to approach him and he stopped her by saying: “Do not touch Me, for I am not yet ascended to My Father, go to My brethren and say to them I ascend to My Father....” (John, 20:17). Both of these cases describe the presence of a boundary between the sacred and the profane. Crossing the boundary is either forbidden to humans or requires a preparation of purification. This idea was materialized through *avaton*, aiming at the moral protection of an ascetic community. Athonian *avaton* is also connected to the control of the male outsider’s presence on the peninsula through entrance regulations related to the crossing of both the general periphery and other internal boundaries, as we will see later. *Avaton* thus becomes the theological reason for the transformation of the Athonian general periphery into a clearer line, dynamically enhancing the utopian qualities of the peninsula’s character.

The connection of Mount Athos to the Christian element and the Mother of God also enhances the *avaton* qualities of the general periphery. In particular, according to a tradition the Mother of God (*Panagia*) and St. John the Evangelist sailing from Joppa to Cyprus were forced by a storm to anchor near the port of *Klement*, close to the present monastery of Iviron. While *Panagia* was walking ashore, a voice was heard saying: “Let this place be your inheritance and

²⁴⁶ According to the article 186 of the Charter of Mount Athos: “the entrance in the Athonian peninsula is denied to the female species”. This is also reaffirmed by the article 43b of the legal decree of the 10th September 1926 that was later included in Greek law through the legal decree 2623/1953.

On this see: Stauros, Papadatos, *The Problem of the Athonian Avaton*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of the School of Law, Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki – Greece, 1969.

your garden, a paradise and a heaven of salvation for those seeking to be saved".²⁴⁷ Since then, the peninsula has been connected with the Virgin and is considered to be *her garden*, her *perivoli*.

Perivoli stems from the Greek word for surround or environ, *perivalló*, and denotes an area surrounded by a wall or fence that is used as a garden in which vegetables or trees are planted. It is etymologically connected to the ideas of the receptacle and protection. It is not the first time that the Mother of God is combined with a garden in Christian culture. In most cases this is connected to the "Song of Songs", a hymn included in the Old Testament describing the loving relationship between a man and a woman.²⁴⁸ Being the subject of allegorical interpretation the relation between the two figures was interpreted as the love between Christ and the Church or between Christ and his Mother. The use of a garden as the symbol of Virgin Mary, the *hortus conclusus* (an enclosed garden), was included in the works of a number of western medieval artists. The Mother of God was often depicted during that period in the middle of a garden symbolically connected to impenetrability, purity and seclusion.²⁴⁹ The Song of Songs was not interpreted in the same way in Eastern Byzantine culture, in which the depictions of the Mother of God in a garden are rarer.²⁵⁰ In the case of Eastern Christian art, the Virgin Mary was more closely related to the Byzantine expression "The Land of the Uncontainable", or "The Land of Whom that exists beyond space" (*Hè Chora tou Achorètou*). Combining positive and negative theology this expression symbolized the Incarnation of Jesus which is indescribable and infinite. *Hè Chora tou Achorètou* was artistically expressed through Byzantine depictions of the Mother of God with the baby Christ, either in her lap or in her womb.²⁵¹ [Figure 4.4] The lap or the womb represented an impenetrable, pure sphere in which Christ existed until his birth. The Mother of God has thus been connected with the idea of a sacred, untrodden land/receptacle since Medieval times that was penetrated only when Christ was born, signalling the beginning of

²⁴⁷ Philip Sherrard, *Athos- The Mountain of Silence*, (Oxford University Press, London, 1960), pp. 5-6.

²⁴⁸ Carl W., Ernst, "Interpreting the Song of Songs: The Paradox of Spiritual and Sensual Love", Web Site of Carl C. Ernst, 24 January, 2003, <http://www.unc.edu/~cernst/articles/sos-intro.htm>.

²⁴⁹ Brian E., Daley, "The "Closed Garden" and the "Sealed Fountain": Song of Songs 4:12 in the Late Medieval Iconography of Mary", in Elizabeth B. Macdougall (ed), *Medieval Gardens* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, Colloquium 9, 1986), pp. 253-278.

²⁵⁰ Mary-Lyon Dolezal and Maria Mavroudi, "Theodore Hyrtakenos' Description of the Garden of St. Anne and the *Ekphrasis* of Gardens", in Anthony Littlewood, Henry Maguire and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (eds), *Byzantine Garden Culture*, (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002), pp. 105-158.

²⁵¹ Athanasios Yeftits, *Christ. The Land of the Living*, (Athens: Indiktos Editions, 2007), Chapter: The Mother of God – The Land of Whom that exists beyond space", pp. 89-101, (In Greek).

the Church as a community of the faithful. “The garden of the Mother of God” is an expression of these associations, adding to the character of the peninsula’s general periphery. The monks believe that she is their protector and the only female figure who is “allowed” to *enter* Athos. It is a symbol of the peninsula’s consecration, supporting also the relevant avaton regulations. A number of oral tales (miracles and traditions) shared between the monks and the visitors describe incidents of her mythical/miraculous presence in the peninsula. Furthermore, icons and wall-paintings depicting events of her life, place-names and celebration of her feasts in a special way re-enact this tradition. [Figure 4.5]



Figure 4.3 (Left): Mount Sinai, St. Catherine’s monastery, Annunciation icon.

Figure 4.4 (Right): The Mother of God, *Hè Chora tou Achorètou*, (Main Church of the Monastery of Chora in Istanbul).



Figure 4.5: The combination of the Athonian peninsula and the Mother of God (Russian Card, 1873).

For a long period of time, the Athonian *avaton* was broken by women only with the acceptance of the monks. This happened only three times during the Byzantine era. In particular, around the year 1100 local families grazed their sheep on Athos and their daughters took milk, cheese and wool to the monasteries, where some of them were also working as maids. In 1308, two families from Ierissos found shelter in the Monastery of Vatopedi during a period of famine and a raid by the Catalans. Finally during 1347-1348, the wife of the Prince of Serbia Stephan Dushan stayed for several months in the Serbian monastery of Chilandari to escape from the plague.²⁵²

Avaton, connected to the semi-independent administrative status of the peninsula and the intense role that it had played in the religious (and political) affairs in different historical periods, enhanced its character *as a moral and purified community*. Gradually, Athos became a “*landscape of myth*” expressed through western imaginary geographical depictions.²⁵³ In them, its Classical past and its ascetic-religious qualities were depicted through a distant, clearly demarcated, ideal realm. Hence, the *invisible presence* of a canal that according to Herodotus was opened during the Persian Wars along the neck of the peninsula and the *avaton* distinction between the sacred and the profane contributed to the characterization of the peninsula as a “real utopia” and a “moral space”, being depicted in a wide range of maps from *insulaires* to historical ones.²⁵⁴ Utopia is also connected to a clearly demarcated realm, initially represented as an island in the early 16th century in Thomas More’s book. An ideal community lived there, following a monastic-like life.

²⁵² Alice Mary Talbot, “Women and Mount Athos: Insights from the Archives of the Holy Mountain”, Lecture, 14 February 2012, The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, in <http://www.ascsa.edu.gr/index.php/news/newsDetails/alice-mary-talbot-women-and-mt.-athos-insights-from-the-archives-of-the-hol>.

²⁵³ Veronica della Dora, “Mythological Landscape and Landscape of Myth: Circulating Visions of Pre-Christian Athos”, in G. Backhaus and J. Murungi (eds.), *Symbolic Landscapes*, (Springer Science and Business Media B.V, 2009), p. 111: According to the writer a landscape of myth is: “a place visited by few, but alive in the geographical imagination of many”.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.115: Henricus Martellus (1480-1490) includes in his “*Insulari*”, the description of Athos. “*Insulaires*”, were “the handwritten or printed atlases (...) that included maps of islands and coastal areas, distributed according to the encyclopaedic system of independent entries”. In Martellus’s atlas Athos is depicted as a quite circular island in which elements of the natural and built environment constitute a landscape quite similar to that of Utopia. There cannot be a conclusive argument for the relation between the two expressions, but one may argue about a possible influence on Martellus’ description by the symbolic power of the island based on its sacred/ monastic character.

See also: B.S.J. Isserlin et al., “The Canal of Xerxes on the Mount Athos Peninsula”, *Annual of the British School at Athens*, 89 (1994), pp. 277-284.

In this way, the German art historian Heinrich Brockhaus connected Mount Athos to More's *Utopia* [Figure 4.6] in the introduction of his book about Athonian Byzantine Art, published in 1924.²⁵⁵ Basing his argument on Brockhaus's connections, Paul Huber also underlined the similarities between Utopia's communal way of life and the Athonian monastic one, something that was possibly fired by More's interest in monasteries.²⁵⁶ Utopia was initially a peninsula divided from the rest of the land by a canal, opened by its founder Utopos. This is similar, according to the writer, to the history of the general periphery of the Athonian peninsula with the opening of the canal by Xerxes and its material recollection, either through the actual border along the neck or the imaginary maps of that period.²⁵⁷ Furthermore, in the *Lexicon Der Antike*, published by Johannes Irscher in 1987, we find similar connections of the two models.²⁵⁸ Finally, the geographers Pazarli and Livieratos underline similarities in 17th century depictions of More's Utopia and contemporary ones of Athos. In particular, during the 15th century, Henricus Martellus (1480-1490) included in his "Insulari", the description of Athos.²⁵⁹ In Martellus's atlas Athos is depicted as quite a circular island in which elements of the natural and built environment constitute a landscape quite similar to that of Utopia.²⁶⁰ [Figure 4.7] Whereas the

²⁵⁵ Brockhaus stayed at Mount Athos for two months in 1888 in order to examine the Byzantine icons of the peninsula. In the introduction of the second edition of his book *Die Kunst in den Athos-Klöstern* (1924) he underlines the connection between the two models, a subject he published later in a second piece, entitled "The written piece – Utopia of Thomas Morus" (published by B.G. Teubner, Leipzig und Berlin, 1929). A year later Michael Freund criticized these arguments as not academically sufficient. ("Historischen Zeitschrift", 1930).

²⁵⁶ Maria Pazarli and Euaggelos Livieratos, "Ou topos or the place (topos) of Athos?" in Euaggelos Livieratos (ed), *Όρους Άθω, Γης και Θαλάσσης Περίμετρον. Χαρτών Μεταμορφώσεις (Mount Athos: Between the Earth and the Sea, Its Transformations through Maps)*, p. 246: Huber underlines similarities between the two models. In Utopia, thus, there are 54 towns with 6,000 habitants each and the *Tragos*, an Athonian *typikon* written in 972, was signed by the representatives of 54 monastic structures (monasteries, *sketes* and cells) that had 6,000 monks. On Utopia see also: Dalibor, Vesely, "Design and the Crisis of Vision", *Scroope: Cambridge Architectural Journal*, (1995-1996), pp. 67-70.

²⁵⁷ Maria Pazarli and Euaggelos Livieratos, *ibid*, pg.247.

See also: Rudolf Billeta, "Der Heilige Berg Athos" in *Zeugnissen aus sieben Jahrhunderten*, Volumes A – D, (Wien – New York – Dublin: Mosaic Publications, 1993), pp. 125-127, as quoted in Maria Pazarli and Euaggelos Livieratos, *ibid*, p. 243: Critically approaching Huber's argument, Rudolf Billeta admits that it is impossible for Moore to have ignored the Athonian "paradigm of spirituality, being totally excluded from the political conditions due to ottoman occupation".

²⁵⁸ *Lexicon Der Antike*, (Herausgeber), Bibliographisches Institut, 9. Auflage, Leipzig 1987.

²⁵⁹ Euaggelos Livieratos and Giorgos Toliass, "Mount Athos of the Islands", Euaggelos Livieratos (ed), *Όρους Άθω, Γης και Θαλάσσης Περίμετρον. Χαρτών Μεταμορφώσεις (Mount Athos: Between the Earth and the Sea, Its Transformations through Maps)*, *ibid*, p. 220.

"Insulaires", were "the handwritten or printed atlases (...) that included maps of islands and coastal areas, distributed according to the encyclopaedic system of independent entries".

See also: Veronica della Dora, "Mythological Landscape and Landscape of Myth: Circulating Visions of Pre-Christian Athos", p. 114.

²⁶⁰ See Also, Veronica Della Dora, "Mythological Landscape and Landscape of Myth: Circulating Visions of Pre-Christian Athos", p. 115.

historical proof of this connection is not part of our discussion, the frequent reference to it by scholars over time underlines the way the Athonian peninsula has always been related to the symbolic paradigm of a distant “ideal community”, the general periphery of which carries elements of a clear division between everyday life and the Athonian one.



Figure 4.6 (Left): The island of Utopia (1518).

Figure 4.7 (Right): The Athonian peninsula in Henricus Martellus Germanus *Insulari* (1480-1490).

Hence, the general periphery plays an important role in the utopian associations of Mount Athos as the geographical dynamics of an island and a peninsula are combined with the absolute character of the *avaton* regulations.²⁶¹ As Christian Norberg-Schulz argues, the island is a *place par excellence*, appearing as an “isolated”, clearly defined figure, the entrance to which may even existentially affect the individual. Similarly, the word “peninsula”, meaning “almost an island”, underlines the unique character of the specific geographical formation.²⁶² Xerxes’ canal and its previous *island* past are also recollected by the clarity of the administrative boundary along its neck.

²⁶¹ The limited number of visitors to Mount Athos until the 1980s also contributed to this character. Utopia is an ideal state of nowhere and hence it is paradoxical by definition, as utopia is a way to approach the “authentic” that can never be realised. Its quest is also depicted on the dynamics of the general periphery of Mount Athos, the penetration of which may signal the interaction with a “more authentic” life. This has been part of the pilgrim’s motivation since the Byzantine Era.

²⁶² Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, p. 39.

During the Romantic period a number of travellers went to Greece wanting to visit the unapproachable Athos directed by the above *imaginary map* and trying to envisage elements of the ancient past in the experience of the actual landscape. From an *imaginary ideal community* Mount Athos became an *actual place*, the experience of which seems to have enhanced its mythic qualities. This is also evident in romantic travel accounts of the period.²⁶³ The general border, supported also by entrance regulations, and the long journey played an important role in this process as it added to the semi-independent status of the realm, cutting it away from the rest of the world. At the same time this border also had the character of a boundary as it could be penetrated both through geographical imagination and by travelling.

By the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, Mount Athos had become even more approachable as a travel destination for both eastern and western travellers “easily” sailing there on steamboats.²⁶⁴ The number of travel descriptions increased, also including the narratives of women who sailed around the peninsula to interact with a topography that formerly they could approach only through imagination, reading male travel accounts and maps.²⁶⁵ Searching for the “picturesque” and the “exotic”, women of that period (like the American writers Edith Wharton and Isabel Anderson) wrote about their Athonian experience focusing on an aesthetic description of the unapproachable coast.²⁶⁶ The narratives follow a chronological sequence of events during the course of the boat’s journey. These

²⁶³ Veronica della Dora, “Mythological Landscape and Landscape of Myth: Circulating Visions of Pre-Christian Athos”, p. 122: Veronica della Dora includes a characteristic depiction of Scotschman’s ascension to Athos’ peak in 1828:

A man lying on his back; for as the nose and chin would so be raised in the air, and an interval would appear between the chin and the breast, so the elevated portion of the extremity of the mountain seems detached from the rocks that lie below, and which spread on either side as if were the shoulders; then they seem narrow and to rise in the centre and mark the navel; then spread towards the hip; then the abrupt escarpment of a mountain across the isthmus, seems to give the outline of the knees, bent and drawn up; after which the land, suddenly sinking, narrows where the joined feet might be supposed to touch the earth. This must have been the view of Stesicrates when he endeavored to persuade Alexander to complete the resemblance.

²⁶⁴ Frederick Hasluck, *ibid*, p. 3.

See also: John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, (London: Sage), 2002:

The end of the Romantic period and the beginning of the twentieth century was followed by a dynamic change in the way space was perceived as the distances were reduced through new means of transport.

²⁶⁵ This was also confirmed by my research of the archive of Mount Athos’ Centre, entitled: “Five Centuries of Peregrinations to Mount Athos, 15th century – 1930”. It is a collection of the descriptions of 354 male travellers to Mount Athos, the 280 are dated. 45 of them (280) were written and published from 15th century – 1800, 81 cases were published between 1800 and 1880, 105 cases were published between 1880-1920 and 49 cases were published after 1920.

²⁶⁶ Wharton, E. *The Cruise of the Vanadis*, (New York: Rizzolu), 2004 (1888)

Isabel Anderson, *A Yacht in the Mediterranean Seas*, (Boston: Marshall Jones), 1930.

As presented in the article: Veronica Della Dora, “How Mount Athos was seen by western women sailing around it: 1888-1930”, in (Under Publication), pp. 9-30.

journeys and descriptions coincide chronologically with the utopian connections of Brockhaus, underlining the dynamics of the general periphery through the notions of exclusion and interdiction. In this context, in the *National Geographic* magazine of 1916, Harry Grisworld Dwight underlines the avaton dynamics of the place by writing:

The rare arrival of a Russian steamboat once per week and the occasional arrival of some Greek ones are the only events happening there. Monks are deprived from the most important thing of others' lives. Because, I will have to disclose to you, feminists and sufrazets, oh women that are struggling for your rights in the Western world, that here is a bastion intact by your attacks. An ancient law forbids to any female creature to walk in the ground of Mount Athos (...).²⁶⁷

We have to add here that during the twentieth century the border was transgressed by a small number of women who wanted to state their opposition to the ban on their free movement in the realm. For example, in 1929 Maryse Choisy claimed that she spent a whole month on Mount Athos, pretending to be a boy servant after having a double mastectomy. She also published a book entitled *A Month Among the Men*, in which she described her experiences.²⁶⁸ Moreover, Maria Poimenidou from Thessaloniki also crossed the boundary in 17 April 1953 dressed as a man. She was spotted by monks and policemen and expelled. Two months later legislation (No 2623/1953) was passed according to which a transgression of the boundary by women would be punished by two to twelve months imprisonment.²⁶⁹

Hence the general periphery of the peninsula has gradually started acquiring qualities of conflict and controversy connected to its border character, something that has become the subject of debate mainly since the nomination of the peninsula as a World Heritage Monument (1988). In August 2003 the French member of the European Parliament (MEP) Fode Sylla suggested lifting the *Avaton*, as it is considered to be against the human rights of the "equality between men and

²⁶⁷ H. Dwight, "The Hoary Monasteries of Mount Athos", *The National Geographic* 30, 1916, p. 33.

²⁶⁸ Maryse Choisy, *A Month Among the Men*, (Salem: Pyramid Books, 1962).

"A woman in Mount Athos. The bold descriptions of Maryse Choisy", in the newspaper *Macedonia*, Sunday 14 July, 1929, p. 1.

²⁶⁹ "Indeed, the Avaton of Mount Athos was transgressed by a woman", in the newspaper *Empros*, Wednesday, 29 April, 1953, pp. 1 & 3.

In 1938 Alike Diplarakou also illegally entered Athos, dressed as a man. She was discovered by Vatopedian monks soon after her arrival and was expelled. A number of rituals and prayers were held on Athos to purify the topography from her presence. As recently as 2008 Ukrainian smugglers left four Moldovan women on the coast of Athos. They were also quickly spotted by monks and policemen and expelled from the peninsula.

women”.²⁷⁰ Female representatives of left-wing parties in Greece and feminist movements underline in a similar way the intensity of the border character of the general periphery, arguing about the violation of the international conventions on non-discrimination and the EU Law’s basic principle of freedom of movement.²⁷¹

At the same time women sailing around the peninsula is a well established habit today. [Figures 4.8 & 4.9] They can participate in one-day cruises, sailing between Ouranoupolis and the Athonian Desert. The organizational framework of these trips may be either touristic or pilgrimage in character. Regular daily routes are held during summer. Moreover, female members of local churches or female monasteries organize independent *pilgrimages* of this kind. This journey gives them the opportunity to conduct, according to the anthropologist Filareti Kotsi, a “floating pilgrimage”,²⁷² where they can see the monasteries on the shore and can listen to the tour guide’s descriptions. In some cases, the monks take holy relics out of the monastery to be venerated by the pilgrims. They may also conduct rituals on the boat enhancing the pilgrimage character of the journey.



Figures 4.8 & 4.9: A “floating pilgrimage” of a local church of the Greek town of Patras during June 2009. Monks from the Holy Monastery of Dionysiou brought out Holy Relics to be venerated by the pilgrims.

²⁷⁰ Paragraph 91, Report by Fode Sylla, Date: 21 August 2003, url: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sidesSearch/search.do?type=REPORT&language=EN&term=5&author=4358>, pp. 18-19.

This is not the only document of European Parliament connected to the Athonian Avaton. See for example: Paragraph 98 of “The European Parliament resolution on the situation concerning basic rights in the European Union (2001/2014(INI))” (url: [www.lavoro.minori.it/.../eu/Risol.%20\(2001-2014\(INI\)\).rtf](http://www.lavoro.minori.it/.../eu/Risol.%20(2001-2014(INI)).rtf))

²⁷¹ For example, read the article: Anna Karamanou, “Mount Athos and Human Rights”, *Newspaper: Eleutherotypia*, 06.02.2003, also available in: www.karamanou.gr.

For the thesis of Mount Athos on this issue, read: Ioannis, M. Konidaris, *The Mount Athos Avaton*, (Athens: Sakkoulas Editions), 2003.

²⁷² Filareti Kotsi, “The Enchantment of a Floating Pilgrimage. The Case of Mount Athos, Greece”, in *Vrijetijdstudies* 17:2 (1999), pp. 5-20.

Hence, the border between the sea and the peninsula is not a clear line. It becomes a porous membrane in which the travelling of the male visitors, the visual contact of the female participants in the cruises and the few transgressions enhance its *liminal* dynamics. It creates a capsule in space and time that implicitly hides part of the internal happenings, triggering women's reaction.

The *avaton* has also been questioned through a number of artistic projects which depict the transgression of the border.²⁷³ [Figures 4.10, 4.11, 4.12] An interesting case is the work of the contemporary artist Maria Papadimitriou who depicted a hot air balloon representing her face and *silently* flowing over Mount Athos. [Figure 4.13] The aim of the project was to question the "border controls that link mobility with identity". According to the artist, the hot air balloon openly challenges Athonite tradition without breaking Greek laws, as the aerial sphere of the peninsula can be penetrated through different kinds of entities, from birds of any gender to airplanes and hot air balloons.²⁷⁴ By placing a female figure in the Athonian realm, these pieces depict the border of the realm through its imaginary transgression, visualising a paradoxical condition in which the border is transformed into a porous boundary. The canvas or the photograph becomes a kind of threshold suggesting the inhabitation of Mount Athos also by women.

²⁷³ The late nineteenth century Romantic painter Theodore Jacques Ralli depicted the temptation of a monk through the vision of a female figure sitting on a marble throne in the exo-narthex of Vatopedi monastery. Ralli met the monk that had the vision at Esphigmenou Monastery, whereas in his painting(s) the event is depicted in the exo-narthex of the Vatopedi monastery. On this see:

Maria Mirka Palioura, "Theodore Ralli's Diary on his Travels to Athos (1885)", *Proceedings of the 8th Biennial Conference of Astene* (The Association for the Study of Travel in Egypt and the Near East) U.K., pp. 78-87.

For the description of the actual event see also: Theodore Jacques Ralli, *At the Mountain of Athos. Excerpts from the Diary of a Painter*, translated into Greek from French by Mirka Palioura, (Athens: Kastaniotis Editions, 2004), pp. 73-80.

Moreover, Spyros Papaloukas (1924-1925) depicted his wife Olga Papalouka on the peninsula of Mount Athos. On this see: Markos Kambanis (ed), *Spyros Papaloukas. The Mountain Athos Paintings*, (Mount Athos, 2004).

²⁷⁴ See: Jennifer Allen, "Maria Over Athos", in: <http://centrefortheaestheticrevolution.blogspot.co.uk/2007/05/maria-papadimitriou-to-fly-over-mount.html>.



Figure 4.10 (Left): Theodore, Jacques, Rallis, *Resting in a Greek Monastery*.

Figure 4.11 (Right): Color Photograph of the marble throne by Cuville in 1914-1918.

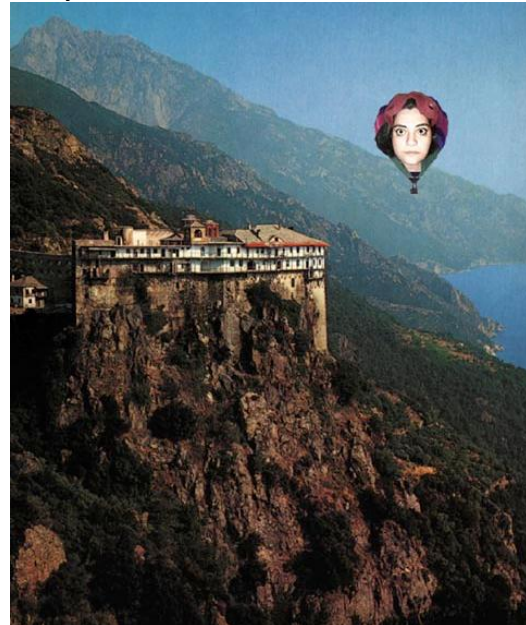


Figure 4.12 (Left): Spyros Papaloukas, *The depiction of Olga Papalouka as if standing on Mount Athos (1929)*.

Figure 4.13 (Right): Maria Papadimitriou, *“To Fly Over Mount Athos” (2007)*.

The *Avaton*, therefore, has played an important role in the liminal/utopian dynamics of the general periphery of Mount Athos. Women are not allowed to see what is beyond the coastline to avoid morally disturbing the male monastic communities. Rather questionable nowadays, this attitude still adds to the creation of a “space-out-there”, making the distinction between the inside and the outside even more intense. The equality between the two sexes, and the right of freedom of movement challenge the validity of this rule, especially when we are talking about a

UNESCO monument in the context of a shared international cultural heritage. “Floating” female pilgrims argue that this is part of an initiation process that is never fulfilled, underlining also their strong desire to see *beyond the line*.²⁷⁵ This visual penetration adds to the border dynamics of the general periphery, redefining the distance between the inside and the outside and enhancing its implicit qualities. Its rare transgression by women who decide to interact with the topography as paradoxical intruders is also an expression of its controversial character. At the same time, the entrance regulations for men divide this distance into different stages of a typical or a travel process.

This theme is also illuminated by Mary Douglas’s examination of the role of boundaries in her investigation of the relationship between hygiene and the ideas of order and disorder. The writer argues that pollution is a way to protect an “ideal order of society” as the latter is defined by a number of “danger-beliefs”.²⁷⁶ Showing how different societies have dealt with the notions of *uncleanness* and *contradiction*, she describes a number of similar regulations and “rituals of purity and impurity”. Hence, the avaton relates to the way the Athonian community tries to secure a sense of order which is connected to anachronistic ideas about moral purification and still adds to its eccentric character. Entrance of female visitors, or even male ones in “uncontrollable” numbers, carries the danger of possible disorder. This danger of “pollution behaviour” according to Douglas is also expressed through transgression of external and internal boundaries, something also applied in the case of Athos.²⁷⁷ According to Victor Turner, Douglas’s approach can be connected to the notion of liminality to describe the persons who enter a realm in which they are considered either as unfit, or as not-totally-initiated (yet).²⁷⁸ In this sense, women who sail around Athos or transgress its general periphery and men who visit the place to stay temporarily in it are *liminal persons* who threaten the order of the community in

²⁷⁵ Fieldwork at Mount Athos (August – September 2011).

See also the case of Eleni Ladia: Λαδιά, Ελένη, / Ladia, Eleni, “Η όραση και το Άγιο Όρος”/“The Vision and Mount Athos,” in Ioannis Xatzifotis, *Ανθολογία Λογτεχνικών Κειμένων για το Άγιο Όρος/Anthology of Literary texts about Mount Athos*, (Athens: Iolkos Publications, 2000), (First edition: 1977), pp. 222-225.

Other religiously motivated women refuse to do the floating pilgrimage as it is not a “proper proskynima”, excluding the possibility of actual veneration at the site.

²⁷⁶ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger. An Analysis of Pollution and Taboo*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), p.

3

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 122: In particular, there are four main ways that “pollution behaviour” is expressed: a. “danger pressing on external boundaries”, b. “danger from transgressing the internal lines of a system”, c. “danger in the margins of the lines”, d. “danger from internal contradiction”.

²⁷⁸ Victor Turner, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*”, in Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), pp. 23-59.

different degrees. The liminal qualities of their status are also reflected in the way they interact with the peninsula, as this has to follow specific threshold-rules that underline their lack of a permanent place in the peninsula.

Entering Mount Athos

The strict *avaton* regulations of the entrance of the male visitors and the uniqueness of the combination of the almost untouched natural and architectural context still enhance a sense of a religious environment that is *out-there*. The anthropologist Maria Santos still includes Mount Athos in the pilgrimage shrines that are “organized for an exclusively religious reception due ... to ... prohibitions or restrictions on access”.²⁷⁹ A number of rules have been set so that the character of the Athonian realm is not changed. These enhanced the area’s character as it became even more difficult to enter an untouched natural and built environment, in which the outsiders believe that they are going to interact with monks who live according to the Byzantine way of monastic life. They usually prepare themselves to enter the peninsula by reading books, internet blogs and trying to organise their future movement in the peninsula through touristic maps. These activities are included in a process of *prefiguration* that enhance their sense of expectation and intensify the way they cross the border of the peninsula.

Every day 100 Orthodox and 10 non-Orthodox male visitors are permitted to enter Mount Athos. In order to visit the peninsula formal permission must be sought from The Mount Athos Pilgrims’ Bureau (Thessaloniki, Greece). The first part of the visitor’s journey is to reach Ouranoupolis, a small circumlittoral village of Halkidiki. He should first exchange his authorization from the Pilgrims’ Bureau for his official permit to enter Mount Athos (visa). After obtaining his tickets from “Athoniki Shipping” office, he is able to travel to Athos using one of the three boats leaving from Ouranoupoli daily. Greek visitors can spend seven days there and foreigners only four. An extension can be granted by asking an abbot’s permission. No one is

²⁷⁹Maria de Graca, Mougá, Pocas, Santos, “Religious Tourism: Contributions Towards a Clarification of Concepts”, in Fernandes, C. McGettigan, F. And Edwards, J. (eds), *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage – Atlas: Special Interest Group*, (1st Expert Meeting), Tourism Board of Leiria, Fatima, Portugal, pp. 28-42.

allowed to spend more than a day in a monastic place.²⁸⁰ These regulations are also included in the framework of “avaton” as they control the way outsiders *tread* in the peninsula.²⁸¹

Thus, the notion of “distance” is also enhanced by the formation of the pilgrimage/ travelling identity of the Athonian realm. Even Greeks feel as if they are going on a long journey while travelling towards Athos. The crossing of the general boundary contributes to a process during

²⁸⁰ Konstantinos Andriotis, “Sacred Site Experience. A Phenomenological Study, *Annals of Tourism Research*, pp. 66-67: “In 2006, approximately 78,000 persons visited Mount Athos, among which only 3.8% (approximately 3,000 persons) were Heterodox”.

²⁸¹ This process was different during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth. Arriving at Daphne the visitors also had to give their passports to the authorities and go to Karyes to obtain their permission and retrieve their passport. This process was not absolutely necessary as Mount Athos was under Ottoman Occupation. Hence, if the visitors had obtained permission from the Ottoman authorities at Daphne to move freely in the peninsula they did not have to carry their diamonitirio in order to be accepted in the monasteries and walk along the footpaths. A letter of recommendation from a Christian Orthodox religious authority positively contributed to the longer stay at Mount Athos and the conduct of academic or artistic research. Submitting this letter to the Athonian authorities at Karyes the outsider received another one signed by them that had to be carried always and handed in to the porter of each of the monasteries in order to be accepted and hosted there. This hospitality was also extended to movement in the realm as every monastery provided the visitor with either a means of transportation (a small boat, or a mule) or a guide. On this, see: P. Karolidou, *The Current Condition of Mount Athos*, (Athens: Paliggenesias Press, Company of Hellenism, 1896).

During the mid-twentieth century all the visitors also had to ascend to Karyes from Daphne in order to obtain their Diamonitirion from the Athonian authorities after they have asked and received a confirmation note from the Vice Governor of Mount Athos or the Department of Foreigners of Mount Athos. Greek priests had to carry with them a letter of recommendation from a religious authority and the foreigners a letter of recommendation from the Greek Ministry of External Affairs and the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. Similar documents are required from those who want to conduct research in the monasteries of the peninsula. A number of other regulations also defined the movement of the visitors in the peninsula. For example, they had to be properly dressed and smoking was not permitted. Moreover, visitors were not allowed to carry recording machines or musical instruments. On the entrance process during the mid-twentieth century, please see: G. Alexandrinou from Great Lavra Monastery, *A Guide to Mount Athos*, (Athens, 1957).

Moreover, the typical process of entering was much more difficult than it is today, especially for foreigners, even during 1980s, as the only foreigners permitted were: professors of universities, primary and high school teachers, and students (older than 21) in theology, philosophy, architecture and history of art. Of course, it was not totally impossible for someone else to enter as long as he had obtained a “strong” letter of recommendation from an academic or a distinguished professional in the above areas. Arriving at Thessaloniki foreigner visitors had to go to their country’s Consulate and if there was no consulate at Thessaloniki, they had to go to their Embassy at Athens first. The consulate had to write a letter in which he/she confirmed that the visitor was “a man of good character”. The process was quite typical, just checking the external appearance of the people and asking some questions. Then they had to go to a civil servant in the Ministry of Northern Greece who was in charge of foreign visitors to Mount Athos. The travellers had to show their passports and be included in the list of the ten people that were going to enter the realm the coming day. After that, they had to visit the Immigration police and declare their presence and its purpose and then to go to Ouranoupolis in order to take the boat to Mount Athos. Arriving at Daphne they had to give their passport to a policeman, take the bus to Karyes and there get their passport back together with their Diamonitirion that was actually signed by the representatives of the four monasteries during that short period of time. Entering the “list of ten” seems to be the most important part of the journey’s preparation, especially after the mid-1980s. After 1986 the letter of the consulate was no longer needed and they just had to go to the Ministry of Northern Greece. Since 1993 the visit at Thessaloniki is no longer necessary and the Diamonitirion is not issued at Karyes. (For these pieces of information I would like to thank Mr. Wim Voogd, a frequent visitor to Mount Athos since 1980 who kindly shared his experiences with me, adding also a relevant post on his blog: <http://athos.weblog.nl/basic-information/1324-athos-only-for-men-of-good-character/>).

which the individual experiences a gradual detachment from his everyday life and his integration into another environment. Travelling by ship is also part of the experience of a “threshold”, the passage through which begins at the village of Ouranopoli and ends with the arrival at one of the Athonian ports. The character of this threshold changes according to the traveller’s motivation. It may be part of an initiation process for the pilgrim, an opening to the unknown for the existential traveller or part of the predefined tourist route for the cultural tourist.

Ouranoupolis is a small tourist village which was founded in 1922 for refugees from Asia Minor. Its most noticeable building is a Byzantine tower by the sea known as “Prosphori”, meaning “the gift”. [Figure 4.14] It was built by Emperor Andronikos II during the thirteenth century as an offering to the monastery of Vatopedi. The land surrounding the tower was confiscated and given to the refugees. A small village was created named Pyrgos, meaning “tower” in Greek. After a short period of time the village was renamed Ouranopolis in memory of a homonymous ancient town located on the other side of the peninsula.²⁸² The tower still standing ashore is a monument historically connected to Mount Athos also through its inhabitation by Sydney and Joice Loch, two writers who stayed there from 1928 until the end of their lives. The couple helped the village a lot in different levels of life: social, financial and cultural. Sydney Loch was also a frequent pilgrim to Mount Athos. The tower played the role of a threshold, as both visitors and monks used to spend a night there during their entry or exit from the peninsula. Today the tower is a small museum in which the visitors can see how the couple used to live there and also interact with material relevant to Mount Athos.²⁸³

²⁸²Graham Speake, *Mount Athos: Renewal in Paradise*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 237-238.

²⁸³*Ibid.*



Figure 4.14: The Tower of Ouranoupolis.

During summer the life of the village is organised to support the daily voyages of the ships that carry the male visitors and the daily cruises along the western coast of the peninsula. A number of shops sell souvenirs connected to Mount Athos, some of which purport to be made by Athonian monks. [Figures 4.15 & 4.16] Books, maps, incense, praying ropes and icons are displayed outside the shops to attract the gaze of the travellers. To the pilgrims this tourist environment signals the end of their separation from their everyday sphere. Thus, arriving at Ouranoupolis during the early 1990s Nikolaos Koufos felt that the city stood as the “threshold” between the inside and the outside of Athos: “This is the threshold through which you have to pass in order to go to the one [threshold] that leads to heavens”.²⁸⁴ Negative feelings about such commoditization of the journey to Mount Athos were combined with his expectation of entering the realm, making him buy only a map so he could trace his movement on the peninsula accurately.²⁸⁵ Obtaining the *Diamonitirion* (Athonian visa) enhanced the whole process, confirming his gradual entrance, which began with his boarding the ship.

²⁸⁴ Nikolaos Koufos, *Holy Week on Mount Athos*, (Mount Athos: The Holy Monastery of Iveron, 1997), p. 15.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 17.



Figure 4.15 (Left): Ouranoupoli: Male Visitors waiting to buy their ticket.



Figure 4.16 (Right): Ouranoupoli: Exterior views of a shop selling "Athonian Things".

The sea journey therefore signals the passage of the visitor into the realm and adds to the meaning of the border that is crossed by the outsiders, visually at the beginning of the route, and literally when arriving at a port. Graham Speake describes the process in a characteristic way:

The voyage from Ouranopolis is the final stage in the process of departing from the world and entering Athos. Womenfolk are left behind on the quayside as the ferryboat heads out to sea. Soon the tower of Prosphori disappears behind a headland, and a glimpse of the wall that marks the boundary indicates that the ship has entered Athonite waters. Regrettably, mobile telephones do not have to be left behind and Greek businessmen make their last frantic calls to colleagues and clients in Athens as they struggle with the prospect of cutting links with their mundane concerns for the next four or five days. Anyone wearing shorts on the boat will be asked to change into long trousers out of respect for the monks; anyone spotted using a video camera will have it confiscated for the duration of his visit. There is an air of expectation as first-time pilgrims pore over their maps and try to identify passing settlements, while others toss morsels to Athonite seagulls and keep a watch for monastic dolphins.²⁸⁶

While sailing towards Daphne, the boat stops at the monasteries of Zografou, Konstamonitou, Docheiariou, Xenofontos and St. Panteleimonos. [Figures 4.17, 4.18, 4.19, 4.20 & 4.21] The ports

²⁸⁶ Graham Speake, p. 238.

See also in the same: The writer also describes in an interesting way how the ship is inhabited during the journey:

The ships now in service between Ouranopolis and Daphne are very similar in style to the sort of car ferries that operate on short-distance routes between Greek islands. The lower deck is likely to be occupied by lorries serving the timber industry on the Mountain or carrying building materials for the numerous reconstruction projects now in progress and smaller commercial vehicles bringing in supplies to supplement what the monks produce for themselves. The middle deck is an enclosed saloon which provides shelter and refreshments. If the weather is fine, most passengers make for the top deck, which is open to the sky and offers a good view of the passing coastline. (238-239).

of the monasteries (called *Arsanades*) become the gates towards Mount Athos. The disembarkation from the boat signals the end of the transitional process from the outside to inside, and the beginning of the reverse movement. This distant visual interaction with the landscape enhances the general periphery of the realm, incorporating in its zone the route of the ship. During the latter the visual penetration of the formal border is an initial stage of familiarisation with the Athonian landscape.



Figure 4.17 (Left): The monastery of Zografou and its *arsanas* (port).

Figure 4.18 (Right): The *arsanas* of Konstamonitou Monastery.



Figure 4.19 (Left): Docheiariou Monastery.

Figure 4.20 (Right): Xenofontos Monastery.



Figure 4.21: St. Panteleimon Monastery.



Figure 4.22: General view of the port of Daphne.

Around two hours later the outsiders arrive at the main Athonian port of Daphne which is considered to be the port of its capital, the village of *Karyes*. [Figure 4.22] Daphne gets its name from the daughter of the king of Arcadia, who according to a tradition, fled to Mount Athos in order to save her virginity from Apollo. This tradition is also connected to the idea of a moral purification. The area of the port is very small. A customs office, a police station, two small shops, a café and some other buildings belonging to Athonian monasteries make up this most important port of the peninsula. [Figures 4.25 & 4.26] Arriving at Daphne, the visitor meets the people waiting for the ship to exit the peninsula. [Figures 4.23 & 4.24] The port becomes therefore a **threshold** between the inside and the outside. Along the quay people wait for another smaller boat to take them to the monasteries located beyond Daphne, or board the bus that will take them to Karyes. Some of them begin to walk to their destination and others drink, taking some rest before the next stage of their journey. People also wait for their luggage to be checked by the custom officers and get on the boat for Ouranoupoli.



Figures 4.23 & 4.24: Arriving at the port of Daphne.



Figure 4.25 (Left): Daphne: A small shop selling Athonian handicrafts and books.



Figure 4.26 (Right): Daphne: The Customs Office of Mount Athos.

The smaller boat takes some of the pilgrims to the rest of the peninsula. The visitors arrive at their final destination of the day, one of the east side's monasteries that lie beyond Daphne or the Skete of Saint Anne and the Desert. The port of each monastery plays a vital role in entering Athos. In the area of the port we usually find different buildings connected to the storage and repair of boats, the housing of lay workers, storage spaces and different kinds of laboratories, features generally found in ports which are connected to the interaction between the inside and the outside of a realm: exchange of people and goods. In the case of Mount Athos the *arsanas* is connected to the entrance and exit of the visitor, being included in a pilgrimage or a more touristic circular journey. It also highlights the entrance and long stay of the monk at the community.

All the coastal or continental monasteries have an *arsana* for the service of their needs. One monk of the monastery, called *arsanaris*, is in charge of the maintenance and service of the port. A tower is included in the complex of the port of some of the monasteries. Built for defensive purposes, the tower stands as a symbol of the past that defines the entrance to the territory of a monastery, becoming also a visual signal for the entering outsider.²⁸⁷

Twenty minutes after the departure from Daphne the boat arrives at the *arsanas* of Gregoriou Monastery. The pier is placed on the left side of the small complex, followed by the houses of the lay workers, the stables, the carpentry, the timber warehouse and the new guest house. On the right edge of the port there is a small shipyard where the two or three fishing boats of the

²⁸⁷Ioannis Xatzifotis, *Everyday Life on Mount Athos*, (Athens: Papadima Editions, 1999), pp. 136-139.

monastery are kept and repaired if necessary. It is a two-storey building with a mezzanine. For safekeeping and maintenance the boats are housed on the ground floor, and some rooms for workers, small storage rooms and a chapel in honour of St. Modestos are located on the second floor and mezzanine. Arriving at the port the visitors are led to the guest house to be given a bed for the coming night.

The port of the monastery plays the role of the space between the inside and the outside. The sea-scape gives an intense sense of detachment from ordinary life.²⁸⁸ Along the port one may find outsiders either waiting for the boat or arriving and being guided to the guest houses. Only monks connected to the guests' hospitality are found at the port area around the time of the boat's arrival. A monk at Gregoriou monastery told me during my fieldwork: "I only get down to the port to welcome or say goodbye to my spiritual children that visit me. Otherwise, I prefer staying in the cell". It seems that this is the case for most monks as they try to focus their minds on the interior of the peninsula.

Virtual Penetration of the Periphery

Thus the *liminality* of the general periphery of Mount Athos is also connected to how the insiders deal with its crossing. Athonian monks claim that their monastery and Mount Athos is their *grave*, the place of *xeniteia* and departure from the mundane sphere. Even today monks exit the realm very rarely, and only after receiving their abbot's permission. This period varies from one year to whole decades. A monk from Gregoriou Monastery, for example, exits Mount Athos once per year, whereas a monk from the *Kellion of Danielaeon* has not been out for around 40 years.²⁸⁹ Nevertheless, modern life has influenced their interaction with the outside, re-defining also the *liminal* character of the general periphery as some monks use mobile phones, laptops and personal computers. Athonian web-sites can be found on the internet.²⁹⁰ This is not a common thing on the peninsula, as most of the time the monks' access to the different means of communication is controlled. For example, in Gregoriou monastery the monks are not allowed to access the internet and only very few have the abbot's permission to

²⁸⁸Fieldwork at Athos, August 2012.

²⁸⁹Fieldwork at Mount Athos (August-September 2011 & August 2012).


²⁹⁰The cases are very few. A characteristic example is <http://www.maximosathos.com/> with the creator of which both male and female outsiders have the opportunity to exchange emails.

have a mobile phone. Only three landline phones exist in the monastery, access to which is controlled by specific regulations. In parallel, the outsiders also carry their mobile phones with them, with the ability to be interconnected to the outside through the exchange of telephone calls and digital messages, but also virtually as the latest versions of mobile phones allow periodical access to the web. These developments in the experience of the peninsula question the distinction between the sacred and the profane, the inside and the outside, the self and the Other, that is also materialized and up to a point defined by the way the general periphery is experienced.

At the same time, male and female users of the web have the opportunity to see images and videos about the life of the peninsula and also participate in conversations about its experience in the relevant web blogs. These processes enhance the boundary qualities of the periphery of Mount Athos as men who have not been there and women can interact with aspects of the topography that they would not have the opportunity to see otherwise. For example, information about the network of footpaths is depicted in an interesting way in the mosaic of the recording media used to answer questions in web blogs about Athonian routes. The information is not always valid as everyone can add material from a journey there. In the framework of the preparation for his travel a visitor tries to be informed about his walking-movement in Athos through these internet sources. Other users of the web-pages suggest routes recollecting previous travel experiences. The latter are, usually, people who go there regularly, including in their journey the walking experience as a means of a more “authentic” interaction with this place. Therefore, parts of the Athonian landscape are being mapped and “preserved” in the internet, opening to a wide audience an in-progress database of the area. The result is usually “oral” mappings of specific parts of the peninsula through the combination of different narratives of experience. One of these answers concerned a combination of text and images. The user-answerer had videoed the route from Karakalou Monastery to the *Kellion* of Panagouda in a previous visit and in order to describe it more clearly he used clip-images of the video and integrated them in his text, creating the following representation:


Re: Παναγούδα
 Από heart » Σάβ Μαρ 07, 2009 10:00 am

petrosathanas έγραψε:
 Μπορεί κάποιος να μου δώσει οδηγίες για το πως πηγαίνουμε στην Παναγούδα?



320x239 39kb


φτανεις κουτλουμουσιου και περνεις των κατηφορο αυτων
 αμεσως μετα την στροφη που βλέπεις στην foto, κανεις δεξιά, (οχι όπως παει ο δρομος) μετα ακολουθεις



320x239 37kb


εναν σχετικα φαρδι χοματοδρομο αυτων
 και ακολουθεις

μετα φτανεις σε μια σαν μαντρα με συρματα γυρο γυρο, εκει ενα ανοιγμα μπενεις μεσα




320x239 41kb

το μοναδικο μονοπατι που σε βγαζει σε αυτην την (ταμπελα)
 συνεχιζεις πλεων σε χοματοδρομο. μωλης 15 μετρα μετα την ταμπελα δεξια σου θα δεις το κελι του γ.γαβριηλ(πας και στον γερωνα εκει δεν το συζηταμε)



320x239 29kb

και μετα συνεχιζεις σε αφτο το δρομακι πλεων



320x240 32kb

περιπατας και φτανεις σε αυτη την ταμπελα
 και

heart
 Καρυφαιος Απιστολας

Δημοσιεύσεις: 945
 Εγγραφή: Τετ Νοέμ 19, 2008 9:24 pm
 Τοποθεσία: Κωσταντινος@Ευβοια

Figure 4.27: Blog depiction of the path towards Panagouda.

This depiction of walking along a footpath carries elements of the actual experience. Texts and images are integrated in the linear narrative of the bridging of the distance between the two monastic structures. Panagouda was the shelter of a famous *hesychast*, Elder Paisios who died in 1994. Connected to his spiritual aura, the place has become the goal of pilgrimage. Therefore the path is the result of the pilgrims' intentional walking. Its preservation is based on the desire of the moving body-subject to visit a sacred place. In this sense, the above depiction tries to transfer elements of this unique experience through the incorporation of the walker's gaze in the narrative. Handmade signs, the *kellion* of Panagouda and paths' intersections are depicted in the images making clearer to the viewer and possible future visitor what he is going to see along the route.

Conversations of this kind are also open to all the users of the web, redefining the distance between them and the peninsula in a virtual way and at the same time adding to the liminal dynamics of the boundary that divides the inside from the outside.²⁹¹ It has to be underlined

²⁹¹This is directly connected to the notions of cyberspace and virtual place.

here that virtual experience is different from the embodied one on which this study focuses. Whereas embodied experience relates to the concrete happenings of place in which we are engaged through all of our senses, the virtual is another field of interaction created by different media, such as television, telephone and the Internet. Their difference is based on the ability of information to travel faster than people and objects due to technological advancements, creating a global network of communication. According to the cultural theorist McKenzie Wark, virtual experiences are “telesthetic”, as focus is on the notion of distance between the individual and the object of perception, in our case the Athonian peninsula.²⁹² Therefore the “virtual geography” of Mount Athos is something different from the actual embodied topography in which the individual actually maps the place through his movement. “Telesthetic” perception is a more abstract experience, transforming the landscape into a kind of spectacle, our interaction with which involves new ways of “reading”, different from traditional travel literature and two dimensional depictions.

Liminal qualities of the Athonian general periphery, therefore, are carried in the event of the virtual interaction between the individual and the online space of the web, but are perceived by the individual in a different way from the actual crossing or transgressing of the boundary. A number of scholars have dealt with how people interact with religious landscape and architecture through the computer screen, introducing concepts such as “cyberpilgrimage” or “spiritual co-location”.²⁹³ Though questionable, these approaches underline the way religious sites can be “virtually visited” by people through new media, that may be also characterized as “virtual thresholds” of a boundary that divides the sacred from the profane.

Hence, the general periphery of Mount Athos carries elements of both a border and a boundary. Through the application of *Avaton*, the more sacred was divided from the more profane, refusing women entrance to the peninsula and controlling the entrance of male visitors. This is

On cyberspace and virtual place, please see: Dr. Paul C. Adams, “Cyberspace and Virtual Places”, *Geographical Review*, 87:2 (April 1997), pp. 155-171.

²⁹² McKenzie Wark, *Telesthesia. Communication, Culture and Class*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), pp. 25-38.

²⁹³ Lorne L. Dawson & Douglas E. Cowan (eds), *Religious Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, (New York, London: Routledge, 2004).

Anastasia Karaflogka, “Religious Discourse and Cyberspace”, *Religion: An International Journal*, 32 (2002), pp. 279-291.

Mark MacWilliams, “Virtual Pilgrimages on the Internet”, *Religion: An International Journal*, 32 (2002), pp. 315-336.

Connie Hill-Smith, “Cyberpilgrimage: A study of Authenticity, Presence and Meaning in Online Pilgrimage Experiences”, *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, 21:2 (Summer 2009).

also connected with the utopian qualities that have been attached to the realm since the early twentieth century. *Avaton* is about the detachment of the peninsula from mundane life through its moral purification. Regulations of entrance and men's movement in the peninsula also contribute to *avaton's* degradations, playing an active role in the male visitors' journey. On the other hand, the general periphery is always in a process of penetration through the journeys of travellers of different motivations. Moreover, it is also visually penetrable through the organised cruises around it and virtually crossed through the web. Insiders and outsiders can interact with each other more easily today, changing the notion of distance and the character of *Avaton*.

Chapter Five

The Mountain, the Cave and the Hermitage

Introduction

This chapter examines the role of the mountain of Athos and its caves in the experiential topography of the peninsula. It seeks to explore how the tacit understanding of the relevant symbolic archetypes informs people's perception of this sacred place. Athos is an important religious symbol of the landscape, carrying the sacred associations that are traditionally attributed to mountains. Focus on the annual pilgrimage of monks and visitors to its peak on the day dedicated to Christ's Transfiguration (6th August) aims to illuminate its liminal qualities. This event commemorates the possibility of communication with the divine through a number of rituals included in a rite of passage, whose liminal stage happens at the peak of Athos. Moreover, the examination of Athonian caves as the smallest natural spaces for the ascetic to practise hesychasm seeks to explain further the religious character of the place. The hermits live in harsh conditions in the caves, praying and striving to reach *theosis*. This is also connected to how the ideas of distancing from mundane life and *xeniteia* are performed in the solitary conditions of the Athonian desert. The exploration of the ephemeral hermitages and wandering asceticism also contributes to the argument of the chapter, questioning the role of the built boundaries and underlining the moving dynamics of *xeniteia*.

The Mountain of Athos

The soil or rocky surface of the ground is the boundary between the earth and the sky. Its high points, the mountains, sometimes acquire the role of the threshold towards the divine. Being closer to the sky, the peaks of mountains have been connected in different cultures to the encounter with the sacred and the individual's feeling of the aura of the gods.²⁹⁴

²⁹⁴ Mountains are connected to the divine in a number of different religious traditions. Hence, in Tao Buddhism there exists the tradition of the "five mountains", the four connected to one of the four directions of the horizon and the fifth one is the *mountain of the Centre*. At the same time there is also another divine mountain complex in the same religion, the one of "the four mountains", each of which is connected to the four directions of the horizons. Both of the complexes carry sacred symbolism connected to their orientation. Furthermore, it is said that Buddha delivered a number of sermons on the Vulture Peak in northern India, something that plays an important role in Mahayana Buddhism as connected to the text of the Lotus Sutra. In addition, Mount Sumeru is considered to be the centre of the Buddhist universe, linking the mundane world with the hells and the heavens.

Mountains also acquire *hierophanic* qualities in Shamanistic tradition. Hence, Ichiro Hori underlines how shamanistic tribes of Central Asia and Mongolia believe that their supreme deity lives at the top of a golden mountain that reaches the centre of heaven. They also relate their religious-ascetic life to the ascension of this golden mountain,

Therefore, according to Mircea Eliade, a mountain can be a sacred place, a “centre”, an *Axis Mundi*, “where hierophanies and theophanies can occur and where there exists the possibility of breaking through from the level of earth to the level of heaven”.²⁹⁵ The sacred associations of mountains were found even during prehistoric times when, according to Walter Burkert, sanctuaries were organized on the peaks of mountains located at a small distance from human settlements. In these “peak sanctuaries” several celebrations were held, the most important of which were the fire rituals (possible forerunners of the fire festivals of the classical period), honouring a goddess.²⁹⁶ In this sense, mountains had a dual symbolic character in Ancient Greece. On the one hand, they were considered as *steps toward otherworldly space*, and on the other they were seen as *natural habitats of the Όρειοι Θεοί* (the gods of the Mountains). Apollo, Artemis, the Nymphs or Pan were believed to live on the slopes and in the caves of mountains.²⁹⁷ For example, it is said that Zeus had an altar on the highest peak of Mount Helikon, close to a spring dedicated to Poseidon. On the northern slope of the same mountain there was a sanctuary in honour of the Muses, while the Nymphs were worshipped in a cave nearby.²⁹⁸ Usually the citizens of a city conducted processions towards these sanctuaries on specific dates of the year, reaffirming the sacredness of the mountain. It is also said that the citizens of Megalopolis would walk once a year to the sanctuary of Apollo on Mount Lukaion. This repetitive religious journey intensified the connection between the *polis* and the sacred centres of its wider realm.²⁹⁹

a process divided into different stages (three, seven or nine) the aim of which is the communication with the deity and the transference of his oracles back to earth.

On this see: Ichiro Hory, “Mountains and their Importance for the Idea of the Other World in Japanese Folk Religion”, *History of Religions*, 6:1 (1966), pp. 1-23.

²⁹⁵ Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*, (Princeton University Press, 1991), (first edition: 1952), the chapter “Symbolism of the “Center””, pp. 27-56.

See also: Frank j. Korom, “Of Navels and Mountains: A Further Inquiry into the History of an Idea”, *Asian Folklore Studies*, 51:1 (1992), pp. 103-125, esp.106-108 (Paragraph: Eliade’s Concept of the “Center” as *Axis Mundi*).

Mircea Eliade, *Patterns of Comparative Religion*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1958), p. 373.

²⁹⁶ Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, (Blackwell Publishing and Harvard University Press, 1985), (first edition in German: 1977), pp. 26-28.

See Also: Barbara A. Weightman, “Sacred Landscape and the Phenomenon of Light”, *Geographical Review*, 86:1, (January, 1996), pp. 61-63, Paragraph: Fire: The writer argues about the important role that fire plays in different religious traditions, including the Christian one.

²⁹⁷ Merle K. Langdon, “Mountains in Greek Religion”, *The Classical World*, 93:5, The Organization of Space in Antiquity, (May – June, 2000), pp. 466-467.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 464.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 468.

Mountains also play an important role in the sacred landscape of the Scriptures. According to the theologian Alexander Golitzin, the meaning of the notion of the ‘place of God’ (*Topos Theou* – *Τόπος Θεού*) in the Old and New Testaments regards the dynamic synthesis of: “God, his presence and his house, the link with heaven in the ‘gate’ or ‘door’ thus the note of the *axis mundi*, joining heaven and earth and the angels, together with – at least by implication their liturgy”.³⁰⁰ It was from Mount Chorev’s peak that Moses received the Ten Commandments and Prophet Elijah saw God in the Old Testament. In particular, during their journey through the desert the Israelites decided to stop for a while at the foot of Mount Chorev (Mount Sinai). Moses then **ascended** to the peak of the Mountain to communicate with God, where he heard His voice telling him to **return** and inform the Israelites. Three days after his return to the desert, lightning and thunder appeared suddenly over the mountain, while the sound of trumpets was heard, inviting Moses again to the peak, obscured by a cloud for six days. Moses finally reached the top alone, after a second ascent in which God asked him to return again and tell the people not to follow, as the place was holy because of a divine presence. After forty days of praying there, God gave him the Ten Commandments written by his finger on two stone tablets. (Exodus 19-20:21). Moreover, seeking for divine guidance and shelter to protect himself from the Emperor Achaav and his wife Izevael, the prophet Elijah was staying in a cave on the same mountain when he was asked to go to the top and “stand (...) before the Lord” (1 Kings 19:11-12). At the same time a strong wind was blowing, followed by an earthquake and a fire. At some point, “a still small voice” was heard, making Elijah exit the cave and listen to God asking him about the purpose of his presence there and advising him to return to the world as a prophet (1 Kings 19: 12-15). Mountains in the Scriptures are therefore points of the relief where a divine **aura** can be transmitted: the sound of trumpets, the cloud around the peak, rain, earthquake and especially the voice of God. Vision, hearing and touching (the stone tablets) are interconnected with the **ascent** of the scriptural figures to the peak of the mountains and their prayerful pauses there (forty days in case of Moses). The liminal stages of these journeys involve the paradoxical encounter with God, happening at the peak of a mountain through a multisensory aural code that becomes an important sacred communicative atmosphere. Traces of this atmosphere are also carried back, as they **return transformed** ready to transmit a divine message to the people left behind.

³⁰⁰ Alexander Golitzin, “Topos Theou: The Monastic Elder as Theologian and as Theology. An Appreciation of Archimandrite Aimilianos”, in Dimitri Conomos and Graham Speake (eds), *Mount Athos, the Sacred Bridge: The Spirituality of the Holy Mountain*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), (first edition: 2005), p. 205.

Another characteristic case is the Mount of Olives. A necropolis from biblical times, it is an important place in the biblical landscape, containing the tombs of prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. The sacred character of this mountain is underlined in the Old Testament as Solomon built altars for the gods there. Moreover, according to Zechariah, God was going to stand on the Mount of Olives and the mountain would split in two, with one half shifting north and one half shifting south (Zechariah 14:4). The mount of Olives also plays a key role in the New Testament as the place where Jesus taught his disciples. Adding to this, the Garden of Gethsemane, where Christ spent his last night before the betrayal silently praying to God, is situated at the foot of the Mount. Finally, the most important Scriptural event held at a mountain is Christ's transfiguration on the peak of Mount Tabor which stands as a prefiguration of a paradigmatic Christian life-path, the peak-experiences of which are considered to be the paradoxical communication with God.³⁰¹

Hence the Holy Mountain that characterizes the peninsula is for the monks a "place where sky and earth meet; a «central point» through which an *Axis Mundi* goes, a region impregnated with the sacred, a spot where one can pass from one cosmic zone to another".³⁰² This is expressed in the chapel of the Transfiguration that is situated on the peak of Athos, symbolizing the aforementioned paradoxical communication between earth and heaven. According to an Athonian monk:

Arriving at Mount Athos and deciding to live here for the rest of his life, the individual learns that the Mountain plays an important role in his life, symbolizing the transformative experience of transfiguration. Gradually the reference to the sacred dynamics of the mountain becomes part of his daily cycle and the ascent to its peak is always felt as a great blessing and worthy of being conducted.³⁰³

In this sense, during the early eighteenth century the Mountain of Athos became the symbol of the peninsula. The peninsula was no longer depicted as a distant, ideal island but as a mountain, through bird's-eye view maps, connecting it to the depictions of the Mount Sinai and to the ascent of the Divine Ladder of St. John. They were also connected to the important position that pilgrimage to Athos had for the Christian orthodox world during the Ottoman occupation. These

³⁰¹For a more detailed description of this scriptural event and its role in orthodox tradition see the Chapter: Liminality and the Movement of the Athonian *Hesychast*. *Xeniteia*, Ritual and Silence, pp. 53-57.

³⁰² Mircea Eliade, *Patterns of Comparative Religion*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1958), pp. 99-100.

³⁰³ Father L. from Gregoriou Monastery, Discussion during my fieldtrip at Mount Athos in August 2012.

maps were ordered by the monasteries and were usually carried by the monks in the late eighteenth century during their “alms-begging missions” to the Danubian Principalities. They were used to illustrate their tales, and to call the outsiders to prefigure their possible pilgrimage. According to the human geographer Veronica della Dora, these depictions carried important elements of the spiritual meanings of a topography with which very few of the viewers would have the opportunity to interact. “[T]he Edenic island became a climax, a ladder for physical and spiritual ascent. It became a liturgical space where the pilgrim performed a sort of procession (...)”.³⁰⁴ The peak of the mountain with the chapel of the Transfiguration on it had become a “geographic icon” which was able to transfer both the *hesychast* life of the monk and the possible journey of the outsider.

This is depicted in Alessandro dalla Via’s map of the peninsula. In particular, based on the pilgrim’s guide of Ioannis Komninos (1701), Alessandro dalla Via represented the Athonian pilgrimage topography in a non-abstract way, also trying to include traces of its meaning. The size of the map is 745 mm X 1070 mm and it was printed in Venice.³⁰⁵ In it, the east and west views of the peninsula are depicted as an elongated strip of land, with the double mountain of Athos in the middle. [Figure 5.2]³⁰⁶ The whole synthesis is based on a sea zone illuminating the boundary between the sea and the land, and is crowned by a more symbolical zone: the top of the mountain is flanked by the icons of the *Deisis* (the enthroned God between Mary and Saint John the Baptist) and the Mother of God. The latter follows the type of *Portaitissa*, an icon kept in the Iveron Monastery whose abbot commissioned the map.³⁰⁷ Below the sea, inlaid texts depict the pilgrimage to Athos. This image is a characteristic example of sacred cartography, describing sacred places through the combination of images and texts. Moreover, it was a “map of authority”, intended to be hung on a wall with the aim of impressing the viewer.³⁰⁸ In the same period, two other similar maps of Athos were printed in Venice by unknown authors in 1708 and 1713.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁴ Victoria della Dora, p. 92.

³⁰⁵ Giorgos Toliás, 2002, “Athonian Sacred Cartography. The Beginning”, in Euaggelos Livieratos (ed) *Όρους Άθω, Γης και Θαλάσσης Περίμετρον. Χαρτών Μεταμορφώσεις (Mount Athos: Between the Earth and the Sea. Its Transformations through Maps)*, (Thessaloniki: Εθνική Χαρτοθήκη/Ethniki Chartothiki, 2002), (In Greek), pp. 158-159.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 159.

My emphasis.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid*.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 153.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 158 & 163.

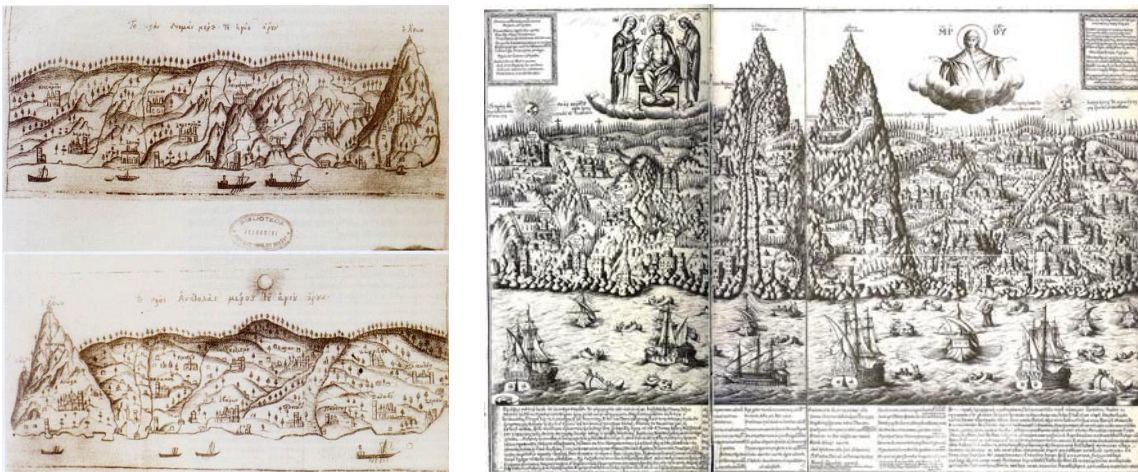


Figure 5.1 (Left): Ioannis Komninos' depiction of Mount Athos, 1701.

Figure 5.2 (Right): Alessandro dalla Via's depiction of Mount Athos .

These bird-eye views are therefore more concrete than modern maps as they highlight the significance of metaphor in experience. The different localities depicted in their middle zones are combined through their co-existence in the same physical and metaphysical landscape. They are part of a pilgrimage topography being performed through the life of the monks and the possible experience of the pilgrims. Finally, the doubling of the central Mountain also plays a key role, creating, according to the geographer Veronica della Dora, “a gateway to heavenly kingdom”.³¹⁰ The depiction of the ascent to the top of the mountain illuminates the pilgrimage character of *hesychast* practice, connecting it to its future-eschatological perspective through a “threshold” created between the two mountains. This process is depicted as also including the possibility for a stranger to ascend the Mountain, narrating the reciprocal relationship between the sacred and the profane and questioning thus the absolute character of the *Axis Mundi*'s centrality.³¹¹ The synthesis stands between traditional cartography and corporeal mapping of place, highlighting the importance of narrative (archetype of journey) and memory in the (repetitive) walking to the peak of Athos.

These embodied dynamics of the mountain are mainly manifested today through the annual ascent of monks and pilgrims to the peak, the all-night services held in the chapel, and the following descent on the 6th August, when the event of the Transfiguration is celebrated. [Figure

³¹⁰ Veronica Della Dora, *Imagining Mount Athos. Visions of a Holy Place from Homer to World War II*, (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press), 2011, pp. 95-96.

³¹¹ See: Mircea Eliade, 1991, “Symbolism of the Centre”, in *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*, pp. 27-56.

5.8] This ritual is not obligatory for the Athonian monks.³¹² Participation in it is considered to be a “blessing” that gives feedback on their physical-spiritual striving through the interaction with the mountainous landscape and the constant recollection of the celebrated event. [Figures 5.3 – 5.7]



Figures 5.3 & 5.4: Ascending towards the Shelter of the Mother of God.



Figure 5.5: Preparing the meal in the kitchen of the Shelter of the Mother of God.

³¹² Mountain rituals are also held in different religious traditions. For example, in India there a number of rituals connected to sacred mountains or hills such as the rite held for the benefit of the dead called *shraddha*.

See also: Ichiro Hori, “Mountains and Their Importance for the Idea of the Other World in Japanese Folk Religion”, *History of Religions*, 6: 1 (August, 1966), pp. 1-23:

Ichiro Hori also presents in detail the different rituals connected to sacred rituals in Japanese Buddhist tradition. An important ritual, for example, is the “bon” ritual held between the thirteenth and sixteenth day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar and is connected to the adoration of the dead ancestors that during that period return and receive offerings from the living. This ritual includes two sub-rituals. In the first one (*the making of the bon road*) a passage is opened along the slope of a mountain or a hilltop in order for the spirits of the ancestors to descend and after the *bon* return again to heaven. Moreover, in the second sub-ritual (*flower gathering for the bon festival*) flowers are picked from mountains and hilltops as according to the tradition the spirits of the dead enter them in order to visit the mundane world.



Figures 5.6 & 5.7: The processional ascension towards the peak and the peak of mount Athos. In the second photograph one can recognize the shadow of the mountain on the sea. These five images are from the book of Vasileios Stergioulis, “All-night vigils at the peak of the holy Athos” in which he describes his experience from the pilgrimage to the peak of the mountain on the 6th August, 2004.

In particular, monks from different Athonian monastic structures and pilgrims ascend the mountain on the 5th August to prepare and participate in the all-night vigils that are held in the chapel. Five different paths meet at the middle of the route, where all the participants gather and start ascending a steep narrow path that passes through the thick forest. The aim is to reach the recently restored “Shelter of The Mother of God”, a small complex of a communal guest room, a kitchen and a chapel dedicated to the Virgin (at about 1600 metres height). [Figures 5.9 – 5.11] They have some rest and an informal meal there, conduct Vespers in the chapel and then continue the ascent to the peak in a processional way. The individuals, one after the other, re-inscribe the footpath towards the peak of Athos in a liturgical way. Priests and deacons wearing their uniforms are followed by the rest of the devotees carrying icons, candles or branches to be used during the service. Chanting, censuring and reading are also part of the procession, contributing to the ritual inhabitation of the wild landscape.

At the peak there is the small rectangular chapel of the Transfiguration, which can only be used by fifty devotees. It was built in 1977 to replace the previous one that was destroyed due to bad weather conditions.³¹³ [Figures 5.12-5.16] Outside the chapel there is a small courtyard and a well. The all-night vigils usually start with the Blessing of Holy Water at 20:30, and finish around

³¹³ Gerasimos Smirnakis, *To Agion Oros*, (Athens, 1903), p.408:

According to the writer, this chapel was built in 1894 and consecrated in 1895 under the reign of the Ecumenical Patriarchate Joachim III. It was a small basilica with a narthex (7.90 m X 3.50 m). It had 12 stalls and could be used by 20 devotees maximum.

In: Dimitris Kirou, *Ascending towards the Peak of Mount Athos*, (Poligiros, Greece: Perfecture of Chalcidiki, 2001), p. 26, we are informed that before the chapel built under Joachim III there was another very small one, also destroyed due to the bad weather conditions.

06:00 the next morning.³¹⁴ The devotees then go back to the shelter of the Mother of God, where the celebration ends with a meal during which blessed grapes are distributed, as Athonian ascetics are allowed to start eating them only after the 6th August. Besides this feast the monks conduct pilgrimages to the shelter, combining the ascent and descent with their prayer.

This yearly pilgrimage has a clear liturgical character with relatively predefined movements. This contrasts with the freer movement along the footpaths of Mount Athos, as we will see in the next chapter. It is divided into the three pilgrimage stages identified by the Turners: departure from the different parts of the peninsula and ascension to the peak (departure stage) participation in the all-night-vigils (liminal stage), and return. The participants, mostly monks and pilgrims, aim at a possible transformation through the interaction with the different phases, the shared rituals (*communitas*) and silent prayer. The ascent towards the peak, thus, is also divided in two parts by the stop at the Shelter of the Mother of God. Whereas the first part is usually connected for both the monks and the outsiders to the interaction with the silence of the rigid natural landscape, in the second part the ritual procession changes the experience by inscribing a new aural line in the silent-scape of the mountain that includes chanting, reading and censing. The sacred aural associations of the mountains are thus recollected through a dialogue between a silent atmosphere and a communal ritual one, the inscription of which re-defines temporarily the *liminality* of what is between the different components of that place-event. The ascent becomes, hence, a process of initiation during which the individual body's tiredness is dynamically combined with the *hesychast* qualities of the topography. The peak of Athos still symbolizes for monks and pilgrims a vertical threshold, standing at which they have the possibility of being exposed to an interaction with the divine. This is also re-actualised by the *liminal* stage of the annual pilgrimage that coincides with the liturgical inhabitation of the peak. The uncanny qualities of the landscape also contribute to this process, creating a feeling of awe and the sublime.

³¹⁴ Dimitris Kirou, p. 30.

Moreover: Since 2009 a new chapel has been constructed. The new development is of small scale and aims to replace the existing structures that have been badly damaged by the hard weather conditions.

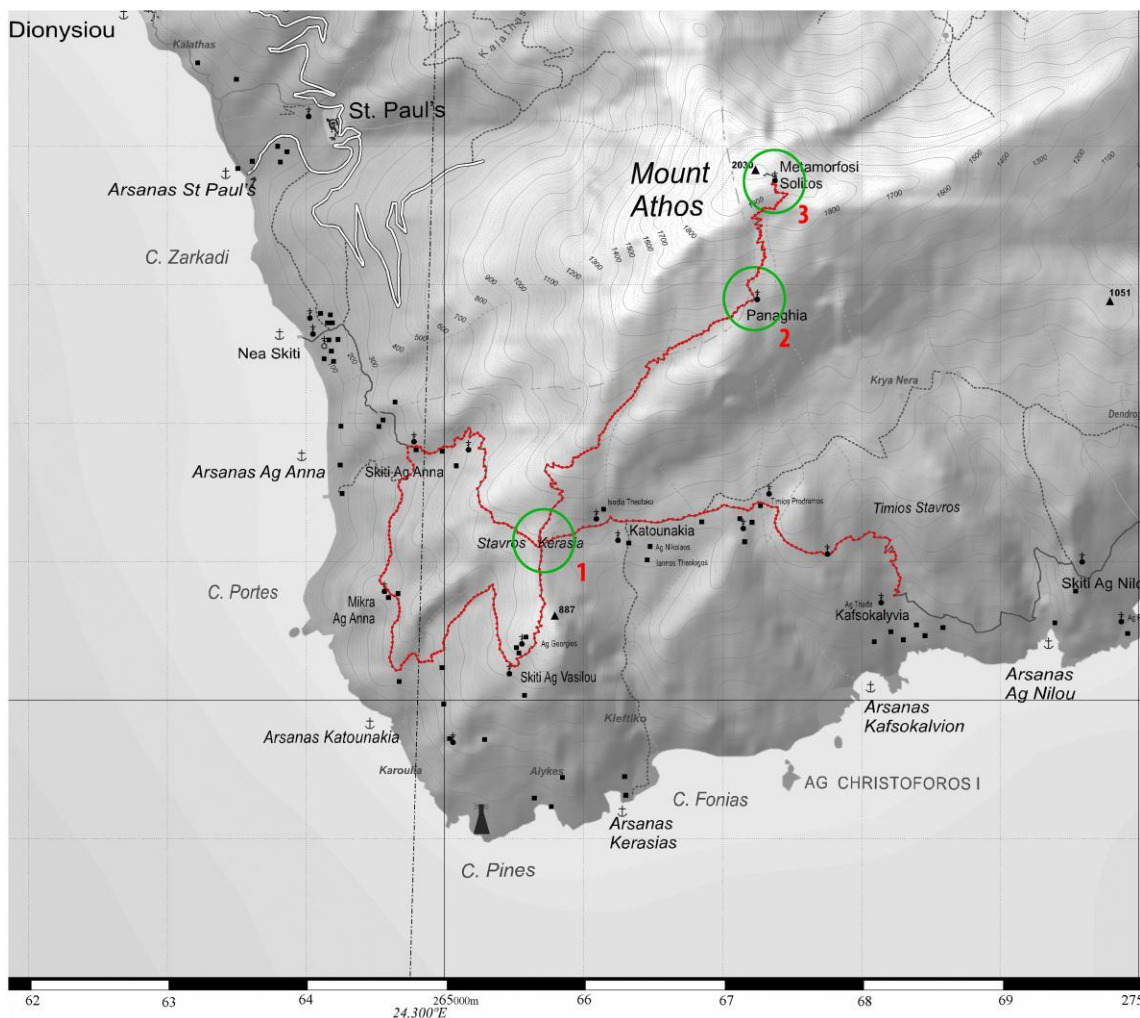


Figure 5.8: Ascending the Mountain of Athos: 1. “Stavros”, the point where the different paths meet, 2. The Shelter of the Mother of God, 3. The peak of the mountain of Athos.

The possibility for visitors to participate in the procession underlines the dynamic opening of communal rituals to the participation of the outsiders. This is described in the accounts of Vasileios Stergioulis and Dimitris Kyrou, who participated in the relevant rituals more than once during the last 20 years.³¹⁵ In particular, in the testimony of Kyrou we find the tripartite Turnerian division of a pilgrimage and also trace the different qualities of each of its stages. Thus, the silence of the untouched natural environment towards the shelter always created for the writer a *mystical* atmosphere in which the walker feels that he is connected to nature. This made him pray.

³¹⁵ Vasileios Stergioulis, *All-night Vigils at the Peak of Mount Athos*, (Larisa, 2005).

The route begins with a steep uphill path that at some points resembles a staircase. This is the crucial part of the ascent. If the walker does not regret it and return, he then gets used to it and goes on. (...) The vegetation is thick in the area. The way is conducted in the silence of the forest, in the wild and shadowy vegetation, under the pine-trees and through the beech and chestnut trees, the bushes and the wild trees that rapidly grow in a messy way, blocking the route on the wet and rough terrain³¹⁶

Moreover, processional walking of 150 to 200 people along an alpine landscape with the few trees gradually disappearing, leaving the mountainous environment absolutely bare, has the power, for Kyrou, to *re-generate* the rigid environment. This last part of the ascent has intense embodied religious qualities that also made him pray, interacting with the communal ritual sounds.³¹⁷ Finally, descending to reach the Shelter of the Mother of God on the 6th August, Kyrou always felt changed as the goal of his pilgrimage was fulfilled. Interaction with the natural environment contributed to his prayer, which followed him even during the all-night vigils. The pivotal moment of the pilgrimage for him has always been the participation in the Holy Communion, directly connected to a sense of *communitas* and the sharing of communal (religious) meanings. In accounts such as Kyrou's, therefore, we find an interesting mapping of how the natural landscape of Mount Athos is inhabited by the monks and visitors, confirming its pilgrimage character in the life of the peninsula. The repetition of this experience re-affirms the sacredness of the highest point of the landscape, narrating its *threshold* meaning both for the insiders and the outsiders.



Figures 5.9, 5.10: The Shelter of the Mother of God, October 2011.

³¹⁶ Dimitris Kirou, pp.12-13.

³¹⁷ Dimitris Kirou, p.22.



Figure 5.11: The Shelter of the Mother of God, October 2011.



Figures 5.12, 5.13 & 5.14: The new developments at the peak of Mount Athos, October 2011. These images are from the blog of Wim Voogd, a Dutchman that started his blog in 2006 to prepare a pilgrimage to Mount Athos. His blog is an important source of visual and literal information that is constantly updated. These photographs were taken in one of his visits to the peak of the Mountain during 2011.



Figures 5.15 & 5.16: “The first pictures of the newly build chapel on the summit of the mountain by Martin Drozd from Slovakia”, July 2009, also included in Wim Voogd’s blog. Martin Drozd visited Mount Athos in 2009 with his friends and decided to walk to the top of the Mountain of Athos.

The Cave and the Hermitage

Part of the mountainous environment of the Athonian peninsula, caves play an important role in the topography, as ascetic life in them has been one of the main forms of monastic practice on Athos for more than a thousand years now. They are the ideal material vessels, always waiting their consecration through ascetic life. Usually caves are also included in the wider framework of the coenobitic monasteries as connected to the beginning of the founder’s life on Athos.

In this sense, the search for a hermitage in the mountainous environment may be seen as related to the Christian theme of “desert”. The theologian James Goehring argues that this kind of life is included in the Christian “myth of the Desert”, as the ascetic struggles of the desert saints testified to the possibility of fulfilling the biblical commandments. The desert landscape, being part of the biographies of canonical saints, stands as an ideal life-path towards completion.³¹⁸ Hence, according to Zygmunt Bauman, choosing to live in a deserted place is for the Christian hermit an attempt to abandon the mundane world, going to a “land that is not sliced into places, and far for that reason it is the land of self-creation”. In this otherworldly environment the individual has the opportunity to work on his/her self-redirection towards the divine.³¹⁹

³¹⁸ James Goehring, “The Dark Landscape: Ideology and Power in the Christian Myth of Desert”, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33.3 (2003), pp. 437-451.

³¹⁹ Zygmunt Bauman, “From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity” in Stewart Hall and Paul du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*, (London: Sage Publications, 1996), pp. 20-21.

See also: Kip Redick, “Wilderness as Axis Mundi: Spiritual Journeys on the Appalachian Trail”, *Symbolic Landscapes*, 1 (2009), pp. 65-90 : The writer presents in a detailed way how the wilderness of the desert has an Axis Mundi character in the Old and New Testaments and also in the period of the first Christian hermits (Desert fathers).

In the case of Athos, caves are the pores of a deserted mountainous rough relief, whose cosmic dynamics attracted ascetics possibly even during the seventh century. [Figure 5.17] They are the folds of the skin between the earth and the sky, providing the ascetic with a sense of solitude and partial protection from the weather due to their organic form. Being part of the lived organism of this natural environment, caves are connected to the notions of *unbuilt*, *indestructible*, *eternal*. “Primitively eccentric”, these dwellings of the hermits are, for the theorist G. Chatzinis, related to a non rational way of thinking, according to which the individual/hermit builds his relationship to God.³²⁰ It is the absolute isolation and the difficult living conditions that enhance their *xeniteia*: their need to alienate themselves from the worldly environment through silence, solitude and work on the repetition of the Jesus prayer.



Figure 5.17: A Cave at the Karoulia area.

The monk Theoklitos from the Dionysiou Monastery describes these special spatial qualities and their relationship to the orthodox ascetic mentality:

³²⁰ Giannis Chatzinis, “The Secret of Mount Athos”, *Nea Estia – Mount Athos*, (Christmas, 1963), pp. 132-133.

A crack or a protrusion of the rock is enough to constitute an ideal site for the hermit's settlement, resembling aeries. Both hermitages and asceticism are "formed" according to the spirit of a rough architecture. Nobody should search for leisure in them. (...) the mentality of the hermits (...) does not follow a logical way of thinking. They prefer climbing to walking on flat ground. They are not adventurous but believe that danger is a vehicle of ethical improvement.³²¹

The *hierophanic* qualities of caves are part of an ancient living tradition. Burkert argues that caves have been related to the experience of the sacred since the prehistoric era. Archaeological findings lead to the argument that during that period caves were connected to the worship of the gods through sacrifices (*Caves of Arkalochori* and *Psychro*) and other rituals (dedication of "symbols of power"). Their formation even included 'altar-like elevations' (*Ideaon Cave*, *Cave of Eileithyia*), and libation tables.³²² The sacred dynamics of caves are also found in the landscape of the Old and New Testaments. As we have seen, it was in a cave on the Mount Chorev that Prophet Elijah found shelter to protect himself from the Emperor Achaav and his wife Izevel. And it was from this mountain's peak (from the same point that Moses received the Ten Commandments) that he saw God, experiencing a combination of the protection of the rough and solitary environment with communion with God. Moreover, Christ was born in a cave at Bethlehem combining his Incarnation with an ideal ascetic approach of human life.³²³ Hence, these sacred associations of the mountainous environment are included in the framework of what Kaia Lehari calls *mythopoetical meaning* of stone, seen as a metaphor of symbolical, mythical and ritual ideas due to its unchangeable physical qualities.³²⁴

Caves are also related to the 'primordial image of Mother Earth' (*Gaia – Γαία*) which, according to Mircea Eliade, is connected to the birth of man from the 'depths of the earth, from caverns, caves ravines, but also from ponds, springs, rivers'.³²⁵ The earth's relief thus acquires

³²¹ *Ibid*, p. 134.

³²² Walter Burkert, pp. 24-26.

³²³ See: George H. Williams, *Wilderness and Paradise. The biblical experience of the desert in the history of Christianity and the Paradise theme in the theological idea of the university*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), pp. 17,35 and 37.

³²⁴ Kaia lehari, "Mythopoetics of Stone", in A-T Tymieniecka (ed.), *Analecta Husserliana*, CIV (2009), p. 401.

See also: Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion. The significance of religious myth, symbolism, and ritual within life and culture*, translated by Willart R. Trask, (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovic), pp. 155-256. & Mircea, Eliade, *Symbolism, the Sacred and the Arts*, edited by Diane Apostolos - Cappadona, (New York: Crossroad, 1986), p.107.

³²⁵ See also: Thaddeus Zielinski, *The Religion of Ancient Greece. An Outline*, translated from the Polish with the author's co-operation by George Rapall Noyes, (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 32:

cosmogonic qualities that connect it to the *sacred*. Caves become for the hermits a kind of physical-spiritual “womb” in which they live, seeking rebirth and psychosomatic transformation through *ascesis*.³²⁶

Monks who wanted to experience this kind of absolutely secluded life went to Athos and adjusted their spiritual demands to the existing landscape. They used the mountain’s cavities that were most easily accessible to the walker through the minimum of passages. During the Late Byzantine era, *asceteria* were dispersed all over the Athos peninsula. Nowadays, still-active hermitages are to be found mainly in the Desert of Athos, the area between Karmelion Mountain and the skete of Hagia Anna.

The architect Paulos Mylonas defines two types of “caves-hermitages”.³²⁷ The first one is quite elaborate and is a result of a hermit’s own building work. These dwellings have a small chapel, one or two rooms, and sometimes also some ancillary spaces (storage rooms etc). The second type stems from the minimum alteration of the cave’s space:

One of these caves is situated in Karoulia, at the end of a mountainous chain. It has a rudiment of a diaphragm, a dry(stone) wall with only one opening on it serving the human movement and also the room’s ventilation and lighting. Inside the cave one can see a small, really simple altar made of white painted stone with a broken icon on it, a mattress made of sticks and a basin in which the rock’s water is dripping. These are the only things a hermit, like Philaretos, allows himself to need.³²⁸

Caves constitute the smallest inhabitable spaces provided by nature, and carry intense solitude dynamics, supporting the departure qualities of ascetic *xeniteia*, also enhanced by the minimization of built additions. The addition of built boundaries should be minimal, as profane

Mother Earth: She is the oldest of the Assembly of the Olympian Gods. Greece built many temples to her, under the simple name of Mother (Meter) – ans in Athens and Olympia- long before there was introduced from Asia Minor the cult of a kindred but barbaric goddess, the Great Mother of the gods or Cybele. She was represented as a stately woman of maternal form with only the upper half of her body emerging from her native element.

See also: Ichiro Hori, “Mountains and Their Importance for the Idea of the Other World in Japanese Folk Religion”, *History of Religions*, 6,:1 (August, 1966), pp. 1-23.: In Buddhist tradition mountains and caves also are connected to the “mother earth”, having intense womb-like qualities that are celebrated through different rituals, such as the “Autumn Peak” rituals (*Aki-no-mine*), held on Mount Gassan.

³²⁶ See also the relation between Plato’s cave and maternity in Irigaray’s work:

Luce Irigaray, *Spéculum de l’autre femme*, (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1974), and its interpretation in Kristi L., Krumnow, ‘Womb as Synecdoche: Introduction to Irigaray’s Deconstruction of Plato’s Cave’, *Project Muse*, 13:1-2 (Spring/Fall, 2009), pp. 69-93.

³²⁷ Paulos, Mylonas, “The Architecture of Mount Athos”, *Nea Estia - Mount Athos*, pp. 206-207.

³²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 207.

concerns have to be reduced. Therefore, the extension of the natural space of a cave for the protection of the hermit from the difficult weather conditions, the covering of his needs or the housing of disciples that gather around him is not necessarily a new structure. It is in-between the natural and the artificial when a dry wall or a rectangular space made of wood closes the opening of a cave. Staying in a quasi-natural environment becomes, thus, part of *hesychast* practice. It contributes to the initiation process towards the union with God through silence, carrying also qualities of a desired unification with nature.

Moreover, the practice of wandering in the service of *xeniteia* also plays an important role in the ascetic realisation of boundaries and *liminality*.³²⁹ In this sense, some ascetics inhabit a cave or a hermitage and abandon it when their silence is disturbed. Wandering and need for solitude makes these places become part of the landscape again, either through their total destruction or the smooth incorporation of their ruins into the surrounding context. Hence, even small huts built in the wild landscape as a shelter for one or two ascetics are not considered to be permanent constructions. Their boundaries are always in a process of a possible annulment and smooth re-integration in the natural landscape. The combination of solitary-silent life and ascetic wandering influences the way the landscape is experienced by the monks, either through its inhabitation or through the structuring of the smallest bounded spaces for the cover of their needs. We have to underline here that today some of the huts are built in quite a stable way, losing this sense of a paradoxical co-existence of material and immaterial qualities.

Hence, the space of the *kathisma* or the *hut* covers the basic needs of a *hesychast* group.³³⁰ Mainly spiritual, these needs are organised according to the elder's will, in a daily programme

³²⁹ Wanderer ascetics, called *sadhu*, are also found in Hinduism. They are considered to be renouncers of the world who try to fulfil their religious aims through meditation, prayer and other ascetic practices. Their decision is followed by a "total break" from their everyday sphere and by a change of name. They are initiated by a guru who gives them their new name and their mantra, a short sound or phrase that the *sadhu* has to repeat as a meditative practice. Only the *sadhu* and the guru know the name and the mantra. After their initiation the *sadhu* has to conduct his daily prayer, to recite his mantra and wander about alone. *Sadhu* is allowed to have one vegetarian meal per day. *Sadhu*'s practice is based on the notion of "vairagya", "the will to achieve something by leaving the world". The aim is to reach absolute "liberation", a state called *moksha*. Interestingly, a *sadhu* is considered to be dead both to himself and to the country of India too. According to Fr. Stever Scherrer, "[*sadhu*] are a walking reminder to the average Hindu of Divinity", found in different places from ashrams (Hindu monasteries) and temples to huts, caves and perpetual pilgrimage. On this see: Fr. Stephen Scherrer, "Hindu Asceticism", url: http://www.stevenscherrer.com/admin/upload/Hindu_Asceticism.pdf.

³³⁰ *Kathisma*(ta) and *hut*(s) are monastic structures related to the (semi)anchoritic life on Athos. They are small houses in which a monk, alone or with his disciples, practise hesychasm. Administratively they are usually connected to one of the coenobitic monasteries.

that is independent for each group. The relation between the father and the child (elder – disciple) is the model by which the life in these structures is organised. Most of the time a hermitage is almost organically related to the rough, mountainous environment. With a small chapel as its life's core, the complex is always constructed in an active relation to its natural context. The intention of the hermits is to live in an isolated, rough environment. Usually, the transformation of a cave is the beginning of such a monastic place. The structural evolution of the complex is related to the development of the ascetic life in it. Furthermore, huts may be part of a *skete's* complex. The *skete* is the intermediate stage between the anchoritic way of life and the coenobitic one, through the reference of the huts to a communal core. In this field of ascetic experience the groups of the monks live quite independently, with the ability to choose the level of intensity of their *hesychast* practice. A *skete* involves the combination of a changing landscape, in which huts are (re)inhabited, abandoned or ruined, and a stable communal liturgical core.

In this sense, the inaccessible area of *Karoulia*, the southern end of the peninsula, is where the two types of hermitages are mainly found. [Figures 5.18, 5.19, 5.20, 5.21 & 5.22] Even its name reveals the hard ascetic way of life, meaning “the place of the pulleys”. This relates to the old way of accessing these hermitages, as hermits had to haul themselves up by ropes or chains that passed over makeshift pulleys. The area contains a number of separate hermitages. The harshness of the environment and the intention of the ascetics to solitary practice of *hesychasm* did not allow the creation of a clear network of movement in the area. It was difficult for the paths to be opened and preserved. For this reason the ascetics had to struggle there, uninterrupted by outsiders and incorporated in a different religious experience based on a direct relation to nature.³³¹ Now the different caves and small huts are connected through a narrow mule track, hard to walk and dangerous because of the sharp cliff. In the following photographs we can see that ladders and pulleys are still used as a way of accessing the hermitages, becoming extensions of the mule track, the character of which is again connected to the notions of solitude and *xeniteia*.

³³¹ Graham Speake, p.225.



Figures 5.18 & 5.19: The Area of Karoulia (August 2012).



Figures 5.20, 5.21, 5.22: The inaccessible caves at *Karoulia*.

In his book *Athos: The Holy Mountain*, Sydney Loch shares the following description of this part of Athos:

Karoulia is still spectacular from a boat. A precipice of hermit eyries joined by chain-and-rope banisters, with its roots everlasting child by waves. It is still spectacular, but not as it was a few years before someone moved with the times sufficiently to scratch a track from top to bottom to allow a loaded mule to slither down, and his driver to follow, after crossing himself. This path has done away with the lower chains by which the caller hauled himself out of the boat up to those heights, and by so much has the power to astonish been lost to the world.³³²

Silence plays an important role in this part of the peninsula. Ascending the steep slope of the area one finds himself in a mountainous rocky context, whose harshness intensifies a sense of isolation. The only sounds are those of the sea and the birds. It is very rare to see the hermits as they usually avoid interaction with other people. Silence is more intense here than in the areas closer to the coenobitic monasteries or the *Sketes*, disclosing the presence of **aural boundaries**

³³² Sydney Loch, *Athos: The Holy Mountain*, (Michigan: The University of Michigan, 1957), 1957, p.220 as quoted in Graham Speake, p.225.

between the different parts of the peninsula. Difficulty of approach to these hermitages enhances this sense of solitude and silence through the creation of a clearer boundary between the insider and the outsider. Absence of noise and limitation of vision are experienced both by the Athonians and the visitors, becoming a liminal zone in which they co-exist. On the one hand, the ascetic practises silent prayer in the absolute seclusion of his cave-hermitage, and on the other the outsider interacts with this uncanny environment, passing through an unfamiliar landscape that, while not sound-less, has a character of *otherworldly* isolation. Discontinuities in the route towards a hermitage (when a ladder replaces part of a path, or falling rocks obstruct the way) also make the outsider experience feelings of disorientation, unfamiliarity and awe. Describing their walking along the Athonian Desert, four Greek pilgrims claimed that their experience was an “extraordinary” one, as absolute silence, intense bodily tiredness and the unapproachable hermitages created an environment full of religious characteristics. According to them, this environment was a “marginal” one, in which the ascetics try to transcend the boundaries of their bodies, while the pilgrims can also go through a peak-experience of their journey, realising the extremity of the formers’ *hesychast* struggle.³³³

In Archimandrite Cherubim’s *Gerontikon*, therefore, we read about the ascetic Gabriel, who spent his whole monastic life in a hermitage in the deserted context of *Karoulia*.³³⁴ He was born in 1903 and became an ascetic there in 1930. In 1933 he became a monk, taking the name of the archangel Gabriel in whose honour the hermitage was dedicated. After the death of his spiritual father, a monk named Seraphim, he remained in the same hermitage alone.³³⁵ In this ascetic environment, monk Gabriel practised *hesychasm* following his own programme. He used to say the Jesus prayer through the night, walking back and forth on a path (40-50 metres long and 6-8 metres wide) which he had made for this purpose. Along this path there were also some benches made of rocks and logs. When he was praying in his hermitage, he hung from a rope attached to two points of the roof. After his night-prayer, he incensed the icons of the small chapel while chanting. He slept on a wooden board and had a rock instead of a pillow, while fasting. Moreover, silence played an important role in his embodied *hesychast* practice. He was trying to keep silent as much as he could, especially after the Liturgy constantly saying the Jesus

³³³ Fieldwork at Mount Athos, August 2012.

³³⁴ *Gerontikon* stems from the word “Gerontas” meaning “Elder” and is a book in which a collection of biographies of monks that are considered to have lived a spiritually mature life are presented, in order to guide other monks and lay devotees.

³³⁵ Graham Speake, p. 80.

prayer. Moreover, it was usual for pilgrims not to receive an answer when knocking his door. He was either hiding in the rock-caves or silently praying in the cell, something that he tried not to interrupt.

He also used to go to a cave that was higher than his hermitage in order to practise the Jesus Prayer in a more intense way. It was a natural cave covered in front by a dry-stone wall. In it there was only a bed made of boards with a log instead of a pillow. He had also dug his grave between the Small *Skete* of Saint Anne and the *Skete* of Saint Anne in order to be prepared for his coming death.³³⁶

The opening of the solitary way of life to a more communal one becomes clear in the case of the “Monk Joseph the Hesychast” (1898-1959), an ascetic of the desert who gradually attracted a number of disciples around him, as this was described in his biography written by a disciple.³³⁷ [Figures 5.24 & 5.25] Monk Joseph always tried to stay in isolated places in which, according to the tradition, great hermits had lived before. [Figure 5.23] He thus spent his first summer on Athos chasing around the peninsula and practicing *hesychasm* under hard living conditions, such as the ones of the Shelter of the Mother of God at the beginning of the peak of Athos. During this period of his first quests, he participated in the all-night vigils of the 6th August at the chapel of the Transfiguration at the peak of the mountain, where he met the monk Arsenios, with whom he decided to start a common ascetic life.

³³⁶ This is usual for the Athonian monks as connected the idea of “the memory of death” that is considered to be of major importance for the orthodox Christian ascetic as we will also see in the chapter: The Cemetery (*Kemeterion*) and the Grave, pp. 302-323.

³³⁷ See also the cases: Father Filaretos, in Archimandrite Ioannikios, *Athonian Gerontikon*, (Thessaloniki – Greece: Holy Hesychast Complex of Saint Gregorios Palamas, 1992), 1992, p. 100.

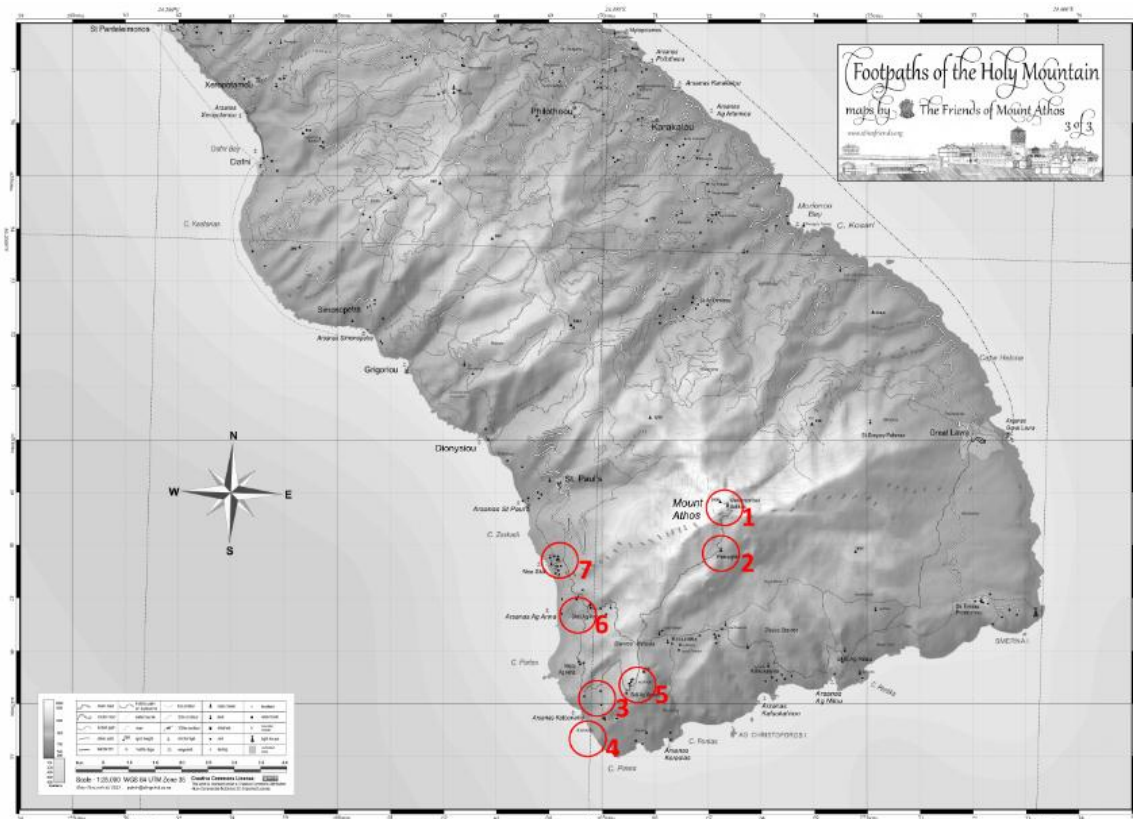


Figure 5.23: The different places that “Joseph the Hesychast” lived in the area that he wandered: 1. The peak of Mount Athos, 2. The shelter of the Mother of God, 3. Katounakia, 4. Karoulia, 5. The desert of Saint Basil, 6. Skete of Saint Anne, 7. New Skete.



Figure 5.24 (Left): Elder Joseph the Hesychast and the group of his disciples.

Figure 5.25 (Right): Elder Joseph and Elder Arsenios.

They settled in a hut at *Katounakia*, an area close to *Karoulia*, as disciples of an elder monk called Ephraim. According to his biographer and disciple, monk Joseph from Vatopedi, their basic concern was to work in silence. For this, Joseph the *hesychast* “created at the end of their

realm and just under a sloping rock, a kind of an artificial cave using pieces of wood”.³³⁸ He would spend his night there, praying. After this, he had a short rest in his cell and then participated in the common programme.

Unfortunately, the proximity to other huts disturbed the essential silence for their spiritual work. For this reason they decided to go to a more isolated place, the desert of Saint Basil. They reached this barren realm carrying only their clothes and some of their books. As there were no vacant huts during that period, they had to build their own. After the death of their elder, they decided to spend the summer wandering from place to place, practising *hesychast xeniteia* in famous ascetic fields. They spent the winter in their hut. During the Easter period they used to ascend towards the peak of the Holy Mountain. They stayed there for some days praying in the chapel of the Mother of God. A small copper bowl helped them to boil the snow and to cook some herbs or roots. As the wind there is really strong (1600 metres high) they had to find “secure” places to spend their nights, such as small gorges or caves. In order not to sleep during prayer, they used to walk barefoot on the snow.³³⁹ They moved from place to place, praying. According to the biographer, wandering helped them feel like strangers (*xenoi*) in relation to their environment. They tried to find a way to depart from their mundane sphere and move towards God through the repetition of the Jesus Prayer.

Joseph and Arsenios stopped living like this when they were too old to walk long distances. In parallel, they built a small chapel in their hut in honour of St. John the Baptist, which served their liturgical needs. Their spirituality attracted a lot of monks and pilgrims, making them search for a cave in the *skete* of the Small Saint Anne. The place proved to be “appropriate, calm, remote and hidden from the people”.³⁴⁰ [Figures 5.26 & 5.27]

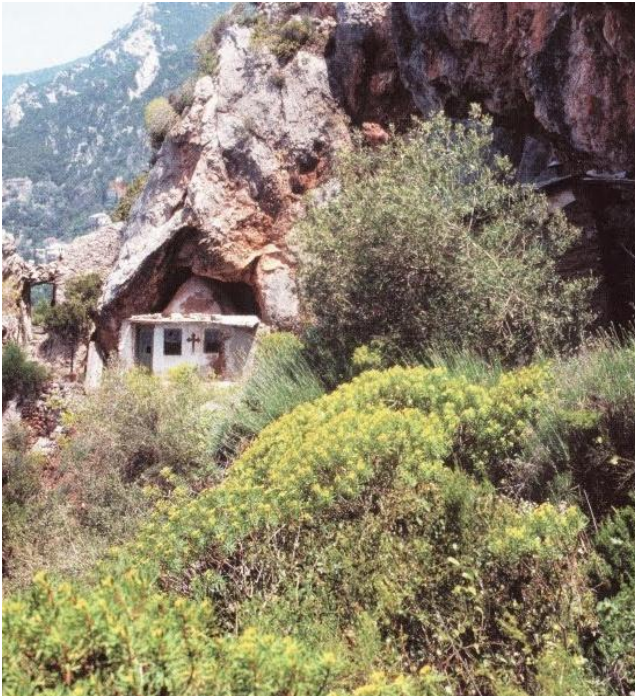
Clearly demarcating the field of their ascetic practice, the wall thus played an important role in the protection of their solitude. The entrance set in it was related to their everyday programme, connected to the most important temporal boundary of the day. They used to have this door open until the midday, showing that they were manually working and receiving guests. From

³³⁸ Γέροντος Ιωσήφ Βατοπαιδινού/ Elder Josef from Vatopaidi, *Ο Γέροντας Ιωσήφ ο Ησυχαστής / Elder Josef the hesychast*, (Mount Athos: The Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi, 2008), (First edition in Greek: 1983), p. 52.

³³⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 110-111. (My translation)

³⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 116.

midday onwards the door was closed, letting the ascetics practise *hesychasm*. Later, they built a small chapel, transforming the interior of a cave. Its dedication to St. John the Baptist confirmed the continuity of their common ascetic life. Finally, they built a big hut that was divided into three small cells (1.8m X 1.5m). It was set attached to the edge of the cliff, allowing part of the cave to become a storehouse. These cells were inhabited by the Elder, Fr. Arsenios and the priest who went to conduct the liturgy.³⁴¹



Figures 5.26 & 5.27: The hut at the *Skete* of Saint Anne.

According to the biographer and disciple of Fr. Joseph, the severity of this ascetic way of life was a result of the dynamic interaction between the elder and the distinct natural environment. This rough place permitted Fr. Joseph to construct only the essential buildings to frame his *hesychast* life. The landscape and the people became part of the same ascetic topography as the modest constructions filled the voids left by the natural cavities of the mountain.

In this *organic* context, Elder Joseph's emphasis was on the programmed life and the observance of the *typika*. The canon, the services and the hours of manual work followed the division of the day into smaller parts dedicated to one of these activities. This scheme was also

³⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 117.

applied to their life in a hut in *New Skete*.³⁴² [Figures 5.28 – 5.31] Intensifying the practice of *xeniteia* and homelessness, the small group moved there due to a further disturbance of their silence. It was a complex of small huts for one or two monks. They were gathered around the hut of the elder and the small chapel that they constructed in honour of St. John the Baptist. Everything was again formed to serve “the application of the old (...) programme and type of life, in order their ascetic experience not to be disturbed by the change of place”.³⁴³



Figures 5.28, 5.29, 5.30, 5.31: The hut in *New Skete*: The interrelation between the natural cavity and the built boundaries is very intense disclosing this kind of in-between the natural and the artificial.

³⁴² Built near the sea in 1757, the New Skete belongs to St. Paul Monastery and consists of 37 cells and huts.

³⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 151.



Figure 5.32: The hut in *New Skete*: The interrelation between the natural cavity and the built boundaries is very intense disclosing this kind of in-between the natural and the artificial.

Stories such as the one of Elder Joseph create a mythical framework in which wandering asceticism is a unique and difficult *hesychast* practice. Crossing and transgressing boundaries, the wanderer is a silent moving body-subject that is only temporarily attached to a place. The Athonian monks claim that there are very few wanderer ascetics today on the peninsula, mainly living in the deserted parts of *Karoulia* and *Kerasia*.³⁴⁴ During my fieldwork at Gregoriou Monastery I had the opportunity to interact with one of them, a member of a group of wanderers called *kabites*. He was a Romanian novice who spent his time on Athos by silently changing places. A silent figure, dressed in black and with his head bowed, arrived at the Gregoriou Monastery on the eve of the day that the celebration of the Death of the Virgin Mary is held (the 15th August according to the Julian Calendar that is the 28th August according to the Gregorian one). He never used means of transportation but only walked on the peninsula repeating the Jesus prayer. He slept on benches in the courtyard or in the exo-narthex of the church. During the day he could be found hidden in a corner playing his praying rope. He participated in the meals, but did not enter the church during the rituals. The monks knew him and he was allowed to silently inhabit the shared spaces of the monastery, questioning with his moving presence the *liminality* of their spatial boundaries.

³⁴⁴ Fieldwork at Mount Athos, August 2012.

From the above examination of the Athonian mountainous landscape and its gradual inhabitation we see that the experience of its south-eastern end (the Mountain of Athos and Athonian Desert) still plays a very important role in the topography. The construction of the chapel of the Transfiguration at its peak and the opening of the footpath towards it allow the performance of the annual communal ritual. This is a pilgrimage that includes intense initiatory qualities. Silence and communal ritual are in a dynamic discourse, contributing to a meaningful *liminal* atmosphere. The latter also communicates with the sacred associations of the mountains as the field of an atmospheric communication between humans and the divine, reaching its climax in the all-night vigils held at the peak. The path, hence, is an intermediate zone along which the ritual is orchestrated to celebrate the paradoxical possibility of the communication with the divine, a possibility that for the monks is also included in the specific procession.

On the other hand, due to their organic formation and relation to the mountain, the caves are also connected to the threshold associations of the former and they can be characterised as archetypal natural inscriptions of the limits of the individual *hesychast* practice, which is also related to the alienating deserted environment of specific areas of the peninsula. In their silent-scape, silence is more intense than in the rest of the peninsula, becoming an important in-between zone in which the insiders and the outsiders meet. The insiders avoid the interaction with other people and a silent boundary is hence inscribed, which is also intensively received by the visitors through the uncanny character of their experience.

The construction of small additions in the restricted area of a cave “slices” the natural environment into ascetic places, the character of which is generally temporary. Whereas the cave is connected to the notions of eternity and ascetic (re)birth, the built constructions are closer to mundane concerns and the notion of decay. After the death of the hermit, their ruination often leads to their gradual disappearance. This is also enhanced by the wandering qualities of *hesychast* practice, in which the individual always re-defines himself in relation to the bounded world, aiming to distance himself from it.

Chapter Six

The Footpaths: Being Mapped and Remaining Unmapped

But the call of the pathway speaks only as long as there are men, born in its atmosphere, who can hear it. They are servants of their origin, not slaves of machinations. Man's attempts to bring order to the world by his plans will remain futile as long as he is not ordered to the call of the pathway. (...) The pathway gathers in whatever has its Being around it; to all who pass this way it gives what is theirs. The same fields and meadows, ever changing but ever near, accompany the pathway through each season.(...) But, in one single harmony whose echo the pathway carries with its silently to and fro, everything is made serene.

(Martin Heidegger, "The Pathway", 1947-1948)³⁴⁵

Introduction

The Athonian monastic structures, set in different locations in the promontory, create a network of religious places connected by footpaths and roads that are followed by monks and strangers. Physical tiredness, enhanced by the recollection of the sacred associations of the landscape, influence the walker, giving a new meaning to his experience. This chapter examines these paths as organic liminal zones that are created and preserved through the walking of the body subject, always following the existing topography. Their difference from the clearly inscribed, planned roads also found in the peninsula is part of this discussion.

Examining the gathering dynamics of a field-path, Martin Heidegger argues that it follows the rhythms of nature in a pre-modern way, harmonically combining them with the surrounding landscape and the movement of the individual, and leading to a sense of serenity and renunciation of the everyday modern world.³⁴⁶ This section, therefore, builds upon the difference between modern cartography and embodied topography. Whereas the former relates to abstract, two-dimensional representations of the earth's relief, the latter is about the *corporeal mapping* of the place through the movement of the individual. This embodied mapping is emphatically applied in the network of the Athonian footpaths that has been preserved since medieval times, contributing to the creation of a number of special qualities that enhance the walking experience of both the insiders and the outsiders.

³⁴⁵ Martin Heidegger, "The Pathway", translated by Thomas F. O' Meara, in Thomas Sheehan (ed), *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2010), pp. 69-72.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

The Footpaths as Embodied Phenomena: Walking through the Athonian Landscape

Elements about this network of paths and the way it is experienced can be found in a number of Athos narratives, such as travel testimonies, oral (web-blog) maps, abstract cartographic approaches, videos and photographs. 'Reading' them, one realises that this network of paths is an inscription of individual and collective experiences, difficult to map in a modern cartographic way. As part of a special travel experience, it is shared through different means of communication, the combination of which tries to express the sense of *real* embodied experience. This was characteristically depicted in the web blog map of the route towards an Athonian hut through the combination of words (oral directions) and video snap shots (views during the route) that was discussed in a previous chapter.³⁴⁷

Today, the network of roads on Mount Athos can be divided into two main categories. On the one hand there is the wider, *primary* network of dirt and asphalt roads, along which men and cars move. On the other hand, there is a secondary network of footpaths and cobblestone pavements that serve walkers. This secondary one also includes the passage to almost inaccessible hermitages, created by their inhabitants and used mainly by them and a few pilgrims. Thus, for example,

The monastery [of Stauronikita] is today connected to the wider transverse road axis of Mount Athos, which connects Iviron Monastery to Karyes and Karyes to the port of Dafni, at the south coast, through a 7 kilometers dirt-road, which was constructed some years ago for car use. The monastery is also connected to the two neighbouring monasteries of Iviron and Pantocratoros through two narrow footpaths, along the north coast, and to Karyes through an old cobblestone pavement, damaged at some points because of the construction of the new road.³⁴⁸

Walking along these networks seems to be one of the most important means of movement in the peninsula, thus experiencing the landscape through a direct and dynamic process. Walking on Mount Athos is important for the experience of the outsiders. It is not connected to a predefined (and quite obligatory/processional) route as, for example, in the case of the Way to

³⁴⁷ Chapter: The general periphery of the peninsula: Border VS Boundary, Section: Virtual Penetration of the Periphery, pp. 117-120.

³⁴⁸ Nikolaos Charkiolakis, *Tradition and Evolvement in the Architecture of the Holy Monastery of Stauronikita/Παράδοση και Εξέλιξη στην Αρχιτεκτονική της Ιεράς Μονής Σταυρονικήτα*, (Mount Athos: Publications of the Holy Monastery of Stauronikita, 1999), p.37, (My translation).

Santiago de Compostela.³⁴⁹ The outsider on Athos is free to visit any monastery and spend a night there. He is *free to walk from one destination to another*. One could say that this kind of freedom is also evident in the formation of these footpaths. They are the result of the repeated passage of humans, leaving their tracks and thus contributing to an always open and dynamic process of path making, preserving, or extinction. At the same time, they respond to the existing topography, becoming part of its organic nature.

Hence, the notion of distance changes in reciprocity with the real experience of walking. In this sense, monks and pilgrims measure distance according to the time spent in connecting two places by walking, underlining the importance of temporality in human experience rooted in movement. [Figure 6.1] The body of the monk or the outsider is a kind of **stylus** which spatially inscribes these zones through the passing of time connecting them to motility. Real and possible movement along the paths results in an opening of space that is characterised by an eccentric character. Walking along the path is not connected to the interaction with a centre, but to the encounter with the possibility of an adventurous wandering.³⁵⁰ Therefore, foot-paths become quasi natural things and at the same time quasi man-made things.³⁵¹

³⁴⁹ The Way to Santiago de Compostela is one of the most important pilgrimages of Christian Catholic Church. It refers to the collection of different routes that cover Europe, having as their final destination the city of Santiago whose Cathedral is connected with the relics of St. James. The most popular route during medieval times was the French Way that started from the Pyrenees and passed through La Rioja, Burgos, Lyon and Galicia. The pilgrims have to walk this long route. This trial is their preparation for the coming arrival at the Cathedral. Along the routes a number of different places, either sacred or not, are connected to the pilgrimage process. Walking is very important for the participants (now not only pilgrims, but also tourists of different types).

For the Way to Santiago de Compostela see: Sean Slavin, "Walking as Spiritual Practice: The Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela", *Body and Society*, 9:3 (2003), pp. 1-18.

³⁵⁰ O.F. Bollnow, *Human Space*, translated by Christine Shuttleworth, edited by Joseph Kohlmaier, (London: Hyphen Press, 2011), (First edition in German: 1969), pp.94-105.

³⁵¹ See also, Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988): Michel de Certeau also describes how walking may be a "tactic" experience, during which the individual has the opportunity to interact with the natural landscape. For Michel de Certeau, walking thus becomes a kind of "travelling", an opening to Heidegger's idea of an "uprooting in one's origins", during which the individual is simultaneously reading and writing an embodied story based on his/her search for a proper place. (p. 107) This story is organised into a sequence of encounters between the different characters involved in the process, things, humans, animals and elements of the natural landscape. (p. 126) During some of these encounters limits are drawn, the crossing of which contributes to the coherence of the walking narrative. For de Certeau, body deals with its own and different boundaries/limits when these contacts occur in which "conjunction" and "disjunction" co-exist according to a "logic of ambiguity" that allows the penetration of the different boundaries. (p. 127).

ΠΙΝΑΞ ΕΜΦΑΝΙΘΝ ΤΑΣ ΑΠΟΣΤΑΣΕΙΣ ΕΙΣ ΧΙΛΙΟΜΕΤΡΑ & ΩΡΑΣ ΑΠΟ ΚΑΡΥΑΙ ΕΙΣ ΤΑΣ 20 ΜΟΝΑΣ, ΩΣ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΤΑΞΥ ΤΩΝ 20 ΜΟΝΩΝ

ΜΟΝΑΙ	ΚΑΡΥΑΙ	ΙΕΡΩΝ	ΦΙΛΟΘΕΟΥ	ΚΑΡΦΑΛΟΥ	ΜΕΤΕΠΙΘΗ	ΛΑΥΡΑΣ	ΑΓΙΟΥ ΠΑΝΟΥ	ΔΙΟΝΥΣΙΟΥ	ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΥ	ΣΠΙΡΙΔΟΣ	ΠΕΤΡΑΣ	ΔΕΦΝΗ	ΣΠΥΡΙΔΩΝ	ΡΩΣΣΙΟΥ	ΖΕΝΩΝΙΟΥ	ΩΡΘΟΓΩΝ	ΚΩΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ	ΣΩΦΡΩΝ	ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥ	ΕΓΓΕΛΙΟΥ	ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥ	ΕΥΧΑΡΙΣΤΟΥ	ΜΟΝΑΣΕΙΣ		
ΚΑΡΥΑΙ		7½ 1½	12½ 2½	17½ 3½	35 7	25 5	20 4	20 4	17½ 3½	12½ 2½	10 2	15 3	15 3	15 3	17½ 3½	30 6	25 5	15 3	7½ 1½	5 1	Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες				
ΙΕΡΩΝ				7½ 1½	27½ 6	20 4	20 4	17½ 3½	15 3	15 3	12½ 2½	10 2	15 3	15 3	17½ 3½	30 6	25 5	15 3	7½ 1½	5 1	Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες				
ΦΙΛΟΘΕΟΥ						7½ 1½	20 4	17½ 3½	15 3	15 3	12½ 2½	10 2	15 3	15 3	17½ 3½	30 6	25 5	15 3	7½ 1½	5 1	Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες				
ΚΑΡΦΑΛΟΥ								7½ 1½	20 4	17½ 3½	15 3	15 3	12½ 2½	10 2	15 3	17½ 3½	30 6	25 5	15 3	7½ 1½	5 1	Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες			
ΜΕΤΕΠΙΘΗ										7½ 1½	20 4	17½ 3½	15 3	15 3	17½ 3½	30 6	25 5	15 3	7½ 1½	5 1	Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες				
ΛΑΥΡΑΣ												7½ 1½	20 4	17½ 3½	15 3	15 3	17½ 3½	30 6	25 5	15 3	7½ 1½	5 1	Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες		
ΑΓΙΟΥ ΠΑΝΟΥ															7½ 1½	20 4	17½ 3½	15 3	15 3	17½ 3½	30 6	25 5	15 3	Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες	
ΔΙΟΝΥΣΙΟΥ																					7½ 1½	20 4	17½ 3½	15 3	Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες
ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΥ																									Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες
ΣΠΙΡΙΔΟΣ																									Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες
ΠΕΤΡΑΣ																									Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες
ΔΕΦΝΗ																									Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες
ΣΠΥΡΙΔΩΝ																									Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες
ΡΩΣΣΙΟΥ																									Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες
ΖΕΝΩΝΙΟΥ																									Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες
ΩΡΘΟΓΩΝ																									Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες
ΚΩΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ																									Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες
ΣΩΦΡΩΝ																									Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες
ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥ																									Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες
ΕΓΓΕΛΙΟΥ																									Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥ																									Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες
ΕΥΧΑΡΙΣΤΟΥ																									Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες
ΜΟΝΑΣΕΙΣ																									Χιλιόμετρα Ωρες

ΣΗΜΑ: ΩΙ ΜΕΝΤΡΩΝ ΑΡΤΗΡΙΑΙ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΕΝΤΑ ΤΩ ΕΙΣΤΕΙΝ ΑΠΟΣΤΡΟΦΗ

Figure 6.1: A “map”/diagram depicting the different distances according to the time of walking spent to bridge them (1957). It was included in a guide for the travellers to Mount Athos written by a monk there. It depicts the distances between Karyai (the capital of Mount Athos) and the twenty monasteries both in kilometres and walking time. The distances between the monasteries are also included.

Footpaths are mapped and unmapped at the same time because of their organic nature. Hence, technological advances (GPS, satellite data) today give the Institution of the Friends of Mount Athos the opportunity to map the current line of a footpath (that changes over time because of the climate and the falling of the rocks) in quite an accurate way, creating a two-dimensional map. This project responds to the rise of a wider concern about damage to the paths due to the opening of new dirt-roads. Their cartographic approach is only abstractly connected to the real experience, something also highlighted by them.³⁵² Characteristically, Peter Howorth, the

³⁵² The Society of the Friends of Mount Athos (FoMA) has been trying for twelve years now to map these footpaths. FoMA is a society established in 1990 aiming at *the study and promulgation of knowledge of the history, culture, arts, architecture, natural history, and literature* of all the monasteries of Mount Athos and those outside the peninsula that are connected to it. Now that new roads are being opened and some of the monastic complexes buy their own car, for practical purposes the Friends of Mount Athos felt the need to map and preserve the footpaths, as it is considered to be one of the most important parts of the pilgrimage to Athos. A group of people regularly visit the peninsula, trying to map this organic network accurately using oral descriptions and GPS devices. They also work on

engineer in charge of the mapping, argued that “whereas this map is going to be a useful instrument in the hands of the walker, it will not include traces of the actual experience: the adventurous qualities of the paths, or even the transformative dynamics of the pilgrimage walking. This is a deficiency of conventional cartography”.³⁵³ Going from one place to another relates to a movement which may not be repeated more than once by the same individual and opens as a dynamic field of embodied experience that includes both the elements of “known” and “unknown”.³⁵⁴ Even the walkers who have done the same routes before emphasize that following a path involves a sense of unpredictability. On the one hand, the actuality of the connection between two places of certain significance, and on the other hand, the lack of proper direction and the opening to its always changing, organic nature contribute to a dynamic framework that can be mapped in the most genuine way only through the movement of the body.³⁵⁵ The experience of the walkers is also re-defined by their personal sphere (memories, thoughts, intentions). For them, a two-dimensional map plays the role of the “general framework”, through which they are oriented.³⁵⁶ Taking photos and videos enhances this process recording notable parts of the landscape.³⁵⁷ The footpaths become thus an important part of the topography. Cutting through different zones of the landscape, they have their own

preservation of the paths by re-opening and signposting them. At the moment the project focuses mainly on the Western part of the peninsula. Peter Howorth is a member of this team. As an architect he is also in charge of creating a two dimensional map based on the collected data. He bases his research on a combination of existing maps and fieldwork. SPRTM data collected by NASA’s space shuttle-programme were combined with the Greek Military maps, Google Earth results and the GPS tracks from the fieldwork of FoMA people. As we can see from the relevant figures, this process gave him the opportunity to map the paths as they were when he did his fieldtrips. Nevertheless, Howorth argues that the map is not complete as long as qualities of the actual experience are missing.

³⁵³ Interviews of Peter Howorth (June 2012 & June 2013).

The transformative dynamics of path walking played an important role in Bruce Chatwin’s visit to Mount Athos in 1985. While walking from Vatopedi monastery to Stauronikita monastery the novelist felt involved in an experience of spiritual significance. Interaction with the Athonian landscape enhanced this experience. The view of a cross on a rock, for example, moved him to write in his notebook: “The most beautiful sight of all was an iron cross on a rock by the sea”. During the same period he was writing his book *The Songlines* (first published in 1987) in which he examines Aboriginal songs, highlighting the unifying relationship between the aboriginals/nomads and land. The aboriginals believe that by singing the land, the land comes into existence. The songs are created while walking, transforming the routes into songlines and vice versa. His work on this could have possibly influenced his experience at Athos, where he believed that he contacted the Divine.

On this see:

Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines*, (London: Vintage, 1998).

Nicholas Shakespeare, *Bruce Chatwin*, (London: The Harvill Press & Jonathan Cape, 1999), pp. 449-452.

Nicholas Shakespeare and Elizabeth Chatwin (eds), *Under The Sun: The Letters of Bruce Chatwin*, (New York: Penguin Group, 2010), pp.414-416.

³⁵⁴ See also: Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place. The Perspective of Experience*, (Mineapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), (First Edition in English: 1977), p. 188.

³⁵⁵ This always changing nature relates to the tangible changes of the landscape due to falling rocks and climatic changes and the possibility of the path’s extinction due to the disuse of one of the two connected places.

³⁵⁶ Field-trips to Mount Athos: September 2011 and August 2012.

³⁵⁷ Characteristically, the writer Christopher Merrill emphasized that taking photos and writing a diary during his journey played a valuable role in the synthesis of his book after his journeys.

character carrying movements of departure and return, allowing the walker to stop, meet other people and explore the landscape. They connect and divide different places through the movement of the monk and the visitor playing also the role of an extended boundary between these places.

Underlining this eccentric character of walking experience, the writer Giannis Gikas compares the handmade Athonian signs to the ‘Hermes heads’, the columns that signalled the entrances of an ancient Greek city and gave directions at roads’ intersections. At the same time, the ‘Hermes heads’ were worshipped through donations made by walkers.³⁵⁸ This may be related to the role that footpaths play in the experience of the Athonian landscape. The handmade signs, connected to Saint Minas, the orthodox protector of wayfarers, may also be bearers of these *liminal* dynamics. There are very few in the footpaths and they mark the most usual stops in a pilgrimage: the hut or the grave of a well-known ascetic, a monastery and so forth. Their presence is the result of the repetitive walks of outsiders, as they are mostly placed by monks to guide them. Giving a sense of direction they contribute to the experience, reducing the unpredictability of the way. While they are very helpful for the walking, they also objectify the experience by introducing an element of instrumentality and create a distance between the walker and the quite untouched environment. [Figures 6.2 & 6.3]



Figures 6.2 & 6.3: Handmade Signs along the footpath that connects Gregoriou and Simonopetra monasteries.

³⁵⁸ Giannis Gikas, “The Paths of Mount Athos (Where all the mystical athonian history has walked)”, in Ioannis Xatzifotis (ed.), *Anthology of Literary Texts about Mount Athos*, (Athens: Iolkos, 2000), (In Greek), p. 115.

In this sense, the Gregoriou monastery was initially connected to the Simonopetra monastery through a footpath first made during Byzantine times. Its first part has been replaced by a dirt road for cars. Starting from Gregoriou, thus, the individual walks along a relatively wide road. [Figures 6.7 & 6.8] Along the way the road joins the initial footpath, “the only footpath to from Gregoriou to Simonopetra”, as a sign there informs the walkers. The difference in the experience of these two parts of the way is intense in terms of scale and construction. The width of the car road and the absence of vegetation leave the walker absolutely exposed to climatic changes. Cars are very few on Mount Athos. Nevertheless, the individual is forced to walk along the edge of the road to avoid an accident. Moreover, red guardrails enhance this different and more directed sense of movement in the peninsula.

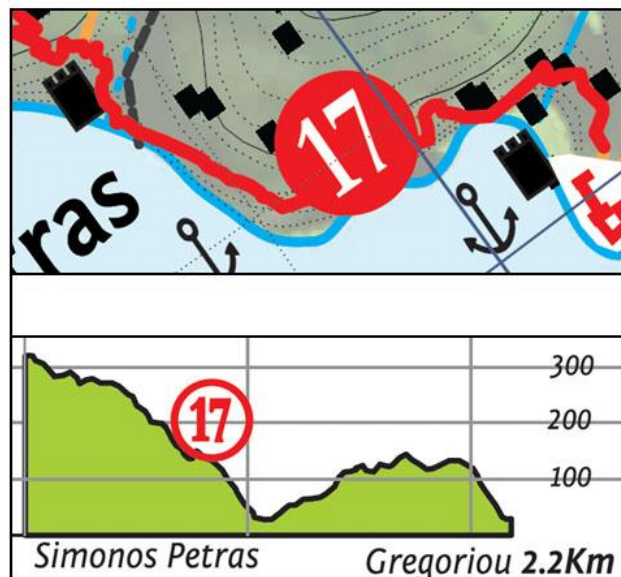


Figure 6.4: A map of the path that connects the Gregoriou Monastery to Simonopetra Monastery and its elevation, FoMA Project for Paths.

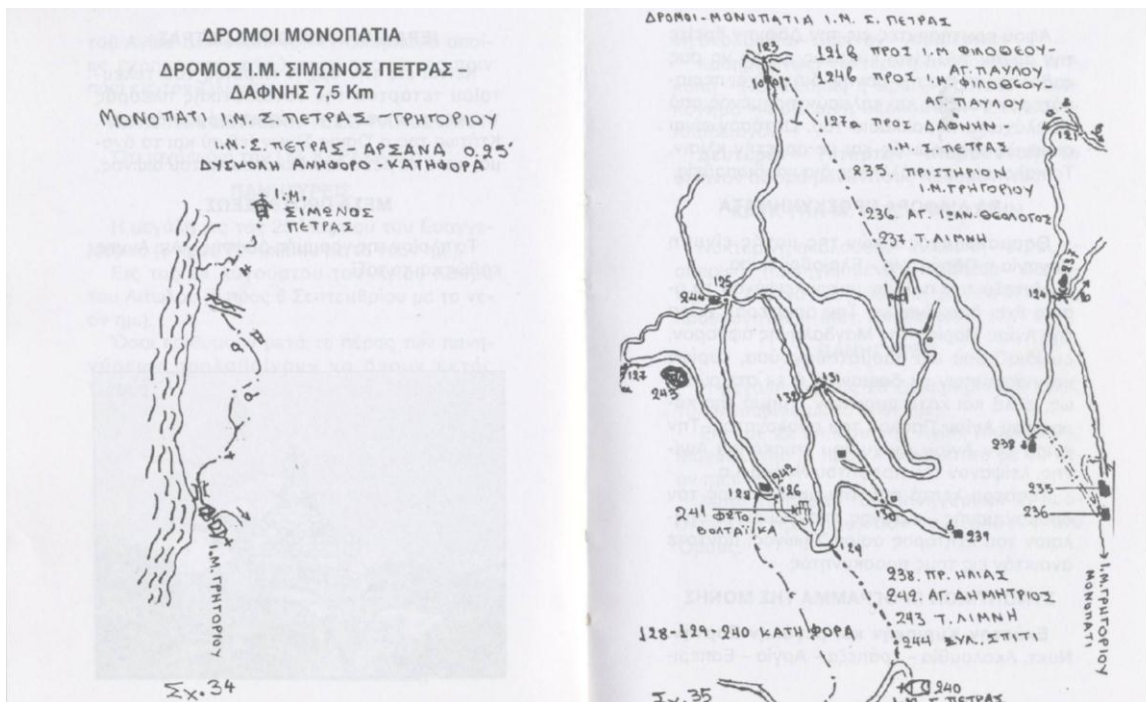


Figure 6.5: A depiction of the footpath that connects Gregoriou with Simonopetra Monastery (left) by monk Markos. Monk Markos is an Athonian ascetic who published a small pilgrims' guide in 2000. In its maps such as the above are included. They are the result of repeated walks and experiential measurements according to the walkers' paces, the walking time and other components of walking experience. Therefore, their drawing is different from the modern cartographic one.

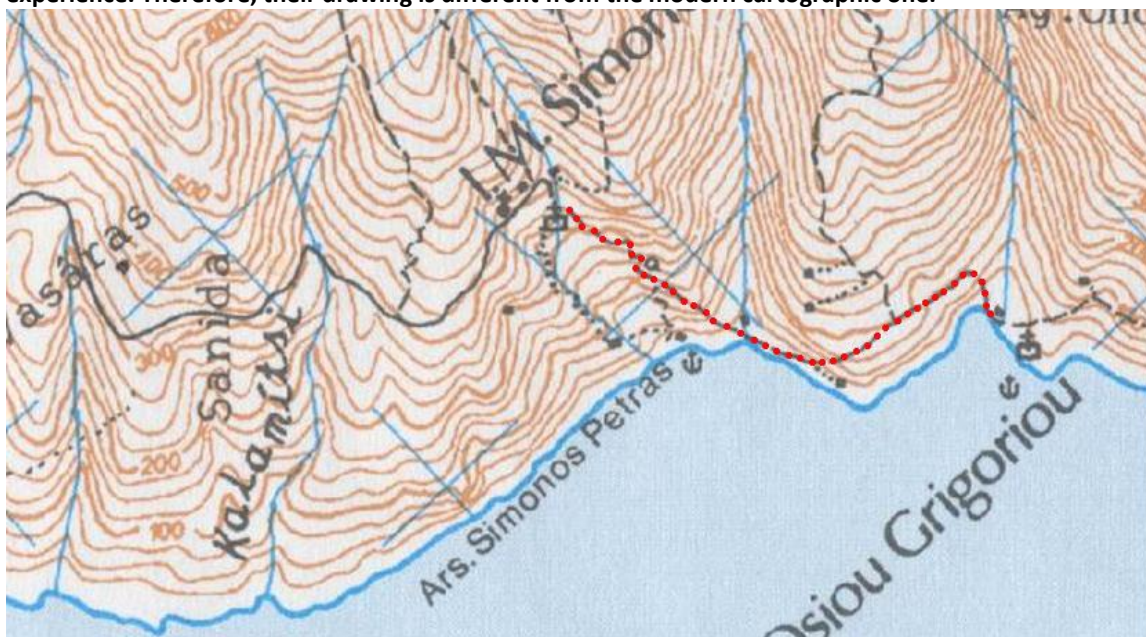


Figure 6.6: Part of a map also showing the footpath that connects Gregoriou and Simonopetra monasteries. It was created by Reinhold Zwerger, a frequent pilgrim at Mount Athos since 1956. During his long journeys there he kept detailed diaries, made drawings and sketches and mapped the network of roads and footpaths in quite a detailed way. His map, published in 1982, is considered to be one of the most "accurate" ones. The map follows the modern cartographic approach with clearly designed contour lines and abstractly represented footpaths.



Figures 6.7 & 6.8: Views of the first part of the route.

Entering the traditional path, the individual feels as if he is passing through a landscape unchanged in time. Often the more elaborate parts are closer to the monasteries. The thick vegetation of the intermediate ones either creates a secure side wall towards the cliff, or a compacted natural sphere in which very little light enters. [Figures 6.9 & 6.10] The sounds mainly come from the birds and the sea. Small built structures make the way more readable. Therefore, some of the handmade wooden signs direct movement controlling this embodied mapping up to a point. Moreover, handmade dry stone foundations at right angles help to preserve the footpath. Finally, bigger constructions along the way divide the walk into different stages. Benches, water basins and the entrance of a *kathisma* allow the measurement of space and time in relation to the direct experience of the footpath.³⁵⁹



Figures 6.9 & 6.10: Views of the second part of the route.

³⁵⁹ A *kathisma* is a small monastic structure. This one is dedicated to Saint Artemios and is connected to the Gregoriou Monastery.

Thus this route can be divided into four basic parts by different spatial markers such as the point where the initial footpath starts, the beginning and the end of an uphill road. The stages are:

- a. From Gregoriou Monastery until the point where the old footpath starts.
- b. A downhill path starts from there and reaches the sea where the area of the “flour mill” of Gregoriou is sited.
- c. From that point a difficult uphill road starts that brings you again at the height of 200 metres over the sea through walking a much shorter distance than the previous one. The end of the third part is a kiosk, to which a path from Simonopetra’s port also leads.
- d. The last part is an easier cobblestone path in which human intervention is stronger compared to the previous two, introducing the built environment of Simonopetra, the view of which intensifies a sense of expectation.

This basic division of the route may also be depicted according to the time needed to cover the different distances:

Time	Spatial/Aural Qualities
00:00	(Ascent along the car road – our constant view is the horizon of the sea, no vegetation, very warm).
00:10	Red Columns for the protection of the cars along a corner (totally different from an untouched landscape).
00:13	Beginning of the initial path
00:15	Stone Steps.
00:16	Wooden Sign (Navigation).
00:20	Kathisma of Saint Artemios (First view of the port of Simonopetra, sounds: water of the sea, rustling of leaves).
00:22	First view of Simonopetra.
00:25	Path supported by mortar and stones.
00:27	Low vegetation creating a protective wall towards the side of the cliff.
00:30	Thick vegetation (sounds: birds and water of the sea, humidity-dew).
00:32	A clearing with a water basin. (Makes the walker stop and have some rest).
00:33	Sea Level (Makes the walker feel disorientated)
00:40	The ascent of the difficult uphill road begins.
00:42	View of the water-mill.
00:45	First corner of 180 degrees (The walker totally separated from the rest of the world, sounds: birds).
00:52	Wooden bench (The walker realises that he is not lost).
00:59	Kiosk, the beginning of the gentler path.
01:04	Mules and sea.
01:12	Second water basin and bench.
01:15	Simonopetra.

The third part of the route is very arduous. [Figures 6.11 & 6.12] It involves climbing a steep cliff. The width of the path allows the movement of only one person while the danger of rocks falling from above is always present. The landscape is mainly rocky with wild vegetation that often functions as a secure side wall to the cliff. Human intervention on this path is minimal. Walking along this path always makes the traveller feel an intense sense of isolation and silence. Physical tiredness enhances the sense of expectation. The experience of the uncanny fires a search for signs of human presence, traces of familiarity. Arriving, thus, at a wooden bench or at a small

built complex of a bench and a water basin is a realization that the walker is not lost. The landscape seems almost untouched, making the individual feel involved in an embodied communication with the ascetics and visitors who created and preserved these paths. This embodied preservation of the paths is thus readable in their scale, in the offhand supporting constructions and in the disused branches (that you can see being gradually deleted).



Figures 6.11 & 6.12: Views of the third part of the route.

The path becomes more relaxing as the walker gradually approaches Simonopetra. The kiosk signals the beginning of this last part of the route, stone steps which are carefully constructed. These gentle stone configurations testify to the presence of the monks. In the kiosk there is a lectern with an icon of the protectors of the monastery, while a water basin placed between built benches invites the body-subject to have some rest. Some metres later he sees the monastery for the first time, while moving in parallel with the terraces used either as gardens or for keeping animals.

This final phase of approaching Simonopetra is similar to the approach to the Gregoriou. [Figures 6.13 & 6.14] The rhythm of trees contributes to the change of the walking experience, making the path more easily realised. It supports a rhythm in the individual's pace and organises

the view towards the sea (gaps between neighbouring trees). Wooden railings also make the way clearer by indicating the edge of the cliff. The very last part of the path is covered by a pergola on which vines and kiwis grow. Walking under it, the individual interacts with the more organised landscape of the monastery, the core of which still looks unapproachable due to its architectural peculiarity. Therefore, in both of the monasteries a transitional zone between the more untouched natural landscape and the built monastery is organised as part of the route that connects them.



Figures 6.13 & 6.14: The last part of the route.

Thus walking along the paths becomes a way of experiencing the paradoxical interaction between the mapped and the unmapped. Following the path the walker becomes an active part of the topography as he is trying to find his way in an unfamiliar natural landscape. The more he walks, the better he knows the path. The way he has to harmonize his pace with the changes of the relief, the constant fear of disorientation and the mental alertness needed to combine the abstract information of a map that he may carry with an always changing route create an adventurous environment.

In this sense, besides the liturgical ascent to the peak of the mountain that was examined in the previous chapter, the monks use the paths as part of their everyday life. Monks may be seen walking along the paths for different purposes: to go to work to the cultivated parts of their monastery that may not be attached to it, or to go and visit another monastery, or even to attend the liturgy at a monastic structure as they may belong to a *Kellion* or a hut that does not have a chapel. Monks also go for a walk in the wider territory of their monastic dwelling to practise silent prayer.³⁶⁰ Generally, their presence along the paths is very rare and their body posture usually has specific characteristics as they are trying to *keep silent*: most of the time they do not talk to the people they meet (neither monks nor visitors), keep their head bowed and play their praying ropes. If somebody meets a monk while walking, he usually feels that the sense of solitude and silence is intensified. Furthermore, it is worth adding here that usually the passages towards the caves and the hermitages of the peninsula are really narrow and hard to walk as the ascetics living there want to control both their exit from the hermitage and the entrance of an outsider in order to serve *xeniteia* in a better way. On the other hand, walking seems to play an important role in the journey of the outsiders, sometimes even connected to an existential quest.

Qualities of the walking experience on Athos can be found in the practice of wandering that, according to Otto Bollnow, refers to a “leisurely, lengthy and coherent movement on foot from one place to another, not driven by urgency or undertaken for some external purpose”.³⁶¹ It was first discovered by the Romantics and was stabilized as a way of life during the early twentieth century and the German “Wandervogel” movement. Walking along the “quieter, less frequented paths” the wanderer enters the landscape, trying to interact with an environment totally different from the fast rhythms of his everyday life. The hiking path is a way opened through an organic relation to the countryside that invites the wanderer to *adapt himself to the*

³⁶⁰ Walking as a practice is also included in the daily life of Carthusians. In particular, every Monday Carthusians monks/nuns of a monastery go for a 3-4 hour walk. The walk is conducted in quite a processional way with the different groups of the monks (brothers, fathers, novices) clearly divided and walking in pairs 50 metres apart wearing their habits and periodically swapping places. An annual long walk is also included in their life. During these walks the monks are allowed to talk about anything they want, something forbidden for them during the rest of the week (except from one hour after the Sunday liturgy).

Walking meditation is also part of Buddhist religious tradition. Walking meditation is an integral part of Indian monastic daily practice. It focuses on the on-going process of walking and not on its aim. Emphasis is on the matching of breathing with the individual's paces.

On Walking Meditation see: Thich Nhat Hanh, *Buddha Mind, Buddha Body. Walking Towards Enlightenment*, (Paralex Press, 2007).

³⁶¹ O.F. Bollnow, p. 106.

ground. During this process he/she experiences *aimlessness* and *timelessness*. The important thing in the wanderer's experience is not the arrival at the destination but the walking through the natural environment, during which unexpected detours may be harmonically integrated. Moreover, time acquires its own rhythm that is totally different from that of everyday life. Wandering becomes thus a way of escaping the everyday purposefulness of life and interacting with an uncanny environment, trying to fulfil "intimacy": "a return in man himself, a return to the origins of existence and to the 'basis of all things'".³⁶²

In the case of Mount Athos, walking is not connected to an intentional involvement in a leisurely wandering, but to a process during which the individual usually chooses to move in the peninsula through the (foot)paths, feeling that this may add to the meaning of his journey. Thus, pilgrims and existential tourists usually prefer to walk from place to place, aiming at a possible opening either to self-examination or to a more direct communication with material and immaterial qualities of the topography.³⁶³ Intentionality plays an important role in this process, mainly for the pilgrims who tend to include walking in their religious quest, feeling that this is part of the "trials" they have to experience in order to fulfil the aim of their journey. Thus, for example, they may pray while trying to reach a destination that is mostly connected to interaction with the ascetics (e.g. spiritual father) in the *hesychast* context of a monastic structure. Nevertheless, natural tourism is also a way of experiencing the unbuilt environment of the peninsula. These tourists fulfil the aim of their travel just by walking along the tracks. Finally, the few dirt roads allow some of the monks to travel by the car of the monastic communities to which they belong, even using it as a kind of taxi for the transportation of visitors. This is rare and applies mostly to monks living in small communities (Kellia, or huts).

Walking, therefore, plays an important role in the journey of pilgrims at Athos. In his article "Paths of Athos", the theorist and frequent pilgrim Philip Sherrard argues that during walking

³⁶² *Ibid*, p. 115.

³⁶³ See also: Adrian Snodgrass and Richard Coyne, *Interpretation in Architecture. Design as a Way of Thinking*: In Chapter 13, entitled "Random Thoughts on the Way" (pp. 241-254), the writers connect the practice of wandering to the Chinese character of Tao, the Way as both include the dynamic interaction between the mind and the body. In the practice of Way the individual is trying to be united with the path, to be organically involved in the route that the path follows. Focus is on the way things are unfolded before the walkers during this process: They present themselves and are themselves presents, discovered not by but to us and thus given as gifts. Our part is to accept these presents in a spirit of acceptance, allowing them room to reveal themselves, just as they are. Then the path reveals things; as you follow the path, prospects unfold". (p. 247).

the pilgrim has the ability to distance himself from his mundane life and enter in the *unknown*, realizing his *dependence upon God*.

Of this spiritual exploration, inward and outward, walking is an essential part. His feet tread on earth –the earth from which he is made and from which he is usually so cut off, especially in the more or less totally urbanized conditions of modern life. Through his eyes, ears, nose, he renews his sense of natural beauty- the beauty of God’s creation.

(...)

But through all this, and through his prayer and dedication and confidence, slowly an inner change is wrought, a new rhythm grows, a deeper harmony. The pilgrimage is at work.³⁶⁴

This spiritual importance of walking in the pilgrimage at Athos is also underlined by the results of Rene Gothoni’s fieldwork there in 1984. For example, walking involved one of his interviewees in a distinct experience with an intense “medieval” character. The combination of the quite untouched natural environment with the Byzantine monastic architecture was for him the live context of a “medieval experience” in which monks and visitors were active parts of the same whole.³⁶⁵

Similarly, the pilgrim A.I.B. who went to Mount Athos in 1970s describes his walk towards the Athonian Desert just after Vespers to find the hermitage of a monk whom he wanted to meet in order to benefit from his spirituality.³⁶⁶ The roughness of the landscape in relation to the sunset created an atmosphere of mystery which made him pray. He claims that the sacredness of the Athonian landscape forces every pilgrim to constant prayer. For him, the unique natural beauty of Mount Athos intensely affects even non nature-lovers. To support this idea he includes vivid descriptions of the landscape:

During the sunset at Mount Athos! And as the sun was going to set I was going to rise. The sunset found me walking a narrow and rough footpath....I was flanked by high, unapproachable rocks with their sharp peaks touching the sky....In the rocks one can see small houses that are the cells of the

³⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 155.

³⁶⁵ Rene Gothoni, *Paradise within Reach: Monasticism and Pilgrimage on Mount Athos*, (Helsinki University Press, Helsinki, Finland, 1993), p. 159.

³⁶⁶ A.I.B. *Μία βραδυά στην Έρημο του Αγίου Όρους/ A Night at the Desert of the Holy Mountain*, (Thessaloniki – Greece: Εκδόσεις Ορθόδοξη Κυψέλη).

monks-hermits. One is in a cave, another sticks out and you feel that it is going to fall into the sea....³⁶⁷

The natural landscape and the primitive hermitages within it contributed to a sense of the sacred for the writer. At some point, a hermit invited him into one of these huts. The description of the space is minimal as A.I.B. was more interested in the “spiritual athlete” and began a conversation with him about the notion of love.³⁶⁸ After his short visit to the hermit’s cell, he continued walking to his final destination, which he calls “Mount Tabor” or the “Mountain of his Life’s Transfiguration”, terms which characterize the apocalyptic experiences that followed during his final discussion with the ascetic that he wanted to meet.³⁶⁹ Climbing the mountain was for A.I.B., therefore, a source of inner prayer and a preparation for the meeting with the ascetic, during which this pilgrimage reached its climax. Difficult to approach, a cave at Athos became the place where an outsider and an insider met. It was common ground, the roughness of which played a vital role in the experience of both its dwellers. For A.I.B. it was a sacred uncanny environment which helped him to pray more intensively and for the monk it was the ideal place to practise *hesychasm*, making him feel actively engaged in the event of a pilgrimage topography.

The intensity of the walking experience on Mount Athos seems to be similar even today. Konstantinos Andriotis, presenting the results of fieldwork there between 2004 and 2007, underlined the role of the network of paths. He saw walking on them as an important way of experiencing the Athonian environment, something that was also confirmed through my own fieldwork. Direct contact with nature and an element of “silence and escapism from the everyday world” enhance the journey of the outsiders, also adding to the “spiritual magnetism” of the place.³⁷⁰

Therefore, one of the most important qualities of the Athonian paths is a sense of ‘silence’, the result of untouched nature and the specific, unchangeable, monastic life. It is mostly connected with the difference between the Athonian soundscape and the outside one. The former

³⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.20.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 24.

³⁶⁸ At the Mount Tabor Lord was transfigured during his co-prayer with three of his students. On this see the chapter: Chapter: Liminality and the Movement of the Athonian *Hesychast*. *Xeniteia*, Ritual and Silence, pp. 53-56.

³⁷⁰ Konstantinos Andriotis (2009), “Sacred Site Experience. A Phenomenological Study”, p. 64-84

encompasses the combination of the sound of the birds, the wind and the sea. This sense of silence is also connected to the absence of other people (or their rare presence). Feeling alone in an unfamiliar natural environment, the outsider has the possibility of experiencing silence, a response to his crossing the external boundary of the Athonian landscape. Encouraging the visitors to keep silent, these embodied qualities dynamically contribute to the pilgrim's journey by opening him to a sensual quality of *hesychia*, literally meaning silence. As Gerald Palmer says, this silence may be "... far more than a mere absence of sound. It has a positive quality, a quality of fullness, of Plenitude, of the eternal peace which is there reflected in the Veil of the Mother of God, enshrouding and protecting her Holy Mountain, offering inner silence, peace of heart".³⁷¹ This is possibly connected, according to Richard Coyne, to the relation between silence and Immanuel Kant's ideas about human reaction to the *sublime*, which includes a sense of movement that relates to a feeling of silent *vibration*.³⁷² Quoting Kant, Coyne argues:

"This movement (especially in its inception) may be compared to a vibration, i.e. to a rapidly alternating repulsion from and attraction to one and the same object". Human imagination has the capacity to represent or describe, and words fail us in the face of the sublime "What is excessive for the imagination...is as it were an abyss." The concept of vibration, which is readily ascribed to sound, comes to the aid of the acoustic aesthetician in giving an account of silence, the gap, and the tuning of place.³⁷³

Silence is a condition shared between the visitor and the path and is not only connected to the absence of noise. To understand the silent qualities of paths we have to go back to the definition of silence as both an absence of sound and vision.³⁷⁴ The path is an embodied phenomenon, the natural character of which is more silent than our noisy everyday life in modern cities. It creates a sphere of isolation inviting the walker to keep silent. Any sensual connection to the outer world changes this atmosphere, adding *noisier* qualities to it. Being part of an organic topography, therefore, silence is not perceived in the same way while walking along a route. Its intensity varies according to the environment that the individual passes through and is connected to the absence and/or presence of elements such as: humans, sense of orientation, light, view towards the external horizon. For example, the silence-scape of the

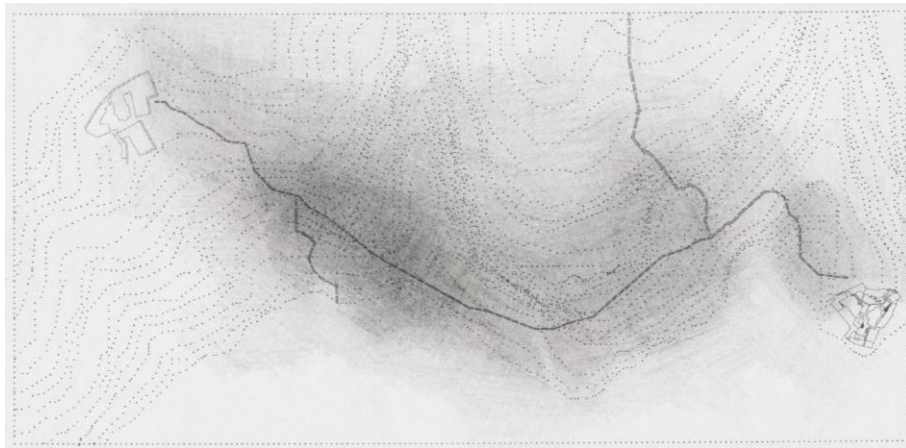
³⁷¹ Gerald Palmer, "Silence over Mount Athos", *Orthodox Life*, (November-December 1968), p. 33.

³⁷² See: Richard Coyne, *The Tuning of Place: Sociable Places and Pervasive Digital Media*, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2010), p. 209.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁴ Chapter: Liminality and the Movement of the Athonian *Hesychast*. *Xeniteia*, Ritual and Silence, Section: Silence, pp. 74 & 75.

footpath that connects Gregoriou Monastery to Simonopetra can be divided into three basic zones according to its intensity: a. the parts that are closer to the monastery, b. the footpath that is covered with vegetation and c. the third part of the ascent of the steep path that is considered to be the most silent one. A number of different qualities are also included in these three zones, connected either with the changes to the above absences/presences or to unexpected events (meeting someone, stopping at a hermitage and having a short discussion etc). These zones are included in the personal map of a visitor, and are difficult to transfer through conventional cartographic approaches.³⁷⁵ This embodied interpretation is also influenced by the walker's horizon, his travel motivation, thoughts, memories and so forth, making its further expression even more difficult. [Figures 6.15 & 6.16]



Figures 6.15 & 6.16: Experiential diagrams of the silent-scape of the footpath that connects Simonopetra and Gregoriou Monastery. The darker it is the more intense the silence that was experienced by the author during repetitive walks there. This depiction is also based on interviews of walkers during fieldwork there.

³⁷⁵ Fieldwork, 2011 and 2012.

It has to be underlined here that this kind of silence is different from the one found in the built spaces and the wilder landscape. The silence found in built complexes such as a church or a monastic courtyard is most of the time intentionally preserved to contribute to the silent meditation of the monks and is also carefully incorporated into the different rituals held in these places. The sense of silence found in the wild or deserted landscape is even more intense than the one experienced along the paths, making these areas ideal places for the hermits to practise austere *hesychasm*.

Therefore walking from the one monastery to the other also played an important role in the travels of the existential tourist Christopher Merrill. At the beginning, it was mainly followed by intense self-examination. The wilderness of the landscape connected to his interaction with the *hesychasts* and the other visitors made him practise the Jesus Prayer, something that gradually became an integral part of his walking on Athos, contributing to the change in character of his travels from “journeys with not a specific character” into pilgrimages. Interpreting his travel experience on Athos connected to the walking along the paths he says:

“Man instinctively considers himself as a wanderer and traveller” says Thomas Merton, “and his second nature is to conduct pilgrimages searching for a special and sacred place, a centre and a spring of incorruptible life. Hope is integrated in his mentality and either imaginatively or in reality his soul is always trying to go back to a mythical spring, a place of “origin”, the home of his ancestors, the mountain from where the Fathers were communicating with heavens, the place where the world was created, the Paradise with the Tree of Life”. Athos was one of the last authentic places.³⁷⁶

In this sense, while walking along the path that passes through the desert of Athos without carrying a map, he was trying to find his way by following a plastic water pipe that was transferring water from a spring. He was walking and praying when he felt that he had gone astray from the path of his “inner self” which according to his words was about “the close relation of the individual to earth and marriage – how both of them depend on our ability to recognize boundaries”.³⁷⁷ This made him realize that he had to redefine his relation to both nature and people. Interaction with the hesychast qualities of Mount Athos was the beginning of this effort.

³⁷⁶ Christopher Merrill, p. 275.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 211-212.

Silence was experienced by Merrill as an active component of different parts of the topography. On the one hand, in this unfamiliar environment, he could feel alone, interacting with the sounds of nature (birds, water, wind) or the absence of other people that made him examine himself or pray. Silence could also be shared between the walkers as most of the time they preferred not to talk, but just interact with the surrounding environment. Therefore, the silence of the desert connected to a ruined hermitage and the horizon of the sea and the sky made him feel that he was experiencing "his own revelation: that the mystery of the Incarnation remains a constant element of his life".³⁷⁸ As he admits in an interview:

Silence is the key to understanding my journey and this book. It is the dominant motif and the theme, for it is in silence that we may begin to listen for that "still, small voice" that governs our best selves--the space that we make (...) for everything that matters. In an increasingly noisy world silence may be our only refuge, and so you could say that I went to the Holy Mountain in search of silence, in order to be able to listen.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 339.

³⁷⁹ Interview, Sunday 27 May 2012, answer to my question: *What was the role of silence in your journeys? You mention a number of events in which silence played a key role (the sharing of moments of prayerful silence with the Russian pilgrim in the cave of Saint Kosmas, the way the silence of the untouched natural environment enhanced your individual prayer etc). Was/Is this connected to hesychasm?*



Figures 6.17 & 6.18: Views of the footpath that connects Simonopetra with Gregoriou Monastery.

Today sometimes the silence is violated by the loudspeakers of the cruise ships that sail around the peninsula. One may suddenly hear vague noises, the combination of the sound of the boat's engine and the voice of the tourist guide. These sounds are quite rare and are audible only to those walking along the footpaths close to the western coast of the peninsula. These elements that define the silent-scape of the footpath are connected to its simultaneous mapping and unmapping dynamics that characterise the visitor's experience, most of the time becoming the reason for including walking in their journey.

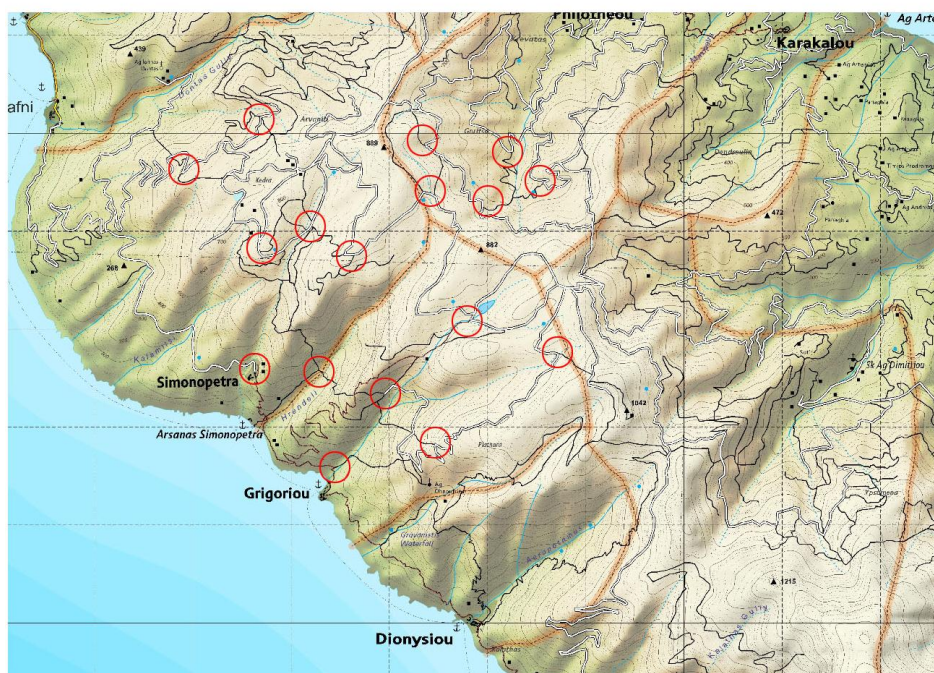
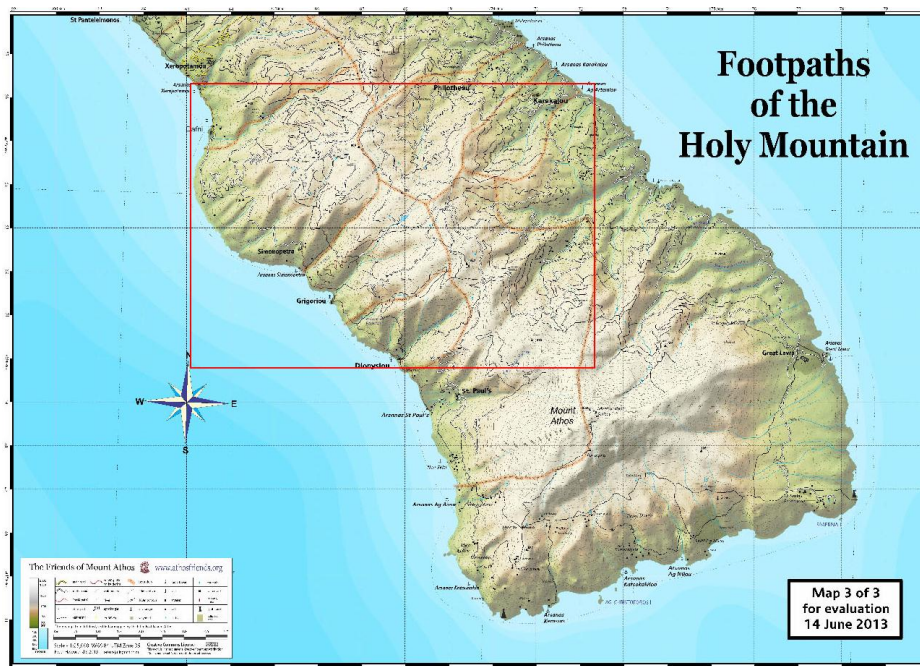
Adding to the unexpected moments of walking experience, the difference between the footpaths and the roads is usually experienced by the walkers as unpredictable changes in a landscape that initially they had thought was untouched. This difference lies, according to Otto Bollnow, on the fact that the roads are artificial products of technology, characterised by Heidegger as "equipment of walking [Zeug zum Gehen] and even equipment of driving". Its experience is totally different from that of the footpath, as *the road surface separates the foot from the ground*.³⁸⁰ Therefore they can be clearly represented in a two dimensional map. In the following parts of the map of the Athonian network of movement, designed by the Friends of Mount Athos, we can identify the several points where footpaths and roads meet. At these points several walkers feel a sense of embarrassment, because it is difficult to be harmonically

³⁸⁰ Otto, Bollnow, p. 109.

integrated in the embodied narrative of their travel. Visitors highlight the bad condition of some of the footpaths due to the dirt roads and the opportunity of the individual to move using one of the very few cars. For example, the monastery of Simonopetra has a small van that collects the visitors everyday from the port of Dafni and takes them to the monastery. A fifty year old teacher from Greece told me: “I cannot find all the footpaths I used to walk along. Some of them are mostly erased by the growing vegetation. Walking here is connected to a sense of exploration, a search for a destination, the hardship of which redefines the arrival at a monastic complex and our interaction with it”.³⁸¹ Car roads can be also used for walking. The difference in pedestrian experience from the one of the footpaths lies in the latter’s primary relationship with the landscape.³⁸² [Figures 6.19 & 6.20]

³⁸¹ Fieldtrip to Mount Athos: August 2012.

³⁸² The examination of walking in the city by the architectural theoretician Gordana Giusti provides interesting comparative material on this purpose. Giusti underlines the importance of walking in the experience of the city. Building upon an extensive historical review of the topic she argues about the way pedestrian flows perform their own urban spatiality, forming *assemblages* of different events. Walking in the city is for Giusti an embodied way of experiencing urban environment both in the physical and psychological level. On this see: Gordana Korolija Fontana Giusti, “Mapping the Movements of the Walker – a Spatio – Dynamic Method of Designing a Responsive Environment for the 21st Century Pedestrian Culture”, September 2005. Gordana Korolija Fontana Giusti, “Urban Strolling as the Measure of Quality”, *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 11(2007), pp. 255-264.



Figures 6.19 & 6.20: FoMA institution has been mapping the footpaths of Mount Athos 10 years now. This is part of the updated map (2013). The red circles show where the dirt roads meet the footpaths for the specific part of the peninsula.

Hence, the American pilgrim Scott Cairns, who went to Mount Athos in 2004, decided to move around the peninsula mostly through the network of footpaths, in order to enhance his pilgrimage experience. During one of his first wanderings, he felt grateful to God because he was walking along the same paths that actual saints had previously walked. Recollecting a

number of Athonian fathers, such as Saint Gregory Palamas, Saint Siluan, Saint Nikodimos and Saint Savvas, he suddenly felt the desire to repeat the Jesus prayer.³⁸³ While praying, the writer felt “an almost hallucinatory sweetness” which was unexpectedly changed into “an almost hallucinatory melancholy”, as after an hour of walking, the footpath was replaced by a road made of crushed granite.³⁸⁴ Similarly, Merrill describes in a characteristic way the realization of these changes of the topography of Mount Athos during his route from Dafni to Karyes:

The increase in the numbers of pilgrims and preservation works undermines the sense of isolation and silence that are vital for the spiritual life. Thus, the jingle signalling the approaching mules (the only offered means of movement on Athos until recently) was covered by the noise of the chainsaw, that was being intensified as I was going up to the chestnut forest over the monastery [of Xeropotamou]. Somewhere later, at a clearing on my right-hand side, a new kellion was built. Piles of cut poplar trees and small branches were crammed at the side of the road. Another road (opened through felling) leading to the peak was on the other side. (...) The opening of roads is the contemporary disaster of Mount Athos. (...) Only the most distant parts of Athos –mainly in the area of the Desert, the dry and arduous place at the south end of the peninsula – are still served only with mules.³⁸⁵

The organic nature of the footpaths, therefore, is directly connected to their creation and preservation through the embodied movement of the walker along the existing topography. Playing an important role in the experience of the topography the footpaths are quasi natural and quasi man-made liminal zones. On the one hand, they are mapped in the most genuine way only through the movement of the insiders and the outsiders. At the same time, they remain unmapped, always changing due to their primary character. The constant interaction between the notions of mapped and unmapped plays the most important role in walking process of the visitor, being expressed with an intense sense of wandering and adventure. For them walking involves the initiative qualities of bodily tiredness combined with the embodied recollection of the spiritual meaning of the topography that may contribute to an existential quest (of pilgrimage character or not). Moreover, for the monks, walking is connected to *hesychast* practice as they keep silent and harmonize the repetition of the Jesus Prayer to the rhythm of

³⁸³ Scott Cairns, *Short Trip to the Edge. Where Earth Meets Heaven – A Pilgrimage*, (San Francisco, United States of America: Harper, 2007), p.39.

³⁸⁴ Research in the books of guests' impressions of Gregoriou monastery for the years 2001-2006 confirmed the above presentation of the use of paths by the outsiders. Therefore, walking along the footpaths and contact with wild nature is part of the sacredness of their travel. Some of them complain about the new roads and underline the important role of the paths in the preservation of the sacred qualities of the experience of the place. A lot of them argue that the Athonian natural environment transmits a sense of tranquillity, calmness and silence that is in accordance with the *hesychast* tradition of the peninsula.

³⁸⁵ Christopher Merrill, pp. 46-47. (My translation)

their pace. Dirt roads allow the use of the car: something that changes this kind of experience as the travellers now have the ability to reach their destination faster and through a process that distances themselves from nature and its embodied qualities. A sense of silence is one of the most important elements of the footpath experience and it is related to a natural soundscape and the absence of people. It is interpreted by the walkers in different ways, depending on their motivations. Finally, the unexpected interruption of silence by the loudspeakers of the cruise ships and the interruption of the natural landscape by the dirt roads are noted by the visitors as discontinuities of their experience, usually surprising them or distancing them from what had been happening until that moment.

Chapter Seven

Time and Athonian Monastic Life

This chapter introduces the key features of Athonian temporality. Starting from the description of the linear, hierarchical movement from the outsider to the final stage of monkhood, it examines the way programmed life is organised in the monastery through the combination of different calendars, repetitive rituals and practical tasks. The chapter aims to illuminate how time actively contributes to the synthesis of the topography, acquiring also an important liminal character.

The experience of a monastery by a number of different groups of people can be approached through moving from the absolute stranger to the “perfect monk”. This “path to monkhood” can be divided into five stages. The **newcomer** is the visitor who goes to Mount Athos either as a pilgrim or a tourist. If the visitor is interested in being involved in the monastic life, then he enters a period of probation. During this period (which lasts from one to three years) he is given some small tasks and he is placed under the guidance of a senior monk. If he feels that he wants to stay longer and the abbot thinks that he is mature enough for this, he becomes a ‘**novice**’ through a simple ceremony in which the former vests him in a black cassock, the “inner *rason*”, with a round black woollen cap on his head. This stage is followed by the *rasophoros* in which the novice becomes a “wearer of the *rason*” entering the lowest level of monkhood. After some period of time (depending on his spiritual maturity) the monk enters the stage of the **lesser habit**, in which he becomes a *staurophoros*, a wearer of a cross, or *microschemos* (μικρόσχημος: of the small habit). He is given a new name which usually begins with the same letter as his previous name. He also wears a woollen rope with small knot crosses crosswise over the inner *rason*, an outer black tunic called the “outer *rason*” and a headscarf over the woollen cap, called “air” or “*koukoulion*” (hood) that symbolises the hope of salvation through *theosis*. Finally, the ascetic becomes a “perfect monk” after the passing of many years. He then is a *megaloschemos* (μεγαλόσχημος: of the great habit), wears “the *pallion* of the Great and Angelic Habit” and can no longer leave monastic life. These five different groups of people co-exist on Mount Athos interacting with the natural landscape and monastic architecture there. They are the stages of a hierarchical path aiming at the spiritual progression towards *theosis* and echoing the

hierarchical qualities of patristic theology as these were examined previously.³⁸⁶ The initiation services denote *rites of passage* from one status to the next. Their liminal stage is mainly held in front of the main entrance of the iconostasis and under the main dome of the main church. After these ceremonies, the individual exits the main church and re-enters the monastic community with a transformed identity. [Figures 7.1, 7.2 & 7.3]



Figures 7.1, 7.2 & 7.3: Images from the initiation rite of a monk of Vatopedi monastery who passes from the stage of *microschemos* to the *megaloschemos* one. The rite is held in front of the main entrance of the Iconostasis, signalling its liminal character. The images are from the blog of Vatopedi Monastery and are followed by an extensive description of the relevant *rite of passage*.

In parallel, liturgical life in the Monasteries of Mount Athos is still organised according to the documents of their foundation, the “*typikon*” (τυπικόν). Ensuring the continuity of their tradition “*typikon*” provides a general spatio-temporal framework in which the brotherhood experiences monastic life *now*, always understanding their movement from the *past* towards the *future*. Most of the “*typika*” of the monasteries are similar to the one of Great Lavra of St. Athanasius. Difficult to describe or teach, a *typikon*, according to I. Fountoulis, “is inculcated by constant daily practice. Its provisions regulate the liturgical life of the brotherhood. (...) Its specifications constitute the **bounds** of liturgical order”.³⁸⁷ On the one hand, *Typikon* indicates ways of prayer and on the other, underlines the necessity of everyday work in the monastery. The life indicated in the *typika* follows Athonian time, which is organized according to the Julian

³⁸⁶ See Chapter: Liminality and the Movement of the Athonian Hesychast. *Xeniteia, Ritual and Silence*, Section: The movement of the ascetic: Hesychasm and Xeniteia, pp. 51-65.

³⁸⁷ I. Fountoulis, ‘Liturgical life’, in Stilianos Papadopoulos (ed.), *Simonopetra – Mount Athos*, (Athens: ETBA, Hellenic Industrial Development Bank), 1991, p. 132.

calendar which was replaced by the Gregorian one (the one that we use now) during the fifth century. The former is thirteen days behind the latter. Moreover, the periods of daylight and darkness are divided into twelve equal parts of one hour.³⁸⁸ This means that the hour's changes follow the season's changes. Therefore, every Athonian monastery follows a specific daily program. The following table depicts the daily program of the Gregoriou monastery:

04-07:30 Morning Service

07:30-08:10 Formal Meal (sometimes between the meal and the service one more small service is held in the *katholikon* (Supplication)

08:15-17:00 Rest and Tasks

17:00-18:00 Vespers (On Tuesdays and Thursdays there is also held a Supplication to the Mother of God is also held)

18:00-18:30 Informal Meal (On Tuesdays and Thursdays the meal is formal)

18:30-19:30 Compline

19:30-21:00 Rest - Tasks

21:00 "Silence" (signalled by the ringing of the bell)

From the above, one can understand how a typical Athonian day is divided in smaller parts each of which is dedicated to either work or prayer. Novices and monks have to follow this programme in order to acquire a daily cyclical rhythm, possibly connected to a religious understanding of recurrent time. Transferring the words of an Athonian monk, Renè Gothoni says:

According to Father Joachim, there are many cyclical aspects in Orthodox monastic life. There is the liturgical cycle (from vespers to the morning service), the weekly cycle, the yearly cycle, the agricultural and seasonal cycle, a cycle of Adam's fall and the monks' aim at striving, unseen warfare practised again and again by trial and error, gradually, until the passions eventually settle. The spiritual fruits ripen slowly. Monastic life is a lifetime's retreat, a continuous striving until the last breath is drawn.³⁸⁹

Every single time-unit of the day has a cyclical structure. Every day monks follow the same programme. During the services (held at the same hour every day) the individual participates in rituals in which the community re-actualises past events, something that becomes a kind of temporal base for all the everyday life of the monastery. This cyclical way of experiencing time is related to the more linear eschatological goal of *hesychasm* to produce a spiral model of time. As already mentioned above, the services follow the archetype of the journey, usually inscribing

³⁸⁸ See also: Rene Gothoni, *Paradise within Reach: Monasticism and Pilgrimage on Mount Athos*, p.73.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 117.

circular routes in space and re-enacting the “pilgrimage” of the community to God. The return process of these daily pilgrimages of worship include the possibility of a gradual spiritual transformation of the participants. Hence, every next time a ritual is repeated, the devotees expect to come closer to the mystery of *theosis* and Heavenly Jerusalem.

This follows Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition that organizes its calendar according to a “feast cycle” based on the events of the life of Christ, the Mother of God and the Saints. The main theme is the Resurrection of Christ celebrated at Easter, the first Sunday after the full moon of the vernal equinox. Thus, a “moving” festival cycle related to the fifty days of the preparation for Easter (Great Lent) and the fifty days after it (Pentecost) is combined with a static one creating the liturgical calendar of orthodox Christianity. The main “canonical” (and static) calendar is the “Twelve Feasts” (*Dodekaorton*), twelve to sixteen key events of the Orthodox faith celebrated at fixed days, as shown in the table below. Furthermore, each day of the week (recollecting the seven days of the creation) is dedicated to an important religious event (see the table below).

Feast	Date
Birth of the Virgin	September 8
Presentation of the Virgin	November 21
Conception of the Virgin	December 8
Nativity	December 25
Baptism	January 6
Presentation at the Temple	February 2
Annunciation	March 25
Resurrection of Lazarus	Saturday before the Holy Week
Christ’s Entry into Jerusalem	Palm Sunday
Harrowing of Hell	Easter
Thomas’s Disbelief	First Sunday after Easter
The Holy Women	Second Sunday after Easter
Ascension	Forty days after Easter
Pentecost	Fifty days after Easter
Transfiguration	August 6
Dormition	August 15
Exaltation of the Cross	September 14

The Dodekaorto

Day	Feast
Sunday	Resurrection
Monday	Assembly of the Archangels
Tuesday	John the Baptist
Wednesday	Annunciation
Thursday	Washing of the Feet
Friday	Crucifixion
Saturday	Paradise and Commemoration of the Dead

The Weekly Cycle of the Festive Calendar

The main axis of this kind of life is worship. The morning service begins a little after midnight. The Mass is celebrated daily and the *Hours* are read at midday. Vespers is held three hours before sunset. Just after dinner (which follows Vespers) is Compline (*arodeirno* - *απόδειπνο*). Moreover, all-night vigils held on feasts are of great importance to the monks at Athos.³⁹⁰ In particular, the Mesoniktiko, Matins and Holy Mass open the day of the monk and the pilgrim to the reality of *hesychast* life. Three to four hours of practising the Jesus Prayer while attending the services lead to the most important orthodox mystery of the Eucharist and characterise the life of the monk, as a preparation for his participation in the different stages of the process. After the first hammering of the *talanton*, the *ekklisiastikos* goes to light the candles, the *lousernes* (a kind of lantern) and the lanterns of the *katholikon*. After the third hammering, the priest of the day signals the beginning of the *Mesoniktikon*. *Mesoniktikon* means “in the middle of the night” and is regarded as a preparatory service that psychosomatically awakens the monk who expects a possible meeting with God. It symbolises the division between the darkness of the monk’s previous life of ignorance and the illuminated one that he expects to experience through individual and communal *hesychast* practice. The passage from this service to Matins is followed by the rhythmical percussion of the immovable *talanton* (*kopanos*) and the *simantron* by the *ekklisiastikos*.

Matins begins with the opening of the main entrance of the iconostasis. The priest standing in front of the *templon* chants its first verse. At certain times in the ceremony the priest or the *ekklhsia* cense the *katholikon*. For example, during the Ninth Hour, in which honour is paid to the Mother of God, the priest censes the church while the monks take off their airs and get off their *stasidia*, in this way venerating their protector. At the end of Matins the *ekklisiastikos*

³⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 120.

goes to hammer the *talanton* again, making three circles around the *katholikon*. At the same time the priest goes to ring a small bell in the chancel and all the monks without the choir and off the stalls silently commemorate names of live and dead people. The *ekklesiastikos* lights a special candelabra called *drakontio* and the Holy Mass begins. Sonic markers follow the narrative of the different ceremonies informing the monks of its progress. They are important sensual bonds between different ritual episodes that enhance the experience of the *katholikon* and sonically interconnect it to the rest of the complex.

In parallel to the services, shared work in the community plays a vital role. Certain “tasks” (*διακονήματα* - *diakonimata*) combined with the maintenance of the monastic city are distributed to certain monks every year. According to Aimilianos, the ex-abbot of Simonopetra monastery:

Those who are allotted the tasks of the Monastery receive, at the beginning of each year, from the hand of the Christ and the holy founder [refers to *typikon*], through the Abbot, their keys and tools as sacred liturgical vessels. Each monk is serving the needs of his brethren, is performing the liturgy of the one body and giving an account of himself as a faithful steward.³⁹¹

These tasks have to do with the care of the whole monastic complex, all serving different practical needs of the monastic city.³⁹² The following table relates the tasks to the different spaces of the monastery:³⁹³

³⁹¹ Archim. Aimilianos, ‘Monastic Life’, Stilianos Papadopoulos (ed.), *ibid*, p. 119.

³⁹² For a detailed list of the different tasks of an Athonian monastery see: I.M. Xatzifotis, *Everyday Life in the Holy Mountain*, (Athens, Greece: Papadima Publications, 1999), pp. 268-270.

³⁹³ Based on: Paul Mylonas, *ibid*, pp. 194-195.

Task	Space
<i>Ekklesiastikos</i>	Church
<i>Kodonokroustis or Kampanaris</i>	Steeple
<i>Portaris</i>	Entrance
<i>Archontaris</i>	Guest House
<i>Trapezaris</i>	Refectory
<i>Cook</i>	Kitchen
<i>Magkipas</i>	Bakery
<i>Dochiaris</i>	Cellar
<i>Nurse</i>	Hospital
<i>Librarian</i>	Library
<i>Vordonaris & Chatlaris</i>	Stable
<i>Arsanaris</i>	Port

Moreover, work in the fields (vineyards, olive groves, groves of hazel trees and commercial forests) aims at a “recreation of the monk”, exercising the body to be ready to co-operate with the spirit. Therefore, the fields, situated in the periphery of the monastery, become a transitional zone from the untouched natural environment to the ordered context of the monastery, playing a unique role in its liturgy. This is possibly related to the “religious experience of renewal (rebeginning, recreation) of the world” through the importance of seasonal changes.³⁹⁴ As we will see later, this is also combined with the experience of the refectory, as the products of the plantations are consumed during the meals that follow the fasting periods of the Eastern Christian Festive Calendar. At the same time, the cemetery where the dead monks lie is part of this zone, illuminating its liminal character.

³⁹⁴ See the paragraph: Terra Mater of the Chapter ‘The Sacredness of Nature and Cosmic Religion’, in Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane ...*, *ibid*, pp. 138-141.

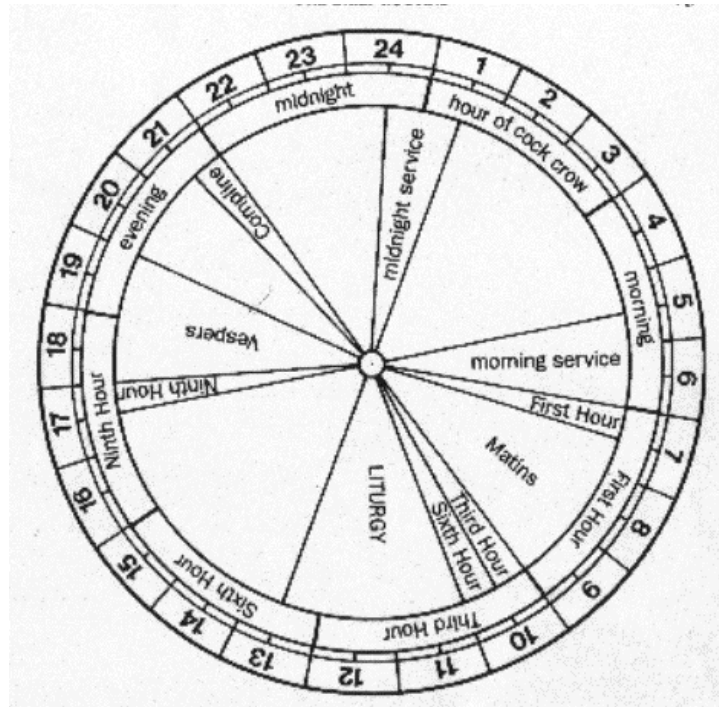


Figure 7.4: The daily cycle of the church as this was depicted by Renè Gothoni in his book *Paradise within Reach: Monasticism and Pilgrimage on Mount Athos*. Using a cycle to represent the sequence of the different rituals he underlines its repetitive aspect following the passage of each day of the year.

The daily programme of the monks, organised according to the “*typikon*”, is based on the repetition of certain ways of worship and tasks, aiming at the monks’ active co-presence in the whole life of the monastery. According to Philip Sherrard, this communal life dynamically enhances the monk’s way towards the *New Jerusalem*. As a member of the monastic community he enters this “symbolic and ritual rhythm” of everyday life through which he bodily expects to contact the divine.³⁹⁵ Temporal boundaries play an important role in this process through the notions of division, repetition and rhythm. The day is divided into certain units of activities that are repeatedly conducted, giving the monk a constant rhythm of life in which he concentrates on individual and shared prayer. These temporal qualities are interconnected with spatial and sonic ones, leading into a religious place. Being an Orthodox Christian and frequent pilgrim to Mount Athos, Sherrard characteristically argues: [Figure 7.4]

³⁹⁵Philip Sherrard, *Athos – The Mountain of Silence*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960):

By himself submitting to this [communal] pattern the individual monk bit by bit performs the task of self-annihilation through which his purpose may be realised. (...) The whole uniform and repetitive pattern of conduct is a ritual enshrined in the monastic tradition. Every aspect of this ritual is permeated through and through with symbolic significance, with the sense of something more than human, down to the least details. (p.80).

Each act, steeped thus in symbolic or ritual meaning is charged with a potential that goes far beyond its mere physical performance. (...) [Monk's] whole devotion to their traditional discipline, induces in him that vital loosening and equilibrium, that recollectness and presence of mind, without which no spiritual work may be done. In this way he is brought into the right frame of mind for the next stage, that in which object and subject, the formal act and the spiritual content, begin to flow together without break; in which imitation is no longer so much a matter of copying the outer pattern, as of consciously learning to exercise control over the inner ways of concentration and selflessness.³⁹⁶

This process reaches its peak during the feast days, the celebration of which involves all-night vigils. According to the Byzantine *typika*, all-night vigils were held on every Sunday, every Despotic feast and in favour of some Saints.³⁹⁷ Even in the first post-Byzantine era the Sunday ones were abolished. Nowadays, about 68 all-night vigils are held per year on key dates of the festal calendar.³⁹⁸ This service begins two hours before sunset with the *ekklisaris* prostrating before the abbot. He then moves towards the *katholikon* rhythmically striking the *simantron*. The ceremony lasts from twelve to sixteen hours, usually without a break. At sunset the *ekklisaris* goes again to the abbot's cell making one more prostration in front of him. He then knocks the *talanton* making three stops around the *katholikon*. Entering in it, he lights the wax on the candelabra that flank the Main Entrance of the iconostasis that is now opened. The main phase of the vigils begins with a series of services following one another.³⁹⁹ In it a *lite* is also included in praise of favour the celebrated saint or religious event. *Lite* is a special ceremony performed in the second narthex of an Athonian church that will be examined in detail later. At the beginning of the Holy Liturgy the *ekklisaris* knocks the *talanton* again making three stops around the *katholikon* and then he lights all the candles in the church. He then knocks the *simantron* once more while the priest and the deacon ask the abbot's permission to start celebrating the service by prostrating in front of him. After they are properly dressed, the service begins. During vigils, in the *Phiale*, a circular domed kiosk usually situated close to the church, a 'blessing of the waters' is also held, just before the end of the *Canon* (another service of the liturgy). Monks holding candelabra and lanterns that are used only in processional routes accompany the priest from the church to the *phiale* and then back to the church when the ritual is over. Moreover, on feast days the monks do not perform their tasks, as they have to rest after

³⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 81.

³⁹⁷ The feasts that are connected to Easter are called Despotic.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 441-443.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p.443.

the tiring vigils. On the next day a Holy Liturgy is held, dedicated to the founders of the monastery for whom a memorial service was held during the feast day. After the vigils a meal is held, with a more intense ritualistic performance than on other days.⁴⁰⁰

The notion of commemoration, therefore, plays a vital role in the life of the monk. According to Casey, commemoration refers to the transition from one's individual sphere to the public sphere of *ritual observance*. It is the movement from the "private contemplation of the past" to the "remembering through specific commemorative vehicles such as rituals and texts". The ceremonial embodied movement of a group of people through ritualistic actions repeated in the same way year after year is an open field, in which the common experience of space becomes a common *place*, a shared spatio-temporal event of liturgical character.⁴⁰¹ This is connected to Eliade's approach to myth and ceremonial action as reactualizations of an *illus tempus* opening towards eternity:

Man only repeats the act of the Creation; his religious Calendar commemorates, in the space of a year, all the cosmogonic phases that took place *ab origine*. In fact, the sacred year ceaselessly repeats the act of the creation; man is contemporary with the creation and with the anthropogony because ritual projects him in the mythical epoch of the beginning...⁴⁰²

According to Georgios, the abbot of Gregoriou monastery, worship and its eschatological perspective is not only related to the ceremonies held in the *katholikon*. It has to do with the whole life of the monk. As mentioned before, the refectory is obviously combined with worship through the ceremonial way that the meals are organized after daily services. The monk in his mundane "fallen" sphere strives to deal with the gap between him and God through *ascesis*. Hesychast meditational practice is also based on a cyclical temporal division, as the *ascetic* has to repeat the Jesus prayer ceaselessly (even during work) and also use his body in accordance with this, aiming to reach *theosis*.⁴⁰³ Therefore, the life of Athos is based on the re-enactment of past sacred (even cosmogonic) events and on a constant repetition of certain activities, in order to support the embodied narrative of their collective identity aiming to acquire an almost

⁴⁰⁰ Fieldwork at Mount Athos, August-September 2011, September 2012.

⁴⁰¹ Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: a Phenomenological Study*, (Bloomington, USA: The Indiana University, Press, 1997), p. 221.

⁴⁰² Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History – The Myth of the Eternal Return*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), p.22.

⁴⁰³ For a more detailed description of hesychast practice see the report: Orthodox Theology and Monastic Architecture.

mythical rhythm, the aforementioned spiral life-long process that is included in a three-fold (past-present-future) time model.⁴⁰⁴

In parallel, monks always carry with them their *komposchoini* (praying rope). The knots of these handmade praying ropes help them to constantly repeat the Jesus Prayer. [Figure 7.5] Their number varies: 33 knots (symbolising the age of Christ's death), 99 knots (three times the number 33), 150 and 300 knots. The praying rope is related to the 'canon' of the monk, his individual prayer. Pilgrims may also use a praying rope, but it is not obligatory for them. For the monk the praying rope thus becomes a way of measuring time through the repetition of the same verse that becomes a kind of time-unit.



Figure 7.5: Monk sitting in his stall and “playing” his praying rope.

Therefore, crossing the general periphery of Mount Athos coincides with crossing the temporal boundary between Athonian time and the outside one. Following a different calendar, the character of Athonian time is unique. The idea of repetition defines its experience to some extent through the combination of a festive calendar and the clearly organised daily life and constantly preserving the collective identity of the community. Ritual embodied re-enactments and constant repetition of the Jesus Prayer are connected to the idea of a linear movement towards the Heavenly Jerusalem, creating a spiral temporal model. This temporality is an active

⁴⁰⁴ Iakovos Potamianos, *ibid*, pp.129-130.

component of the Athonian topography and adds to the meaning of the natural landscape and the architecture there, something emphatically applied in the case of a coenobitic monastery. Thus, the following chapters aim at the examination of Athonian coenobitic monasteries according to the life of the monks and the experience of the strangers, as this was observed during my fieldwork at Gregoriou Monastery and is also presented in published travel accounts. Focus is again on how different components of the topography (humans, sound, light, wind) move dynamically interacting with the (spatial, temporal and sonic) boundaries of the complex.

Chapter Eight

The Organisation of the Monastery and the Cell

Introduction

All the Athonian monasteries follow a number of general architectural principles which are related to certain functional, liturgical and spiritual demands. The theologian Stilianos Papadopoulos underlines the cosmic associations of a monastery that, according to Christian theology, is a “world in the world”, in which the monks are grouped in a community anticipating the *New Jerusalem* through constant prayer and the practice of *hesychasm*.⁴⁰⁵ Hence, the monastery, according to Christian theology, aims to materialise a cosmic event in which the members of the community are interrelated in a shared world, working through the liturgical inhabitation of religious places and open to the possibility of a hierophany.

Starting from the connection of the ideal model of a coenobitic monastery to one of Heavenly Jerusalem, this chapter examines the way spatial, sonic and temporal boundaries in an Athonian monastery are interconnected through different embodied movements (silence, communal ritual and the freer movements of the strangers). Focus is on the open spaces of the monastery. Demarcated by the walls and the attached wings, they open as a field of silent and ritual practice, dynamically interacting with the monastic cells in the wings and the presence of the visitors.

The Organisation of the Monastery and the Search for Ideal Order

In his book *Athos and its Monasteries* Frederick Hasluck presents in a detailed way the “governing [architectural] principles” according to which a monastery was founded during the middle Byzantine times in Athos.⁴⁰⁶ A thick wall marked a rectangular courtyard in the centre of which was the main church (*καθολικόν-katholikon*). [Figure 8.1] The other buildings were part of the wall, underlining its role as the boundary, which differentiated qualitatively and symbolically the monastic space, contributing to its sacred character. The refectory was part of the west

⁴⁰⁵ Stilianos Papadopoulos, “Space”, in Papadopoulos, Stilianos, (ed), *Simonopetra: Mount Athos*, (Athens: Hellenic Industrial Development Bank ETBA SA, 1991), p. 58.

⁴⁰⁶ F. Hasluck, *Athos and its Monasteries*, (New York: Kegan Paul Trench, Trubner, 1924), pp. 92-114.

range, facing the main entrance of the *katholikon*, combined with the kitchen and storerooms for functional reasons. The cells, organized according to the repetition of the same unit, also looked towards the *katholikon*, intensifying the sense of introversion of the whole complex.⁴⁰⁷ It is worth adding here that the architect Patrick J. Quinn presents the results of his fieldwork at Athos in 1985 in a similar way.⁴⁰⁸ He also underlines the importance of a “general plan” and identifies it with the original organization of Great Lavra, which initially followed Hasluck’s description illuminating a living spatial continuity.⁴⁰⁹ [Figure 8.2]

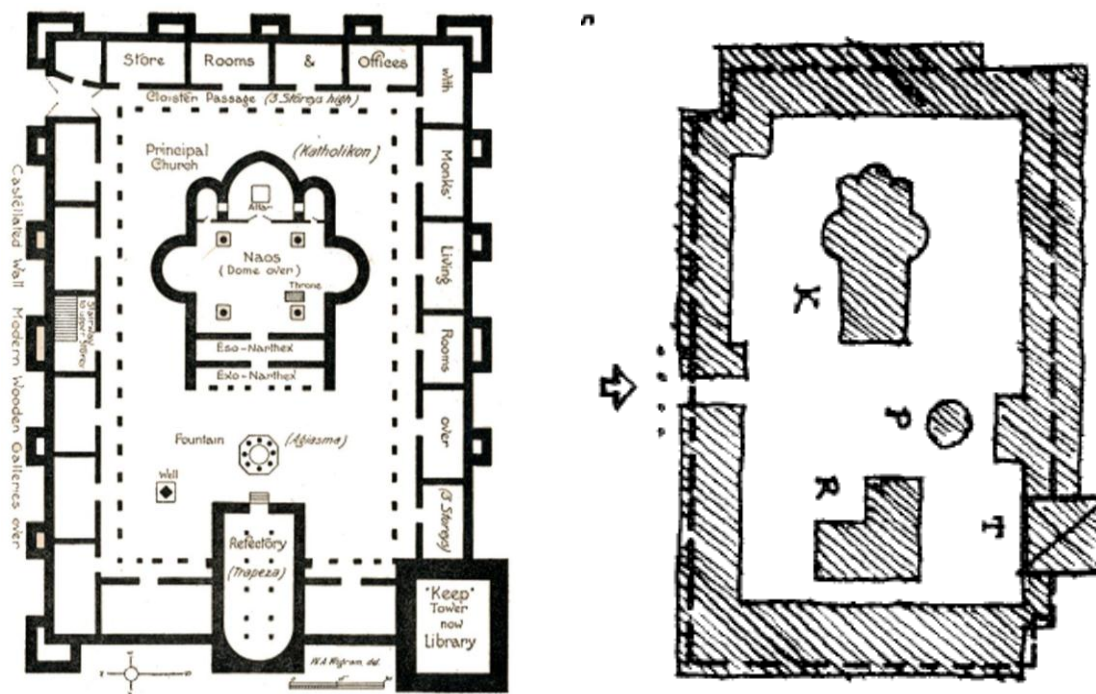


Figure 8.1 (left): F. Hasluck’s ideal model.

Figure 8.2 (Right): Patrick Quinn’s “formal plan” of an Athonian Monastery.

Even from the general model of an Athonian coenobitic monastery as presented in the accounts of Hasluck and Quinn we can understand the importance of the boundaries in its creation and experience. Like all building complexes, the monastery is also a narrative in which the main wall

⁴⁰⁷ See also Svetlana Popovic, “Dividing the invisible: the Monastery Space – Secular and Sacred”, *Receuil des travaux de l’Institut d’etudes byzantines*, XLIV (2007), p. 55: The writer relates this architectural model to the formation of a ziggurat and of an ancient Greek city. In the case of the latter: “acropolis bears witness to both elevation (located on a natural mount) and enclosure by an outer wall resembling a sacred fort”. In this framework, Popovic feels that this model is the result of a gradual evolvement of sacred space from ancient times till the Byzantine era.

⁴⁰⁸ See, Patrick J. Quinn, “Drawing on Mount Athos: The Thousand-Year Lesson”, *Places*, 2:1, pp. 32-47.

⁴⁰⁹ See, Stilianos Papadopoulos, p. 58

See also Rene Gothoni, *Paradise within Reach: Monasticism and Pilgrimage on Mount Athos*, (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1993), p. 113.

and the way the different buildings are placed in it organise a field of human embodied interaction, during which the crossing of different boundaries plays an important role. Therefore, the communication between the refectory and the main church, supported by the Christian tradition and the predefined programme of liturgical life of the monks, is also materialised through the close relation of the entrances of the two buildings and the transitional character of the space between them that is also performed through daily rituals.

The organization and experience of the monastery involves the embodied understanding of multiple meanings. In this phenomenal context, the individual is open also to the sensual communication with the different symbolic metaphors of the model. Therefore, its similarities with the model of the Heavenly Jerusalem, presented in St. John's Revelation, also relate to how built boundaries are synthesized to demarcate the field of a "search for an authentic dwelling". St. John's model is connected to sacred art and architecture as according to Christian theology earthly liturgy is a *mimetic* representation of the heavenly one. It embodies the devotees' anticipation of the return to Paradise.⁴¹⁰ [Figures 8.3 & 8.4] Heaven is seen as the communion of the Church (the whole of the devotees) and God that is also expressed through the idea of a *heavenly city*: a "place in which all things are ordered radiant with the glory of God, theocentric, lacking nothing, and where relationships are proportionate".⁴¹¹ The only 'image' of this future city that we have (and which may support a relevant representation)⁴¹² is the following description of St. John:

And there came unto me one of the seven angels (...) And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; And had a wall great and high and had twelve gates, twelve angels and names

⁴¹⁰ For the relation of the model of Heavenly Jerusalem and Byzantine Monastic Architecture see: Svetlana Popovic, "The Byzantine Monastery: Its Spatial Iconography and the Question of Sacredness", in Alexei Lidov (ed), *Hierotopy, Studies in the Making of Sacred Space*, (Moscow, 2006), pp. 150-185.

For the relation between the model of Heavenly Jerusalem and seventh/eighth century monastic architecture in Iona Islands, see:

Finbar McCormick, "Iona: the view from Ireland, electronically published in the framework of the Iona Research Conference", 10-12 April 2012, in <http://www.ionahistory.org.uk/researchconference>.

For the similar symbolism of Cistercian cloister as a paradise see: Anne Muller, "Presenting Identity in the Cloister: Benedictine and Mendicant Concepts of Space", in Anne Muller and Karen Stober (eds), *Self-Representation of Medieval Religious Communities*, (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2009), pp. 143-166.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹² The Incarnation and the embodied Resurrection of Christ gave the opportunity for His depiction. His human existence can be depicted. In this sense, this description of Heaven can be represented.

written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. On the east three gates; on the north three gates; and on the west three gates. (...) And the city leith foursquare and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. (...) And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold as it were transparent glass. And I saw a temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.⁴¹³

Christian religious rituals and architecture seek to materialise this model in order to embody the homeland to which the monks want to return. The monastery therefore becomes a built recollection of the desired end. This materialisation is not fulfilled through an actual representation of St. John's model, but through the metaphor of some of its basic qualities: the importance of a surrounding wall, the central position of the church, the replacement of the peripheral gates with the cells that also symbolize an opening to heaven and *theosis* through the conduct of silent prayer. According to the art historian Alexei Lidov, the model of Heavenly Jerusalem is a "spatial icon", transferred during the creation and preservation of a Christian church or monastery. It is a metaphor of the relevant religious ideas based on the comprehensive interconnection of different components of the sacred topography (natural landscape, architecture, light, fragrances, music, iconography, dramaturgy). The "spatial icon" of Heavenly Jerusalem is in constant movement as it also involves its ritual performance and the individuals' perception.⁴¹⁴ The different boundaries found in a coenobitic monastery (in both open and closed spaces) are also incorporated in this iconic narrative. They are "image-paradigms" of the "veil" of Moses' Tabernacle, extended through the tearing of the veil of

⁴¹³ St. John The Divine, *The Revelation*, (Oxford: Printed at the University Press for the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1864), paragraph 21.

⁴¹⁴ Alexei Lidov, "Spatial Icons. The Miraculous Performance with the Hodegetria of Constantinople" in Alexei Lidov (ed), *Hierotopy. Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, (Moscow: Progress-tradition, 2006), pp. 325-372.

Alexei Lidov, "The Byzantine World and Performative Spaces", in Alexei Lidov (ed), *Spatial Icons. Performativity in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, (Moscow: Indrik, 2011), p.17.

Alexei Lidov, "New Jerusalems. Transferring of the Holy Land as Generative Matrix of Christian Culture" in Alexei Lidov (ed), *New Jerusalems. Hierotopy and Iconography of Sacred Spaces*, (Moscow: Indrik, 2009), pp. 5-10.

Solomon's Temple (Exodus 25-40, Luke 23:45) and gradually incorporated in hesychast experience through the writings of the fathers.⁴¹⁵



Figure 8.3 (Left): The Heavenly Jerusalem, Manuscript of Parchment, 1255-1260, Trinity College, Cambridge. Figure 8.4 (Right): God Geometer, Manuscript Illustration.

The connection between an ascetic place and the model of a city goes back to the 4th century hermits. In the Life of Saint Anthony the Great we read that the Egyptian desert gradually became a “city by monks who ... registered themselves for the citizenship in the heavens”. Saint Anthony characteristically said: “though we have been contestants on earth, we do not receive our inheritance on earth, but we possess the promises in heaven”.⁴¹⁶ Similarly, in his *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, the 7th century abbot of the coenobitic monastery of Saint Catherine of Sinai, St. John Climacus, also underlines the desire of the monastic community to materialise a kind of “heaven on earth”. The aim is to reach “the celestial palace of the Heavenly King; and the many mansions as the abodes within this city, and the wall of this celestial Jerusalem as the forgiveness of sins”.⁴¹⁷ These paradise associations are also expressed through the writings of Saint Symeon the New Theologian, a 10th century ascetic of the monastery of Saint Mamas in Constantinople. According to him, the monastery resembles an island in the middle of the sea that is clearly demarcated from the rest of the world and in which the monks bodily search for

⁴¹⁵ See Chapter Two: Liminality and the Movement of the Athonian *Hesychast*. *Xeniteia*, Ritual and Silence, Section: The movement of the ascetic: *Hesychasm and Xeniteia*, pp. 51-65.

⁴¹⁶ Athanasius, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, translated by Gregg R. C., (New York, Ramsey, Toronto, 1980), pp. 42-44.

⁴¹⁷ St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, translated by Archimandrite Lazarus Moore, (London: Harper and Brothers, 1959), Step 29: 14, p. 130.

communion with God. The monastery is hierarchically organized with the church playing the most important role in it as the earthly icon of the heavenly liturgy, performed through the daily services.⁴¹⁸ These ideas were transferred in the creation of the Athonian monasteries (during the same period) and have evolved into the contemporary embodied realisation of the complex.

Hence, the four-sided walled enclosure of an Athonian monastery with its defensive towers and entrance can be connected to the **walls** of heaven, demarcating the main field of coenobitic worship.⁴¹⁹ This connection also materialises an imaginary boundary between the sacred and the profane that usually follows the physical distinction between the inside and the outside of a religious territory.⁴²⁰ The central position of the **church** with the dome in its centre becomes, thus, a metaphor for the central position of the Lamb (Jesus) in St. John's depiction. This core is also responsible for the orientation of the whole complex, as the chancel looks towards the East, where the sun rises, symbolising the direction of the community's gaze (and consequently of its whole existence) towards the source of the light, God, and underlining the importance of the Eucharist for the liturgical inhabitation of the whole monastery. Moreover, the cells organised in different ways around the *katholikon* interact with the whole in a dynamic way. On the one hand their walls define the personal sphere of the monk, directly connected to silence and the repetition of the Jesus Prayer and, on the other, they are also related to the silent open spaces and some of the rituals held there on specific occasions. A similar symbolical character of the organisation of a monastic complex can also be found in other religious traditions, such as Zen monasticism, and the Cistercian and Carthusian Orders.⁴²¹ In parallel, the different built, unbuilt

⁴¹⁸ St Symeon the New Theologian, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Saint Mamas of Xirokerkos, *Works, Volume Three: Hymns – Letters*, Digital Patrologia, Department of Cultural Technology and Communication, University of Aegean, url: http://khazarzar.skeptik.net/pgm/PG_Migne/Symeonis%20Junioris_PG%20120/Epistulae.pdf, Date of access: 30 March 2013, MA: 308, p. 205.

⁴¹⁹ On the meaning of the surrounding wall of a Byzantine Monastery as the boundary between the inside and the outside see also: Svetlana Popovic, "Dividing the Indivisible: the Monastery Space – Secular and Sacred", *Recuell des travaux de l' Institut d' etudes byzantines*, XBIV (2007), pp. 51-55.

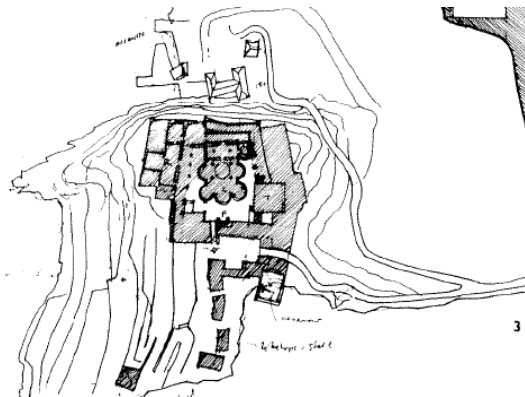
⁴²⁰ Mircea Eliade, *Patterns of Comparative Religion*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1958), p. 373.

⁴²¹ Hesychast model of life has a number of similarities with different religious traditions, such as the Buddhist and the Benedictine ones. Both monastic traditions are based on a number of monastic rules that have to be followed. Zen monastic life is based the rules of Pai-Chang (720-814) and the Benedictine life is based on the monastic rules of St. Benedict (480-543) based on the practice of the Desert Fathers and early communal monasticism. Cistercians (Trappists and "Black Benedictines") follow his rules. Hence, both of them are based on a programmed monastic life in which ritual, meditation and prayer are considered as very important elements.

The general organisation of a Zen monastery, therefore, is based on the rules of Pai-Chang and relevant rituals. Emptiness and harmony with nature play an important role in it. It is organised along a north-side axis and is consisted of seven main halls (*shichidô garan*: seven halls' monastery) a model directly connected to both the communal rituals and meditative practice. Three buildings are placed along the main axis: the tower gates, the Buddha Hall and the Dharma Hall. Passing from the one to the other is the (ritual) way that you experience the

and aural liminal zones of the monastery carry the symbolic dynamics of the “veil” paradigm playing an important role in the topography. This was also obvious in the case of the general periphery and the avaton regulations that enhance the division between the profane and the more sacred “Garden of the Mother of God”.

As we saw, none of the Athonian monasteries is absolutely similar to this “ideal” model as they all had to adjust to the mountainous environment of the peninsula. Characteristic examples of this adjustment/transformation are the Simonopetra and Gregoriou monasteries. [Figures 8.5, 8.6 & 8.7] Nevertheless these complexes are still connected to the anticipation of the New Jerusalem open to the reception of an outsider. They keep clear the importance of the general wall that frames the main courtyard(s), with buildings attached to it that look both to the inside and to the outside and a main entrance that allows the movement of the monks and the strangers.



complex, following a specific route in which all the different halls are included. Symbolical language is also used for the names of the buildings, as for example the name for the tower gate is “sanmon” derived from the word “sangedatsumon”, meaning “the gates of the three liberation” and is connected to the individual’s entering the *nirvana* status. (Antariska, Antariska, “Study on the Philosophy and Architecture of Zen Buddhism in Japan. On syncretism religion and monastery arrangement plan”, *Dimensi Teknin Arsitektur*, 30:1 (July 2002), pp. 54 – 60). See also: Leggett, T., *Zen and The Ways*, (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1989) and Suzuki, DT., *Zen and Japanese Culture*, (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1983).

On Zen monastic complexes see also: Matthew Boisvert, “A Comparison of the Early Forms of Buddhist and Christian Monastic Traditions”, *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 12 (1992), pp. 123-141.

On Cistercian monastic complexes see: Mark H. Dixon, “The Architecture of Solitude”, *Environment, Space, Place*, 1:1 (Spring 2009): The general organisation of Cistercian monastery, based on the rule of St. Benedict, conveys a sense of emptiness and solitude through minimalism and functionalism (p. 67). In the centre of a quadrilateral there is a cloister surrounding a court. The church is placed on the north side and the refectory, dormitories, communal rooms and the Chapter House are placed on the eastern and western wings. On the southern side one finds the offices, the infirmaries, the kitchen and other auxiliary spaces. The dormitories (dorter) are always placed above the communal rooms (frater). The spaces in a Cistercian monastery are all large with the minimum of furniture and decoration in them, as the silence of the monks has to remain undistracted. Colossal scale in connection to this sense of emptiness contributes to a sense of immateriality and silence. (pp. 67-69).

Figure 8.5 (Left): Patrick Quinn's drawing of the Simonopetra Monastery. Figure 8.6 (Right): A photograph of the complex.

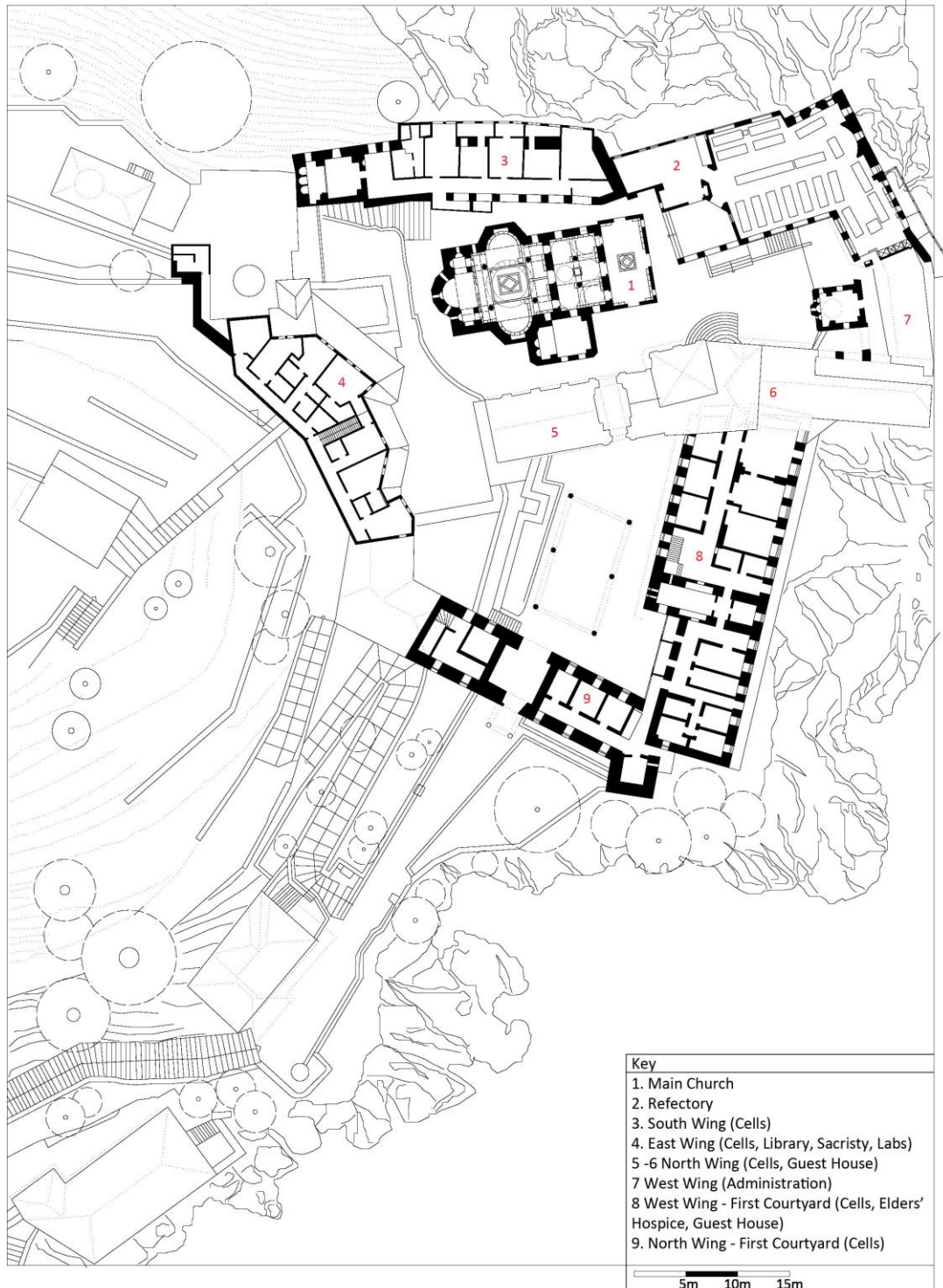


Figure 8.7: Gregoriou Monastery: The General Organisation.

In most cases, there is only one entrance in the wall that signals the intercommunication between the *inside* and the *outside* of an Athonian monastery. This passage is a transitional space, having both a practical and a religious purpose. It is the intermediate zone in which the inside and the outside co-exist, underlining the importance of the constructed sacred place as interrelated to its environment and, at the same time, open to the reception of the strangers.⁴²² In the monastic complex there are three main groups of buildings. The first one relates to exclusively religious buildings (*katholikon*, chapels); the second one to “bi-functional edifices”, such as the refectory, that serve both religious and practical functions. Finally, there is also a third category of buildings connected only to practical functions, like the kitchen or the bakery. These three zones are combined into a liturgical whole through monastic life. Everyday life, based on the *typika* of coenobitic monasticism and ascetic practices, becomes a kind of embodied *narrative* in which the different events-places are combined into a harmonic liturgical whole.⁴²³ *Hestial* and *hermetic* qualities are interconnected to a *choral* environment of religious character. Movement plays an important role in these processes through the dynamic interrelation of silence and communal rituals. On the one hand silence is intentionally preserved in the complex, contributing to the silent meditation of the monks. On the other, repetitive communal rituals are also held in both the open and closed spaces, re-enacting different events of the Scriptures. The church plays a vital role in these processes as the rituals support its *Axis Mundi* qualities, materialized through the dome and its relation to the chancel. Moreover, the refectory becomes part of this environment through its liturgical relation to the church (in the case of the refectory: silent participation in the meals). At the same time, strangers enter and interact with the life there, recollecting the role of Hermes always connected to the crossing or transgression of boundaries.⁴²⁴ The coenobitic monastery, therefore, becomes an embodied metaphor of the anticipated movement from the profane to the sacred that is only partly fulfilled in mundane life through moments of *theosis*. Hence its character always includes both departure and arrival qualities, re-defining the role of its built and unbuilt boundaries.

⁴²² This is also related to the dynamic combination of Hestial and Hermetic qualities of a choric environment. On the one hand, the gate is part of the Hestial spatiality of the ancient home and at the same time it is the point where Hermes used to stay inviting the stranger(s) to participate in the Hestial rituals around the hearth of the home (*συν-εστίαση*, *sun-hestias*: co-participation in hestial, domestic movements-processions).

⁴²³ See also Wendy Pullan’s approach to early Christian pilgrimage topography of Jerusalem. In particular, see: Wendy Pullan, “ ‘Sacred Space’ as Mediation”, in *Het kerkgebouw in het postindustriële landschap/ The church in the post-industrial landscape*, (Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer, 2004), p. 257.

⁴²⁴ Results from Fieldwork (September 2011).

Reading the General Spatial Boundaries of an Athonian Monastery: The Hierarchical Qualities of the Organisation of the Gregoriou Monastery

The division between this sacred environment and the profane one, therefore, is not clear. The natural environment and its relation to the monastery, either as the untouched natural context that surrounds it or the organized fields of plantations, contributes in a dynamic way to the whole, defining the wider sphere of a monastic complex, its limits in relation to the horizon of the peninsula. Furthermore, through its intense pilgrimage character, the realm is open to the reception of the visitor who may participate in different events there, redefining the character of the monastery. At the same time, structural and technological developments (e.g. elevator) also change the experience of the space as we will see in the following chapter.

The role of the crossing of built boundaries in the embodied performance of the coenobitic monastery both by monks and strangers is evident in the general organization of Gregoriou monastery. In reaching this monastery from its port, the individual has to pass through a sequence of (semi)open spaces, which are the result of the passing of time corresponding to its different building phases. [Figure 8.8] The disembarkation from the boat is followed by the ascent of an uphill road that leads to the main, north entrance of the monastery. Another covered entrance opens to the initial monastic core, in whose organization the complex of the *katholikon*-refectory plays the most important role. In this sense, the landscape, the buildings and the pedestrian form a narrative of movement through a sequence of courtyards and covered entrances, the end of which is the side door of the church. These transitional events are bonds of a *liminal* character: they allow both the entrance to the peninsula (port) and to the heart of the monastery and the reverse movement, opening the complex also to the imaginative interpretation of the monks (sacred-profane) and the individuals (exploration of the unfamiliar).

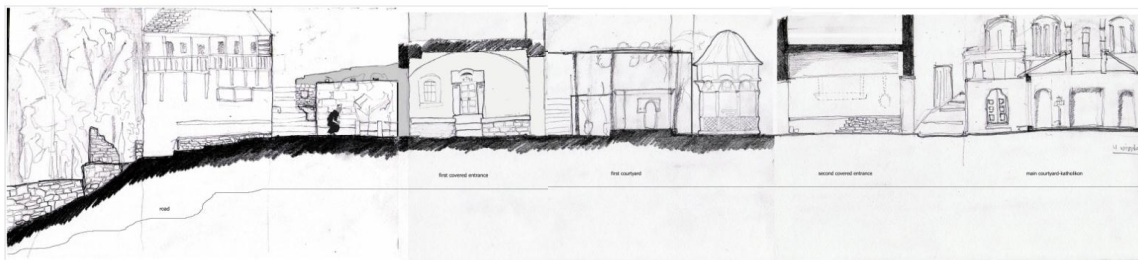
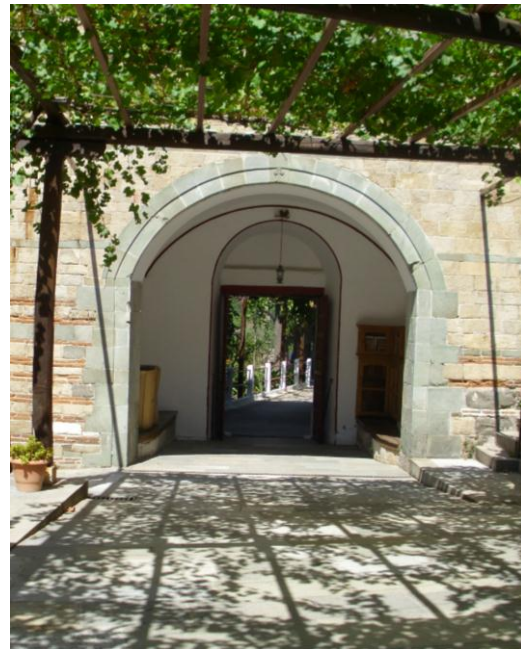
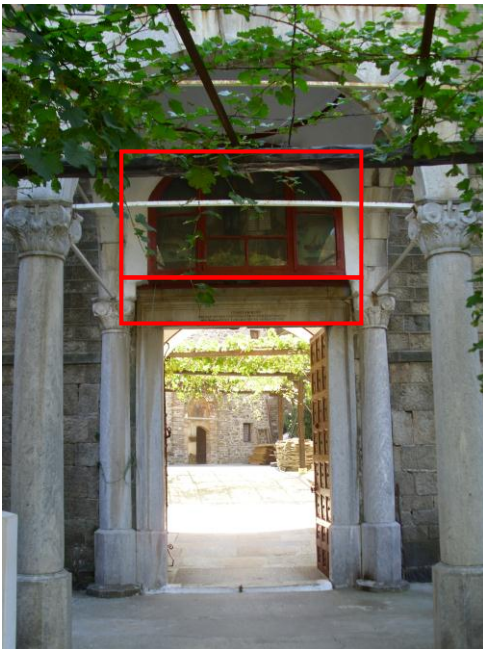


Figure 8.8: A section of the Gregoriou Monastery (Fieldwork on Mount Athos, July 2010).

In particular, the beginning of the ascending road is signalled by a lectern in which an icon of Saint Nicholas is placed. On one side of the road is the intense rocky environment and on the other the rest of the slope goes down to meet the sea. The length of the road is 150 metres, and it contains big stone steps. The sense of expectation of seeing the monastery is heightened by bodily tiredness. A semi-circular seat with a big tree at its centre is found at the end of the road. The walker is invited to stop there before *entering* the final stage of his approach to the monastic complex: walking along a row of cypresses and under a pergola (30 metres long). [Figures 8.11, 8.12 & 8.13]



Figures 8.9 & 8.10: The main entrance of the monastery.

Signalling the transition from outside to inside, therefore, the main entrance of the monastery is an important episode of this movement. [Figures 8.9 & 8.10] A small kiosk attached to it adds to the intensity of an almost ceremonial way of crossing this boundary. The two-leafed iron door (known as “Abbot Symeon’s gate”) is crowned by a piece of marble on which the name of Abbot Symeon is connected to the construction of the gate in 1896. The icon of St. Nicholas and a perpetually burning candle are placed over this inscription. On the left side of the Saint an open book is represented. On it we read: “You are the light of the world. A **city** built on a hill cannot

be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.”⁴²⁵ (Math,5,14-15)

A short text related to the construction of the wing and the icon’s dedication to the Saint is also inscribed under the icon.⁴²⁶ Moving through the entrance, the individual actively participates in a transitional event. He gradually approaches the entrance by the ascent of the cobblestone pavement and by walking under an arbour. The repetition of the cypresses gives a rhythm to his walking (organizing also his views to the sea), preparing him to look at the synthesis of different elements around the entrance. On the exterior of the wall, thus, the history of the monastery, its protection by Saint Nicholas and the aim of *hesychast* life (spiritual illumination) are depicted. This kind of experience is included in the habitual movements of the monks and the outsiders. Both of them focus on their passage through the main entrance, not always paying attention to the way the façade is synthesized. In any case this gradual movement-towards (a series of passages through: the uphill road, the pergola, the kiosk) prepares them for the eventual entering. Repetition gives them a sense of rhythm and divides their movement into a sequence of events placed one-after-the-other during which they are able to realise the entering process in a better way.⁴²⁷ Therefore, occasionally, monks make the sign of the cross while entering, narrating their movement to the more sacred parts of the complex and interacting with the depictions on the wall through a habitual embodied understanding (even if they had not paid any attention to them at that specific moment). This is directly connected to the meaning of the door in our embodied experience, as a threshold is the spatio-temporal entity that divides and at the same time unites different worlds, inviting the individual to pass through and be involved in the dialectical interrelation with the two worlds.⁴²⁸

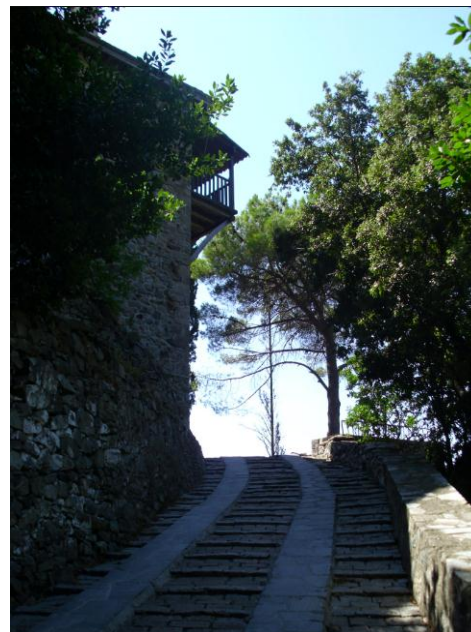
⁴²⁵ My emphasis.

⁴²⁶ Sotiris Kadas, “The Holy Monastery”, in Sotiris Kadas and Nikos Zias (eds), *The Holy Monastery of Saint Gregorios. The Wall-paintings in the Katholikon*, (The Holy Mountain – Mount Athos, 1998), p. 29. The inscription says: Most Holy Nicholas, the glory of Orthodoxy,/finest of hierarchs, pillar of the Church/this sacred, holy and august icon/we offer in all reverence and with all our heart/ to you the protector of the widely famed monastery dedicated from the beginning to your name: Symeon its shepherd and all his flock,/ who by your prayers, make worthy Saint,/ of the life of heaven and keep this monastery/ safe from every danger and from the evil o Satan/ through your sleepless and Godly intercessions to Christ the King of All and through your God-moving/ prayers send down your blessings onto this your monastery,/ dedicated from our soul to you, by your prayers to God./ 1891.

⁴²⁷ Most of the visitors at Gregoriou Monastery underlined the importance of this gradual approach to the monastery. Expressions such as: “this idea of the ‘one next to the other’” or “whereas you have the feeling that is going to be a tiring walking towards the monastery, it ends to be like a part of it with stops and movements being interconnected” were used in disclosing the role that this route plays in the overall experience.

⁴²⁸ Richard Lang, “The Dwelling Door: Towards a Phenomenology of Transition”, in David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer (eds), *Dwelling, Place and Environment*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 204-205.

The covered corridor of the passage is, therefore, flanked by a bench and a small bookshop. The *portaris* (the monk in charge of the entrance) is always silent, sitting on the bench or just walking back and forth under the pergola. Arriving at the port, the visitors are usually led to the external guest house, passing through the main entrance when the *talanton* and the bell ring for Vespers. Some of them cannot really understand these acoustic signs and simply follow the others. Entering the monastery, they are curious to see the unfamiliar environment or to re-enter a context different from their everyday life. They usually enter more slowly than the monks, with exploratory glances at the surroundings. The bookshop is connected to the visitors' final exit from the monastery, opening only for an hour just after the morning liturgy and incorporating financial qualities in the reception of the guests that is considered to be for free. On the other hand, the monks have to ask for the permission of the abbot in order to pass through the intermediate zone between the inside and the outside, something that enhances its liminal character. This is not a strict rule, as the monks are usually allowed to be around the main entrance, either inside or outside. Nevertheless, when they leave the periphery of the monastery, they need the abbot's permission.





Figures 8.11, 8.12 & 8.13: Ascending the uphill road: the rhythmically planted cypresses and the semi-circular seat.

The land's configurations on the south-west side of the complex also reflect the logic of a transition from the untouched landscape to the more organized one of the monastery. The latter's character is more practical with vegetable gardens, conservatories and fields of fruit trees. [Figures 8.14 & 8.15] The cultivation of vegetables and fruit is seen as an expression of temporal rhythms, as different products are being cultivated in each season of the year. In earlier times the monasteries consumed only what they grew. Now, they also import some products. This primary, natural and sacred marking of time is combined with the Orthodox festive calendar, signalling important dates of the year. Thus, the monks eat leeks for the first time in the year during the feast of the Archangels, on the 9th of November, and grapes during the feast of Christ's Transfiguration on the 6th of August. Moreover, there is a special prayer for the harvest of the vineyards that used to be read during the morning service of the 14th of September (the feast of the Holy Cross). Now, that there are so many different types of grapes, the prayer is read at a date between the different harvests. In older *typika* there was a closer connection between the festive calendar and the cultivation of the land.



Figures 8.14 & 8.15: The gardens of the monastery.

Both configurations, the movement towards the main entrance and the gardens are processional open spaces of a different character that play an active role in the topography of the monastery. The former is experienced both by monks and strangers. The second one is experienced only by the monks and is related to a cyclical mode of time. Both of them create an intermediate zone around the built core of the monastery and its natural context. Man is trying to organise nature in order to support liturgical and practical needs of the monastic complex. This zone is in the middle of the more untouched natural landscape and the very well organised monastic complex, dividing them and at the same time uniting them through its integration in the embodied experience of the wider horizon of the monastery.



Figures 8.16 & 8.17: The second covered entrance of the monastery.

The courtyards of the monastery are surrounded by different buildings that enhance the material existence of the general wall, opening both to the courtyard and the outside of the monastery along a series of balconies. Buildings such as the hospital or the elders' hospice, therefore, are placed along the ranges of the first large courtyard of Gregoriou. A wing of cells is also included in them. Practical and liturgical uses of the shared open space are connected. Therefore, the *phiale*, the lavatorium of the monastery, is placed on its south-eastern corner. Under its dome the blessing of the waters is held every month. This Holy Water is spread around the open and closed spaces, symbolizing a consecrating renewal. Monks also drink from this water at the end of the daily morning Liturgy.

On its southern side there is a second covered entrance to the main courtyard. Over its wooden double door, Saint Gregory, the founder of the main monastic complex in which the individual enters, is represented in a slightly recessed semicircular niche. [Figures 8.16 & 8.17] He holds the abbatial rod in his right hand and the model of the monastery in his left, along with a scroll on which the following text is inscribed: «Come my Children and listen to my teaching for the fear of God». The corridor inside the entrance is flanked by two stone benches. Over the one on the right one there is a *simantron* and a stable *talanton*, percussion musical instruments used to signal the different services of the day.



Figures 8.18 & 8.19: The side wall of the *katholikon*.

Entering the main courtyard the individual sees the side wall of the *katholikon*. Two clocks hang on it showing the profane and the Athonian **time** (the former is four hours ahead of the latter) while a mobile *talanton* leans next to a second *simantron*. [Figures 8.18 & 8.19] These are the

talanton and the *simantron* that will signal the **next** service.⁴²⁹ Adding to this, the structural phases of the building are readable on the wall through the different layers of paint, the inlaid plaques and *spolia*, the different types of masonry, the windows and the domes. The individual is able not only to recognize the function of the building but also to relate it to the life of the monastery, integrating the past and the future in a dynamic present.



Figure 8.20: Map and Section of the different spaces of the monastery drawn during my fieldwork there in August 2010.

Silence and Communal Ritual in the Courtyards of the Monastery

Silence plays an important role in the experience of the courtyards and the zones attached to the external sides of the wall. Absence of noise and the rare presence of monks create a silent environment with an intense feeling of “void” and “emptiness”. The monks usually walk fast and bow their heads when meeting with strangers, trying to fulfil the double character of silence: absence of both sound and vision. Strangers also have to keep silent while in the courtyards of the monastery. Moreover, they are also not allowed to enter some parts of both the open and

⁴²⁹ During my fieldtrips some of the visitors mentioned the side-wall of the church, saying that it becomes an extra limit before the final entrance to the monastic core.

built spaces. These zones are often connected to the cells and the silent prayer of the monks. Signs are also used to forbid entrance. Hence, strangers experience an imposed control on their sonic and visual communication with the specific context. This allows the external, physical silence to be preserved, helping the monks to conduct their silent meditative processes. In the atmosphere of the coenobitic monastery two kinds of silence are therefore attuned, an imposed one (closer to the idea of “being silenced”) and an intentional, shared one (closer to the idea of being of “being silent”) highlighting the importance of an implicit boundary between the inside and the outside that in some cases may acquire “border” characteristics.⁴³⁰ This silent environment is sometimes interrupted by discussions either of monks or visitors. [Figures 8.21 & 8.22] In particular, this mainly happens after the evening meal. The monks usually gather close to the main entrance, or just outside it, sitting in the kiosk or along the pergola-covered corridor. The strangers may also sit on the benches in the first courtyard. During the three years of my research, the intensity of noise at that time of the day increased, changing the soundscape. At 21:30 the bell rings, informing monks and visitors that sounds should stop in the monastery. The gate closes and the visitors staying at the external guest house have to leave. Rarely, monks move silently in the courtyard during the night, either preparing the meal for the coming day or finishing another task. The only sounds heard during this time are from the birds and the wind. Hence, the void between the concrete boundaries of the monastery is never something totally empty as even silence (followed also by noises of nature) becomes an active gesture of the topography.

⁴³⁰ Most of the time, during my fieldwork, visitors were asked by the monks to stop talking in the courtyards something that annoyed some of the latter ones.

The ideas of “being silenced” and “being silent” are also examined in: Robyn Fivush, “Speaking Silence: The Social Construction of Silence in Autobiographical and Cultural Narratives”, *Memory*, 18:2, pp. 88-98.



Figures 8.21 & 8.22: The silent-scape of Gregoriou monastery during the morning hours and the evening ones (after Vespers).

Apart from these audible events, ritual processions connected to the celebration of specific festivals also enter the silent territory. The different spaces of the monastery are united through the liturgical performance of a specific pathway. Ritual processions were an active part of Ancient Greek and Roman festivals such as the Panathenaia, the Dionysia and the Eleusinian. Through the conduct of such a “*pompe*” (meaning “escort”) a group of people was formed, distinguishing themselves from the rest of the citizens.⁴³¹ Performing the way towards the sanctuary in which sacrifices were going to be held was of major importance. During the procession a number of different objects connected to the festival were carried. In this sense, the new robe (*peplos*) of Athena was carried from the gates of the city to Acropolis passing

⁴³¹ Walter, Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, translated by John Raffan, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p. 99.

For the role of *Pompe* in Ancient Greek Religion, see also: Louise Bruit Zaidman and Pauline Schmitt Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, translated by Paul Cartledge, (Cambridge, New York, Victoria: Cambridge University Press, 1992), (First publication in French: 1989), pp. 102-111.

For the interaction between the *pompe* and the democratic *polis*, see:

Athena Kavoulaki, “Processional Performance and the Democratic Polis”, in Simon Goldhill and Robin Osborne (eds), *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

through the *Agora*. Moreover, the image of Dionysus was brought to Athens from Eleutherai during the Great Dionysia.⁴³² Dancing and hymns were also part of this tradition, creating a moving multi-sensual event that ritualised the city by the re-inscription of a pathway.⁴³³ Similarly, *Robigalia* was an annual Roman festival of reconciliation with the god of rust, Robigus. This included a procession starting from the Flavian gate, passing through the Milvian bridge, to reach the fifth milestone on the Claudian Way and a sacred grove in which the priest made sacrifices.⁴³⁴

For the theologian John Baldovin, these processions are connected to the urban character of Christian worship, expressed through *stational liturgies* that began during the early Christian period and traces of which are still active in the liturgical life of both Eastern and Western Christian traditions.⁴³⁵ According to his words, a stational liturgy is “a service of worship at a designated church, shrine or public place in or near a city or town, on a designated feast, fast, or commemoration, which presides over by the bishop or his representative and intended as the local church’s main liturgical celebration of the day”.⁴³⁶ Stational liturgy was an expression of the

⁴³²Walter, Burkert, pp. 99-100.

⁴³³ *Ibid*, p. 102.

⁴³⁴ For Roman Festivals and Processions see also:

T. Bullfinch, *The Age of Fable*, (Boston: S.W.Tilton, 1861)., J. G., Frazer, *The Golden Bough*. (New York: Macmillan, 1951) and J. G. Frazer, *The Fasti of Ovid*. 5 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1929).

⁴³⁵ On the use of musical instruments in Zen Monasticism see:

Guy L. Beck, *Sacred Sound. Experiencing Music in World Religions*, (Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), pp.169-190.

William Malm, *Traditional Japanese Music and Musical Instruments*, The Yamaguchi Kan Series, (New York: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1959).

Morris, Augustine, “Zen and Benedictine monks as mythopoeic models of nonego-centered worldviews and lifestyles”, *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 6 (1989), pp. 23-49.

Use of musical instruments is also part of the aural environment of their monasteries. Being a Mahayana tradition, Zen monasticism incorporates in its practice both chanting and instrumental music. Hence, in a monastery monks are examined on chanting, the bad performance of which may be (*timwrh8ei*) even with a dismissal from the monastery. According to Augustine, morning *choka* and frequent *sutra* and other chants are said for hours daily. Instrumental music is mainly used as a sonic signal of specific parts of Buddhist rituals. Wind and percussion instruments are used to follow the communal rituals communicating (...). Horns, double-reed oboe-type instruments, end-blown flutes, conches and drums are all used to enhance the multi-sensual experience of the community. An important sonic ritual is the clockwise circumambulation of instrumental music around a funerary building (*stupa*) through the conduct of which the worshippers honour the Buddha and his teachings, moving like the sun around the cosmic mountain. At the same time circular breathing while playing music is also connected to meditation. Wooden percussion instruments are used in Zen monasticism to mark the beginning and end of the different (sub)rituals, but also of the different parts of the day. *Mokugyo* and *uchiwa-daiko* are the two basic instruments. The former is a wooden gong and the latter is a fan drum. According to William Malm, about twenty different instruments are used to regulate monastic life of a Zen monastery. The most important of them is the *bangi* and the *bonsho*. The former is a wooden board beaten with a hammer inviting the monks to the central hall for meditation and the latter is a large bell hung from an independent bell tower and is struck by a large horizontal piece of wood marking the hours of the day and New Year’s Eve.

⁴³⁶ John, F. Baldovin, S.J., *The Urban Character of Christian Worship. The Origins, Development and Meaning of Stational Liturgy*, (Roma: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1987), p. 37.

dynamic interrelation between worship and urban context. It was the *liturgy of the city*, uniting the different parts into a consecrated whole. Hence, *synaxis*, *litaneia* and *lite* were the three words used for the different processions in Constantinople during Byzantine times. *Synaxis*, means “to bring together”, to create a liturgical assembly during the celebration of the Eucharist. Moreover, the meaning of the word ‘litany’ was “supplication made during a procession” and was mainly used in reference to the religious processions held outdoors. Finally, *lite* was also used to refer to ritual processions in which the Emperor and his court were participating.⁴³⁷

Traces of these processions are still found today in a number of different rites held in the church or outside it. Litany and *lite* are two terms used in Athonian monastic life in reference to such processions. In particular, the litanies held in the territory of an Athonian monastery are three and are connected to Great Lent and Easter. Two of them are part of a shared liturgical life of Eastern Christianity and the third one (Easter Monday) is a ritual happening only on Mount Athos.

Hence, on the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, the first Sunday of Great Lent, the eastern Christian church commemorates the victory of the iconodules over the iconoclasts with the decision of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. [Figure 8.23] The restoration of the icons is celebrated throughout the day by a procession of priests, the chanters and the faithful holding icons, flags and lanterns, moving around the church. A similar procession is conducted in Mount Athos starting from the main entrance of the Iconostasis and ending there, signalling its importance in the liturgical life of the community. The procession is held in the main courtyard of the monastery. It is a circular route around the main church during which four stops are made (each along one of the four sides of the building) and supplications are said.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 207-211.



Figure 8.23: Experiential Map of the Ritual Procession of the Sunday of Orthodoxy.

The second procession is conducted during the evening services of Good Friday, when the *epitaph* of Jesus Christ is held. [Figure 8.24 & 8.25] Epitaph is a Greek word that means “on the

grave” and relates to the lamentations conducted during the burial process of a dead person. Hence, during that day in the middle of the church, under the main dome, a kind of a bier is placed that symbolizes Christ’s grave. On it the *epitaph* will be placed. The *epitaph* is a richly decorated embroidered piece of cloth on which the dead body of Christ is represented.⁴³⁸ After the “Lamentation upon the Grave” is chanted, the epitaph is lifted up by monks who are also priests and a procession is held recollecting the burial of Christ and his movement towards Hades.⁴³⁹ Monks carrying banners, lanterns and metal depictions of Cherubim are followed by the priest monks (all dressed with their liturgical uniform) some of whom carry the epitaph and the chanters. The rest of the monks and the laymen come behind. This litany is held in both of the courtyards and includes four stops in which supplications are said for: a. all the dead monks of the monastery (in front of the south *kodra*), b. all Christians (in front of the north *kodra*), c. for the political authorities (in the first courtyard) and d. for the donors of the monastery (in the chapel of Saint Anastasia). When the epitaph reaches the closed door of the church the priest symbolically asks Hades to open the doors of the underworld in order for Christ to enter. One more stop is held in the narthex when prayers are said for all the monasteries of the world. After this, the epitaph is held on the threshold in order for the participants to pass under it, recollecting the human following of Jesus’ example. During the rite the bell rings in a funeral toll.

⁴³⁸ Similar rituals are also found in the Western Christian Church, such as the rite of the Anointing of the Body Christ held in the South America (i.e. Vera Cruz).

⁴³⁹ The lamentations are included in the verses of the Psalm 118 that is divided into three parts called *staseis* (stations) the beginning of which is signaled by a censuring and during the third one the priest springs rose-water and throws flower petals all around recollecting the funeral process.



Figure 8.24: Experiential Map of the Ritual Procession of the Great Friday.



Figure 8.25: Photograph of the Ritual Procession of Great Friday (Courtesy of the Gregoriou Monastery).

Finally, one of the most important religious events of Mount Athos is the litany held in all the monasteries either on Easter Monday or Easter Tuesday. During this rite the different places of the wider territory of a monastic whole are liturgically united.⁴⁴⁰ [Figure 8.26] By the end of the morning Liturgy of Easter Monday all the congregation exits the *katholikon* of Gregoriou Monastery. The order of the litany is similar to that of the epitaph, following the hierarchical organisation of monastic life. Holy relics, icons, banners and candles are carried while psalms related to the event of the Resurrection are chanted. They pass through the main entrance of the monastery and start ascending the footpath that leads to the cave of St. Gregory. Initially, the litany reached the cave, where the service of the blessing of the waters was conducted and then returned to the monastery. Now the distance covered by the litany is reduced. They stop at the house of the vineyard (just over the monastery) to conduct the service of the blessing of the waters under a pergola and return to the *katholikon*. [Figures 8.27 – 8.31] This blessed water will be spread over the gardens, following, for the Athonians, the parallel spring regeneration of

⁴⁴⁰ The most important Easter Monday litany is held in the capital of Mount Athos, the small village-city called Karyes.

nature and the human physical-spiritual one, due to the celebration of Christ's Resurrection. During the litany the Canon of the Easter is chanted and six stops are made to read supplications for: a. the dead monks of the monastery, b. all the Christians of the world, c. the participants of the litany, d. for the dead of the world, e. for the monks who live in the monastic structures that belong to the monastery (*metochia*) and f. for the people (monks and laymen) who serve the monastery. The locations of these stops are not specific ones. It relates to how the *tupikaris* (the monk in charge for the rituals) is going to divide the distance into seven different parts.

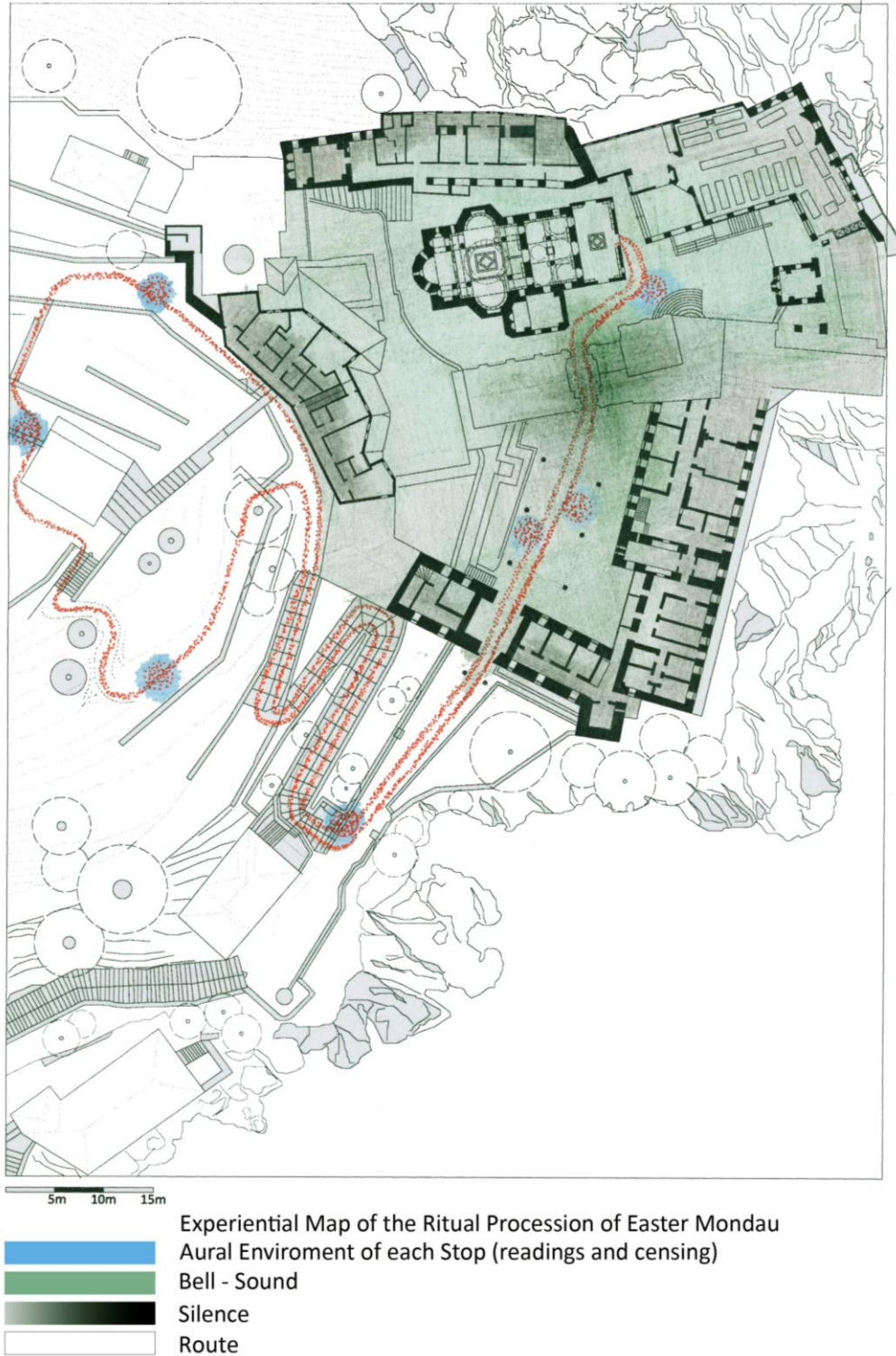


Figure 8.26: Experiential Map of the Ritual Procession of Easter Monday.



Figures 8.27, 8.28, 8.29, 8.30 & 8.31: Photographs of the Ritual Procession of Easter Monday (Courtesy of Gregoriou Monastery).

Based on the archetype of journey these circular rituals embody important religious ideas connected to the movement from the earthly sphere to the ineffable and back to the former. This is an expression of religious liminality. Besides the processional movement through the thresholds of different spatial boundaries (walls of the main church and the chapel of Saint Anastasia, the main entrances of the monastery) this liminality is also expressed in the way these rituals change the monastic aural environment. The litanies mark the spaces through the choreographical inscription of a new temporary zone in the open spaces of the monasteries. Each of these zones has its own aural character that introduces ritual characteristics in the silent sound-scape of the monastery. At each stop of the procession this character changes temporarily as a short service is held with readings, chanting and censing. The different sounds (chanting, censing, bell ringing) penetrate the boundaries of the surrounding wings up to a point, dynamically interacting with their silent qualities. Most of them are empty during these three rites as the monks are also participating in them. Only the sound of the Easter Monday procession can be perceived by people who happen to be in the area of the port and the uphill footpath at the moment when the rite exits the monastery and starts ascending towards the house of the vineyard. Nevertheless, the ringing of the bell (either of funeral or joyful toll) reaches the wider area of the monastery, informing people who did not attend of the progress of the ceremony. Hence, whereas usually only the audible pauses of visitors talking interrupt the physical perception of silence, rhythmical ritual sounds also enter it. Moreover, the visitors become both participants and audience of the rituals, as they can also observe another performance of the open spaces.

We also have to add here that this ritual atmosphere changes not only because of the increasing number of visitors but also because of the monks' use of a number of technological devices, such as mobile phones and the internet that is still controllable. Hence, one of the monks who was allowed to have a mobile phone used to "silently" text me during the afternoon in order for me to interview him. Whereas this act preserves the silent-scape of the monastery it changes the way space is perceived in it, something that becomes even more emphatic if we think of the possibility of two monks of the same community using their mobile phones to communicate. Therefore, changes in the perception of space that happened at least twenty years ago in the outside world are happening now in the Athonian realm, questioning the way distance and

liminality are perceived, and adding telecommunication to the ways that these liminal zones are experienced and penetrated.

The Cells, the Silent Courtyard and the *Talanton* Rite

The relation of the cells to the general organisation of the whole monastery is very important in Athonian life. The cell is a part of the whole that to a great extent defines the identity of the monk that inhabits it, allowing him to distance himself from the shared spaces and work on personal prayer and self-examination. The cell as the built framework of the monk's silent worship is connected for *hesychasm* to the gradual transformation of his body into a "cell" in which his soul aspires to a conversation with God. This is also found in the way cells were inhabited by the desert fathers as this is depicted in their biographies.⁴⁴¹ Cells also play an important role for other traditions, such as the Carthusian Order of the Christian Catholic Church.⁴⁴²

Hence, the cells are usually part of the non-western ranges of the monastery wall. The repetition of the same simple unit of a small rectangular room was the general plan for this part of the Athonian monasteries. They are organized in buildings called *kordes*. [Figures 8.32 & 8.33] This word stems from the latin "chorda" or the ancient Greek "χορδή" (*chordi*) that means a "piece of string that joins the ends of an arc" and relates to the construction of the buildings around the centrally situated *katholikon*, something that enhances the symbolic connection of the monastery to the model of Heavenly Jerusalem. The movement from the *kordes* to the

⁴⁴¹ Darlene L. Brooks, Hedstrom, "The Geography of the Monastic Cell in Early Egyptian Monastic Literature", *Church History*, 78:4 (December, 2009), pp. 756-791.

⁴⁴² Another Christian Catholic Order in which silence and solitude play an important role is the Carthusian. In the Carthusian monasteries (or Charterhouses) silence in the individual cells is considered to be a prerequisite for achieving union with God. (Mark H., Dixon, "The Architecture of Solitude", *Environment, Space, Place*, 1:1 (Spring 2009), p. 62) Hence, communal monastic and individual life are connected through the daily life of the monks but their interpenetration is minimal. This is also obvious in the architectural organisation of the monastic complex. Series of individual two-storey cells or hermitages with private gardens surround a cloister that connects them with the communal spaces. On the first floor a workshop and a storage room are found. On the second, there is an anteroom called "Ave Maria" in which the monks/nuns and say a Hail Mary every time they enter and there is also another room called cubiculum in which a bed, a desk, a chair and an oratory cover the rest of their needs. The monk is supposed to spend most of his time in the silence of his cell which he leaves three times per day to participate in communal liturgies in the church and for a Sunday communal, silent meal in the refectory. After the meal he/she has the opportunity to talk to the rest of the brotherhood/sisterhood for an hour. Obligatory shared and individual silence plays a key role in the organisation of the complex. The bell rings twice before each of the offices to signal its beginning. Moreover, before the communal liturgies the monk in charge of the maintenance of the church starts pulling the bell. As each monk arrives at the church he takes over the bell ringing. When all the monks have arrived the Prior signals the beginning of the Office by knocking on his wooden stall.

courtyard is fulfilled by an arcade called “*emvolon*” (έμβολον) or “*heliakon*”(ηλιακόν).⁴⁴³ It is a balcony that acts as an intermediate zone between the building and the courtyard.⁴⁴⁴

Initially, the cells were small rooms with an entrance and an opening towards the arcade. They were arrayed one next to the other following the length of the *korda*. The interior was, and still is, very simple, providing the basic needs of a monk: study, individual prayer and some hours of rest. Over the years the network of cells has acquired various forms. Quinn indicates three different types of this diversity. Some of them are rectangular rooms protruding from the wall. Some others are autonomous units of buildings and finally there are also some integrated in the form of the wall, identifiable only by windows.⁴⁴⁵



Figure 8.32 (Left): The exterior of a *kodra* at Gregoriou Monastery.

Figure 8.33 (Right): The interior of a cell at Gregoriou Monastery.

New qualities are added to the meaning of the central wall(s) that are also related to the practice of silence as this was presented in the third chapter: an embodied gesture through whose conduct we may have a number of physical and psychological experiences. The wall is

⁴⁴³ *The Holy Mountain, a Millennium of Orthodox Spirituality and Art*, (Athens: Karakotsoglou Editions, 1960), p. 69.

⁴⁴⁴ Philip Sherrard, *Athos. The Mountain of Silence*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 47-48.

At evening the usual place of congregating is one of the balconies. These balconies, whether high up on the outside wall of the monastery stratted out on slender wooden brackets as at Dionysiou or Simonopetra or, as at Lavra, overlooking the inner court, are an essential feature of Athonite architecture and monastic life. They are often the most convenient and, indeed, the only means of communication between one quarter of the monastery and another.

⁴⁴⁵ Patrick, Quinn, pp. 34-35.

expanded through the attachment of *kordes* to it. Envelopes of monks' isolation add to the meaning of these walls, co-existing with the movements of the monks and the outsiders through the gate. The use of stone from the surrounding environment and the organic configuration of the whole make these parts of the monastery seem like the result of the abstraction of material from the concrete wall, and not of the addition to it, as their meaning is connected to the way the created void is filled by the body of the monk. As already mentioned, in the cell the monk conducts his daily canon, usually during the night. Silence as the absence of sound and vision already manifests the active participation of the body in this process. Moreover, constant repetitions of the Jesus Prayer is combined with the rhythms of breathing and the posture of the body. For example, the monk may pray kneeling and looking to the sky or seated on a low stall and bowing his head (circular position). Even if his body remains in the same place, he is involved in a rhythmical ascetic *vibration* while trying to cross the material and imaginary boundaries that stand between his mundane, worldly existence and the divine.

The door of the cell, therefore, is also an important threshold in the life of the monastery as the passage through it allows the interconnection between the public and the private. Its "semi-permeable" character is very important for the experience of the space. In this sense, the monk dwelling in the cell is able to pass through the door, while he usually allows the entrance only to the other monks, excluding the stranger from interaction with his individual space (imposed visual silence of the visitor). Characteristically, there is a wing of cells attached to the end of the upper guest house of the Gregoriou monastery. A door divides the former from the wings of the latter, something that also happens at the outside balcony. A sign on the door informs the visitors: *No Entrance, Keep Quiet, Monastic Cells*. The wing of cells is the only zone that the outsider is not allowed to enter in order to avoid disturbing the silence of the monks.

The cell is always part of the monastery. Through its openings it is connected to the rest of the community. Entering and exiting from the cell is connected both to individual and community prayer. In the conduct of the personal canon of the monk, community life is also reflected and vice versa. The small cell carries qualities of the experience of the church as they are liturgically interconnected through the important role that silent prayer plays in both of them.⁴⁴⁶ Although

⁴⁴⁶ *From the Ascetic and Hesychast Athonian Tradition*, Ibid, pp. 174-183.

there are some similarities between the cell and the use of the cave that are explained by their association to solitude and silence, we should not be carried away by them and believe that these spaces play a similar role in the Athonian topography. Whereas, both of the spaces provide the ascetic with the minimum space to conduct his individual prayer, the cell is always inter-connected with the monastery.

Therefore, in Gregoriou monastery the cells are small rectangular rooms that may be divided into two smaller spaces. A bed, a table and a chair are usually the only pieces of furniture. In some cases a bookcase is also allowed. On the door there is usually hung the icon of the saint in whose honour the monk has taken his name. Another interesting way of monastic cells inhabitation is found in Simonopetra monastery. According to the *typikon* of the monastery, for ascetic purposes the monks have to sleep on the floor in an almost empty room. Moreover, when the monk is inside his cell he has to leave the key on the outside of the door, showing his brothers that he has no problem receiving them whenever they like. On the other hand, when a monk wants to enter the cell of another monk, he has to knock on the door saying: “With the blessings of our Holy Fathers”. When the abbot has sent him he says, “With the blessings of our Holy Father”. These movements, the key on the outside and the reference to the Holy Father(s) redefine the meaning of the door, including it in the liturgical performance of the monastic complex. Hence, the cell becomes an absolutely closed space only when its occupier has to go out of the monastery, only when it is not inhabited. Its occupation is followed by the opening to a common life, in whose framework the monk is alone and at the same time part of the living brotherhood.⁴⁴⁷

Besides the communication with the silence of the courtyards, the monastic cells also communicate with the open spaces through daily sonic rites that inform the monks of the progress of the rituals held in the church and the refectory. Acoustic signs hence play an important role in the experience of the Athonian topography, characteristically illuminated in

The biographies of monks that lived on Athos during the 20th and 21st centuries inform us in an interesting way about how monks tried to deal with the notions of solitude and silence while living in a coenobitic monastery. Another interesting case is the Athonian Monk and Orthodox Christian Silouan (1893-1938). Athonians usually mention his life as a paradigmatic one and advise the novices to follow it, contributing to the enhancement of the meaning of the topography through oral tradition. On this see: Archimandrite Sophrony, *The Monk of Athos: Staretz Silouan*, (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973).

⁴⁴⁷ Results of Fieldwork, (August-September 2011).

the cases of the *talanton*, the *semantron* and the bell, three instruments that dynamically contribute to the liturgical life of the monastery.⁴⁴⁸

In this sense, the calls to the services are given by the *talanton* (τάλαντον), which is a wooden board. The monk carries the *talanton*, walking around the monastery beating it with a wooden hammer, calling the monks and the travellers to attend the service. [Figure 8.33] According to R.M. Dawkins, the *talanton* symbolizes Noah's hammer. As "the noise made by Noah's carpentry reminded men of their danger from the flood" so the *talanton* calls monks to participate in the rituals in the church, the entrance to which will signal their possible salvation.⁴⁴⁹ Moreover, the beating usually follows the rhythmic repetition of the word Adam, reminding the monks of their fallen nature. A smaller metal *talanton*, called *simantron* (σήμαντρον), symbolizing the angel's trumpet which the "chosen ones" will hear on the Day of Judgement, is also used to signal the congregation of the monks, usually for Matins.



Figure 8.33 (Left): The *Talanton* ritual.

Figure 8.35 (Right): A monk biting the *semantron*.

At 03:30 am the *talanton* and the *simantron*⁴⁵⁰ call the monks of Gregoriou monastery to the morning service that will begin half an hour later. The *talanton* defines its own horizon, signalling the liturgies. Fr.N. explains: "The *talanton* is used in a variety of occasions. It signals the morning and the afternoon services. Half an hour before their beginning, the *ekklisiastikos*

⁴⁴⁸ *Talanton*: A piece of wood (length: about 2 metres, thickness: around 0.03 metres and width: about 0.12 metres). *Kopanos*: Also a wooden instrument (3 X 0.30 X 0.15 metres).

Semantron: A metal bar usually placed next to the kopanos.

⁴⁴⁹ R.M. Dawkins, "Notes on Life in the Monasteries of Mount Athos", *The Harvard Theological Review*, 46:4 (Oct. 1953), pp. 217-219.

⁴⁵⁰ A kind of metal *talanton* that is rung at the beginning of the morning service.

(εκκλησιαστικός)⁴⁵¹ wears a robe that is connected to his task (he takes care of the church) and carries the *talanton*, striking it rhythmically and passing through the two main courtyards of the monastery. The same is repeated two more times”.⁴⁵² Space and time are thus experienced in a liturgical way also through the use of these instruments. Sound is spread throughout the whole monastery, conveying a certain message while its source follows a specific route around the *katholikon*. During the morning service the *talanton* also informs the devotees of the passing from the *Mesoniktiko* to Matins and from the latter to the Holy Mass, inscribing this liturgical form on the whole monastery in sound.

The *ekklisiastikos* thus makes circular movements around the *katholikon*, following the ranges of the different courtyards. [Figures 8.36, 8.37 & 8.38] The hammering of the *talanton* aims to remind the monks of their fallen nature and connect them to a common goal, the achievement of *theosis* through liturgical life, directing their senses to the church. This movement narrates the fusion of different stories: the monastery and its surrounding landscape, the life of the monks and the experience of the pilgrims. The acoustic synthesis of the *talanton* with the rest of the percussion instruments (bells and *simantron*) enhances these connections, contributing to this sacred communicative landscape. The *talanton* is not heard outside the walls of the monastery, excluding the visitors staying in the external guest house from its sound-scape.

⁴⁵¹ *Ekkliaris* is the monk in charge of taking care of the *katholikon*'s (ekklhsia = εκκλησία = church).

⁴⁵² Fieldtrip to Mount Athos: June 2010.



Figures 8.36, 8.37 & 8.38: Experiential Maps of the First, Second and Third Talanton processions conducted before the morning and evening services.

According to Richard Coyne, repetitive sounds contribute to the clearer demarcation of a territory as they create a rhythmical sonic environment in which the individual is able to move

and realize its spatiality.⁴⁵³ The monk listens to the repetitive sound of the *talanton* that periodically switches from louder to softer, depending on where the *ekklisiastikos* is. On the one hand, this sound reminds the monk that he has to wake up, as an alarm clock would do. On the other hand, he has the opportunity to turn acoustically towards the *katholikon*, or the edges of the courtyard, following also the progress/evolution of the liturgy, even if he is not in the church. The repetition gives him time to interpret the sound and prepare himself for the service while also being interconnected with the rest of the community. Therefore, bells also contribute to the soundscape of the monastery, including monks and visitors in its territory and at the same time working as a sonic boundary between different parts of the daily programme of the monks: indicating the beginning of a ritual or a meal. Usually situated close to the main church, the tower bell enhances the dynamics of the monastic core. At the same time, it directs the hearing of monks and visitors towards the *katholikon*, navigating both the locals and the outsiders towards it. The close relationship of the main church to the refectory, both in architectural and liturgical terms, is also supported by the placement of the tower bell close to them. Finally, the sound of the bells interacts with the general periphery of the monastery as it is supposed to acoustically define that space.⁴⁵⁴ Musical instruments as a signal for the different parts of the daily monastic programme are also found in other religious traditions, such as the Cistercian.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵³Richard Coyne, *The Tuning of Place: Sociable Places and Pervasive Digital Media*, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2010), pp. 91-99.

⁴⁵⁴For the acoustic perception of the bell read also: Alain Corbin, "Auditory Markers of the Village", in Michael Bull and Les Back (eds), *The Auditory Culture Reader*, (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2004), pp 117-125.

⁴⁵⁵Bells are also used to signal different parts of the day, carrying also theological symbols connected to the "voice of God". In his "Monastic Observances" Thomas Merton mentions a very clear code of bell ringing in which the whole life of the monastery is sonically communicated. The silent monks are always informed about the office or the meal that is about to begin. [Thomas Merton, *Monastic Observances. Initiation into the Monastic Tradition 5*, Monastic Wisdom Series, (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2010)] Moreover, annual communal rituals are held in the open spaces of a monastery. In particular, on Palm Sunday, when the entrance of the Lord into Jerusalem is commemorated, a procession is held towards the Church. Palm branches are distributed before the beginning and the procession begins while psalms are chanted. The thurifer goes first with lighted censer and is followed by the cross bearer, the principal Celebrant, the ministers, the concelebrants and finally the brothers/sisters and lay devotees. During the procession the participants sing and at an appointed time the cross is placed in the cloister (against the door). After a homily in the chapter room, the procession continues without the cross by the celebrants and the ministers. Arriving at the door they all kneel and say a chant and then lift up the cross and go towards the altar, the venerate it and take their usual places in order the liturgy to begin. (Cistercian Ritual according to the Statutes of the General Chapters of either the Cistercian Order or the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance according to the general and particular Decrees of the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments after Vatican Council II, 2004, available in: <http://www.ocso.org/>)

Hence, the organisation of a coenobitic monastery as symbolically connected to Heavenly Jerusalem is not only about the metaphor of a walled enclosure around the main church. Silence and communal ritual contribute to its constitution and performance. Silence becomes a code of communication asking for new boundaries to be inscribed (refusal of entry and loud speech etc) and also “penetrating” the existing ones spread in the environment. The silence of the open spaces supports the performance of the mystical silent prayer in the cell, adding a new aural layer in its concrete frame. At the same time, the daily sonic rituals communicate with the silent monk informing him about the daily programme and the progress of the rituals. Furthermore, annual liturgical processions combine the different open spaces of the territory, giving new meanings to the openings, but also to the specific places in which they pause. Hence, between the concrete elements of the territory a meaningful aural environment exists, in which silence and communal ritual movements coexist, re-defining the notions of void and emptiness.

Chapter Nine

The Main Church (*katholikon*): “Voiceless Presences” and Communal Ritual

Introduction

The *katholikon* plays a key role in the life of the monastery. This is also the case for the main worship halls both in other Christian and non-Christian ascetic communities.⁴⁵⁶ The three main daily services take place there: the morning service (Matins and Divine Liturgy), Vespers and Compline. Moreover, in the same space the all-night vigils, special rituals of the festive calendar, the initiation rites and funerals of the monks are also conducted. Hence, according to the theologian and frequent pilgrim at Athos, Stilianos Papadopoulos, “it is in the church that the community becomes aware of its unity, hierarchy, power and mission, that it is conscious of the liturgical cycle of the annual calendar and of the linear progress of history from the Incarnation to the Second Coming”.⁴⁵⁷ Papadopoulos focuses on two notions: **unity** and **hierarchy**. Hierarchy, as we will see, relates to certain boundaries that divide the space of the church into different parts, and unity is about the penetration of these boundaries according to specific liturgical ideas. In this chapter I will focus on how spatial, temporal and sonic boundaries are interconnected through the liturgical performance of the church in which the communal ritual is combined with the silent prayer of the monks in their stalls (*stasidia*). Moreover, the way the outsiders interact with this context is also examined, highlighting the dynamic character of these limits which are mainly expressed through the notions of *crossing*, *transgression*, *flow and choreography*. The chapter illuminates the liminal dynamics of the liturgical choreography of an Athonian *katholikon*, suggesting also the incorporation of silence and strangers’ movements in it.

The Organisation of the Church: Hierarchy and Dramaturgy

⁴⁵⁶ In Zen Buddhist monastic complexes Zen-do plays a very important role. Zen-do is the main “meditation hall” in which communal seated meditation (zazen) takes place. It is also included as a separate room in temples. Its organisation is very simple, usually including an altar and rows of “meditation cushions” (zafu) that help the body to sit in the right (pyramid) position. The space of Zen-do aims at the elimination of visual disturbances and the enhancement of silence. Unity is the main focus here. Usually images of the Buddha and other deities are placed on the altar.

On the rituals held in Zen-do see: Stephanie Kaza, “Buddhist Views on Ritual Practice. Becoming a Real Person”, *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 20, (2000), pp. 45-53.

⁴⁵⁷ Stilianos Papadopoulos, p. 58.

The plan of the Athonian *katholikon* is an Orthodox cross inscribed in a square, with side apses (*triconchial*), a broad narthex (*λιτή-lite*) and often also an outer narthex.⁴⁵⁸ The inscribed cross forms a nave, choirs and transepts. The intersection of choir and transepts is roofed by a dome, symbolizing in Christian tradition man's vertical movement towards God, while the horizontal sequence of the narthex, nave and chancel is a reminder of the communal identity of the monk, as the different spaces are divided and united at the same time through the liturgies.⁴⁵⁹ Similarities in built symbols to the general organization of the monastery also relate to the fact that they are both trying to visualise qualities of a "cosmic" model, such as that of the Heavenly Jerusalem.⁴⁶⁰ It is always the ritual that performs the built *metaphors* of this model through their synthesis into a spatio-temporal choreography, in which what is said is also acted.⁴⁶¹ They are performed by specific actors/celebrants (i.e. priests) and open to the embodied interpretation of an audience in the context of a religious belief system. Religious spaces become the fields in which a number of built, unbuilt and human components are harmonically combined according to the employment of the ritual praxis. As we will see later, this has not always been the case for Christian Orthodox services as during the Byzantine period both the celebrants and the devotees were reciprocally interrelated in a more dynamic way. Embodied qualities of these processes are still found today and will be examined in this chapter. Ritual also carries *transformative* qualities. Its performance changes even the character and the meaning of a

⁴⁵⁸See: Michaela Palade, "Aspects of Mount Athos Contribution to the Maintenance of the Triconchial Plan in Romanian Sacred Architecture", *European Journal of Science and Theology*, 3:4 (December 2007): "The triconchial structure is not synonymous with the trefoiled one, although they are often mistaken for one another. The trefoiled plan prescribes joining the apses directly, in their eastern side, while in the triconchial plan the apses are not joined directly but through the square or rectangle which defines the nave, and whose corners are projected." (p. 53).

The cross-like plan symbolizes also Christ's Crucifixion and aims to remind the devotees that their life is going to be an ascetic way towards the communion with God.

⁴⁵⁹ See also: Paulos Mylonas, "The Architecture of Mount Athos", *Nea Estia - Mount Athos*, (1963), p. 200.

The writer, also, underlines a possible relationship between the "*Ladder of Divine Ascent*" and the architecture of the main church of the monastery.

See also: Alexandros F. Lagopoulos, "The Religious Symbolism of the Byzantine city", *Αρχαιολογία και Τέχνες/ Archeology and Arts*, 64, pp. 75-74.

The connection between the church and the Heavenly Jerusalem was also established by certain ecumenical assemblies during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian.

⁴⁶⁰ Hence, paragraph 21 of the Revelation is a kind of a brief for the architects and artists who also want to build and adorn a church. Elements about this relation between the physical building and St. John's description are found even during the tenth century in the texts of consecration rituals. Its walls relate to the notion of unity as they become the boundaries of the field of a possible communal pre-experience of the Second Coming expressed through the daily rituals.

This is directly related to John L. Austin's approach of performative language. See the book: John Langshaw Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, edited by J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa, President and Fellows of Harvard College, (1962).

In this sense ritual is performative as 'it creates what it names'.

⁴⁶¹ Giorgos A. Prokopiou, *The Cosmological Symbolism of the Architecture of the Byzantine Church*, (Athens: Pirinos Kosmos, 1980), pp. 105 and 109.

space, also creating new events in it. This is also connected to the transformative character of the liminal stage of social rituals. According to Arnold Van Gennep, this stage has the power to transform the individual(s) participating in the event into what “will be” or “should be”, something that influences the space in which they take place. For example, the circular incense rituals during the services temporarily change the aural environment of the church, enhancing its connection to key moments of the liturgies. Boundaries and intermediate zones play a key role in these activities, materializing in a concrete way the liminal dynamics of the space: constant division and union through their multilayered penetration.⁴⁶²

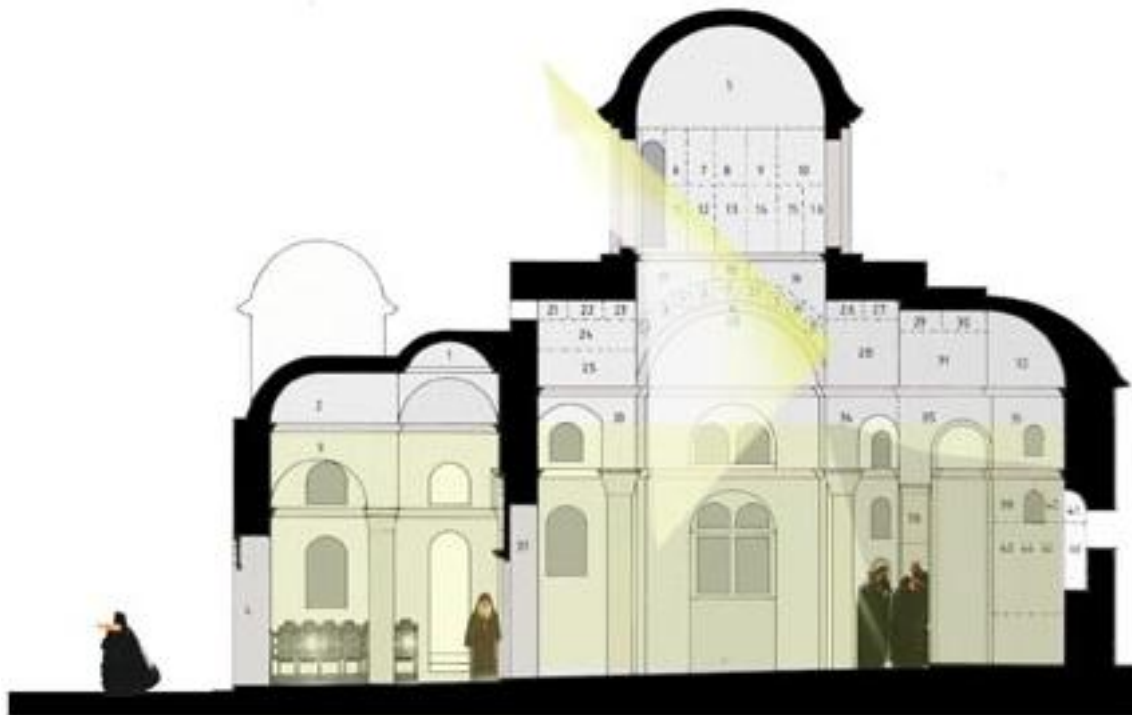
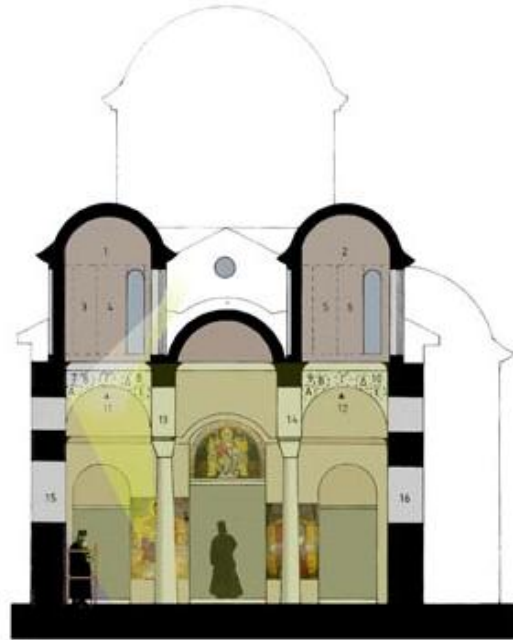
Therefore, along the axes of the cross the external boundaries of the church organize the nave and the transept. [Figure 9.3] They are clearly demarcated by stone walls that work as the intermediate surfaces between the inside and the outside. Moreover, the internal walls also play an important role, dividing the space into sub-spaces each of which has a specific character, and through the openings on them, allowing the choreographic movement of the monks, the flow of the incense, light and sound in the form of chanting, readings and instrumental music (bells, *talanton*). In parallel, they also allow the outsiders to move more freely. Finally, the concrete sphere of each stall demarcates the silent presence of the monks, enhancing the dynamics of the external and internal walls along which they are placed. The most important part of the building is the area of the central dome, which introduces the chancel and under which nodal rituals take place.⁴⁶³

The tripartite division of the church enhances the individual’s experience. He has to pass through the *lite* to enter the main church. If there is also an exo-narthex (as in most of the Athonian monasteries), this experience becomes even more intense. These different spatial layers stand as a sequence of phases of familiarization for the stranger, and gradual sanctification for the monk and the pilgrim, and carry a number of different symbolic connotations for the Orthodox Christian Tradition. One or two chapels may also be included in the complex. Therefore, in the case of Gregoriou monastery, the *katholikon* is composed of a number of different spaces: the narthex, the *lite*, the main church and the chapel of Saint Gregory. The thick stone walls, combined with the frescoes, dark due to the passage and the

⁴⁶² On the performativity of rituals see the Appendix II: Performativity, Ritualisation and Ritual Play, pp.

⁴⁶³ See also Chapter Seven: Time and Athonian Monastic Life, pp. 174-175.

lack of electric light, influence the perception of the interior that is different from the one that we are used to. [Figures 9.4]



Figures 9.1 & 9.2: The *katholikon* of Gregoriou Monastery: Sections.

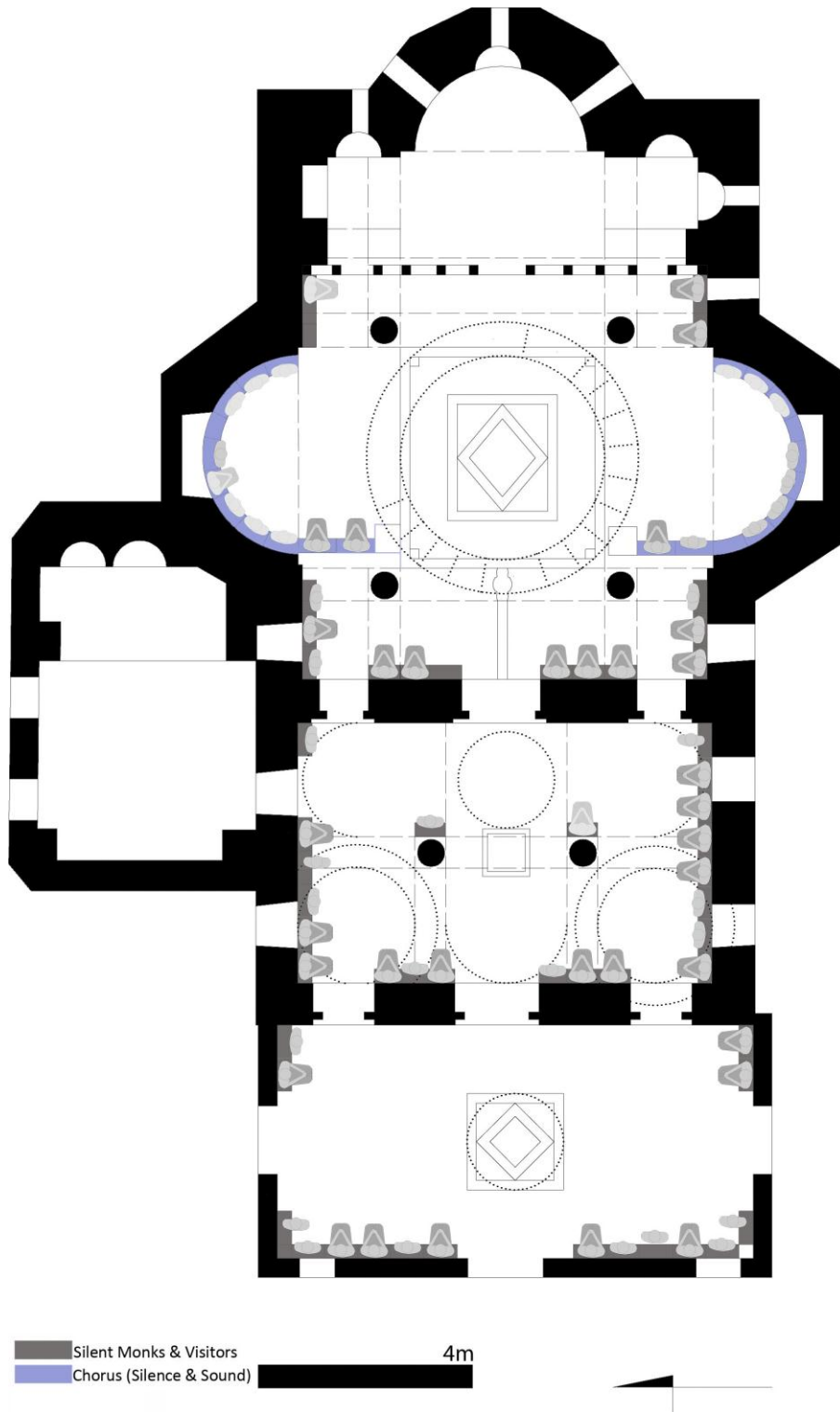


Figure 9.3: The *katholikon* of Gregoriou Monastery: Floor plan.

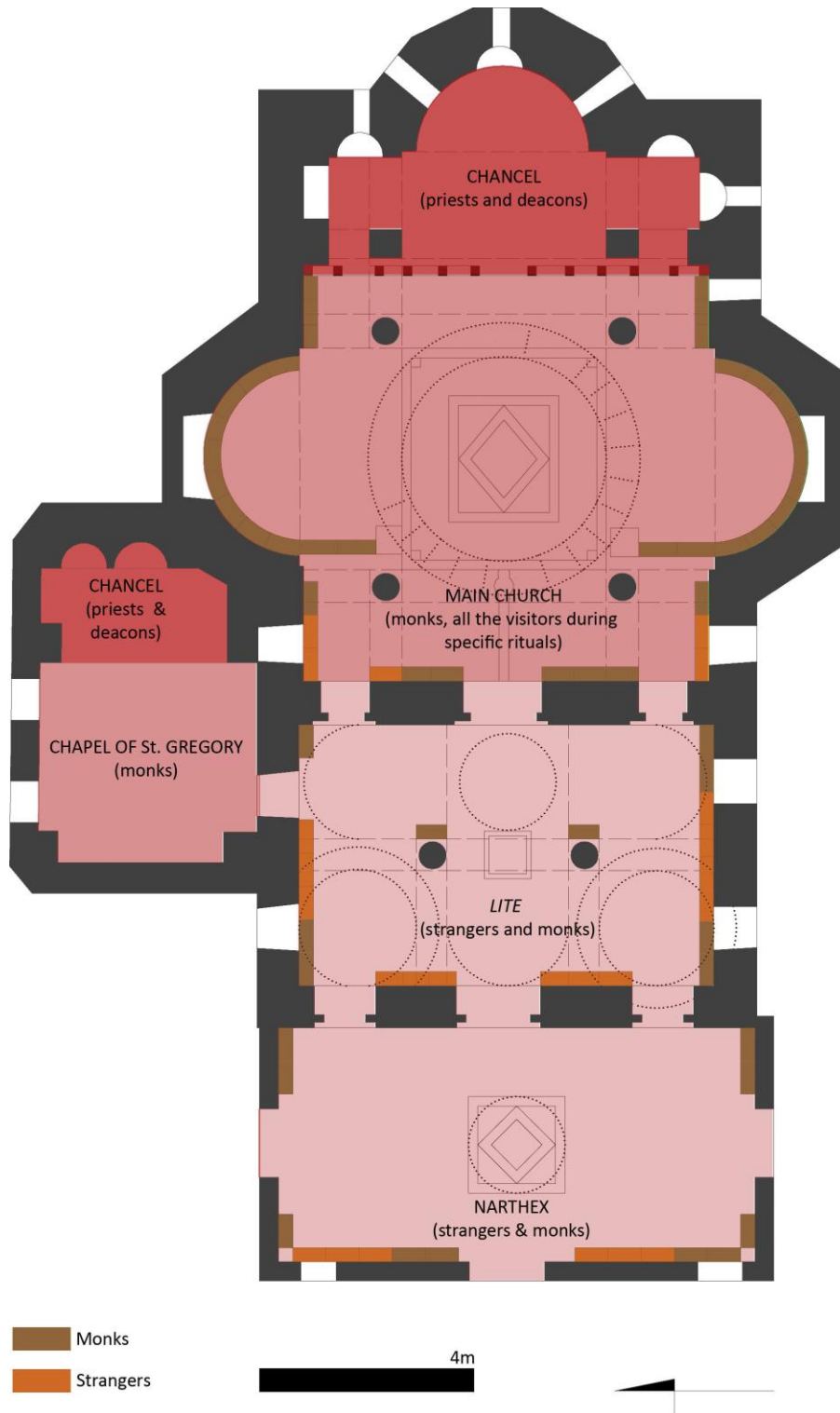


Figure 9.4: The hierarchical organisation of the *katholikon* of Gregoriou Monastery.

The first of these spaces is the **narthex**, a rectangular space that was initially used by the catechumens, the devotees who were not baptized and those who could not receive the Holy

Communion as they were in a state of “repentance”. Whereas today this restriction is not always followed, the space is still used in some of the Athonian monasteries for the non-orthodox who are usually asked by the monks to sit there or even to exit the church. Hence, the domed rectangular narthex of Gregoriou monastery (8.56 m X 4.25 m) that was built in 1840 is the first of the four different spaces that comprise this *katholikon*.⁴⁶⁴ In the case of this monastery there is no restriction in use. Monks and visitors may sit wherever they want in this space or the *lite*, and participate in the rituals. This is not the case for all the monasteries, as in most of them the outsiders are not allowed to sit in the stalls of the monks (attributed to them after their initiation), a prohibition usually administered by a monk, called *taksi8eths* (usher) or *tepi8aris* (the monk in charge of the order of the liturgies).

The lighting of the narthex of Gregoriou monastery comes mainly from the dome, as the front and side windows look at relatively dark parts of semi-open spaces. Rows of *stasidia* cover its western, southern and northern walls. The floor of this space is paved with white marble. In front of the middle door and under the dome, there is a rhombus of red marble, framed by a black square of the same material. [Figures 9.5 & 9.6] This motif is included in a central axis consisting of floor configurations that begin at the main entrance of the *katholikon*, go through the walls between the narthex and the *lite* and end in the main church under the dome and in front of the Main Entrance of the iconostasis.⁴⁶⁵ As we will see later, this axis plays an important role in the liturgical performance of the space, as the most important parts of the different rituals are held along it, contributing to the liminal characteristics of the place.

⁴⁶⁴ It was iconographed according to the Iconographic School of Macedonia that was born in Constantinople and flourished mainly in Macedonia. Intensity, movement, freedom and a great variety of colours are its main characteristics. The faces and the clothes are illuminated too.

⁴⁶⁵ Giorgos Prokopiou, pp. 113-119: The cosmological meaning of the combination of the square with the circle has been part of a number of different religious traditions. In the Bible, the earth is depicted as a square structure based on four wings in which the four Winds reside. Their blowing supports the communication between the *visible* and the *invisible*. The square also relates both to Paradise (in the depiction of Genesis as directly connected to the symbol of the Cross) and Heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation). At the same time, the dome represents the Heavens, following a long tradition that has its origins in the Orphic egg and the Pythagorean theory of the spheres.



Figures 9.5 & 9.6: The dome and the floor-motif of the Narthex.

Three openings on an intermediate wall usually connect the narthex to the *litè*. Adorned by a rich iconographic programme that transfers information about the history of the monastery and its protector Saints, the liminal character of this wall is also enhanced in the *katholikon* of Gregoriou monastery by a second layer of smaller icons, placed at a distance in front of it.⁴⁶⁶ [Figures 9.7 & 9.8] They are venerated by the monks and the pilgrims when entering the *katholikon* before they light a wax candle and put it in the bronze candelabra placed on the left side of the middle door.⁴⁶⁷ They are also venerated by them before their exit and before Holy Communion.



Figures 9.7 & 9.8: The eastern wall of the Narthex.

⁴⁶⁶ In the case of Gregoriou, the representations on this wall narrate the foundation of the monastery by Saint Gregory the Younger, its relation to Saint Gregory the Sinaite and its protection by: Saint Nicholas, Saint Anastasia and Saint Ioulita. In parallel, the middle opening is flanked left by the Archangel Gabriel and right by the Archangel Michael. Over it there is the representation of the Mother of God and the Holy Trinity.

⁴⁶⁷ The moveable icons are: The three hierarchs, Archangel Gabriel, St. John the Baptist, The Mother of God, Archangel Michael, St. John the Theologian.

The individual usually passes through the main door of this wall to enter the internal narthex, the *lite*, which stems from the Greek word *litaneia* (λιτανεία: processional route) and was first incorporated in a *katholikon* during the 10th and the 13th centuries. It is connected to the ritual of *lite* that is held during the all-night vigils and on some special feasts.⁴⁶⁸ *Lite* is also used for other services, such as the *Mesonuktikon*, the Compline and the Ninth Hour. In particular, the service of *lite* symbolizes man's expulsion from Paradise and his return to it. It is a procession of the icon of the saint or the event that is celebrated from the altar toward the space of *lite* and then back again to the altar, conducting a symbolical journey from the sacred to the profane and back to the sacred, as shown in the following diagram:

⁴⁶⁸ Cyril Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, (Milan/ London: Electa/ Faber and Faber, 1978/1986), p. 120.

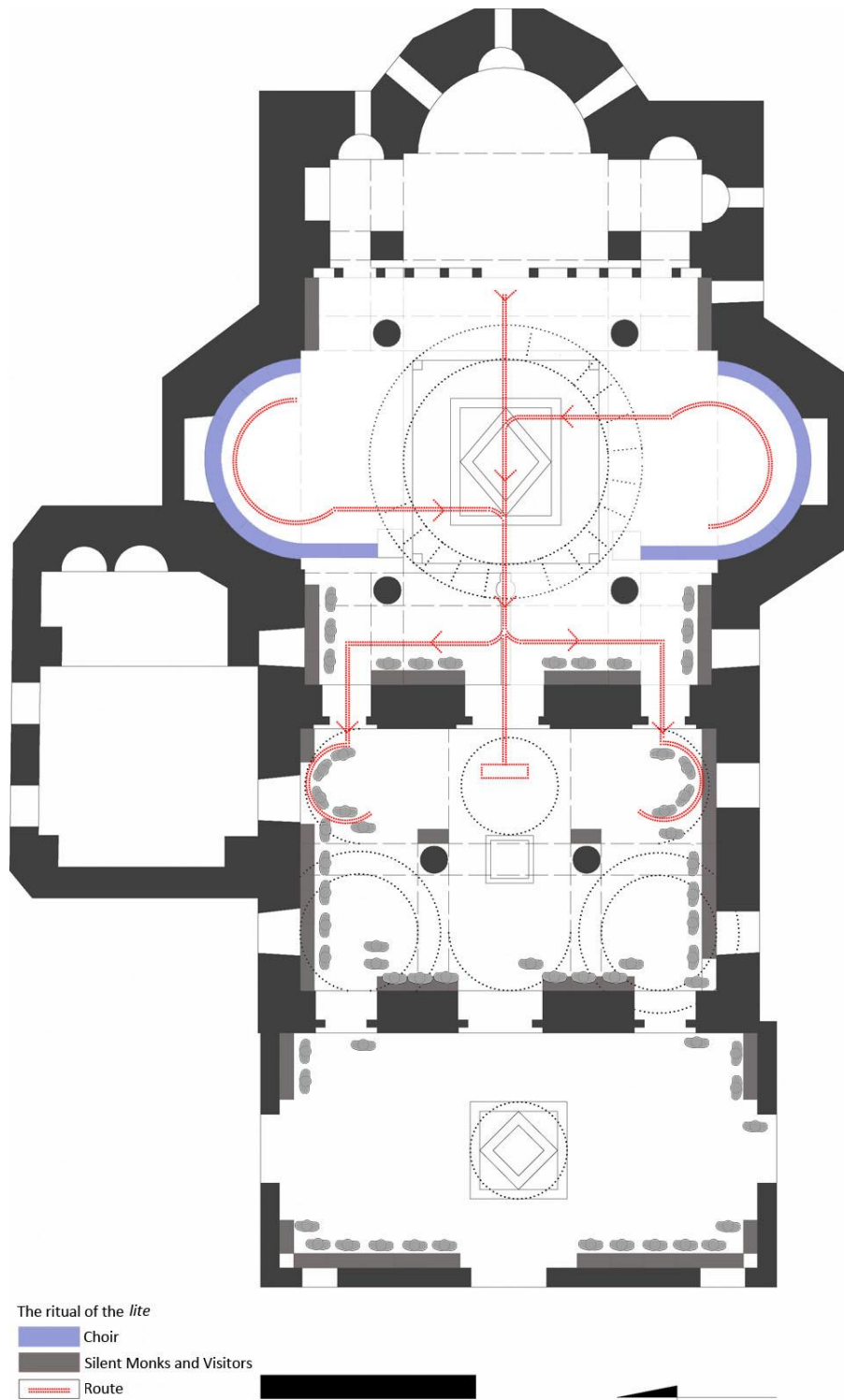


Figure 9.9: The Ritual of *lite*. The priest exits carrying the icon and followed by the chanters. The former stands in front of the Royal Entrance and is flanked by the chanters, standing in two semicircles and bodily recollecting the spatial organisation of the heart of the *katholikon* (choir-dome-choir).

The interior of the *lite* of the *katholikon* of Gregoriou monastery, built along with the main church around 1768, resembles a cave. [Figures 9.10, 9.11 & 9.12] The relatively small size of the space (also rectangular in shape, 7.64m X 4.80m) connected to its covering by the composition of domes and the dark wall-paintings, contribute to a sense of an organic, almost natural space. The humidity of the air in this area is strong due to the thick stone walls and the darkness. A microclimate that is different from outside (especially during summer) is created enhancing the experience of the *lite* which is also marked by silence. The individual entering the space feels the need to keep silent in order to avoid disturbing the otherworldly character of the space.

This is possibly connected, at least in terms of sensual perception, to the dark environment of the natural caves of Athos. For the monks, darkness helps concentration on the constant repetition of the Jesus prayer. For the outsiders, who are also free to sit wherever they want, it is surprising to enter this dark environment. Even pilgrims who go there periodically feel the difference between the inside and the outside as something extraordinary and uncanny. Darkness and silence seem to demarcate the ritual field, reinforcing the built boundaries and highlighting the importance of the sonic ones.⁴⁶⁹



Figures 9.10, 9.11 & 9.12: The cave-like interior of the *lite*.

The floor of the *lite* of this monastery is also made of white marble. At its centre, between two movable icons of Saint Anastasia and the Mother of God and under a low dome, a square frame repeats the central motif of the narthex, contributing to the synthesis of the central axis that leads to the core of the main church. [Figures 9.14 & 9.15]

⁴⁶⁹ In my conversations with pilgrims at Gregoriou monastery I usually heard expressions such as “here the church is something different from what we are used to” that were also followed by comments on the darkness and the coolness of the interior environment comparing it to the brighter and warmer summer one outside.

Three openings on the fully painted eastern wall also serve the passage from the *lite* to the **main church**, the middle of which is called “the Royal Entrance”. [Figure 9.13] A curtain is drawn in front of it during the Supplication to the Mother of God and during the reading of the Ninth Hour, defining the *lite* as the basic field of these rituals. In the case of Gregoriou, the representations of the Mother of God and Christ between these doors contribute to the dynamics of the wall that becomes a boundary. The crossing of this boundary is not only related to the habitual entering of the main church, it also includes the visual interaction with the icons and the participation of the monk and the pilgrim in the different rituals. These icons are incensed regularly and are also venerated by the devotees on entry and exit through prostrations and kissing.



Figures 9.13, 9.14 & 9.15: The eastern wall of the *lite*, the floor motif and the two moveable icons in front of the entrance to the main church.

The core of common worship is the main church. In it the outsiders are not allowed to sit where they choose. The stalls along the choirs and some of the others in the space are reserved for the monks, echoing the notion of hierarchy as this was depicted in the texts of St. Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite and carried by later writers. The repetitive crossing of the intermediate walls contributes to the enhancement of the liturgical character of the building, as it relates to an embodied reading of a hierarchical built narrative that reaches its climax under the central dome, the most illuminated part of the *katholikon*. [Figures 9.16, 9.17 & 9.18] In the case of Gregoriou monastery there is a double square with a grey rhombus in a red framework in the centre. At the four corners of the external square there are four blue and white porcelain plaques. A grey stripe connects the entrance of the church with the middle of the west side of

the external square.⁴⁷⁰ The central dome is flanked by the semicircular choruses. [Figures 9.20 & 9.21] This enhances its dynamics in a number of different ways: contributing to its illumination through the windows, and acoustically through the chanting of the choruses.



Figures 9.16, 9.17 & 9.18: The central dome and the northern choir of the main church.

The motif under the dome plays an important role in the liturgy as a number of rituals relate to it. For example, after they have venerated the icons on the walls and the lecterns, the monks of Gregoriou monastery and some of the pilgrims do four prostrations following the lines of the external rectangle in order to prepare themselves for the reception of the Holy Gifts.⁴⁷¹ Moreover, after the morning service the priest stands under the dome and distributes the *antidoron* (a piece of blessed bread) to those who did not receive Holy Communion. [Figure 9.19] They then have to venerate the icons at the lecterns behind him and drink a cup of Holy Water from the special container placed on a throne where a large icon of the Mother of God lies, just next to the northern choir.

⁴⁷⁰ See also: Fabio Barry, "Walking on Water: Cosmic Floors in Antiquity and the Middle Ages", *Art Bulletin*, 89: 4 (Dec 2004), p. 635: According to Fabio Barry, the use of marble for the pavement of the floor of a Byzantine Church is also connected to the *sacred*. Its fluid appearance relates to the account in Genesis of the universe formed by God from the separation of the waters above Heaven from the waters under Heaven. At the same time in Revelation we are informed that God's throne will appear on "a sea of glass like to Crystal" (Rev. 4:6, 15:2). A route on this "sea" is organised by the motifs under the domes. Their combination repeats the descriptions of the Old and New Testaments and is included in the liturgical performance of the whole. Even if they are not aware of these sacred associations of the different elements of the church's adornment, monks (and pilgrims) re-actualise and reinterpret them through their participation in the relevant rituals and the almost spontaneous walking along the main axis (due to the light from the domes and the size of the doors).

⁴⁷¹ The ritual is also hierarchically organised with the priest monks making the prostrations first and followed by the monks of the Angelic Scheme, the monks of the lesser habit, the novices and the outsiders.

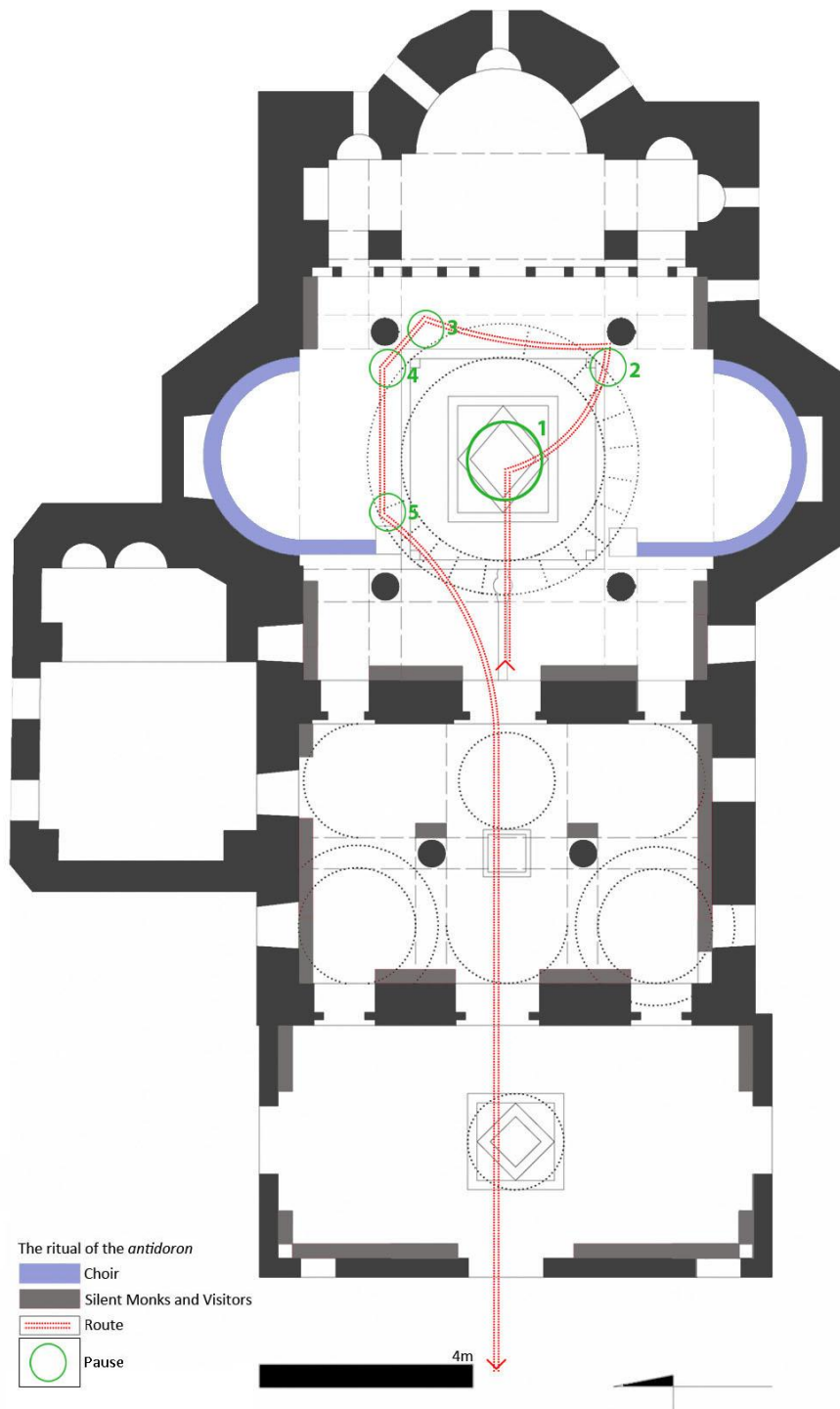


Figure 9.19: The Ritual of the “Blessed Bread” (*Antidoron*). The pauses are depicted with the green circles. The first pause is the most important one (the reception of the blessed bread), the second, third and fourth ones are about icons’ veneration and the fifth about the the drinking of blessed water.



Figures 9.20 & 9.21: The floor –motif under the main dome.

Entering the main part of the church from the *litè* the gold mass of the **iconostasis** (*templon*)⁴⁷² and a great number of hung oil-candles and lamps can be seen. The iconostasis is the screen that divides the chancel (*ἅγιο βήμα-hagio vema*) from the nave (*κυρίως ναός-kurios naos*).

Originally a *templon* was low in height. In the thirteenth century it became a wooden screen, designed to hide what was happening in the chancel during the services.⁴⁷³ The chancel is situated in the east part of the church and is flanked on the north side by a small apse called *prothesis* (*πρόθεσις*) and on the south by another one called *diakoniko* (*διακονικό*). It has three entrances, the middle one situated according to the central axis of the holy altar. On the iconostasis, the Mother of God, Jesus, St. John the Baptist and the Saint to whom the church is dedicated are depicted. The permeability of the iconostasis is a primary quality of its character. Three openings on it serve the relationship between the chancel and the rest of the church, usually happening either through cyclical rituals or the linear movements of the priest from the altar to the main entrance. The most important of these movements is when the Holy Communion is carried by the celebrant to the main threshold to be received by the devotees waiting in a row. These processes are directly connected to the way patristic theology analysed the veil-paradigm and the reciprocal dialogue between the different levels of a liturgical

⁴⁷² The iconostasis that divides the holy altar from the rest of the church.

⁴⁷³ Sharon E. J. Gerstel, "An Alternative View of the Late Byzantine Sanctuary Screen", in Sharon E. J. Gerstel (ed), *Thresholds of the Sacred*, (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2006), pp. 135-161.

hierarchy through the celebration of the sacraments. Based on these ideas St. Maximus the Confessor develops his own cosmic interpretation of the church:

It is a solid building that is going to be divided, (...) into the space for the priests, the holy place, and that for the laymen, the temple. However, it remains one in its existence (...) Moreover, referring to its unity are discharged from their nominal difference showing their sharing identity. And even if they mutually exist the one for the other, they still have a different meaning. It shows the temple as a possible holy place, as it acquires this holiness through the reference of the mystagogy (...). And at the same time, it shows the holy place as a temple as it has the temple as its beginning during mystagogy.⁴⁷⁴

Being, therefore, a concrete instrument of “relation” the iconostasis acquires a paradoxical character, as for the Russian theologian and art historian Pavel Florensky, it symbolises a *mystical* “manifest appearance of heavenly witness”, suggesting the active presence of saints and angels in the earthly liturgy. [Figure 9.22] According to him, even the icons on it resemble *windows* through the glass of which the individual can contact the invisible.⁴⁷⁵ Directly related to St. Maximus’s approach this argument illuminates the role of the paradoxical movement towards God in the *hesychast* practice through the liturgy.⁴⁷⁶ The liturgy is the entirety of rites of possible pilgrimages to the ineffable that are mainly embodied through the circular rituals from the chancel to the nave and then back again to the chancel, transforming the openings on the intermediate walls into both entrances and exits.

The role of the iconostasis in the services is included in scholarly discussions about the relation between the liturgical experience of the Byzantine church and previous or contemporary

⁴⁷⁴ St. Maximus the Confessor, pp. 118-119.

See also: Khaled Anatolios, “Heaven and Earth in Byzantine Liturgy”, *Antiphon*, 5:3, pp. 1-10.

⁴⁷⁵ Pavel Florensky, *Iconostasis*, translated by Donald Sheehan and Olga Andrejev, (U.S.A.: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), pp. 62-63.

⁴⁷⁶ See also: Paul Meyendorff, Introduction in St. Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*, translation, introduction and commentary by Paul Meyendorff, (Crestwood, New York, 10707: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984): Maximus approaches the Liturgy on two levels, which he calls the “general” (γενικώς) and the “particular” (ειδικώς). For each part of the Liturgy, he gives two explanations. The general meaning refers the mystery of salvation to the whole cosmos: this method of interpretation is essentially typological. The particular meaning refers the liturgy to each individual: the process here is anagogical. We can see this from the very beginning of his commentary, when he describes the symbolism of the church building: “...the holy church of God is an image of just the sensible world by itself; the sanctuary reminds one of the sky, the dignity of the nave reflects the earth. Likewise the world can be thought of as a church: the sky seems like a sanctuary, and the cultivation of the land can make it resemble a temple”. (pp. 36-37).

theatrical practices.⁴⁷⁷ The importance of the intermediate walls in the hierarchical and liturgical arrangement of the space and the way the meaning of each of the sub-spaces is defined by specific rituals raise questions about the theatricality of the place. Most Byzantine scholars agree that lack of “enactment” in the Byzantine rites distinguishes them from the intense theatricality of Western medieval and Catholic Christian traditions in which “impersonation” of the heroes of the performed scriptural events is incorporated in a more dynamic way.⁴⁷⁸ Nevertheless, one cannot deny the presence of dramatic elements, such as the role of the chorus’ antiphonal singing, the special clothing of the clergy and the sensual turning of the devotees towards the chancel and the main dome. According to the theologian Pavlos Koumarianos, these were mainly introduced during the Iconoclastic Controversy, when the relation between the clergy and the devotees was transformed from one of active co-participants to a more *acting-audience* one.⁴⁷⁹ For example, a number of “theatrical symbolisms” are included in the texts of the 8th century writer St. Germanus of Constantinople, according to whom the *prothesis* symbolised the cave of Bethlehem, the Holy Altar the tomb and the throne of Christ and the Ciborium over it represented the Ark of the Covenant. Similarly, the barrier between the chancel and the nave was an important liminal zone between the visible and the invisible. It divided the above “scriptural landscape” of the chancel from the devotees and its ritual crossing was only allowed for the ministers.⁴⁸⁰ Therefore, the role of the iconostasis in the rituals is defined by a number of different actions that relate to its important liminal role, also connected to the image-paradigm of the Tabernacle’s veil and the way this was extended and interpreted by Christian Orthodox writers and liturgical praxis. The closing of the door and the curtain of its main entrance before the preparation of the Holy Communion and its opening as a sign of this ritual’s beginning underline its importance as a threshold, something

⁴⁷⁷ There is a debate on the direct connection of Byzantine liturgy and previous or contemporary theatrical practices. On this see:

Marios Ploritis, *The Byzantine Theatre*, (Athens: Kastaniotis Editions, 1999).

Walter Puchner, “Acting in the Byzantine Theatre: Evidence and Problems”, in Pat Easterling and Edith Hall (ed), *Greek and Roman Actors. Aspects of an Ancient Profession*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 304-326.

Leonide Ouspensky, “The Problem of the Iconostasis”, *St. Vladimir’s Seminary Quarterly*, 8 (1964), pp. 186 – 218.

Andrew Walker White, *The Artifice of Eternity: A Study of Liturgical and Theatrical Practices in Byzantium*, Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, (Maryland: University of Maryland), 2006.

⁴⁷⁸ For an extensive examination of the dramatic qualities of Medieval Church, see: Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, Volumes 1 & 2, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933).

⁴⁷⁹ Dr. Pavlos Koumarianos, “Symbol and Reality in the Divine Liturgy”, *Synaxi*, 71, (July – September 1999), pp. 22-37.

⁴⁸⁰ St. Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*, (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984).

also discussed in Chapter Two.⁴⁸¹ Moreover, its penetration by the sounds of the chancel also plays a key role in the liturgy. For example, a number of prayers are said silently by the priest in the chancel (called “secret” or “mystical” prayers) at specific moments of the liturgy.⁴⁸² The devotees either do not listen to them or hear the whispering voice of the celebrant penetrating the screen, something that contributes to the experience of the religious place. Its liminality is also performed through the circular rituals of the Small Entrance, the Great Entrance, and the Incense ones, and is bodily recollected in the passage through the rest of the intermediate walls that follow a similar organisation. The importance of the intermediate walls is also highlighted by the symbolic connotations attributed to the tripartite organisation of the church by Christian writers such as St. Germanus of Constantinople and St. Symeon of Thessalonike.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸¹ Chapter Two: Liminality and the Movement of the Athonian *Hesychast*. *Xeniteia*, Ritual and Silence, Section: Communal Rituals, pp. 65-69.

⁴⁸² C. Quatrone, “The Celebrant: Priest or Pastor. An Investigation of the Mystical Prayers of the Divine Services of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church”, *Orthodox Life*, 46:4 (1996), pp. 17-41.

⁴⁸³ On St. Germanus of Constantinople, see: St. Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*.

On St. Symeon of Thessalonike, see: Nicholas Conostas, p. 267:

For example, he associates the three major divisions of the church building (narthex, nave, sanctuary) with the tripartite division of the cosmos (“earth, heaven, and the places beyond heaven”, 740 BC; cf 321 D) as well as with the three regions of the “visible world” (“earth, paradise and the visible heaven” 337D, 357D, 704AB, 708C). From another point of view, the same threefold division mimics (1) the “tripartite structure of the tabernacle (of Moses) and the Temple of Solomon” (337D, 704CD; 348D); (2) the “three triads of the angelic orders”; and (3) the “clergy, the faithful, and those in repentance” (704BC). And because the three distinct spaces of “narthex, nave and sanctuary” are contained within a single architectural unity, the church pre-eminently signifies the multiplicity within unity of the Holy Trinity (337D; 704B).

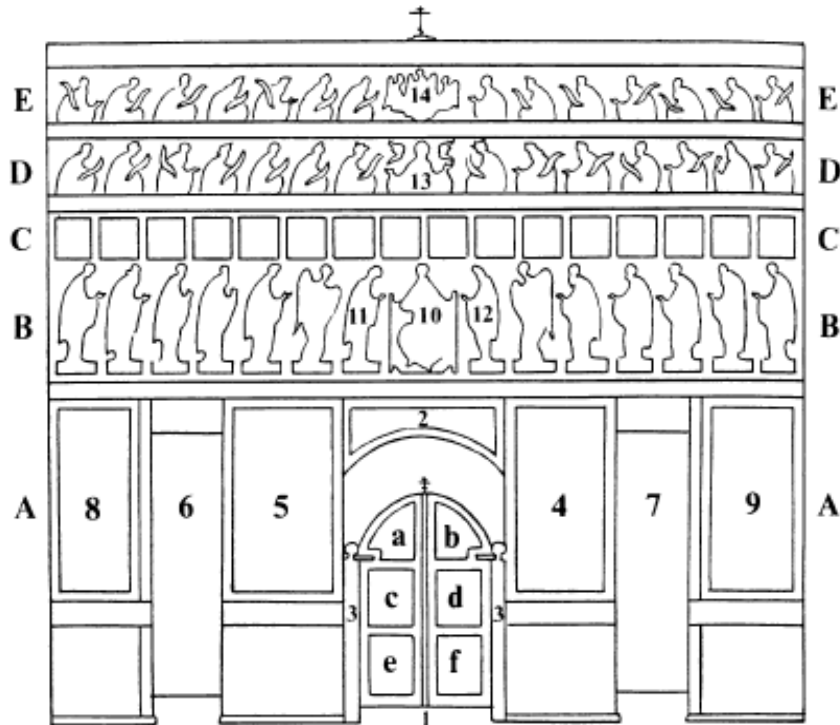


Figure 9.22: An iconostasis. A. The worship row: 1.The royal/holy door; *a.b* The Annunciation; *c,d,e,f* The four evangelists. 2. The communion of the apostles, 3.The liturgists. 4.Saint of event of the church's dedication. 5.Panayia. *g,7*. North and south doors, angels or sainted deacons. 9. Other icons, B. The Deesis row: 10,11, 12 Christ, the Panayia, John the Baptist. C. Row of the great liturgical feasts. D. Row of the prophets. 13.The Virgin of the Sign, E.Row of the patriarchs. 14. The Old Testament Trinity.

Other pieces of furniture placed close to the iconostasis contribute to its liminal dynamics. Thus, in front of the iconostasis and next to a column in the main church is situated a small “*proskynitarion*” (προσκυνητάριον), a wooden lectern that resembles a church. [Figure 9.23] On it, the monks display the icon of the saint or the mystery that is celebrated each day. Entering the *katholikon* for the morning service, each monk has to kiss this icon after prostrating in front of it. The temporal character of this lectern is thus quite important, as its form changes in relation to the liturgical cycles.

Finally, behind the Iconostasis is the **chancel**, the most sacred part of the church in which the Holy Eucharist is held. Its tripartite division into the *prothesis*, the space of the Holy Altar and the *diakonikon* serves the conduct of this ritual as the first is used for the preparation of the Holy Gifts, the Holy Altar, for their sanctification and the third one as an ancillary space. We have to add here that the holy relics are also kept in the chancel, playing an important role in

the life of the monastic community.⁴⁸⁴ As they are proofs of the indivisibility of the spiritual and physical levels in the salvational context of Christian faith, they are considered to be material blessings for the monastery. They are therefore kept in its holiest place and are taken out during feast days. They are also exhibited to the visitors every evening. Only the priests, the deacons and the monks in charge of the church are allowed to enter this holiest part of the *katholikon*. This supports its hierarchical organisation, also connected to St. Dionysius approach of the “Ecclesiastical Hierarchy”, the liminal character of which was presented in a previous chapter.



Figure 9.23: The *proskynitarion* in front of the iconostasis in the *katholikon* of Gregoriou.

Up till now, we saw that the *katholikon* of an Athonian monastery is based on the hierarchical interconnection of different spaces. These zones are defined by different boundaries. Their

⁴⁸⁴ See also Kadas, Sotiris and Zias, Nikos (eds), *The Holy Monastery of Saint Gregorios. The Wall-paintings in the Katholikon*, (The Holy Mountain – Mount Athos, 1998), p. 70:

For their importance in the monastic life we read in the *Proskynitarion* of Grigoriou Monastery: “The graceful holy relics smell beautifully, heal, support, comfort, disclosing that the Grace of God remains unaltered on the body even after death. Finally they are material proofs and preambles of the coming Resurrection and incorruptibility” (My translation).

functions become of vital importance for the embodied narrative of the topography enhancing the liminal dynamics of the building. Both the external and the internal walls play their own role in the liturgical performance of the whole, allowing penetration by people, sound, light and air. The most important of the internal walls is the iconostasis, a semi-transparent screen whose theological connotations are very important for hesychast practice. Threshold qualities are also embodied in the other intermediate walls and are performed in the liturgical drama.

Therefore depending on his identity, the individual can pass through the four main thresholds of the *katholikon*. The monks are allowed to enter the different spaces except for the chancel, which only the priests, the deacons and the monks who are in charge of church maintenance and the relevant rituals (*ekklisiastikoi*) enter. In the same spaces Christian Orthodox visitors are also allowed to enter. Non Christian Orthodox are usually asked to stay in the narthex, while in some monasteries they are not allowed to enter the *katholikon* at all. Finally, there are also some cases (like Gregoriou monastery) where they are allowed to enter the same spaces as the monks and the rest of the outsiders.

The above participants are involved in the event of the religious place in which ritual and freer movements are interacting with a unique aural environment. The character of this event is defined to a great extent by the way the built boundaries interact with and are penetrated by different elements. Side doors flanking the main-intermediate ones allow the circular organisation of the ritual route that unites the space. The liminal character of the openings to both entrances and exits contributes to the performance of the ritual choreography, that also allows the outsiders to participate. The moving elements that penetrate the different boundaries and liminal zones, either creating new ones or synthesizing the relevant embodied ritual narrative, can be divided in two main categories: a. those relating to the notion of silence: wall-paintings, (natural and artificial) lighting, and the presence of the monks in their *stasidia*, and b. those relating to organised communal services: human ritual movements, incense and sound (sonic signs, chanting and readings).

a. "Voiceless presences" of the *katholikon*: the monk in the *stasidi*, the icons on the walls, the natural and artificial light

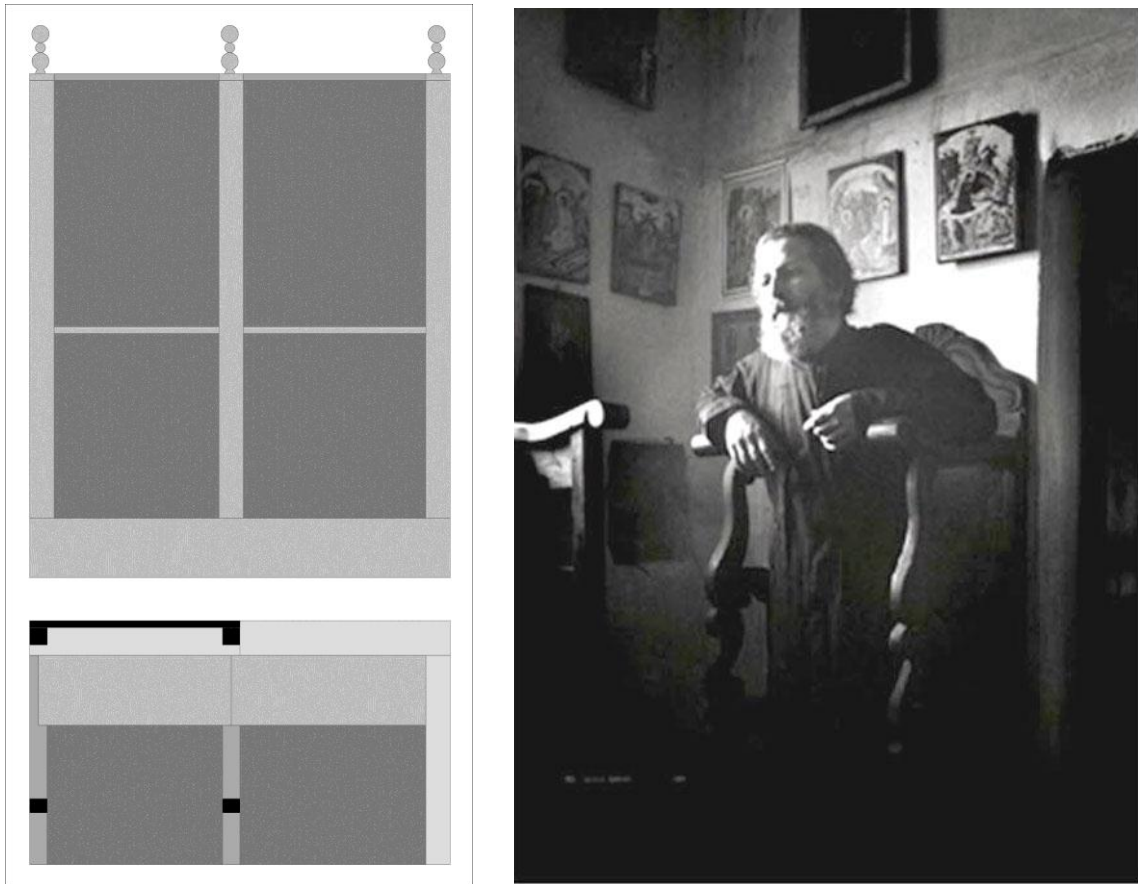
The Stasidi

One of the most important elements of the internal organisation of the church is the stall of the monk, his *stasidi*. Each monk must sit at a specific *stasidi* in the *katholikon*. One of the monks is in charge of keeping “order” in the liturgy (*tepi-karis*), checking whether the monks sit in their *stasidia*, whether they are awake and standing properly. Therefore, if an outsider sits in the *stasidi* of a monk who may not be in the church at that time, the *tepi-karis* asks him to sit in another one. The *stasidi* plays an important role in the life of the monk, as it is the seat of silent prayer.

Reflecting this significance, the *stasidia*, organized in rows, follow the north, south and west walls of the *katholikon*. Based on an event from *Exodus*, the *stasidia* allow the monks to sit in specific attitudes, contributing to a body-control which is necessary for the practice of *hesychasm*.⁴⁸⁵ The walls, therefore, acquire a new meaning as supports for the *stasidia*. Sitting in their stalls, the monks of the monastery participate in the communal ritual through silent prayer.

Traditionally, the structure of *stasidia* is based on the sudden attack on the Jews when they were crossing the Desert by the habitants of a native state named *Hamalikites*. Moses fled to God through prayer, asking for victory. While he prayed, standing upright with his hands outstretched, the Israelites won. When Moses was sitting on the ground with his hands down, the *Hamalikites* won. For this reason the Jews placed a large stone, for Moses to lean against, while two people supported each of his hands. The *stasidi* recollects this attempt to communicate with God, allowing the worshipper to stand in three different attitudes. In the first one, the worshipper stands upright with his hands outstretched. In the second, he is able to sit at an angle, and in the third he can sit normally. In this sense, the connection between bodily tiredness and silent prayer informs the way monks (and some pilgrims) participate in the liturgies, as part of their trials during a religious journey. [Figures 9.26 & 9.27]

⁴⁸⁵ As already mentioned in the fourth chapter silent prayer is always connected to body techniques.



Figures 9.24 & 9.25: Drawing of two stasidia and a monk sitting on his *stasidi*.

Each *stasidi*, therefore, is a clearly defined subspace of the church. Its boundaries are penetrated, allowing the monk to interact with the space and the activities. Monks keep silent. Sitting in different postures, they usually keep their head bowed and lower their hood to in order not to be disturbed by the surrounding environment. [Figures 9.28 & 9.29] They also repeat the Jesus prayer, which is evident from the rhythmical movement of the praying rope in their hands. The monks, therefore, are not constantly interacting with the light and the icons (vision), the other two “voiceless presences” of the *katholikon*, but are allowed to listen to the sounds of the ritual and thus always be aware of the progress of the service. They also have the opportunity to participate in it physically through gesture.



Figure 9.26 (Left): Moses' Prayer in the Battle against the Amalikites. From the Spanish Bible, Ms.I.J.3, fol.45, v., (Illuminated manuscript, Spain, c. 1400/1425).

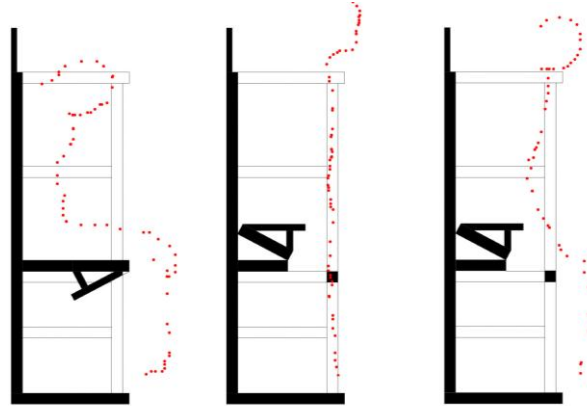


Figure 9.27 (Right): Elevation and Sections of a *stasidia* depicting the three different body-postures.

Hence, in the dark and cave-like environment of the *katholikon* of the Gregoriou monastery, monks and visitors sit in their *stasidia*. Sitting there one can listen to the service and watch the changes of the lighting of the church. Situated one next to the other the *stasidia* create bigger elements that contribute to the organisation of the church. Such series underline the meaning of the wall in the dramaturgy and are also used to divide a space into smaller parts. Thus, besides its role in the hierarchical organisation of the space, the wall also acquires silent qualities, offering a surface for the arrangement of these silent cubicles, creating a second internal framework of stalls that look towards the empty centre of the different spaces. These empty spaces are of vital importance for the dramaturgy, providing a silent field in which more “audible” ritual movements are inscribed. At eight o’ clock in the morning, thus, one can see the other devotees and the monks sitting in their stalls. Even if one cannot recognize the specific characteristics of their faces, one can read the posture of their body and the gestures of their moving hands (making the sign of the cross, ‘playing’ the praying rope, doing prostrations), disclosing their participation in the ritual. The *stasidia* around the dome, thus, materialize a sense of unity. They frame the place of worship in a dynamic way, highlighting their symbolic connection to the model of the Trinitarian Hypostasis, according to which every monk is independent and at the same time part of the community expressed through common worship and participation in the cosmic event of the church (and thus of the Refectory too).



Figures 9.28 & 9.29: Monks sitting in the stasidi with their heads bowed and their hood lowered.

The Icons on the Walls

As already mentioned above, icons play an important role in the liturgical experience of the building, something that also happens in other religious traditions.⁴⁸⁶ Representations of Saints and events from the Scripture adorn the walls of the church and are venerated by the devotees.⁴⁸⁷ According to Orthodox theology, the static present moment enclosed by the picture attempts to convey the *eternal presence of God*.⁴⁸⁸ The visual interaction is included in the possible ways of monks' daily worship, either alone in the cell (that may also be adorned with portable icons) or during communal rituals. The monks are not obliged to look at icons during the services. Nevertheless, looking at them is an action harmonically incorporated in the liturgical performance of the church as theologically connected to the idea of "spiritual contemplation". Bodily awareness of the importance of the icons in the liturgies is also fulfilled

⁴⁸⁶ Images play an important role also in Hindu traditions. They are usually called "murti" which is used to describe both the representation of the deity and the deity itself. Geometry, (in)organic forms and human figures are all used to symbolize these sacred presences. The images carry the potential of their inhabitation by the deities that is believed to be activated through rituals that reach their climax with the opening of the eyes of the means by the chanting of a mantra and the completion of the painting of the gaze by the artist. The images are thus venerated by the initiated artists, the priests and the devotees. According to Hindu religious traditions images make visible the invisible, standing as a concrete metaphor of the unity of God. The worship of the images is directly linked with the worship of other elements such as the yantras (abstract maps of energies) and mantras (verbal formulae or incantations) as all of them are considered to be ritually interrelated. Images play a key role in the architectural organisation of a religious building or complex. The most important image(s) is/are the one(s) placed in the sanctum. Moreover, on the north Indian temples' façade the cosmic universe is hierarchically sculpted enhancing the importance of the entrance, the passage through which is in any case considered to be one of the most important parts of the religious inhabitation of the building. Images also contribute to silent meditation. Through the constant repetition of a mantra and the constant view of an icon the relevant practice is enhanced.

On this see: Heather Elgood, *Hinduism and the Religious Arts*, (London and New York: Cassell, 1998), pp. 13-43.

⁴⁸⁷ Margaret Kenna, "Icons in Theory and Practice: An Orthodox Christian Example", *History of Religions*, 24:4, (May, 1985), p. 349.

⁴⁸⁸ Elsa Johnson, "Hesychasm, Iconography and Tintinnabulation: Reflections on Art, Music and Theology", *Anamnesis*, 4 (May, 2007), pp. 12-13.

through repetitive rituals of veneration (when entering the church, when exiting, and before Holy Communion) during which the monks make prostrations in front of them and kiss them. Venerating the icons is also included in the pilgrim's journey, as part of his embodied interaction with the sacred elements of the place. Thus, the act of kissing as an expression of veneration is an important element of the embodied qualities of the walls. This is emphatically applied in the case of the frescoes of the intermediate walls, as kissing them is part of the liturgical entrance and exit of the ascetic. Moreover, reducing their height by prostration, the devotees also express their respect for the depicted saint.

In particular, icons according to the Orthodox Christian Church are connected to the notion of *prosopon*, which activates a relationship between the members of the Body of Christ, the Church. *Prosopon*, literally meaning the face, is a way of existence for Orthodox Christianity defined by the mutual interpenetration of the three Divine Hypostases of the Holy Trinity (*alliloperichoresis*: making space for the other). Etymologically connected to the idea of the gaze and divine contemplation, this approach emphasizes the simultaneous co-existence of the individual and communal aspect of each human that is also a *being-in-relation*, an active member of the Church.⁴⁸⁹ Representing the faces of sanctified/transfigured individuals, thus, icons involve two basic qualities: the "ascent" into the heavenly realm and the "descent" into the earthly realm. The descent relates to the orthodox approach of symbolism, as its aim is to transform the real image into an *embodiment of otherworldly experience* in which the individual is engaged through acts of worship. This is also connected for Diarmaid MacCulloch to the practice of silent prayer.⁴⁹⁰ It also serves the notion of divine contemplation through an embodied perception, most of the time voiceless and usually connected to a sense of inner prayer.

⁴⁸⁹ For the notion of *prosopon* in Orthodox Christianity see: John Zizioulas D, *Being as a Communion in Personhood and the Church*, (Crestwood, New York 10707: St. Vladimir's Press, 1985).

⁴⁹⁰ See also: Pavel Florensky, p. 45:

(...) a common pattern holds everywhere (...) the soul is raised up from the visible to where visibility itself vanishes and the field of the invisible opens: such is the Dionysian sundering of the bonds of the visible. And after soaring up into the invisible, the soul descends again into the visible- and then and there, before its very eyes, are those real appearances of things: ideas. This is the Apollonian perspective on the spiritual world.



Figure 9.30: The Restoration of the Holy Icons. Eighteenth century fresco of the lite of Gregoriou Monastery.

Therefore, icons are not considered to be mere copies or reminders of an original. They are actively connected to it through the devotee's veneration. According to eastern Christianity, icons are sacramental objects which contribute to the service of the sacraments, aiming at the preparation of the devotee to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit. The contribution of the icon is activated through this interaction with the individuals, the architecture and the rituals. Embodied sensual perception plays a key role in this process as, according to Saint Theodore the Studite, it activates the imagination of the receiver, opening him to a possible communication with its sacred associations: "The depicted body is present in the icon, not as to its nature, but only as regards a relation [schesis]. (...) [It] is present to a greater or lesser degree, according to the analogy of the receiving nature. Should someone say that God is present in this manner also in the icon, it would not be false."⁴⁹¹

⁴⁹¹ JP Migne, (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus, Series Graeca*, (Paris 1857), pp. 225-226.

The way icons are conceived and synthesized contributes to the liturgical experience of Christian orthodox life. The linear perspective is usually reversed with the vanishing point towards the side of the viewer. The represented faces come out of the painting and invite the devotee to an active relationship. According to Christian orthodox tradition, the vanishing point coincides with the heart of the viewer. This aims to highlight the important role that he/she plays in Christian life. The use of one background colour (usually gold) contributes to the process, replacing to an extent any other additions and allowing the iconographic syntheses to adjust to the offered surfaces without the Byzantine (reversed) perspective being changed. The background colour functions also as a common canvas on which the different faces (*prosopa*) or syntheses of events from the Scriptures symbolise the active presence of the originals in the liturgy.⁴⁹² The colours are usually bright. The scope of the lack of shading (lack of black and white combined with the use of gold) is to depict the ideas of the transfiguration of the being and the eternal Sun (God).⁴⁹³ The icon is connected, therefore, to the liturgical theology of *Presence*. It “presents”⁴⁹⁴ (now) historically testified events of transfiguration and leads to the future and the Second Coming through the interaction with the devotee.⁴⁹⁵ In this ec-static (according to Heidegger) temporal framework, the wall is something more than a built limit, as it involves an embodied *hesychast* practice through visual interaction with the paintings on it.



Figure 9.31: The Apostles Receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord, Fresco on the Eastern Wall of the *katholikon* of Gregoriou Monastery.

⁴⁹² Paul Evdokimov, *Orthodoxy*, (Athens: Rigopoulos Editions, 1965), p. 306.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 307.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 299.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid* p. 300.

Therefore, the painting of the (main in the case of the Athonian *katholikon*) church is divided into three main circles: the dogmatic, the liturgical and the historical. The dogmatic circle appears at the entrance of the church, the dome and the niche of the chancel. God in Majesty is painted above the entrance. The painting inside the dome also represents God, surrounded by angels. The four evangelists are depicted on the four squinches that support the dome. Finally, the Mother of God is represented on the central niche of the chancel. The liturgical cycle appears on the main niche of the chancel, under the Mother of God, and on the smaller one of the *prothesis*. Below the Mother of God is the representation of the liturgy of the Apostles (figured in array while receiving the Holy Gifts) and of the liturgy of the Angels (figured as deacons carrying the Holy Gifts in procession, while Christ is depicted as an Archpriest). The Birth of Christ and the Holy Passions are depicted on the niche of *prothesis*. Finally, “faces and events from the great ecclesiastical feasts” are represented in the framework of the historical cycle on the walls of the nave. This cycle is usually divided into three or four zones. In the upper zones are represented themes from the *Dodekaorton* (Δωδεκάορτο), the Gospel and the life of Christ, while in the lower ones are full-length saints. Therefore, the dogmatic zone symbolizes heaven (Christ and Mother of God). The liturgical one symbolizes, according to Robert Ousterhout, the transformation of the church into “a Holy Land that had witnessed these events [of Christ’s life]”.⁴⁹⁶ Finally, the third cycle depicts the *earthly* saints that become a part of the congregation. Playing an active role in communal worship, the iconography of the church is, therefore, a metaphor of the movement from the visible to the spiritual world that penetrates the hierarchical organisation of the different zones.

In the iconographic programme of the main church of the Gregoriou Monastery, focus is placed on the events of the Resurrection and the Transfiguration. The former is depicted twice and the latter has a key position in the semi-dome of the southern section. The double depiction of Christ teaching and the Parables supports the didactic aspect of the programme. Moreover, the representations related to the Virgin Mary (events of her life, Acathyst Hymn, the Prophets who spoke of her) illustrate the connection between Mount Athos and the Mother of God.⁴⁹⁷ Therefore, on the walls different religious stories communicate with the Athonian monastic life,

⁴⁹⁶ Robert Ousterhout, “The Holy Space: Architecture and the Liturgy”, in Linda Safran (ed), *Heaven on Earth. Art and the Church in Byzantium*, (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), p. 98.

⁴⁹⁷ Sotiris Kadas, pp. 87-88.

contributing to its liturgical topography. They symbolize the prayerful pilgrimage of the monks from earth to heaven (*theosis*) and are also open to a possible interpretation by the visitors. They are, thus, venerated by the monk and the pilgrim and celebrated by the priest (if the depicted saint or event is celebrated on a specific date). As they are painted to look towards the centre of the space they also express the eastern Christian belief in the active presence of the depicted Saints in the rituals.

Therefore, the Mystical Supper that is represented on the second zone of the eastern curved wall of the chancel (the end of the central axis) is a characteristic example of orthodox iconography. It is one of the frescoes that were painted in the second half of the eighteenth century (1768-1779). [Figure 9.31] The colours are bright; the background is dark blue. The whole synthesis is organised around the centrally situated figure of Christ, flanked by the disciples (six at each side). He offers the bread with his right hand and the wine with his left. In the background a town is also represented, possibly depicting the *New Jerusalem* situated somewhere to the East, to which the church is orientated and from where sun rises. Whereas the face of Christ looks ahead, those of the disciples look towards Him and to the altar. In parallel, they seem also to be exchanging glances with each other, expressing a sense of movement through their active interrelation. The three entrances to the town repeat the three openings of the Iconostasis. In front of the central one (the one corresponding to the Royal Gate of the Iconostasis) Christ is placed. In front of Him a table is depicted on the same axis as the Holy Altar and the main entrance of the Iconostasis. On it an open book is painted. On its pages we read two of the most important phrases of the Eucharist: "Take, eat; this is my body." (Matthew, 26:26) and Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood (...)" (Matthew, 26:27-28). This wall painting plays an important role in the liturgical experience of the church. On the one hand, it is a mimesis of the Eucharist and on the other, it is a prefiguration of the eschatological goal of the devotees. It is depicted at the end of the central axis of the church and illuminates the desirable outcome of the community of the devotees. These symbolical associations are also enhanced by the way that the individual is able to see it even if not in the chancel, as it is painted at a higher level than the iconostasis. Therefore, in the ritual reactualization of the movement towards God, the fresco is incorporated, adding to the meaning of the concave wall to which the senses of the individuals are directed.

Eastern Christian iconography is, thus, connected to silence and *hesychasm*. Whereas a sense of movement is included in the synthesis through the reversed perspective and the dynamics of the gaze, different elements of their creation and organisation on the walls disclose a sense of a “sudden pause”, a gap opened to attract the gaze of the viewer and activate a dynamic dialogue with him.⁴⁹⁸ Moreover, focus on the depiction of the gaze and lack of shading give a “sense of rest” and “stillness” to the icon that is communicated to the individual especially in the *katholikon* where repetitive pairs of similar eyes look towards the void centre of the space. Initially the scant amounts of morning light illuminate the parts of their faces that are painted with lighter colours than their clothed bodies. Therefore, one usually perceives a combination of human figures placed next to one another and behind the *stasidia* that are inhabited by the silent monks and the visitors. The individual can interact with the painted faces actively as the light changes, directing his gaze from a group of faces, to a specific one or to an event represented in the higher zones of the walls. When he looks at the adorned walls, he may also include in his gaze the silent figure of a monk or a stranger sitting in a stall, something that enhances the dynamics of the icon. Dark, painted human figures and living bodies contribute to the *liminality* of the wall that is extended to include them. Everything is incorporated in a silent interrelationship in which the participant of the ritual is engaged in a multi-sensual experience that changes depending on his identity (monks, pilgrims, tourists). Hence even if they do not really know how to “read” the iconographic programme, monks from the Gregoriou monastery argue that it becomes an embodied recollection of the presence of the saints in the liturgies. These liminal qualities of the image (icon) and the human face (*prosopon*) are also discussed by Max Picard. For the philosopher both the image and the face stand at the boundary between language and silence. On the one hand, the image transfers an intense symbolic and artistic language through which it “speaks” in silence.⁴⁹⁹ At the same time the face is “the ultimate frontier between silence and speech”, always in a process of speaking, something that also enhances the meaning of its silence.⁵⁰⁰ These ideas are characteristically depicted in the case of the liturgical role of Byzantine icons, the tradition of the *prosopon* and the interaction with the silent figures of the monks. Characteristically a monk argues: “you can see their gazes and slightly recognize their figures. Even if you don’t know or remember the names of the saints

⁴⁹⁸ Elsa Johnson, p. 12.

Peter Pearson, *A Brush with God: An Icon Workbook*, (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2005), p. 15.

⁴⁹⁹ Max Picard, p. 92.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 99-106.

depicted, you learn how to remember that they are there with you. Most of us feel grateful for the iconography as it enhances the need for silence that is shared between the living and the dead. I can always see a brother praying besides me and in front of the large figure of the saint protector of our monastery”.⁵⁰¹

Natural and Artificial Light

The use of natural and artificial light co-operates with the above spatio-temporal environment illuminating some of the religious aspects connected to the idea of the “uncreated light”, the embodied experience included in *hesychast* practice and directly connected to silent prayer.⁵⁰²

The use of light in Orthodox worship, through the arrangement of the windows in the church and the use of candles, has contributed since Byzantine times to the performance of Christian traditional ritual, connected to the idea of an invisible emitter (God).⁵⁰³ This is also evident in the orientation of the building towards the East, the source of the light that is connected to the expectation of the Second Coming and participation in Heavenly Jerusalem.⁵⁰⁴

The dome is the most brightly illuminated part of the *katholikon*. Rows of windows, situated high along the drum, allow daylight to enter and become another active component of the *katholikon*'s environment. Light contributes to the sense of movement, indicates the basic axes, and illuminates the faint faces of the Saints represented in frescoes, giving the impression of a mysterious source. In the case of the *lite* of Gregoriou monastery, a window on the north wall and two on the south poorly illuminate the space, due to the proximity of the *katholikon* and the surrounding buildings. This enhances the dark, cave-like atmosphere of the space. Light from the windows of the two domes are carefully directed to the wall-paintings between the three

⁵⁰¹ Fieldtrip to Mount Athos (September, 2011).

⁵⁰² For a detailed description of this see the Chapter: Liminality and the Movement of the Athonian *Hesychast*. *Xeniteia*, Ritual and Silence, Section: The movement of the ascetic: *Hesychasm* and *Xeniteia*, pp. 53-58.

⁵⁰³ Andrew Louth, “Light, Vision and Religious Experience in Byzantium”, in Mathew T. Kapstein (ed.), *The Presence of light – Divine Radiance and Religious Experience*, (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004): The writer underlines this connection between natural and artificial light in Byzantine Orthodox worship to this tradition.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid*:

It is from the east that the sun rises, and churches are orientated not to some geographical east, but to the point on the horizon at which the sun rises on the feast day of the dedication of the church (this was also the case in the West until the end of the Middle Ages, save in cases where local geography made it impossible). It is therefore north of east if the feast day of dedication (of a saint, or of a mystery such as the Trinity or the Nativity of Christ) is in high summer, south of east if it is in the depths of winter. (p. 86)

doors that lead to the main church and are usually connected to specific rituals.⁵⁰⁵ For example, during Vespers and the Supplication (held together in the evening) the face of the Mother of God, to whom the latter service is offered, is illuminated.

According to Iakovos Potamianos, during the movement from the narthex to the nave, the devotee's gaze follows a line that is initially horizontal and gradually turns upwards trying to discover the source of light. The light comes from the chancel and the dome, depicting a neo-platonic sense of elevation towards higher existential realms.⁵⁰⁶ Therefore, a light path is created that follows the central axis that connects the domes, the floor motifs, the main entrances of the western (external and internal) walls and the Iconostasis in the *katholikon* of Gregoriou monastery. The individual usually walks along this route even without having its symbolic connotations in mind. Silence as a movement towards a visual illuminative experience is also reflected in this path, illuminating the active role of light in the *voiceless* components of the religious place. At the same time, this path is flanked by darker parts of the church, the edges of which are covered by *stasidia* looking to the central axis. Whereas the darker parts are more connected to silence, the central one also carries ritual movements as the main route towards the central dome and the *iconstasis*. Hence, darkness and light are polarities, whose reciprocal relationship also enhances the liminal and paradoxical dynamics of the space. Natural light follows the cycles of the day and the seasons and is thus carried by the path even during the night through the expectation of the coming morning. Darkness, thus, plays an important role in the liturgical performance of the *katholikon*. It enhances the practice of silence, creating conditions of solitude. Darkness is a boundary as it demarcates the individual's field of sight. It

⁵⁰⁵ The domes have openings only on the west and south parts of the lanterns following the use of this space mainly during the evening services. (Vespers and the Supplication to the Mother of God).

⁵⁰⁶ Iakovos Potamianos, *The Light in the Byzantine Church*, (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2000), (in Greek), p. 253.

See also in the same book the description of the following distinct experience related to the role that lighting plays in the services in an Athonian Katholikon:

Reaching the climax of the 14-hour all-night vigil in remembrance of the resurrection of Christ, the two concentric candelabums, that are hung from the central dome were set the first in cyclical nutation and the second one in rotation (... Suddenly the monks kneeled looking towards the holy threshold of the iconostasis and the centre of the main church forming something as an elliptic or accidental disposition on the floor. (...) Not realizing what exactly was happening there I had a strong sense of instability of the material world that surrounded me. The building seemed as shaking due to an earthquake. The use of simple acoustic means forced my senses to perceive the whole event as an intense physical phenomenon of earthquake. The candelabrum, being the only source of lighting, was the object of focus of the observer's gaze seeming as being stable whereas the building was being experienced as moving. His impression in relation to the noise of the heavy chains of the candelabrum contributed to the sense of an earthquake. This event was intensively inscribed in my memory. (p. 31).

creates an immaterial sub-space that may be slightly larger than the *stasidi* and enhances the silent sphere of the monk as well. This immaterial sphere changes as the day progresses and the interior of the church becomes more illumined. Darkness also contributes to the silence-scape of the church, allowing the light-inscriptions of the sun or those connected to specific rituals. Lack of electrical light in the church intensifies these cave-like qualities, highlighting the meaning of light in the rituals.

Wax and oil candles are instruments of light that direct the individual to look at some parts of the church and participate in certain events. [Figures 9.32 & 9.33] They actively interact with the boundaries that demarcate the space(s) by illuminating specific icons or frescos and by following some of the major sub-services of the liturgies. According to the theologian Andrew Louth, the artificial light of oil candles is also connected to the idea of uncreated light. According to an early Christian hymn sung in Vespers, the glory of the Holy Trinity is connected to the “joyful light” of the sunset that, as we saw earlier, is always burning there and will reappear some hours later. The oil candles, thus, represent the eternally burning light of God that for the *hesychast* tradition can be partly communicated through the moments of *theosis* symbolized by the interaction of the represented saints’ gaze with the flames of the oil candles in front of them.⁵⁰⁷ A series of burning flames running in parallel with the walls thus creates an atmosphere of mystery that influences the individuals’ participation in the events. The limited light-sphere of each of them allows the participant to interact visually with the painted faces of the saints. And even when light is used to highlight important rituals of the services, like the “Chorus of the Angels”, it still carries silent qualities even if followed by sonic elements like chanting and reading.

⁵⁰⁷ Andrew Louth, “Light, Vision and Religious Experience in Byzantium”, p. 85-86.

The hymn is the following: “O Joyful Light of the holy glory of the immortal, heavenly, holy blessed Father, O Jesus Christ. Having come to the setting of the sun, having beheld the evening light, we hymn the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God. Meet it is at all times to hymn Thee with reverend voices, O Son of God, Giver of Life, wherefore the whole world doth glorify Thee”.



Figures 9.32 & 9.33: These two images are taken during an all-night vigils in the main church of Gregoriou monastery. They depict in a characteristic way the role of artificial light in the liturgical atmosphere. The mobile candelabrum placed under the central dome and in front of the main entrance of the iconostasis underlines the importance of both the main axis and the dome.

One of the most characteristic examples of the symbolic use of artificial light is an Athonian rite held during a part of the Mass in which the devotees express their active proximity to the angels by chanting. During this part of the service the candles of a circular candelabrum hanging from the periphery of the dome are lit, and the whole is set in a smooth circular movement symbolizing the angels and their live presence at the liturgy.⁵⁰⁸

[This] huge candelabrum, that is called **chorus**,⁵⁰⁹ is hung from the dome through heavy chains. The size of its periphery is the same to that of the dome. It is made of bronze and has the shape of a crown decorated with candles between of which are placed small icons (...)

The setting of the candelabrum, which is hung quite low, has a double aim: it guarantees the homogeneous lighting and allows the creation of an imaginary circular screen.⁵¹⁰

In this sense, the *chorus* repeats the periphery of the dome, inscribing a moving light-boundary whose character is both spatial and temporal and its role in the liturgy quite important.⁵¹¹ It

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁹ My emphasis.

⁵¹⁰ *To Ayion Oros*, p.89, (My translation).

See also Denis McNamara, *Catholic Church Architecture and the Spirit of the Liturgy*, (Mexico: Hillenbrand Books, 2009), pp. 73-74: The writer quotes a part of the Revelation in which the Son of Man sits among seven golden lamp stands. In this description of "an immediate disclosure of the majesty of God" we read: "...and in the midst of the Lamp stands was one like a son of man, clothed in a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast..his feet were like burnished bronze..."(Revelation 1:13-16). According to the writer, the word used for bronze oreichalk relates to a metal "which, when heated and properly treated undergoes a glorious, resurrection-like transformation" looking like gold. The qualities of this material are connected to the heavenly Christ and the event of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor.

⁵¹¹ This may be also connected to the important role of the chorus in the Ancient Greek Theatre, the ritual significance of circular dance in Greek culture and the cosmic associations of the circular/spherical scheme.

On this see: J. W. Fitton, "Greek Dance", *The Classical Quarterly, New Series*, 23:2 (November, 1973), pp. 254-274.

“gathers” the gazes of the devotees around the dome and invites them to look towards both the internal edge of the dome on which the Almighty is represented and the chancel. The experience of the ritual is really impressive also for the non pilgrims, who cannot always connect it to the idea of the sacred.

b. Communal Ritual: ritual movement and the idea of the “Entrance”, the role of the incense, chanting.

Ritual Movement, the Idea of the “Entrance”, and the Role of the Incense

Entering an Athonian *katholikon*, thus, the individual is able to participate in an event of a religious place. The liturgical drama uses the entire interior of the church as its setting.⁵¹² In the nave the monks and the visitors sitting in their stalls interact with the priest who celebrates the Mass and the other monks singing in the choir, in the centre of which is a lectern for the books needed for the service (*analogio*). The preparation of the Holy Gifts starts in the *prothesis* and concludes on the Holy Altar (*Αγία Τράπεζα - Hagia Trapeza*).⁵¹³

As we have seen, the intermediate walls relate to the repetition of a surface with three openings surrounded by frescoes that contribute to the meaning of the ritual. The most important boundary of the eastern christian church is the iconostasis through whose main entrance monks and some visitors will receive the Holy Gifts, materialising the desirable movement from earth to heaven. Moreover, rituals held in the *lite* are followed by closing the Royal Entrance with a curtain, making this boundary visually impenetrable and therefore demarcating the field of the specific ceremony.⁵¹⁴

Dagmar Motycka Weston, “Greek Theatre as an Embodiment of Cultural Meaning”, in Paul Emmons, John Hendrix and Jane Lomholt (eds), *The Cultural Role of Architecture. Contemporary and Historical Perspectives*, (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 7-11.

⁵¹² See also: Hans Belting. *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). The writer describes in detail the Byzantine drama of a ritual underlining the contribution of the sacred space to it.

⁵¹³ The choirs, where the liturgical hymns are being chanted, are situated near the *aghio vema*, and no one has the right to turn his back to it. Moreover, the use of the incense tries to stimulate the worshipper’s senses (hearing and smell) in order to participate in the liturgy in more actively (body and soul).

See also: Margaret Kenna, pp. 345-368.

⁵¹⁴ However, the boundary is not totally impenetrable as monks and visitors may sit in the rest of the spaces acoustically participating in the service held in the *lite*.

The idea of the *Entrance*, thus, plays a vital role in the whole process, carrying the liminal qualities of the Eucharist, which is believed to be the threshold between the members of the Church and the Kingdom of God.⁵¹⁵ This becomes even clearer by the fact that during the early Christian period the circular rituals from the altar to the nave and back began from one church or even a square and in a processional walking through part(s) of the city reached the church where the Eucharist was going to be held.⁵¹⁶ This change is also connected to the transformation of religious events into more theatrical ones during the Iconoclastic Controversy. Initially the “entrance” rituals were concerned with the processional *gathering* of the devotees in the church (Small Entrance) or the collection of the bread and the wine (the “offerings”) by them during the liturgy (Great Entrance). Since then, they have been circular rituals held in the church re-enacting the earlier ones and sharing with them important symbolic associations.⁵¹⁷

[Figure 9.34]

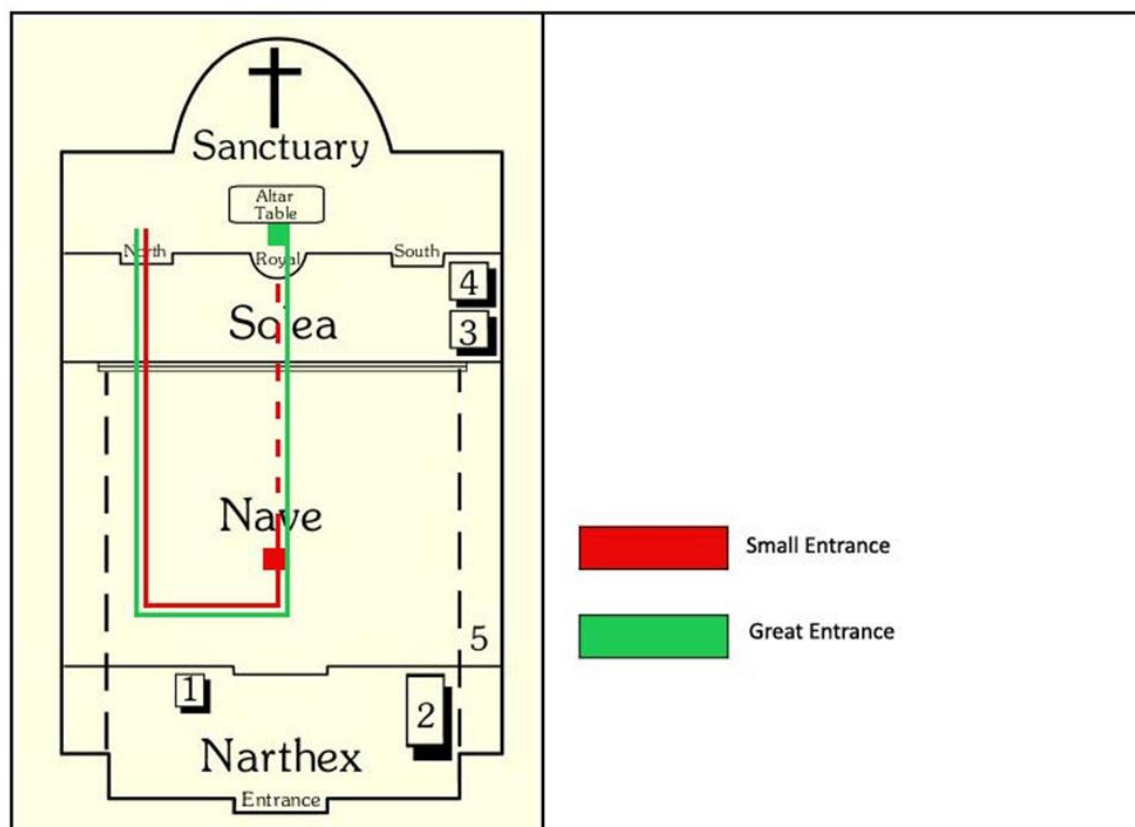


Figure 9.34: A typical Eastern Orthodox Church.

⁵¹⁵ Alexander, Schmemman, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*, (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press), p. 50, as quoted in Khaled Anatolios, p. 3.

⁵¹⁶ Khaled Anatolios, p. 3.

⁵¹⁷ Pavlos Koumarios, “Symbol and Reality in the Divine Liturgy”, *Synaxi*, 71 (July – September 1999), pp. 22-37.

Therefore, the Orthodox Christian liturgy is organised around the Small Entrance and the Great Entrance, two rituals that enact the unity of the building through the openings of the iconostasis.

The *Small Entrance* is a ritual held in the beginning of the service. The priest takes the Holy Gospel from the Holy Altar and goes out to the nave through the north opening of the iconostasis. He then goes to the east side of the building and stops in the middle of the church. He blesses the entrance and raising up the Holy Gospel sings: "With Wisdom, stand up". Until the 7th century this was the beginning of the Holy Liturgy, as the priest used to take the Gospel from the *skeuofulakio*⁵¹⁸ which was an independent building, and enter the church to signal the start of the service.

The *Great Entrance* is conducted during the middle of the liturgy when the priest takes out the Holy Gifts, the bread and the wine, from the north entrance of the sanctuary. He then walks around in the church and enters the sanctuary through the main entrance to place the gifts on the Altar, the holiest place of the church, on which the Eucharist is performed. It symbolizes the entrance of Christ into Jerusalem through a cheering crowd only a few days before his sacrifice.⁵¹⁹ The pivotal ritual during the Liturgy is the Holy Eucharist which is based on the event of the Mystical Supper and in which the bread and the wine are ritually transformed into the body and blood of Christ and received by the devotees.⁵²⁰

Based on this idea of Entrance, the axis indicated by the domes, the configurations on the floors and the central openings on the intermediate walls plays a key role in the circular movement from the chancel to the rest of the *katholikon* and the return to the beginning. Whereas the movement along the axis (fulfilled not only by those who have received Holy Communion, as *antidoron* is distributed to all the monks and Christian orthodox visitors in the end) coincides with the liminal stages of these rituals, the side doors carry the departure and return, allowing the rites to be expressed through the three-partite Turnerian scheme. In this sense, periodically the *ekklesiastikos* unites everything into a meaningful whole, while censuring the icons and the

⁵¹⁸ The room in which objects used in the services are kept.

⁵¹⁹ Nicholas Cabasilas, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, (S.P.C.K, 1983), pp.65-66.

⁵²⁰ For the theological relation between Eucharist and Hesychasm, see: Andrew Louth, "The Eucharist and Hesychasm, with Special Reference to Theophanes III, Metropolitan of Nicae", in Perczel, I., Forrai, R. and G. Geréby (eds), *The Eucharist in Theology and Philosophy. Issues of Doctrinal History in East and West from the Patristic Age to the Reformation*, (Leuven: Leuven Univ. Press, 2005), pp. 199-205.

people, following circular routes and aurally inscribing it in the atmosphere of the *katholikon*. Hence, Davis' approach to Christian liturgies presented in the second chapter as relative to a pilgrimage is also confirmed in the case of the Athonian *katholikon*. Liminality and the act of crossing a frontier play an important role in the process, illuminating both the silent and audible qualities of the event.

The use of incense plays its own role in the whole dramaturgy, as it also invites the individual to participation in the ritual even through the sense of smell, something common in a number of different religious traditions.⁵²¹ Incense is an aromatic, stiff, resinous substance that is rubbed and mixed with perfume and magnesia then dried and cut in small cubes. It is usually made by the monks. The censuring takes place in specific moments of the liturgy and follows certain routes in the church. Starting from the iconostasis, the monk hierarchically censes the rest of the icons and the congregation, calling them to participate in the common prayer.

In the Old Testament we read that Moses was asked by God to make an aromatic powder and place it on an altar in front of the veil that divided the Holy of the Holies from the rest of the Desert Tabernacle. (Exodus 30:34-38). The offering of the incense in the Israelite ritual was mainly connected to the burning of incense on this altar twice a day. Moreover, incense was burned as an independent sacrifice in portable censers, expressing a spontaneous sense of

⁵²¹Incense has also played an important role in Hindu religions since Vedic Times (500 BC – 150 BC). It is included in the offering to the deities conducted for supplications and praise. Physical purification of the space (used also as a kind of disinfectant or at least as an olfactive cover of the bad odours) also enhances a sense of ritual purification through the individual's sensual interaction with it. It is connected to an internal clearing that prepares the devotee for the different acts of worship, either silent meditation or communal rituals.

Moreover, incense has also been used in ritual ceremonies in Japanese Buddhist tradition since ancient times. The relevant ceremonies were formalised during the fifteenth century. In Buddhist temples, censers either hung from the roof or from special stands fill the space with incense and individual sticks are lit by worshippers, being burnt either in bundles or in front of different depictions of a deity (statue, icon etc). A special incense ritual is held during the initiation rite of a Buddhist monk when his scalp is burnt by a lit incense stick for about 5 minutes, producing 6,9 or 12 circular scars, called "jieba", symbolizing his purification after a painful trial.

On this see: Kiyoko, Morita, *The Book of Incense. Enjoying the Traditional Art of Japanese Scents*, (Kodansha: Kodansha University Press, 2007).

Finally, Catholic Christian tradition also uses incense during their services which is burnt in metal devices similar to the Christian Orthodox ones. Incense is used during the "entrance procession" at the beginning of the Mass, at "the procession and proclamation of the Gospel", at "the offertory" and during the Paschal liturgies. Moreover, at the end of the funeral services the priest censes the coffin both as an expression of respect and as a symbol of the prayers of the live devotees to the dead.

For the use of incense in the Catholic Tradition: Roy, Neil, J., "Rite, Gesture and Meaning: Incense in Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass", *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, 116:2 (2002), pp. 175-196.

Also in: Sister Rosarie Politsky, *The Historic Relationship between Sacred Art, Sacred Architecture and the Roman Catholic Liturgy and the Sacramental Aspects of the Aesthetic Experience*, unpublished MSc Thesis, The Ohio State University, 1983.

enthusiasm.⁵²² Similarly, in the New Testament we read about the duties of the priest Zachariah who was the father of Saint John the Forerunner: "(...) he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshippers were praying outside. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense". (Luke 1:9-11). This quotation underlines the regularity of an incense ritual held at a specific place in the Temple. Moreover, when Christ was born, one of the three Wise Men brought to him incense as a valuable gift for the new-born God. (Matthew 2:11) In St. John's revelation we also find the figure of an Angel in the Heavenly temple, accepting a golden censer (Revelation 8:3-5). Incense practices were gradually incorporated into Christian liturgical life during the fourth and fifth centuries, enhancing the olfactory qualities the religious experience.⁵²³ The incense symbolizes the prayer of the devotees ascending to God and God's Grace poured into our souls.⁵²⁴ This is also depicted in the words read silently by the priest before every censuring: "*We offer unto Thee, Christ our God, this incense for an odour of spiritual sweetness which do Thou accept upon Thy most heavenly altar, sending down upon us in return the Grace of Thy Holy Spirit.*"

The censer is a metal vessel in which incense is burnt and which is hung by chains with small bells that are connected at one end. [Figure 9.36] The *ekklisiastikos*, the deacon, or the priest holds it from this point and moves it rhythmically backwards and forwards while moving around in the church. Hence, the ritual of the censuring of the *katholikon* inscribes the space both through human movement and sonic signs. [Figure 9.35] The sound and the smoke are diffused/spread through the boundaries of the space, communicating with the participants' sense of hearing and smell. Therefore, the monks are informed when to stand up, get down from their stalls and wait with their heads bowed to be incensed. Opening their eyes to make these movements, they can also interact with the light that is carried on the surface created by the incense that was spread

⁵²²Menahem Haran, "The Uses of Incense in the Ancient Israelite Ritual", *Vetus Testamentum*, 10:2, (April 1960), pp. 113-129.

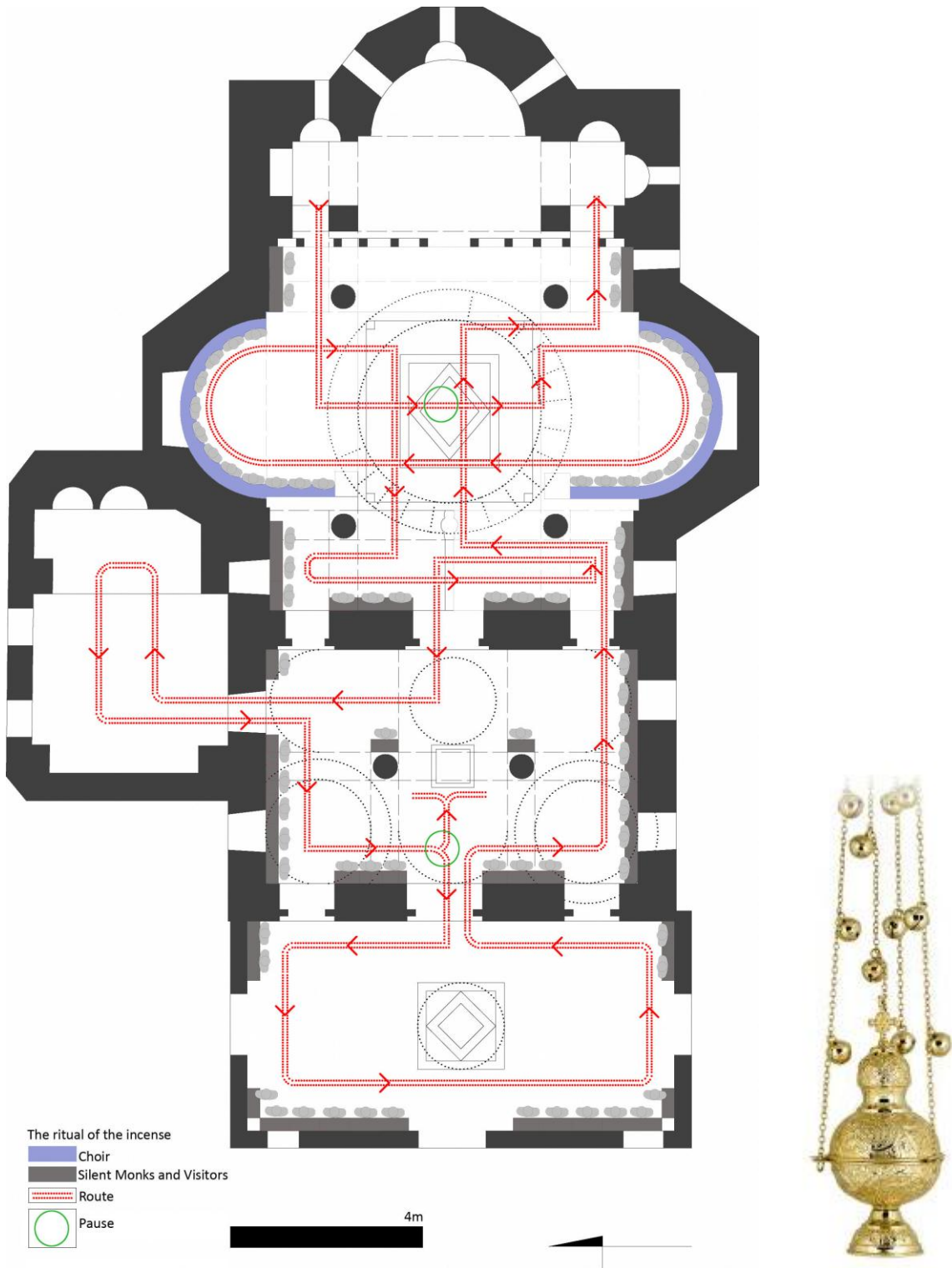
Emanuel Schmidt, "Solomon's Temple", *The Biblical World*, 14:3, (September 1899), pp.164-171.

Paul Leslie Garbor, "Reconstructing Solomon's Temple", *The Biblical Archaeologist*, 14:1 (February 1951), pp. 1-24.

⁵²³Susan Ashbroook Harvey, *Scenting Salvation. Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 75-83.

⁵²⁴Rev. Fr. Theodore, Ziton, "Liturgy and Life: The Use of Incense in Church", *World Magazine*, Publication of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, (1968), electronic form: www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org.

in the atmosphere of the whole church. The incense is able to carry the movement of the light towards the dome and to contribute thus to the *hesychast* experience of the *katholikon*. Even when the *ekklisiastikos* has stopped moving and the small bells of the censer are muted, the incense is still there, silently interacting with the light and its symbolic associations. As well as a sonic sign, the incense also contributes to the inscription of a silent aural zone that fills the space, becoming an embodied recollection of a ritual audible procession.



Figures 9.35 & 9.36: The ritual of the Incense and a censur. The two stops along the main axis of the *katholikon* underline its importance in the liturgy.

Chanting: Sonic Aura and the Limits of Liturgical Place

Chanting also plays an important role in the liturgical experience of the *katholikon*.⁵²⁵ As in the case of the icon, according to orthodox theology, the Incarnation of the Word (Jesus Christ) allows liturgical music to be part of the individual's movement to heaven.⁵²⁶ For Nicolae Teodoreanu, orthodox Christian liturgical music is a "sonorous icon" created by the composer using a specific language, and performed by the chanters according to certain rules.⁵²⁷ Through the ritual repetition of similar melodies a rhythm is produced, aiming to create for the participants a sense of entering a different temporal environment with sacred/mythical associations. The eight modes of Byzantine chanting are combined with the *ison* (or drone), a steadily accompanying sound of the previous note sung in parallel with a melody. *Ison* works as the common context in which the different tunes are synthesized in the same way that the

⁵²⁵ The reciprocal interaction between silence and music is also found in Hindu and Buddhist traditions. In particular, the constant repetition of mantras (like the well known word OM) aim to create a sense of void that becomes meaningful in the specific dogma, forcing the individual to concentrate in him/herself, thinking of the possible union with the Self, the divine cosmos.

On this see: Guy L. Beck, "Hinduism and Music", in Guy L. Beck (ed), *Sacred Sound. Experiencing Music in World Religions*, (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Willfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), pp. 113-140.

George Kalamaras, *Reclaiming the Tacit Dimension. Symbolic Form in the Rhetoric of Silence*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 161-168.

Moreover, Buddhist chant is also connected both to the preparation of meditation and the enhancement of the different rituals. Especially in the Mahayana tradition, chanting, sound of musical instruments (wooden fish, gong, drums) are included in elaborate rituals held either in the main hall of the temple or in the zen-do. Chanting is connected here to emptiness. Sound is connected to "dust", an aural quality that combines everything and at the same time highlight the limits of everything.

Hence, the daily service in a Chinese Buddhist monastery is a mental and bodily practice that aims at the control of the mind and the acquisition of a stable meditative state. Purification of mundane thoughts is also included in the purposes of the service. Free chanting and the so-called "pure land" chanting are combined during this process. Free chanters perform according to their own way, creating their own style and trying to harmonize with each other. The tempo of this chanting is gradually accelerated leading to a really dynamic result. Improvisations are allowed. Hence, variation and adjustment are expressed through the performative qualities of free-chanting technique. Moreover, the "pure land" relates to the recitation of the name of Buddha, followed by a "celestial music" based on the sounds of nature (wind, birds, water etc).

On Buddhism and Chanting see: Pi-yen Chen, "Sound and Emptiness: Music, Philosophy and the Monastic Practice of Buddhist Doctrine", *History of Religions*, 41:1, (Aug. 2001), pp. 24-48.

Sean Williams, "Buddhism and Music", in *Sacred Sound. Experiencing Music in World Religions*, (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Willfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), pp. 169-190.

Furthermore, in the Roman Catholic tradition the word is used for the combination of both vocal and instrumental music. Choral singing and the play of the organ dynamically contribute to the liturgical use of the church. According to Catholic Christian Church, "sacred music" aims to fill the silent gaps of the liturgy (during which no sacred text is read). The way solemn vocal music (for the celebrant and his assistants) is called Gregorian and is considered to be a "supreme type of sacred musics". Its origins are found in the celebration of the Divine liturgy in monasteries and the Rule of St. Benedict.

On Chanting and Religious Architecture See: Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice*, (Yale University Press, 2009).

⁵²⁶ Nicolae Teodoreanu, "For a Theology of the Sacred Music", in www.arches.ro/revue/no07/art12.html, paragraph: Word is Music.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid*, Paragraph: Music in analogy with Image.

golden background contributes to the unity of an iconographic synthesis. Whereas *ison* plays the role of the *keynote* sound, the modes are sonic figures combined into a whole, due to the dynamics of the rituals' plot. This is directly connected to the spatiality of the environment, as we will see.⁵²⁸

Until the tenth century, focus was on the meaning of the words chanted, which led to dialogic, responsorial and antiphonal performances of singing. The dynamic interaction between the meaning of the texts and the way they were chanted aimed at the ritualistic performance of the notion of *relationship*: relationship between the different members of the community and between them and God. Thus, according to Saint Basil: “[the monks] divide themselves into two groups, and sing psalms in alternation with each other ... and then they entrust the lead of the chant to one person, while the rest sing in response”.⁵²⁹

During the late Byzantine period there was a *kalophonic* turn in Byzantine chanting that led to an “evolving freedom from the use of standard, traditional material; free invention; technical virtuosity, and replacement of old material with new (...)”.⁵³⁰ The emphasis was more on the sound, no longer on the meaning. Nevertheless, elements of the *genuine* liturgical framework of orthodox chanting were preserved. During the last thirty years Mount Athos has been trying to return to the first chanting tradition.⁵³¹

Chanting in the communal services also includes the rotation of readings and psalms based on the notions of *dialogue* and *repetition*. The dialogue between the two choirs (representing the whole congregation) and between them and the priest is ritually enhanced by the repetition of parts of the service leading to a dynamic process in which chanting and listening to it become

⁵²⁸ For the terms *keynote sound* and *signal* see: Murray Schafer, *The Tuning of the World*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), p.9: On the one hand, a keynote sound is “the note that identifies the key or tonality of a particular composition it is in reference to this point that everything else takes on its special meaning”. It is a kind of a sonic aural “ground”, most of the time heard in an unconscious way, from which sonic “figures” (like the signals) emerge. A signal, therefore, is any sound that is listened to consciously and most of the time is trying to transmit a message or to work as a “warning device”.

⁵²⁹ Letter, CCVIII, p. 32 as quoted in James McKimmon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, (Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 68, as quoted in: David Drillock, “Music in the Worship of the Church”, in *Jacob's Well, Newspaper of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey Orthodox Church in America*, (1996), www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org

⁵³⁰ David Drillock, “Music in the Worship of the Church”.

⁵³¹ See: Tore Tvarno Lind, *The Past is Always Present. The Revival of the Byzantine Musical Tradition at Mount Athos*, (Lanham, Toronto, Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press, INC, 2012), especially the Chapter: “Musical Blossom”, pp. 37-74.

parts of an embodied liturgical experience that also influenced the birth of the Athonian triconchial type.⁵³²

Hence, the two choruses enhance the dynamics of the boundary between the nave and chancel, adding sonic qualities to it. The placement of the two choirs facing each other results in the creation of a stereophonic, dialogical sonic phenomenon that allows the sound to be merged with architecture in a harmonic way.⁵³³ [Figures 9.37 & 9.38] The sound along this zone is louder than in the rest of the building, drawing the monks' attention towards it. It is in this zone that the most important rituals take place, culminating in its crossing during the Holy Communion, in which a sonic threshold is also created by the two choruses that flank the main entrance of the iconostasis. In parallel, sound also interacts with the concave external walls of the building, being amplified through the inter-reflection on them and reverberating in its interior flowing through the intermediate walls. Sound not only becomes a way to direct yourself to its source, but the different intensities of its echoes also provide a sonorous perception of the surfaces that surround you. The individual feels part of an almost otherworldly environment in which sound is harmonically incorporated. Echo and reverberation are, therefore, connected to the liminal qualities of the travelling sound that returns transformed, broadened and louder, to be re-incorporated in the ritual event. At the same time, the constant repetition of the same modes result in a sense of its swinging in space, filling the liminal aural environment of the place.



Figures 9.37 & 9.38: Chanting in the *Katholikon* of Gregoriou Monastery in the all-night vigils of Great Saturday, (with courtesy from the Archive of the Monastery).

⁵³² See, David Drillock, "Music in the Worship of the Church".

⁵³³ On this see also: David Hendy, *Noise: A Human History of Sound and Listening*, (London: Profile Books, 2013), pp. 123-133.

Besides its seemingly antithetical relationship to the notion of silence as an absence of sound, chanting also interacts with it through silent pauses, the rhythmical repetition of specific tones and the constant presence of the *ison*. For example, during the preparation of the Holy Gifts the curtain of the main entrance of the iconostasis is closed and several hymns are chanted. At some point a short period of absolute silence is held just before the Holy Communion takes place. This creates a silent gap between the ritual and its preparation that is followed by the speedy and noisy opening of the curtain. Hence, the importance of the Holy Communion in the liturgical life of the monastery is sensually illuminated, making everyone turn towards that spot.⁵³⁴ At the same time, the rhythmical repetition of the same eight modes also interacts with the rhythmical repetition of the Jesus prayer. Furthermore, *ison* creates a common sonic background that helps the monks to concentrate on the prayer.

Moreover, one of the most important ways of communication between Byzantine chanting and silent prayer are the “*kratemata*” or “*teretismata*”. They relate to the prolongation of the melody by adding extra syllables to the words of the hymns. The result is a repetitive, almost monotonous sound that has no literal sense.⁵³⁵ This musical practice was introduced in the 14th century, a period during which *hesychasm* was established as one of the main ascetic frameworks for Eastern Christianity. Connections of *kratemata* to ancient Greek ritual practices as substitutes for musical instruments that accompanied them are possible but not historically confirmed.⁵³⁶ Basing his argument on fieldwork at Mount Athos, the ethnomusicologist Tore Tvarno Lind suggests that these “nonsense syllables” acquire a paradoxical meaning through their communication with the silence of the monks. For the writer the paradoxical coexistence of meaning and nonsense in these phrases supports the silent participation of the monks as they become an undisturbing sonic path that is able to carry their internal constant prayer and that orients them eastwards to where the Eucharist is held.⁵³⁷ Breaking the normal vocal code, the *teretismata* and the silent gaps are also connected to negative theology and its liminal

⁵³⁴ Ivan Moody, “Liturgy, Music and Silence”, *Ibero-Slavica 2011, A Yearbook*. Compares- International Society for Iberian-Slavonic Studies, Clepul 5, p. 75.

Moreover, during the censuring of the altar before the opening blessing of the Great Vespers and the procession during the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts held instead of the Great Entrance on special occasions of the festive calendar the choirs keep silent.

⁵³⁵ Tore Tvarno Lind, p. 182.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*

dynamics.⁵³⁸ They are “tricksters”, transgressing the aural zone of the service and enhancing in an embodied way the effort of the individual to communicate with something that is believed to be beyond the boundaries of mundane life. The chanting of these syllables hence has an intense performative character, as what is said is also acted. The chanters express their desire for a communion with God (transfiguration) through the actual transformation of the sensible into nonsensible.⁵³⁹

Uniting the Spaces through Movements: The Liturgical Choreography of the Athonian *Katholikon*

In this sense, art and architecture become ways of engagement in a *hesychast* movement of divine *knowledge (theosis)* during which the different components are dynamically interconnected. For Nicoletta Isar the Platonic notion of Chora plays a key role in this process as it relates to a liturgical choreography in which the ritual movement, the devotees, and the sacred space (either built or part of the natural landscape) are united into “a living space of presence and participation”.⁵⁴⁰ The organization of an Athonian monastery, therefore, is part of the liturgical experience of communal ascetic space. The core of the monastery is the church, where the Eucharist is held. Around it the more profane spaces are organized, materializing the extension of the Liturgy to all the different levels of everyday life.

Therefore, a liturgical choreography is a living architectural brief by which the formation of religious architecture is fulfilled. Spatial boundaries dynamically contribute to this choreography: dividing the space into sub-spaces of different character (more sacred/ less sacred, communal/individual) and at the same time allowing its unification through their penetration by the movements of humans, sound, incense and light. This union is fulfilled through the combination of silence and communal rituals.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁸ On this see also: Ivan Moody, pp. 75-78.

See also: Alexander Lingas, “Hesychasm and Psalmody” in Anthony Bryer and Mary Cunningham (eds), *Mount Athos and Byzantine Monasticism. Papers from the Twenty-eighth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, March 1993*, (Hampshire: Variorum, 1996), pp. 155-170.

⁵³⁹ Tore Tvarno Lind, p. 184.

⁵⁴⁰ Nicoletta Isar, “Chora: Tracing the Presence”, *Review of European Studies*, 1:1 (June, 2009), p. 44.

Starting from the role of the icons in worship, the writer discusses the Byzantine Chora which we can still talk about as the major elements of its organization and performance have remained unchanged.

⁵⁴¹ See also: Pavel Florensky, *Iconostasis*, p. 59 – 60: Following this choreographic approach, Florensky argues that a temple-service is for the individual a simultaneous internal and external movement. It spiritually connects the

Critically appraising Isar's theory, Bissera Pentcheva underlines the active contribution of psalmody and censing in a liturgical chorography of the church through the inscription of sonic boundaries and aural intermediate zones. In particular, having its origin in Archaic Greek poetry, *choros* has always been regarded as a combination of singing (*hymnos*) and dancing (*pannychis*) connected to initiation rituals of young men and women. *Choros* was a ritual re-enactment of the active relationship between mortals and the gods, something that continued to exist in Classical Greece through the important role that *choral* voice and organized movement played in Greek tragedies. Based on these processes, Byzantine architecture began as the active context of human liturgical movement. The centrally organized plans, consolidated as a common church pattern during the Middle Byzantine period with their vaulted **surfaces** and the carefully placed openings giving the devotees the opportunity to perform the Christian drama in a more effective way. In this sense, from the sixth century rituals have mainly been conducted in the church (previously, they were also linked to processions in the city), disclosing the *choric* dynamics of a whole religious matrix. Initially all the devotees and later the choruses representing them participate in the drama through responsorial or antiphonal chanting. As in the case of natural light, sound is reflected on the concave surfaces and thus reverberated and amplified, symbolising for Christian Orthodox theology an enactment of the Incarnation as a succession of echoes acquiring greater tangibility. The shadows created by the censing make the changes of light more readable, providing an aural **surface** for them to move and materializing important theological meanings of the liturgy.⁵⁴² Its fragrance also contributes to this experience. Therefore, the smoke rising and 'carrying' the light coming from the dome symbolizes the achievement of the illuminating experience of *theosis* through constant prayer. The openings on the walls between the different spaces also play an important role as they allow the liturgy to become the plot, where human movement, chanting, light and incense are combined into a meaningful whole.

devotees to higher existential realms through an organized action in space, the "surface membranes" of which direct us to the "central kernel". These membranes have to do with structural elements that demarcate the field of the ritual play and divide it into different parts. The openings on these surfaces play a key role in Byzantine choreography allowing the (organised or not) passage of the individual through them. The pivot of this ascension is the participation in the Holy Communion when the main entrance of the iconostasis becomes the bridge towards the invisible, the Holy Altar.

⁵⁴² My emphasis.

Bissera V. Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon. Space, Ritual and the Senses in Byzantium*, (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), p. 55.

From the above examination, it can be argued that in the case of the Athonian *katholikon*, this collective *liturgical choreography* incorporates **silence**: an embodied vibration that relates to the repetition of the Jesus prayer and aims at contemplation of the divine. The monks silently pray in their stalls while the adornment of the walls and the movement of the different components enhance the liminal dynamics of the different built, temporal and sonic boundaries. The choreography is not only about the unification of the space but also about the inscription of an aural zone, a liminal atmosphere that fills the gaps between the individuals. These gaps are not mere voids, they are always filled with silence transmitted by the participants and being incorporated in the choral event which is both a boundary and a language. It defines the physical sphere of the monk. It is shared through the experience of the whole dramaturgy, carried by the different elements that interact with the semi-transparent boundaries of the place. Silence and sound, darkness and light, natural and artificial light take us back to the *liminality* of Hermes and his connection to the conveyance of a message, hermeneutics and negative theology. In parallel, the form of this choreography is not closed as it is open to the stranger recollecting the opening of Hestia to Hermes and the strangers that he brought inside the House.

Observation and Participation: *Liminality* and the Place Experience of the Strangers

The examination of the liminal qualities of the church also includes the presence of the strangers that changes the above ideal *hesychast* environment. Most of them are allowed to participate in the rituals of the church (except for the non-Greeks and Non-Orthodox in some of the monasteries) and interpret their multi-layered meaningful performance. The strangers usually experience this environment through a process of gradual familiarization, during which they may also imagine themselves passing from the mundane to the sacred, or from the mundane to a higher, existential level. They may also stand at the threshold and not cross these immaterial boundaries, dealing with space and the activities in it in a superficial way, something that happens in the case of tourists who keep a distance from their context.

It is worth adding here that according to Goergios, the abbot of the Gregoriou Monastery, the different ways of worship in Athos have a *dynamic character*. This becomes clear during the

services in the *katholikon*.⁵⁴³ For example, non-ceremonial movements of monks who are in charge of the practical needs of the ceremony are combined with the well-ordered ritual. According to monk Georgios, even the use of artificial (candle) lighting testifies to the fact that orthodox worship is a vivid organism. The simultaneous presence of ceremonial and *free* movement actively collaborates with materials that decay during the liturgy (waxes), all included in worship (and hence all serving an existential-eschatological goal).

Therefore the distinction between the inside and the outside of the church is unclear. Outsiders are allowed to enter the church during the services and interact with the place. Moreover, ritual movements are interconnected to freer ones, transforming the whole into a more open form. During my fieldwork at Gregoriou monastery, I participated in conversations held after the services and before meals mainly connected to what the people had already experienced. Sometimes non-religiously motivated people kept silent as they could not express their opinion about the services. Answering questions such as: “why can’t you express your opinion ?” they usually replied that they needed to re-experience it before answering, or that the difference of this experience to their everyday sphere made them feel unable to judge it critically. They were definitely disclosing their initial reaction to the encounter of the unfamiliar liturgical organisation and performance of space. Some of the pilgrims focused on receiving the Holy Communion and their answers were more connected to a religiously touristic approach. There were also tourists who did not attend the liturgies and woke up only some time before the meal began. There were also some people in the church following the gestures of the rituals and playing their praying ropes during the liturgy, after which they also kept silent. It was quite difficult for me to open a conversation with them.

We have to add here that the presence of the strangers in the *katholikon* may be inconvenient for the monks. In the monastery of Gregoriou the monks sometimes cannot find a stall to sit due to the increasing number of visitors. This causes a problem in the character of their participation in the liturgies, as they either have to stand outside or to listen to the liturgy through a radio transmitter. The *stasidi* thus becomes the subject of conflict when a monk feels that his identity is threatened by the visitor who wants to be accepted by the community. Characteristically a

⁵⁴³ Archimandrite Georgios, *Orthodox Monasticism and Mount Athos*, (Mount Athos: Holy Monastery of Mount Athos, 1998), p. 83.

monk said: “the stasidi becomes a kind of grave for the monk, a personal field of *hesychast* practice and it is sometimes really disturbing for us when we arrive at the church and cannot find a corner to pray”. Adding to this, twenty years ago it was decided that visitors to this monastery were free to sit wherever they wanted in the framework of a loosening of the boundaries and prohibitions reflected in the clear zoning of the building. This caused an intense problem, as on feast days and during summer period it was common to see even the choirs full of strangers. Extra chairs had to be added on these days, covering the free space and changing the character of its liturgical chorography. The Assembly of the monks thus decided that they either had to build a church only for the visitors outside the monastic core, or to return to the previous regulations of inhabitation of the different spaces of the *katholikon*. The former solution proved to be totally inappropriate for the life of the community, as they could not exclude the stranger from the actual services (giving the general boundary of the monastery more “border” characteristics with the danger of transforming it into a museum-like environment). Hence they decided to go back to the previous *typikon*, restoring the hierarchical character of the external and internal walls of the main church. A monk characteristically recollected: “It was a matter of orchestration. The role of strangers is undeniably important for the spiritual aspect of the community, but we needed to draw again the limits of our personal and communal integrity”.⁵⁴⁴ The balance between the inside and the outside, thus, may be transformed influencing the liturgical event of this place. The seats of the monks were occupied by visitors who may not practise inner prayer and their character changed from devices of *hesychast* practice into simple chairs. The stasidi is no longer only the penetrable silent cubicle that is actively involved in the communication between the praying monk and the rest of the ritual. It is used also by persons varying from pilgrims who may interact with the events in a meaningful way to members of an audience who watch a religious performance. The ritual is objectified and a distance is created between the event of a place and the viewer transforming it into more of a spectacle.

This objectification is also enhanced by the daily display of some of the relics, an action that carries elements of a museum-like experience. In particular, after the evening meal and just before Compline a long table is placed under the central dome and some of the holy relics of the monastery are displayed on it to be venerated by the visitors. The monk who takes them out of

⁵⁴⁴ Fieldtrip to Mount Athos (August 2012).

the chancel describes the history of each item and then invites the visitors to proceed and kiss them. Often, some of them give him praying ropes and crosses to sanctify by placing them on the relics. They feel that they can in this way carry part of this holiness back to their homes. Whereas this experience adds museum-like qualities to the character of the *katholikon* as it not connected to a specific ritual and held only when there are visitors, it is still different from an actual museum. The relics are enclosed in display boxes that open, allowing the outsiders to kiss them as part of a liminal or liminoid stage of their journey. [Figures 9.39 & 9.40] This embodied interaction with the displayed remnants has been included in the pilgrims' experience since medieval times.⁵⁴⁵



Figures 9.39 & 9.40: The relics of Saint Fotini the Samaritan and Saint Anastasia the Roman that are kept in the Holy Chancel of the *katholikon* of Gregoriou Monastery.

In this sense, silence is usually the response of the visitors who enter the dark and uncanny liturgical environment of the *katholikon*. Richard Coyne describes the way silence becomes a response to our interaction with specific architectural environments, such as the soundscape of a Renaissance church in Venice.⁵⁴⁶ Quoting the architectural theorist Juhani Pallasmaa he states:

“A powerful architectural experience silences all noise; it focuses our attention on our very existence and as with all art, it makes us aware of our fundamental solitude”. Certain architectures at times take our breath away. The sublime is also that which escapes the reflective observer’s capacity to imagine or describe: the extent of the constellations, the size of an atom, pure transcendence, complete silence, the Big Bang, ceasing to be, the terrors of nature, the power of the machine, the global navigation satellite system (GNSS), the implausibility of flight.⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴⁵ On the role of relics in the Byzantine era see: John Wortley, *Studies on the Cult of Relics in Byzantium up to 1204*, (United Kingdom: Ashgate Variorum, 2009).

⁵⁴⁶ Richard, Coyne, *The Tuning of Place...*, p. 209.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 210.

The silence of the visitors is mainly connected with the absence of sound and is different to that of the monks. Encountering the unfamiliar environment, they silently observe it in order to familiarise themselves with it. Thus, the silent monks in their stalls are observed by the outsiders, which may be disturbing for them, acquiring panoptic qualities; feeling that they are observed they may focus on showing their self discipline, loosening contact with the existential qualities of their silence. This was also included in the aforementioned controversy on the use of the stall, as they had to practise meditation to avoid being disturbed by the gaze of the outsiders, and also deal with the lack of the stasidia. Almost all the published travel accounts of the outsiders include descriptive mappings of the unfamiliar environment of the church. The panoptical qualities that are incorporated in the place-event with the entrance of the strangers change the intermediate aural environment of the space, adding *liminoid* characteristics in it. Liminoid is a term used by Turner to describe the quasi-liminal phenomena that play an important role in contemporary societies, usually happening outside their boundaries and questioning their formal order (a theatrical performances, sport events, marches and so forth). In the religious atmosphere of the *katholikon*, therefore, different aural qualities (sometimes even antithetical) are incorporated, asking for a harmonic *attunement* and adding to the meaning of the place.⁵⁴⁸

These processes are also depicted in the published accounts of the examined travellers. For example, the Christian Orthodox pilgrim Scott Cairns describes his first experience of the interior of an Athonian *katholikon* in a characteristic way. Passing from the bright summer afternoon into the dark narthex made him feel something special. "The combination of dark icons covering virtually every inch of every surface- a darkness made all the deeper by centuries of soot (from beeswax candles and resinous incense)- and the relatively few candles lit for this moment of the service" made him stand for a while at the **threshold**, to see what was before him. When his eyes had adjusted, Cairns had the opportunity to see the interior of the church. Overwhelmed by the impressive combination of oil and wax candles, Byzantine icons and hand-painted walls, he related them to their symbolic use. As he was an Orthodox believer, he could recognize the faces of the saints, the hagiographic events and the scriptural scenes. During this process of

⁵⁴⁸ On the terms "liminal" and "liminoid" see: Victor Turner, "Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbolology.", *Rice University Studies: The Anthropological Study of Human Play*, 60:3, pp. 53-92.

familiarization with the sacred place, he noticed the different-shaped stalls and recognized the concluding hymns of Vespers, watching the monks venerating all the icons of the church.

At two o'clock the next night, Cairns was wakened by the rhythmic hammering of the *talanton*, signalling the approaching Morning service. He stood up, got dressed and went to the church to attend the liturgy. The interior of the church was darker than the previous afternoon. He pushed the **door** "to enter and had the strange sensation that the door was still closed". The whole space resembled a *void* which had to be inhabited by monks and visitors during the liturgies. An oil lamp just next to an icon of the Mother of God was the only source of light. He walked towards it and realized that he was not alone: "[m]ost of the stalls lining the walls of the narthex were already occupied by monks, seated and praying, though some seemed to slump so low in their stalls- a blur of ink in the midst of deep shadow (...)".⁵⁴⁹ Some moments later he could discern the knots of a prayer rope, being drawn between a monk's fingers. Cairns lit three candles (one for his wife and two for their children) and set them in the stand, while a monk from the chorus read the six familiar psalms of Matins. He venerated the icons and stood at a corner just behind the semicircle of the left-hand choir, feeling touched by the chanting of the monks, "hearing (...) a mysterious otherness being sung this way, as if in that confusion of sounds they became less like petitions and more like communion – that is, more nearly occasions of prayer".⁵⁵⁰ During the liturgy, he kept reciting Jesus prayer.⁵⁵¹

On the second day of his stay at Philotheou, Cairns was again woken by the first beats of the *talanton*. Entering the church an hour later he had again to pause at the **threshold** for his eyes to adjust to the dark interior. Helped by the light of the **same** lit candle, he walked into the narthex and venerated the icons. He and his friend found two stalls in their "**familiar**" corner behind the left choir and settled in to pray with the reader, beginning the six psalms.⁵⁵² A number of similar experiences are included in Cairn's travel testimony. In them space and time are dynamically interrelated, being part of the happening of a topography in which he gradually felt engaged. He interpreted the dramaturgy through the aforementioned process of gradual familiarisation. Carrying his structural/mundane sphere, he had the opportunity to recognize the

⁵⁴⁹ Scott, Cairns, *Short Trip to the Edge. Where Earth meets Heaven. A Pilgrimage*, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2007), 2007, p.54.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 55.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 56.

⁵⁵² *Ibid*, p. 65.

rituals and reflect on their meaning. Entering a *katholikon* he was always trying to find his “habitual corner” behind the choir, free to sit and attend the services while saying the Jesus Prayer. He was seeking to be attuned to the religious event. During the fourth day of his first pilgrimage, the long service in the *katholikon* of Saint Paul monastery made him feel that “the rhythm of worship, the rhythm of [silent] prayer, and to some extent, even the rhythm of life on Athos was becoming - had become - familiar and satisfying”.⁵⁵³ Therefore, starting from a distant silent stance, Cairns gradually felt engaged in the rituals through interaction with the dynamic combination of communal rituals and silent prayer. The liturgical aural environment of the *katholikon* and the role of the penetrable boundaries (stasidia, iconostasis, frescoed walls) contributed in his pilgrimage experience.⁵⁵⁴

In some cases this process of familiarization is also followed by actual participation in the rituals, something that mainly happens in the experiences of pilgrims and religious tourists as it is also included in the aims of their journey. Pilgrims are usually bodily engaged in the rituals and at the same time may pray silently in their stalls, closing their eyes, bowing their heads and playing with their praying ropes. |Most of the time participation in Holy Communion is part of their experience, usually following confession of their sins to one of the Athonian *hesychasts*. Participation in the Holy Communion of an Athonian monastery was one of the aims of Scott Cairns’ journey. The phrase “With the fear of God, faith and love, draw near” used to invite the people to participate in the Eucharist signalled his involvement in a new, more meaningful experience of a ritual already known to him by the liturgies in his homeland.⁵⁵⁵ Several pilgrims during my fieldwork stressed the importance of participation in Holy Communion in one of the churches of the peninsula as the peak-experience of their journey. Most of them received Holy Communion during their last morning service on Mount Athos, leaving the peninsula “transformed”.⁵⁵⁶

Similar religious quests are also found in the accounts of existential tourists, such as Christopher Merrill and Ralph Harper, for whom the imaginary boundary from the familiar to the unfamiliar also coincided with the one between the profane and the sacred. In the monastery of

⁵⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 111.

⁵⁵⁴ See also: Nikolaos Koufos *Holy Week on Mount Athos*, (Mount Athos: The Holy Monastery of Iveron, 1997).

⁵⁵⁵ Scott Cairns, pp. 58-59.

⁵⁵⁶ Fieldwork at Mount Athos: 2010, 2011, 2012.

Esphigmenou, Christopher Merrill, as a non-Christian Orthodox had to stay outside the *katholikon* during Vespers. As he was listening to the repetition of a shortened version of the Jesus prayer ("Lord Have Mercy") he felt disappointed that he could not see the interior of the church during the rituals. He also felt that his experience on Athos was similar to Robert Frost's description of the *sound of sense*.⁵⁵⁷ "a conversation through a door in which the words are interrupted", disclosing the presence of a frontier between himself and the happenings of Athos in both the material and the immaterial levels that was no longer solid and impenetrable as he was gradually communicating with the sacred dynamics of the place. His exclusion from the rituals was experienced as part of a meaningful process of familiarization and gradual engagement in the embodied topography. He could listen to the liturgical sounds behind the walls and connect them to the rest of his experience in a creative way. The boundary was sonically transparent, materialising the idea of a physical-spiritual journey from the outside to the inside.

Similarly, while attending the Divine Liturgy from the glazed exo-narthex of the Pantokratoros Monastery, he felt that the ritual was all about "a movement from one door to another door, one world to another world". This idea was followed by the realization of the difference between the dark interior of the church and the illuminated courtyard.⁵⁵⁸ He also felt that this is connected to the experience of walking along the paths of Athos and stopping at the monastic complexes. For him, his experience on Athos was an opening to the unexpected during which he encountered a number of frontiers on both the material and the immaterial/psychological level. Crossing these boundaries and continuing on his way was experienced as a rite of passage in which he had the opportunity to contact the *liminal* dynamics of a pilgrimage. As he characteristically argues:

⁵⁵⁷ See the official site of The Friends of Robert Frost (<http://www.frostfriends.org/sounddevices.html>):

The Sound of Sense: This is a term coined by Frost and most importantly governs his theory of sound. Frost best explained the concept in two letters he wrote when his first books of poetry were published, one written to his friend John Bartlett on July 4, 1913 and the other to Sidney Cox on January 19, 1914. (Worth reading in full, Selected Letters) Here are some excerpts: ..the sound of sense is "the abstract vitality of our speech." "The best place to get the abstract sound of sense is from voices behind a door that cuts off the words." Sounds.."are summoned by the audile imagination and they must be positive, strong and definitely and unmistakably indicated by the context." (sense). We get "cadences by skillfully breaking the sounds of sense with all their irregularity of accent across the regular beat of the meter." Frost's use of the sound of sense leads to his special interpretation of tone. Still seems confusing, doesn't it. William Pritchard explains this idea very well in his book, "Frost: A Literary Life Reconsidered" (pages 78-100)

⁵⁵⁸ Christopher Merrill, pp. 281-287.

Each step that we take can enact the movement from one world to another, from the present into the eternally present, though it is also the case that we are generally oblivious to the spiritual possibilities inherent in our every word and gesture. We walk and talk most of the time, and then, occasionally, something pulls us out of our daily routines and we may be transported out of ourselves. This is what the Divine Liturgy enacts, and so it is that whenever we participate in a church service, with our whole being, we move from the quotidian into eternity.

(...) [Similarly] the interior of an Orthodox church seems to me to be an essay in doors and windows onto eternity – which was the subject of *Things of the Hidden God* and my continuing quest.⁵⁵⁹

The refusal of entry to the *katholikon* during the rituals almost always surprises the non-Christian Orthodox visitors and influences the progress of their journeys. During my fieldtrips I sometimes saw foreigners insisting on entering the *katholikon* and/or asking for further explanations of this barrier. This is characteristically depicted in the published account of Ralph Harper who went to Mount Athos in 1986.⁵⁶⁰ His participation in the rituals of the *katholikon* and the refectory played an important role in his journey. The initial period of a distant familiarization was transformed into an existential experience of the space that gradually transformed his travel into a pilgrimage. In this sense the sonic boundaries of the *talanton* and the *semantron* for example were transformed from simple time-signals into invitations to a communication with the mystical element, and the liturgical chorography in the unique aural environment of the church was an unexpected “soul stirring experience” that he felt the need to examine through the actual participation in them.

This existential quest was interrupted when he was not allowed to enter the *katholikon* during the services at the Zografou monastery. From this point onwards he tried to re-live the experiences of the first three days. The constant (almost enforced) recollection of those moments was the only motivation to continue his journey. An example of this conscious recollection was the sense of engagement in the communal rituals that he had felt during the Mass at Stavronikita Monastery, which was retrieved every time he entered the *katholikon* of

⁵⁵⁹ Interview, Sunday 27 May, 2013. Answer(s) to my questions: You mention at some point that while attending the Divine Liturgy from the glazed exo-narthex of the Pantokratoros Monastery you felt that the liturgy was all about a movement from one door to another door, one world to another world. This is also followed by the realization of the difference between the inside and the outside of the church. I would like you to explain a little more what you mean by the quoted phrase in relation to your pilgrimage. Is this connected to the walking along the paths and the stops at the monastic complexes? How is this connected to the architecture of the church in which the divine liturgy is held? How was this translated in your existential quest?

⁵⁶⁰ Ralph Harper, *Journey from Paradise: Mount Athos and the Interior Life*, (Editions Du Beffroi, 1987).

another monastery. He was so anxious to find himself inside a church again that whenever he reached a monastery, he tried to find the door of the *katholikon* to enter. Harper believed that his journey would be an “adventure”, the meaning of which related to the «crossing of the boundaries of safety» with which he had also become familiar through “reading and writing about existentialism, metaphysical homelessness, love and religion”. The experience of the *unexpected* influenced him to the point of not being able to clarify his stay at Mount Athos. At the end of his journey he even doubted the meaning of the «spiritual element» which he had experienced but never managed to define.⁵⁶¹

Therefore, while staying at Gregoriou monastery, he tried to enter the church to attend Vespers and recollect the previous special Athonian ritual experiences. Once again he was not allowed to enter the church and, as a result, his feeling of “euphoria” was abruptly interrupted. He tried again to enter, giving several reasons, such as that he was a Christian and that his wife was Greek. His attempts were rejected. He had a feeling of “making a fool of himself”, but he did not mind. He wanted to enter the church at all costs and relive the “revealing moments of the first three days”.⁵⁶² At some point a young man came up to him and led him behind an open window of the church from which he could see the whole ritual. He, who could not participate, could at least see and listen:

While I stood outside the church a young man came up to me and told me that if I followed him I would be able to see and to hear. I had not noticed that I had attracted attention. He led me to an open window in the naos [main church]. When I looked through the bars, I could see what was going on inside. The trouble was I was on the outside – or was I? - and there were bars in between. Who was in prison, I or the monks?⁵⁶³

Harper was not allowed to return to one of the monasteries of the first part of his journey, nor did he want to make another journey there. He decided to stay in an intermediate condition in which on the one hand he could not become a Christian and on the other he could not repress his desire to re-experience the unprecedented feeling of his first days at Athos. Trying to bridge this gap he wrote his book in which he re-narrates his travel almost like a diary. He characteristically says that “the aim of this book” was the “clarification of all the unknown feelings”. This takes us back to Simmel’s approach to the role of the door in the liminal

⁵⁶¹ Ralph Harper, *Journey from Paradise: Mount Athos and the Interior Life*, (Editions Du Beffroi, 1987), p. 63.

⁵⁶² *Ibid*, p. 102.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid*.

dynamics of a boundary. The *closing* of the door of the main church transforms its built boundaries into borders that demarcate more clearly the events held in it. This is also connected for the monks with the idea of the avaton and how this is applied to the use of space by the insiders, dividing the visitors also into the groups of initiated (monks), those being initiated (pilgrims) and non initiated (non-orthodox).

From this discussion, it becomes clear that the *katholikon* plays an important role in the experience of the Athonian topography. The cave-like *katholikon* of Gregoriou monastery becomes, thus, a spiritual womb for every monk independently and at the same time for the whole monastic community. In its framework we can find the dynamic fusion of different spheres that while having *Axis Mundi* dynamics are also in a constant dialogue. These physical-spiritual cores (domes, stalls, choirs) are dynamically interrelated through the constant interconnection between the communal rituals and the silent presence of the monks. Boundaries play an important role in the process. Hierarchical division of the *katholikon* and the simultaneous unification of the spaces through openings on them intensively add to the religious character of the building through the multi-sensual experience of a liturgical chorography.⁵⁶⁴ On the other hand liturgical chorography is also open to pilgrims and tourists who initially become silent observers of the whole process during which they may move from a more distant to a more existential experience. Therefore, *hestial* and hermetic movements are connected to create a religious place event in which the polarities silence/sound, movement/stasis, familiar/unfamiliar, inside/outside and personal/communal are always in a dialogue.

⁵⁶⁴The experience of this dynamic context is also intensified in the case of Gregoriou monastery's *katholikon* by the chapel of Saint Gregory that is connected to it through a narrow door on the north wall of the *lite*. It was built in 1851 and follows the type of the compressed cruciform domed church. The chapel plays an active role during the services of the *Katholikon*. The monks who sit there can listen to the liturgy through an opening between this space and the main church. Moreover, the *ekklisiastikos* includes the chapel in the incensing of the liturgical space during the services, testifying to the common worship shared by the two churches. The floor of the chapel is covered with stone slabs of different sizes. Under its dome there is also a square frame with a rhombus in the middle that is flanked both from its eastern and western sides by two single pieces of white marble. The whole motif can be regarded as a compressed narrative of the tripartite division of an Athonian *katholikon* into the narthex, the *lite* and the main church. This unique small space contributes to the cave qualities of the whole, resembling a mysterious branch of it. Quite dark, with remnants of 19th century frescoes on its walls (dome, and pendentives), and numerous moveable icons hung side by side the chapel becomes part of a liturgical narrative that is read in the most authentic way only through the services. The dome is the most illuminated part of the chapel, adding one more symbolical connection to the sky in the complex. This also enhanced by the relatively high lantern that influences the lighting of the space.

Chapter Ten

The Refectory (*Τραπεζα - τράπεζα*): Communal Meals after the Liturgies

According to the monasteries' foundation documents, normally *trapeza's* construction was connected to the one of the *katholikon*. The two buildings were ritually combined, which influenced their location in the complex and their architectural formation.⁵⁶⁵ Therefore, the Athonian monastery's refectory is included in the 'zone of religious worship'.⁵⁶⁶ The completion of every monastic office is followed by a common meal in the refectory.⁵⁶⁷

The notion of sacrifice plays an important role in communal meals in different (religious) traditions, defining the interaction between the giver and the receiver, the host and the guest.⁵⁶⁸ Food, thus, is a 'sacrificial gift' prepared and given by a host to the participants of a meal, activating the interrelationship between two or more individuals. This offering gives birth to what Gerardus van der Leeuw calls a "mystic power (...) which establishes *communio*" as it is shared and always open to a possible returned gift.⁵⁶⁹ Carrying the dynamics of a reciprocal interaction, the gift itself becomes the heart of a sacrificial act. Its flowing plays the most important role in the whole process. The sacrificer's effort to prepare and distribute food is incorporated in the moving gift, assuring the relation between man and man and is also used in different religious traditions to symbolize the affirmation of the relation between man and god.⁵⁷⁰

In this sense, food rituals were also part of ancient Greek culture. Meals were included in festivals and were usually characterised as the "fulsome banquet[s] of the gods", as Greeks believed that gods were also participating in them. Therefore, numerous gods were invited to the banquet included in the festival of Theoxenia that was held in Delphi. Seats were prepared for them around the table and portions of food were served to them which after the meal were

⁵⁶⁵ See also: Svetlana Popovič, "The trapeza in cenobitic monasteries: Architectural and Spiritual Contexts", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 52 (1998), p. 292: According to the writer this is the Great Lavra's monument which became a paradigm for most Athonite monasteries and monasteries elsewhere in the Byzantine sphere.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 282.

⁵⁶⁷ See also: Alice-Mary Talbot, "Mealtime in Monasteries: the Culture of the Byzantine Refectory" in Anthony Bryer, Leslie Brubaker, Kallireoe Linardou (editors), *Eat, Drink and be Merry: (Luke, 12:19): Food and Wine in Byzantium, Society for the promotion of Byzantine Studies*, (United Kingdom: Ashgate, December 2007), p. 119.

⁵⁶⁸ Gerardus van der Leeuw, "From Religion in Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology", in Jeffrey Carter, *Understanding Religious Sacrifice*, (London, New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 152.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 154.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 156-157.

distributed to men.⁵⁷¹ The notion of ‘sacrifice’ (*thusia*) played a major role in these processes, connected both to rituals of consecrating and offering either to gods or to dead mortals or heroes.⁵⁷² For example, in the case of the Panathenea festival, the sacrifice of meat was conducted by the priest on an altar after a long procession through the city. After *thusia* the meat was equally distributed to the participants.⁵⁷³ Libations (*sponde*) played an important role in these rituals. They had to do with the pouring of a liquid on the ground while in parallel the conductor was addressing them to a god or to a dead hero through prayers. Libations were also part of symposia.⁵⁷⁴ The symposium was a gathering of important members of a Greek *polis*, ritually connected to Dionysus, that followed a formal banquet and in which only wine was served.

Religious meals are also included in the Old and New Testaments, always connected to the revelation of the *divine*. Through the parable of the ‘great dinner’ (Matthew 22: 1-14) Jesus Christ introduced the importance of ritual meals as retrievals of His sacrifice.⁵⁷⁵ Moreover, in the Last Supper He prefigured the Eucharist, showing the way people would liturgically retrieve future communion with the Trinitarian God. Another typical example is that during the way to Emmaus, Jesus was not recognised by His followers until ‘he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them’ (Luke 24:30) confirming the role that communal meals can play in the liturgical life of the faithful.

According to Dennis Smith early Christian meals as depicted in the Scriptures are linked with ancient Greek food rituals. The combination of the banquet and the drinking event of

⁵⁷¹ Walter Burkert *Greek Religion. Archaic and Classical*, translated by John Raffan, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p. 107.

Similar ritual banquets are found in Japanese culture, in which people offer food and organise festive meals to venerate their gods, *kami*. Hence, when a Buddhist temple is founded colourful food offerings are made to the gods. Moreover, the guardian deities of rice are also venerated through food-rituals, especially during harvest. In them the gods (a male and a female one) are invited to dine with the human participants after having a hot bath. The gods are served first and then food is distributed to the master of the house and the family members. Sharing food with gods becomes of vital importance for their lives. The gods then return to the mountains where they live and descend again in Spring. On this, see: Yoshida Mitsukuni and Sesoko Tsune (eds), *Naorai. Communion of the Table*, (Tokyo: Cosmo Public Relations Corp.), 1989, pp. 16-35.

⁵⁷² Louise Bruit Zaidman and Pauline Schmitt Panter, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, translated by Paul Cartledge, (Cambridge, New York and Australia: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 29-30.

⁵⁷³ *Ibid*, pp. 34-35.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 39-40.

⁵⁷⁵ The parable describes the organisation of wedding banquet for the King’s son. The invited people could not come because of a number of different unimportant excuses. The King then invited all of the rest of his people who could come as long as they were prepared, clean and wearing proper clothing.

symposium may also be connected (in terms of borrowing ritual schemes as vehicles of religious ideas) to the prefiguration of the Eucharist through the Mystical Supper described by the evangelists.⁵⁷⁶

The important role of daily meals in the Athonian life, therefore, is possibly related to the *agape*, the ancient Christian religious communal meal, based on the Christian character of food rituals discussed above, and the importance of the Last Supper, but of different liturgical value to that of the Eucharist:

It is well known that a meal, or better a communal meal, was very important for the first Christians, whether monks or ordinary believers. Even the first anchorites, who mortified the flesh for the salvation of their souls, gathered twice a week to eat together with other brethren. It is also well known that the *agape* -a religious meal performed by the first Christians, with its roots in Judaism – was different from the Eucharist whose liturgical source was the Last Supper.⁵⁷⁷

The Athonian monks believe that the connection between services and meals is based on the model of the life of the first Apostles and the early Christians. Even for those who do not have the knowledge to make these connections (or at least who did not mention them in discussions with me), the interrelation of the two spaces is included in a process of liturgical ritualization that is able to bind every aspect of their life (material or immaterial) into a whole. Characteristically a monk argued: “Everything is included in a religious framework that is realized through the everyday programme of alternating rituals and more profane actions, like the meals or the different everyday tasks. But even the latter are felt like part of a wider service, repetitively conducted aiming at our spiritual re-direction”.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁶ Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist. The Banquet in the Early Christian World*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

⁵⁷⁷ Svetlana Popovic, p. 282.

⁵⁷⁸ Fieldwork at Mount Athos, August 2012.



Figures 10.1 & 10.2: The Refectories of Great Lavra and Simonopetra monasteries.

Athonian communal meals are organized as rituals included in the daily program of the monastic community materializing the extension of liturgy to all the different levels of personal and communal Christian life. The beginning and end of meals are marked with chanting and prayers, sonic connections with the rituals held in the church. Usually, the visitors enter and take their seats first. Then the monks enter in a ceremonial way, wearing their formal uniform (as during the daily service at church), while one of them chants. The main phases of the meals are signalled by a bell rung by the abbot at specific moments (the beginning, the middle and the end). During the whole process a monk reads religious texts. The ringing of this bell is therefore a sonic boundary that divides the meal into different parts: allowing the reader to start reading, allowing the participants to start drinking water and wine, signalling the beginning and the end of the process.⁵⁷⁹ Characteristically, a pilgrim describes:

The abbot blesses the ‘food and the drinks’ while in front of him there are two lit candelabra. Another monk says a short prayer and the meal begins: beans boiled in water, two boiled potatoes, some olives, a piece of melon, bread. The reader reads a talk of Saint Agapios from Crete, an Athonian monk: ‘nobody will inherit the heavenly kingdom if not bodily struggling and imitating the salvational life path of Christ’. The reading is held in order for the mind to be distracted from the earthly goods during this only moment of contact with necessary material delight.

⁵⁷⁹A similar connection between services and meals is also found in Zen monasticism. In particular, there are three daily meals in a zen-buddhist monastery. The morning (shukuza) meal is held just after the morning services. After ten minutes of prayers the monks eat their vegetarian meal in absolute silence. At midday there is also a noon silent meal. Finally, the evening silent meal (yakuseki) is also followed by communal meditation in the zendo, the communal meditation hall. On this see: Morris, Augustine, “Zen and Benedictine Monks as Mythopoeic Models of Nongecentered Worldviews and Lifestyles”, *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 6 (1986), p. 32.

Similarities are also underlined between the Athonian ritual-meals and the Benedictines. Breakfast also follows the morning Office and a short period of private meditation. It is a silent meal, opened and closed with prayers of thanksgiving, blessing and repentance. The midday meal also follows a Divine office held in the chapel. It is also held in silence while religious pieces are read. Furthermore, the portion of the food consumed is controlled (“about a pound of bread a day” “plus two vegetables at the main meal”). Finally, the evening meal follows Vespers. On this see: Morris, Augustine, p. 33.

Sometime a sound is heard, made by the abbot who hits a small metallic simantron, giving everyone permission to start drinking. When everyone has eaten his meal the sound is heard. The reader stops and goes to the Abbot to make a prostration and receive some of the remnants of the meal as a blessing. The abbot and the priest stand up and go to the exit. The first one stays there blessing every monk who passes in front of him. Next to him the cook and the trapezaris stand with their heads bowed, apologizing for possible mistakes in the preparation of the meal.⁵⁸⁰

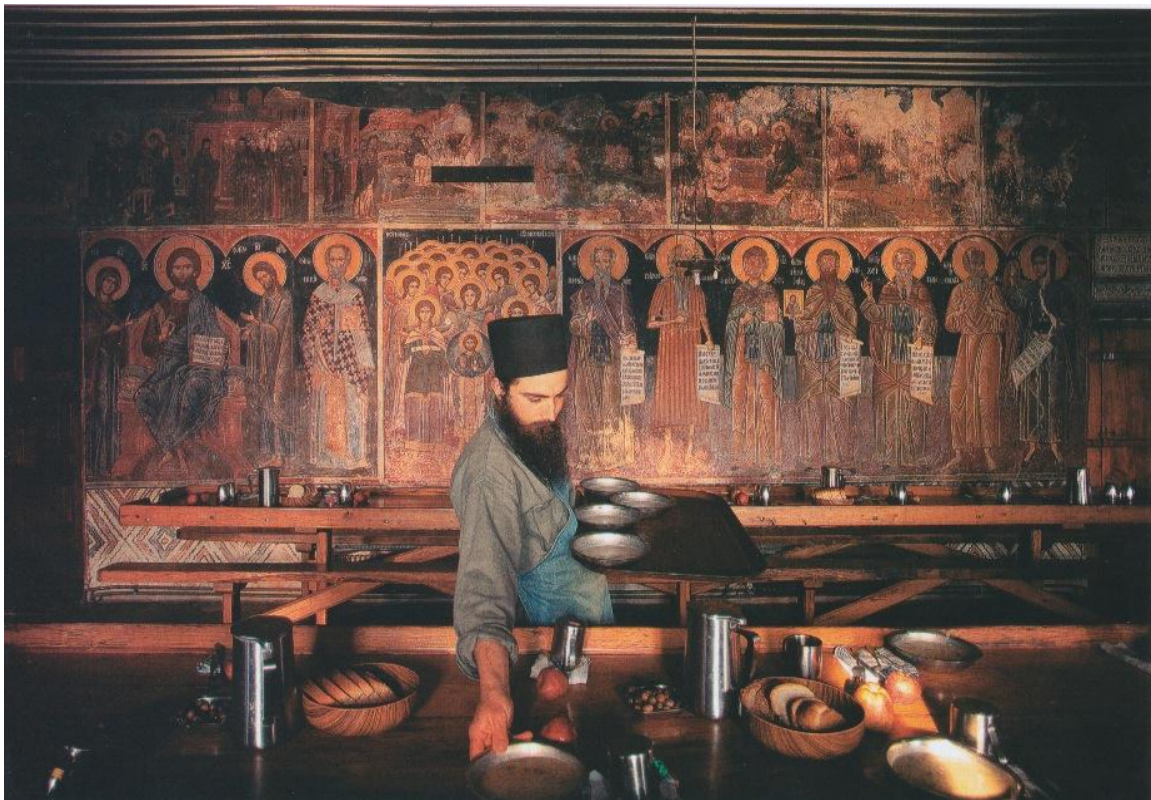


Figure 10.3: Laying the table for the meal at Docheiariou monastery.

⁵⁸⁰ Ioannis Xatzifotis, *Everyday Life on Mount Athos*, p. 123, (My translation).
The trapezaris is the monk who takes care of the organization of the meal.



Figure 10.4: During the meal at Xenophontos Monastery.

The refectories are constructed as closed spaces conditioned by a sense of introversion. They invite all the senses of the participants to focus on their interior. Therefore the iconographic program is mainly connected to scriptural themes related to food, such as the Last Supper, but also including other themes, creating quite a clear frontier between the interior and the exterior.⁵⁸¹ In parallel, the readings and the chanting are also connected to the liturgical and festal cycles. They all create an aural environment of communal ritual that is different from the outside although it is sensually connected to the events in the *katholikon* held previously. Therefore, it feels like an extension of the church, a place of communal worship in which eating and drinking are organically incorporated. Each monk has to sit silently in a specific seat, trying to follow the readings. At the same time the varying number of visitors dynamically enhances the temporal character of the building, questioning the clarity of the boundary between the inside and the outside.

⁵⁸¹ Svetlana Popovic, "The Trapeza in Cenobitic Monasteries: Architectural and Spiritual Contexts". pp. 298-300.

The way food is consumed has always been included in the embodied practices of the ascetics of different religious traditions.⁵⁸² Control of the diet, through avoidance of eating luxury food (such as meat) and fasting periods, sometimes connected to the festive calendars, aim to contribute to an embodied realization of the Athonians' *hesychast* life. Self-discipline and self-restriction are therefore enhanced through specific dietary habits that aim at moral purification.⁵⁸³ This is degraded in relation to the different ways of ascetic life. Hence the hermits of the Athonian desert usually do not cook, instead consuming small amounts of dry food that is mostly brought to them from bigger monastic structures or donated by visitors who happen to pass by their hermitage. It is also usual to see small food containers left at specific points along the footpaths (usually at intersections, or at clearings) to be filled by the passers-by.⁵⁸⁴ At the same time, the kinds of foods (and drinks: wine and water) consumed during the meals at a coenobitic community are usually cooked with the products of the monastery's plantations, following the festal cycles, as the Christian calendar is divided into fasting and non-fasting periods. For example the monks do not consume meat, dairy products, olive-oil and wine on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and some Saturdays (if preparing to receive Holy Communion the following Sunday). The same dietary rules are followed as an embodied preparation for forty days before Christmas, forty seven days before Easter, fifteen days before the 15th August (Celebration of the Assumption of the Mother of God) and also for a period of time that varies each year before the celebration of the Angels' Assembly (30th June). In this sense, a number of temporal boundaries are also applied in the use of the refectory, liturgically combining it with the *katholikon* and the rest of the monastery. The choice of the texts read during the different periods also contribute to this process, as they are most of the time connected to its liturgical meaning.

The location of the building in the monastery supports this devotional character through its relation to the *katholikon*, as illustrated in the following plans. [Figure 10.5] The space between the two buildings thus acquires a special meaning. Either open or covered it connects their

⁵⁸² For the role of fasting in Muslim tradition see: Catherine Bell, *Ritual. Perspectives and Dimensions*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 124-126.

⁵⁸³ See: Deborah Lupton, *Food, The Body and the Self*, (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996), p.133: These dietary controls are also found in the western Christian tradition. For example, during Renaissance a lot of female ascetics practised self-starvation. For example, Catherine of Sienna (14th century) ate only bread, water and raw vegetables from the age of sixteen years. Rough woolen clothes, an iron chain bound tightly around her hips, reduction of sleep and a vow of silence contributed to her extreme ascetic life.

⁵⁸⁴ For the role of dietary control in the life of the Desert Fathers, see: Deborah Lupton, pp. 6-10.

entrances allowing the daily procession of monks and pilgrims after the services. It becomes an extended threshold, where the passage reactualises the above religious connotations of a meal. The following plans show the close relationship of the buildings and how the intermediate spaces are formed in order to support it.

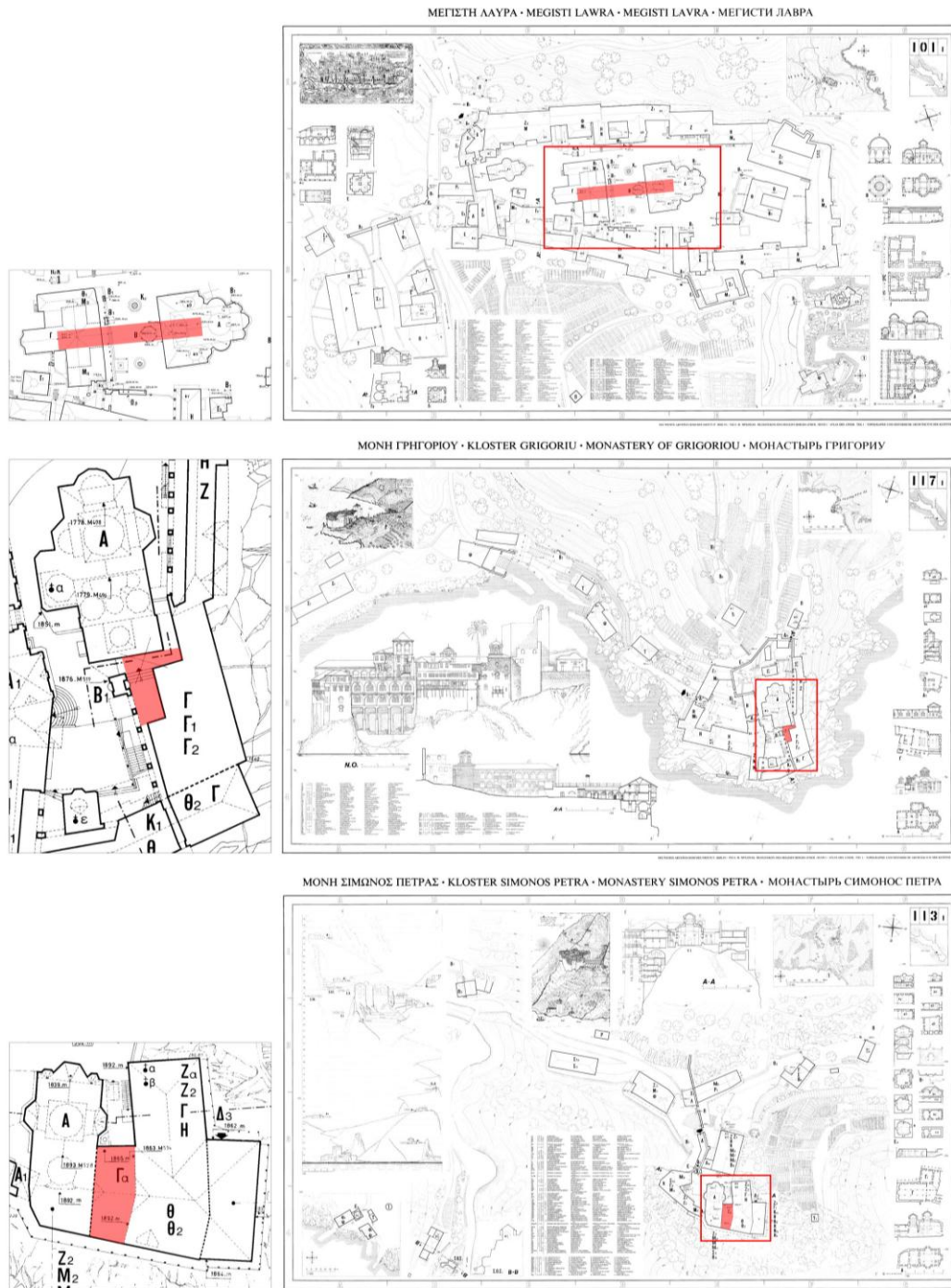


Figure 10.5: Plans of the complex church-refectory of the monasteries: 1.Great Lavra, 2.Gregoriou, 3.Simonopetra. The intermediate space is indicted with red.

The L-shaped refectory of Gregoriou monastery is situated **opposite** the *Katholikon*. It was totally refurbished in 1993. As we can see in Figure 10.5, the space that connects the two places is a trapezoidal semi-open space. On its north side there is a series of windows and on the south side a water basin and the beginning of a narrow remnant of the yard that runs in parallel with the side wall of the *katholikon* and leads to the eastern wing of the cells.



Figure 10.6: The space between the *katholikon* and the refectory of Gregoriou Monastery.

Similarly, in order to enter the narthex of Simonopetra monastery [Figure 10.5] one has to walk along the balcony that is connected to the courtyard and find a rectangular recess on the left hand side. Opposite this opening, the *Deisis*⁵⁸⁵ and Saint Simon the Athonite are represented next to another opening that leads to the transitional space between the entrances to the *lite* and the refectory. At the left side of this special exo-narthex we find the main entrance of the church between the depictions of the archangels Gabriel and Michael. This space is an important bond of the monastery. The wall that separates it into two semi-open recesses acquires an intense *liminal* character as it defines two different liturgical acts: on one side the entrance to the Church after the wall-paintings are venerated, and on the other the entrance of the congregation to the refectory for the meal. The refectory is situated in a direct relation to the *katholikon*. The aforementioned intermediate semi-open passage connects the two spaces. Controlled entrance of natural light and air enhances its transitional character: the movement

⁵⁸⁵ The enthroned Almighty flanked by the Mother of God and Saint John the Baptist.

from the *lite* to the refectory after the morning Supplication to the Mother of God and the afternoon Vespers.

The interior of the Athonian refectory is organised to support the meal. The walls' iconographic programme, the hierarchical arrangement of a series of tables, the place where the reader stands contribute to the creation of the field of this communal act. In this sense, three series of tables are set along the arms of the refectory of Gregoriou monastery, around which monks and laymen sit according to their position in the hierarchy of the community. [Figure 10.7, 10.8, 10.9 & 10.10] The outsiders sit at the tables near the entrance and the monks at the inner ones. The reader stands **between** these two zones. In the middle of the long wing there is a central table used only by the monks who are priests. At its eastern side, just on the corner between the two wings there is a small table at which the priest of the day and the abbot sit. Different rituals that are included in the *Typikon* of the Refectory of the monastery are held in this space. They relate to the formal meals that follow the morning services and some of the evening ones. Special rituals are held after the Sunday liturgy, the all-night vigils and the feast days aiming to embody the aforementioned liturgical meanings.



Figure 10.7: Plan of the refectory (With pale red the tables of the guests, with dark brown the table of the priest of the day, with light brown the tables of the monks, with blue the reader's place).



Figures 10.8, 10.9 & 10.10: The refectory.

The iconographic programme of the refectory is included in the same liturgical framework. On its **walls** one can read the artist's attempt to embrace the monks in a hagiographic narrative, the themes of which communicate with the liturgical experience of the space. Therefore, the representations of the Almighty and the Resurrection frame the central entrance. Themes related to food also play an important role: the blessing of the five loaves, the draught of the fishes. In the most central position of the refectory, just over the table where the priest of the day and the abbot sit, the Mystical Supper is depicted flanked by the protectors of the monastery, St. Anastasia and St. Nicholas. Finally, in the niche that looks to the north, the old stone-oven is surrounded by a number of represented Athonite Saints. An intention of creating an iconographic programme starting from the food (material) and focusing on its liturgical approach by the monks, connected to the history of the monastery and the salvational character of Christian religion is depicted on the walls.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸⁶ Nevertheless, this (contemporary) iconographic narrative has not been expressed in the best way as the causal relationship between the different hagiographic events is not always clear. In the case of Simonopetra's refectory we find a more harmonic narrative in the iconographic programme. In particular, each wall is divided into three horizontal zones. Important orthodox "fathers" and Athonite Saints are represented on the two lower zones of both of the walls. Therefore, Saint Nikodemos from Mount Athos, Saint Maximus the Kausokalivitis, Saint Maximus the Confessor, Saint Efraim the Syrian, Saint Anthony the Great and others remind the devotee that in order to achieve *theosis* he has to follow their example. Moreover, the life of Saint Simon crowns the synthesis of the northern wall inviting the brotherhood to continue their struggle along the same *hesychast* path that supported the creation of the monastery. Finally, on the upper zone of the south wall events commemorated during the Holy Week are depicted, also illuminating the eschatological perspective of orthodox life. This narrative is also enhanced by two large representations of the birth of the Christ (northern wall) and the Climax to the Heavens (southern wall).

The connection between the church and the refectory is intensively underlined during the Sunday meals and some of the great feast-days.⁵⁸⁷ [Figures 10.11 & 10.12] The Abbot after the Dismissal of the Holy Mass wears a cloak (black on Sundays and a pontifical one on the great feasts holding also a pontifical rod). The *trapezaris* (in charge of the function of the refectory) makes a prostration (a “repentance”) in front of him and rings the bell inviting the monks to enter the building. The chanters go first, singing the hymn of the Saint of the day or an Easter one. The *ekklisiastikos* holding a blessed piece of bread dedicated to the Mother of God (called the “Panagia”) is followed by the Abbot. The process continues with the monks and the guests entering in a processional way.

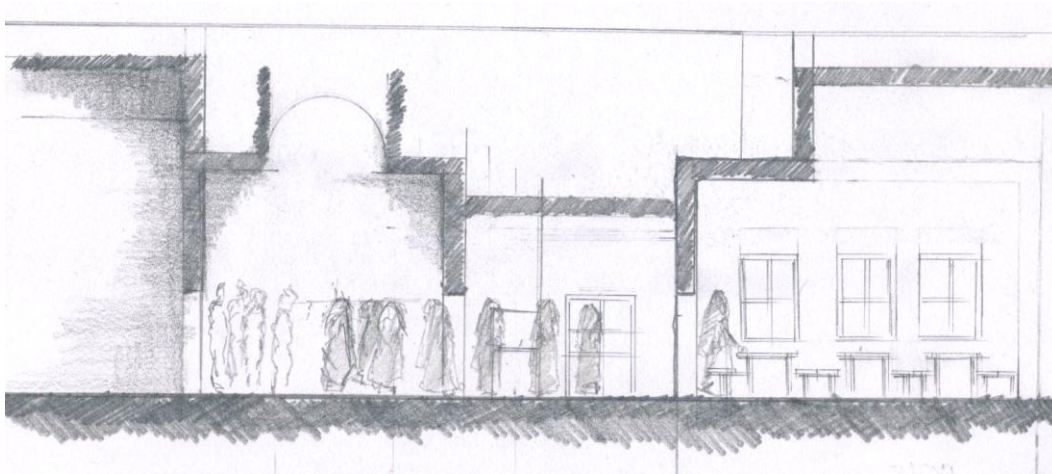
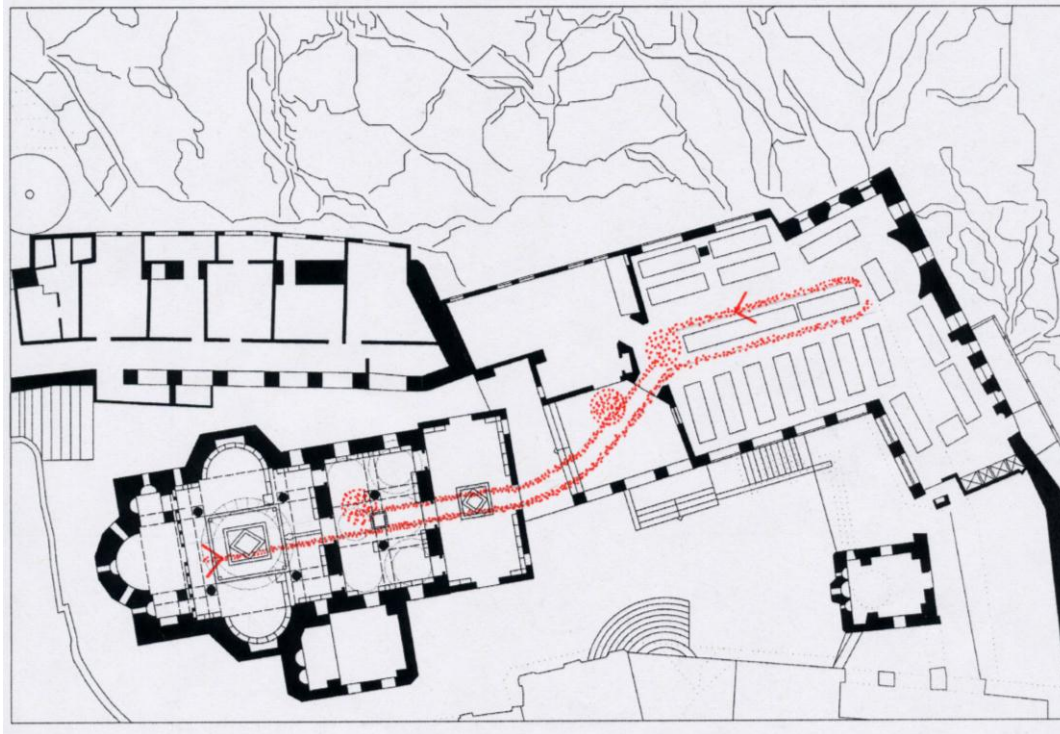
As usual, the reader reads religious texts and the abbot signals the different phases of the meal by ringing a small bell. After he has signalled its end, the chorus starts chanting the *Axion Estin* (hymn dedicated to the Mother of God) or the *Katavasia* of the Ninth Ode⁵⁸⁸ of the feast while “Panagia” is distributed. The Abbot is the first to eat from this special bread. The *ekklisiastikos* is censuring following the *trapezaris* who holds the “Panagia”. Monks and laymen cut a small piece of the bread. They bless it by passing it crosswise through the emitted incense then eat it. The *trapezaris* and the *ekklisiastikos* close this ritual by making a “repentance” towards the east after having eaten their share from the Panagia.

The reader does not close the meal with the usual “Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers have mercy on us and save us Amen”, but exits in silence and stands on the left side of the refectory’s entrance with the cook and the *trapezaris*. The Abbot is followed by the chanters singing the hymn of the day, the monks and the visitors. He goes to stand on the right side of the refectory’s entrance blessing the participants. When the refectory is empty the cook and the *trapezaris* kiss the right hand of the Abbot. The reader leads the chanters to the church. The Abbot stands under the candelabra of the *lite* with the chanters on his right side. The reader says “With the prayers of our Father have mercy on us and save us Amen” and kisses the

⁵⁸⁷ These rituals are also held in other Athonian monasteries, such as Simonopetra. (Fieldwork at Athos, September 2011).

⁵⁸⁸ A relevant to the feast religious reading.

Abbot's right after hand making a "repentance". The same is done by the chanters and the *ekklisiastikoi*.⁵⁸⁹



Figures 10.11 & 10.12: Diagram and section of the Sunday rituals of the Refectory (Fieldwork on Athos, August-September 2011 and August 2012).

⁵⁸⁹ The description is based on a combination of in-situ observation and The Typikon of the Refectory of the Monastery.

This Sunday and festive ritual underlines the liturgical combination of the refectory and the *katholikon*. The fact that the meal begins and ends in the church supports this idea, highlighting also the *liminality* of the intermediate space that connects them. Therefore the passage through this extended threshold plays an important role in the experience of the refectory. Whereas it is usually regarded as the remnant of the courtyard between the two buildings it becomes an important space through the movement of the people, and also the flow of ritual sound and incense during Sunday and the festal meals.

Hence communal meals are connected to the reaffirmation of the community through the sharing of (religious or not) meanings. The sacrificial qualities of the sharing of the same food and the way the different people are distributed during this process embody different qualities of the community's character. Hence allowing the outsiders to participate in the meals materialises the open-form of some of the monastic rituals. In addition, the space is zoned according to the hierarchy of the monastery. The outsiders sit closer to the exit, the abbot is centrally placed and is flanked by the tables for the ordinary monks, while the monk-priests have their own table. Furthermore, meals carry elements of the three-partite division of Victor and Edith Turner, something intensively expressed in Sunday and festive rituals with a sense of *communitas* taking place during the meal and the departure and return stages materialised through the passage from the space between the church and the refectory.⁵⁹⁰

It is important to underline here that in the case of the refectory we can also find the dialectical relationship between silence and communal ritual. According to Alice-Mary Talbot "the rule of silence was universal in monastic refectories [during the Byzantine period]; virtually every *typikon* enjoins the monks and nuns to remain silent during meals (...)"⁵⁹¹ This rule is still part of

⁵⁹⁰ On the role of food rituals in the community's identity please read: Catherine Bell, pp. 120-128. Similar qualities are also found in the communal meals of Japanese tradition (Buddhism). In it, "naorai" means "partaking together" and relates to the sharing of food between gods and humans. Gradually, "naorai" was delimited in the mundane sphere underlining the importance of communal meals in the community's identity. Hence, Japanese used to eat from the same pot in order to strengthen the bonds between the members of a group. Or in the formal meals, they sit following the general hierarchical organisation of the community. On this see: Yoshida Mitsukuni and Sesoko Tsune (eds), *Naorai. Communion of the Table*, (Tokyo: Cosmo Public Relations Corp., 1989), pp. 92-109. On the contrary, meals are held in a different way in the Carthusian Order. They are individually consumed. To the right of the door of each cell there is a hatch where food is left daily by the brothers in charge of this task. Two are the meals in a Carthusian monastery, the lunch at eleven thirty or noon and the supper at quarter to six. Communal meals are held only on Sundays (lunch) and festivities. On this see: Alexander Fernández Bales, "Mapping Rituals in a Carthusian Monastery: La Certosa Di Calci", *Journal of Architectural Education*, 54:4, (May 2001), pp. 264-267.

⁵⁹¹ Alice- Mary Talbot, "Mealtime in Monasteries: the Culture of the Byzantine Refectory", p. 119.

Athonian monastic life, influencing the experience of space as the sound mainly comes from one source: the reader, and only at the beginning and the end of the meal from the abbot at the eastern side. Meanwhile the monks eat without talking, with their heads bowed trying to follow the reading. Silence therefore becomes a kind of boundary that frames the body-subject of the monk. A porous boundary penetrated by the reader's voice and transgressed by any noisy disturbance caused by the visitors.

Almost all the visitors attend these ritual performances of meals. Most of them keep silent and observe the event, transgressing the immaterial limits of the zoning, as in the case of the *katholikon*. Some of them, mainly foreigners, cannot keep silent or follow the readings (in Greek). The common meal, the iconography, the unfamiliar context and the silence of the rest of the participants is not always enough to make them follow the predefined conduct of the meal. There is always the *trapezaris* to remind them to stop whispering.

The silent presence of the monks interacts with the above rituals contributing to the reciprocal discourse between polarities as a way to express an almost paradoxical relation to the divine. Silence during the meal allows them to be sensually connected to the *hesychast* qualities of the Athonian life. At the same time, the penetration of this silence through the inscription of ritual movement and the following flowing of ritual elements (sound, incense, blessed bread) contributes to the creation of a dynamic aural communication, the character of which changes following the events happening in it. The materiality of the meal introduces more profane tints in the refectory's atmosphere which is also connected to the quite distanced approach of the visitors. Their participation is mainly related to covering their physical needs.⁵⁹²

Additionally, the refectory is only used for meals. During the rest of the day it remains closed, transformed into a silent space. The spatial boundaries of the building acquire an implicit character. Whereas the door is never locked, nobody enters the refectory when no meal is being held in it. On the one hand, this enhances the silent qualities of the main courtyard during the day, creating a quite intense silent sphere around the main church that is sonically penetrated

⁵⁹² During my fieldtrips, very few visitors connected the everyday ritual meal to its symbolical associations. Nevertheless, participation in the Sunday and festal ones was initially transformed into a spectacle during which some of the outsiders felt involved in a religious experience. They were mainly pilgrims who could share the meaning of the events.

when the *talanton* signals the beginning of a service. On the other hand, the fact that the refectory is only inhabited just after the services in the church imparts an anticipatory sense to its character that is also enhanced by the preparation of the communal meal, cooking the food and laying the table. Hence, a metallic cap in front of each seat, metallic glasses with cutlery for four participants in each of them and metallic jugs are rhythmically laid on the surfaces of the wooden tables pre-mapping a coming ritual event. The uniform objects, all made of inox and having similar shapes, carry past and future (ritual or not) movements. They are always laid in the same way, repeating the organisation of a previous meal and ready for a coming one. Their placement is part of the meal's preparation by the "giver", the monks in charge of the cooking and the refectory. The silence of the closed space implies the coming silent interaction between a number of participants-receivers. At the same time, the small bell that is always in front of the abbot's seat and the book from which the readings of the day will be read contribute to this *waiting* dynamics being connected to ritual sounds. Visual penetration of the walls through the openings on them allows the communication of these characteristics to the outside. Hence this waiting, silent and closed space carries the gestures of the laying that *wrote* on the stable context of the refectory a (pre)narrative of the meal that will follow a coming service. This is an embodied narrative, steadily repeated twice per day and usually open to reading by the outsiders through the windows (as in the case of Gregoriou monastery) before the actual events take place.

In this chapter, the role of the refectory in the Athonian topography was examined focusing on the way spatial, temporal and sonic boundaries are interconnected in the context of a liturgical choreography. The approach of Christian tradition to ritual meals also enhanced this investigation, underlining the importance of daily meals in the programme of the community. Investigating the liminal dynamics of the complex *main church-refectory*, emphasis was on the inscription of circular communal rituals in the relevant silent-scape and the importance of the space between the two buildings that plays the role of an extended threshold.

Chapter Eleven

The Cemetery (*Kemeterion*) and the Grave

Introduction

This chapter investigates the relation between the cemetery and the notions of memory and anticipation as expressed through its formation and experience, aiming to illuminate its liminal characteristics. It examines the rituals connected with the death of an Athonian monk that can be seen as parts of a *rite of passage* that is also enhanced by the hesychast practice of the “memory of death” (*μνήμη θανάτου - mnemè thanatou*), the constant recollection of the undeniable possibility of death. Hence, death’s rite of passage is divided into three different stages: a. the departure which relates to the period between the death and the funeral, b. the liminal stage which is connected to the funeral, the burial and the three years of the burial and c. the return of the relics’ exhumation and their placement in the ossuary of the monastery. The first and the second stages are further divided into a number of different phases connected to the movement of the dead body in the monastery.

Death as a Rite of Passage and the “Memory of Death”

The *kemeterio* of an Athonian monastery is usually found along its periphery. The word *kemeterio* stems from the Greek verb for “sleep” (“*kèmate*”) and relates to the intermediate state where the soul is between the mundane death and the Second Coming.⁵⁹³ For the Athonians, the grave is one of the three places (along with the cell and the *stasidi*) that “belong” to a monk for a specific period of time. The *kemeterio* usually includes a small number of graves and a chapel connected to an ossuary. It is an active part of the liturgical topography of the monastic complex, directly combined with the experience of both communal rituals and silence.

Death is connected to the notions of crisis and disorder. It is considered to be an event that threatens the coherence of a community through the loss of one of its members.⁵⁹⁴ This event is

⁵⁹³ For the use of the word “sleep” for death in Christian Orthodox tradition see Archbishop Lazar Puhalo, *The Soul, the Body and Death*, (Synaxis Press), the section: “The meaning of the Scriptural and patristic use of the metaphor ‘to sleep’; the soul perceives by revelation from God, by grace not as being the self-contained ‘person’, pp. 19-23.

⁵⁹⁴ Loring M. Danforth and Alexander Tsiaras, *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece*, (Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 31.

always related to the individual's feeling of the uncanny and surprise. Different cultures have addressed this combination since ancient times. The organization of relevant myths communicated through the performance of funerary rituals aims to create an embodied realization of this disorder. Mostly connected to life after death, these rites transform the boundary between mundane existence and non-existence into a shared zone of communication.⁵⁹⁵ Cemeteries are part of this language and have always been connected to the notions of commemoration and anticipation.⁵⁹⁶

The relation between death and the archetype of journey originates in antiquity and is a common element of different religious traditions. In ancient Greece, death was connected to the journey of the soul from the earth to the underworld, which was believed to be located either at the margins of the ocean or in the depths of the earth. Hermes was in charge of guiding the shades of the dead (their souls) to the shore of Akherousian river. They were then received by Charon, the ferryman serving Hades, the King of the underworld. He carried them in his boat to the land of the dead, located at the other side of the river. The dead had to pay him with a coin which had been placed in their mouths during the burial.⁵⁹⁷ Those who did not have the coin to pay were left to wander as ghosts on the earthly side of the river. The river was an important aquatic liminal zone between life and death, symbolizing the transitional character of funeral and burial processes, also connected to the notion of purgation. The washing of the dead body still plays an important role in the funerary traditions and is also found in Mount Athos, recollecting the important role of the water in the process.⁵⁹⁸ The moving boat between the two banks of the river is an important symbol of the idea of a death journey, embodied in Athonian life through the use of a special wooden bed on which the corpse is carried, but also through the monastic gown in which the corpse is totally wrapped in order to be buried.⁵⁹⁹ Interestingly, for a number of religious traditions (including ancient Greek) the underworld is also located in the depths of Earth. Therefore, for the architectural historian Michel Ragon, earth acquires the character of a *double mirror*.⁶⁰⁰ Its visible surface of the living corresponds to the

⁵⁹⁵ See also: Loring M. Danforth, p. 32.

⁵⁹⁶ See also, Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1998), p.293.

⁵⁹⁷ This custom is still held in different places of rural Greece.

⁵⁹⁸ Michel Ragon, *The Space of Death. A Study of Funerary Architecture, Decoration and Urbanism*, translated by Alan Sheridan, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983), pp. 57-64.

⁵⁹⁹ The coffin also carries elements of this "moving-transitional character of the funeral and burial processes.

⁶⁰⁰ Michel Ragon, pp. 57-64.

invisible sphere of the dead. In Ancient Greece entering this underworld was also fulfilled through caves, which were considered to be thresholds to the internal landscape of the earth. For example, Dionysiac initiation ceremonies were usually held in caves, re-enacting the ability of the God to bring a dead person out of the underworld.⁶⁰¹ Either natural or artificial, these cavities embodied the idea of a liminal zone between life and death, also allowing a return procedure. Earth has therefore played an important role in the death rituals of different religious traditions. Similar associations can be traced in the underground crypts and catacombs of the early Christian era and the later opening of the grave.⁶⁰² The Christian tradition that Adam was made from dust and returned to dust through his burial and decomposition is recollected through every funeral. The relevant expression in the book of Genesis “for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis, 3:19) is recited in the Greek Orthodox funeral to highlight the importance of the closing of the life-cycle and the opening to a future regeneration. Moreover, Christ, the New Adam, was also buried after his death in the Holy Sepulchre, a rock-cut tomb, and his disciples realized his resurrection by the absence of his corpse. Hence the opening of each grave and the rituals that accompany the burial carry intense liminal qualities, connected to the idea of birth-and-rebirth, death-and-resurrection.

The anthropologist Loring M. Danforth uses Van Gennep’s theory of the rites of passage to interpret death rituals in the framework of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, where death rituals can be also divided in the three different stages: separation, *liminal* period and return. From the moment of the actual event of death until the beginning of the funeral is the period of departure. The funeral signals the beginning of the *liminal* period that reaches its peak during the burial and ends with the exhumation of the bones at least three years after the date of death. During this process of decomposition the living are able to realize in a material way the physical void that the body has left, usually connecting it with the soul’s journey to an invisible (divine) world. Whereas the corpse is always silent, living mortals react noisily, lamenting and participating in the funerary rituals. The uncovering of the bones thus becomes a kind of return (to the mundane world) stage of this rite of passage. The bones are placed in the ossuary

⁶⁰¹ Yulia Ustinova, *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind. Descending Underground in the Search for Ultimate Truth*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 232.

See also: Richard Seaford, *Dionysos*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 82.

⁶⁰² Michel Ragon, pp. 57-63.

waiting for the resurrection of the dead that according to Christian tradition, will be “embodied” as in the case of Jesus Christ.⁶⁰³

A similar realization can be found in the Athonian approach to death as it can be also divided into three different stages: departure from the mundane sphere, transition to an invisible one and the re-integration of the relics into the sensual experience of the monks through their placement in the ossuary. In this sense, the cemetery symbolizes for them a threshold between the earth and the sky, silently inhabited by the dead body in the grave and communally performed through a number of different rituals by the living community.⁶⁰⁴ At the same time, the *kemeterion* is also connected to the whole life of the monastery through the notion of the “memory of death”, an integral part of their *hesychast* practice.

Hence, in *hesychasm*, the monk also has to practise the “memory of death”, that is to try to always remember that he is going to die, or according to an Athonian monk’s words: “to live every day as the last of his life”. “Memory of death” is of vital importance for asceticism as it contributes to the practice of *xeniteia*, aiming to remind the monk of the temporary status of his

⁶⁰³ Loring M. Dunforth, pp. 35-38.

See also: Karsten Harries, p. 294:

Proper burial was thought necessary to allow the dead to journey to whatever life awaited them in and beyond the tomb. As Eliade observes, like the rites following birth or like rites of marriage, rites of death in primitive societies were rites of passage, special to be sure, in that the survivors could at best preside over part of the deceased person’s journey, who had to undergo further ordeals until he could take his proper place in the realm of the dead. But proper burial was not only a last service the living owed the dead; it was also though necessary to prevent the dead from hunting the living. The Romans thus thought that “if burial was denied, the ghost of the dead would roam the earth in perpetual distress, and might do untold harm to the living. Even if safely conducted to the nether world, it could still exercise an influence over the living that might just as likely be malevolent as benevolent. It was, therefore, imperative to treat the dead with due respect and, above all, to give them proper burial”.

⁶⁰⁴ This approach is different from the one found in the Buddhist tradition. In particular, a Buddhist funeral is also connected to a number of rituals held for a quite long period of time, the aim of which is to follow the transformation of the status of the deceased from a dangerous and unstable into a purified ancestral spirit. The cleaning of the dead body has a number of symbolical connotations related to the notion of purification. The dead body is then dressed in white as a pilgrim and offerings are made to him. The coffin closes after the close relatives venerate the dead person and the funeral begins. After the ritual the relatives carry the coffin to the hearse that takes it to the crematorium. After the cremation that takes one to one and a half hours some of the ashes are gathered and put in an urn. The aim of the whole funeral is the separation of the spirit from the dead body and the guidance of the former to the Otherworld. After this process, memorial rites are held on the day of the death of each week for seven weeks (49 days) when the spirit is believed to be purified. On the day of the last memorial service the urn is buried. A number of annual rites are also held afterwards. On the Buddhist Funeral rites read: Masao Fujii, “Maintenance and Change in Japanese Traditional Funerals and Death-related Behavior”, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 10 (November 1983), pp. 39-64.

A buddhist monk also passed through similar rituals after his death. The “offering of cloth on behalf of the dead” is the most important ritual of the process, held before the cremation. A piece of white cloth that is going to be cut and stiched into a robe is distributed to the living monks in memory of the dead.

presence in mundane life and highlight the importance of the ascetic practice so that detachment from everyday life is fulfilled. Memory of death is taught daily to novices by the elder monks and practised through reading about it and repeating the thought in the mind. Some monks also use other embodied techniques to support this process. For example, in their cell or hermitage they may have a skull. Through the interaction with it (constant visual contact, sensing and veneration of the dead monk) they recollect the idea of death, seeking to incorporate it in their lives. Moreover, some monks (mainly hermits or members of a *skete*) open their graves before they die and take care of them or even lie in them. Whereas I have not met a monk spending time in his grave during my fieldtrips, the relevant myths are shared in the ascetic communities, contributing to the familiarization with the idea of death. Embodied interaction with the grave aims at a redefinition of their relationship to the bounded world through the use of a place that is not used in everyday life.⁶⁰⁵ This idea follows the way Saint John of the Ladder describes “memory of death” and on which the relevant practice is based:

The memory of death gives to the good coenobitic monks fears and sorrows for their sins, and makes them struggle against their own will and be patient, and subordinate themselves [to the abbot’s guidance] and (remember death) in order to feel spiritual joy and sweetness. And for the [solitary] *hesychasts*, and the hermits, memory of death makes them not have mundane concerns but only pray, and keep their spirit clean and free from any minor issues.⁶⁰⁶

The memory of death thus aims to invite the ascetic to think of the three temporal dimensions: the present, the past and the future. He seeks to recollect the past (re-examining his personal route, following the example of the saints and famous *hesychasts*, and living according to a programmed life that is repeated almost daily), ascetically living now and projecting to the certainty of his death and afterlife.⁶⁰⁷ This idea is therefore connected to the ec-static, according to Heidegger, character of human temporality. While living in the present, the individual has the ability to *step-out* of it, either through projection towards future possibilities or retrievals of past experiences. Anticipation and memory are thus dynamically incorporated in his/her life, also

⁶⁰⁵ Fieldtrip at Mount Athos, September 2011.

⁶⁰⁶ St. John of Climacus, p. 103.

⁶⁰⁷ Jonathan Zecher, L., *The Symbolics of Death and the Construction of Christian Asceticism: Greek Patristic Voices from the Fourth through Seventh Centuries*, Doctoral Thesis, Durham University, 2011, Available at Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/3247/>, pp. 215 & 216.

giving meaning to the place in which he/she exists.⁶⁰⁸ For the philosopher, the awareness of death as the only undeniable possibility of one's life is a condition of his/her "authentic" existence, something that happens rarely and causes the individual to experience anxiety. The individual's response to this "uncanny" state is the return to the "inauthentic" everyday world.⁶⁰⁹ Hence the search for "authenticity" is related to temporality and the future character of the individual as a "being-towards-death".⁶¹⁰ Being afraid to accept its meaning, the individual covers the authentic awareness of non-being under the uncertainty of the specific time of death. He knows that he/she will die but he/she is not sure when this will happen exactly. This gives him/her the opportunity to forget it and turn towards everyday "Mit-sein", "being-together" with other people.⁶¹¹ Hence memory of death and silent prayer dynamically interact during the ascetic life of the body-subject aiming at the creation of small gaps in the seemingly linear movement towards God. The individual is constantly asked to "step back" and redefine his position in it. In this way, the Athonian ascetic seeks to harmonically incorporate the "uncanny" possibility of death in his life, interpreting it as a passage towards the afterlife, something that for Heidegger could have possibly been included in the above "dreadful" turning towards inauthenticity. These gaps are connected to his attempt to transform his perception of the limits of his everyday sphere, to reach a point where all the boundaries (even his own body) acquire a paradoxical sense of transparency that enables him to follow his ascetic life in a more undisturbed way. As a monk from Gregoriou monastery argues: "For the monk the memory of death is of vital importance. It redefines his relationship with the boundaries of this world. (...) Even the built boundaries and the boundaries of his body. The aim is their transparency. To be able to see through them. To see in an embodied *way-through*".⁶¹²

This ec-static understanding of human temporality influences the formation and experience of architecture. On the one hand, we have already seen how the spaces of communal rituals recollect spatial, temporal and sonic qualities of models connected to Paradise, the Heavenly Jerusalem and the Second Coming relating both the monastery and the rituals to their eschatological scope. Anticipation and memory are liturgically performed through the different

⁶⁰⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, (Oxford & Cambridge: Blackwell), 2000, (First English Edition: 1962), pp. 376-378, (Sein und Zeit 328-329).

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 230-232, (Sein und Zeit 186-187).

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 296-299, (Sein und Zeit pp. 252-254).

⁶¹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 230-232, (Sein und Zeit 186-187).

⁶¹² Fieldwork at Mount Athos, August 2012.

rituals held either in the open spaces of the monastery or in the church and the refectory, as examined in the previous chapters. On the other hand, in their cells the monks are also advised to recollect death in the framework of their silent preparation for the coming passage. In this sense, the *kemeterion* becomes a place in which the relics of the monks are kept and the living monks are invited to think of death as one of these graves is going to become his own grave. Therefore, it is usual to find monks either in the chapel or in the ossuary silently praying and trying to understand the material disorder of their future.⁶¹³

Death, the Funeral and the Burial

The dead body of a monk plays its own role in the monastic community. When a monk from the Gregoriou monastery dies, a short ceremony of blessings of farewell (*Trisagion*) is held on the spot where he died. The cleaning and dressing of his corpse starts right afterwards, while all the monks have to pass through his cell to say goodbye to him, wishing him “an undisturbed way to Paradise”. He is placed on the *sagisma* (a thin layer made of cloth or rattan on which the body is placed) with a praying rope in his crossed hands. He is enfolded in his *rason* (monastic gown) whose sleeves are torn in order for the body to be totally wrapped.⁶¹⁴ Three embroidered white crosses are placed on his head, chest and hands. If the monk had been a priest, a *petrachili*⁶¹⁵ is placed over him. If he had been an abbot, his face is left uncovered. He is taken on a special wooden stretcher to the narthex or to the chapel of Saint Anastasia. He will stay there until the beginning of the funeral, the liminal stage of his final journey, twenty four hours after the time of his death. During these twenty four hours, monks alternately read the Psalms next to a lit oil candle. We have to add here that there is no restriction on the dead body’s movement in the territory of the peninsula as it is considered to be an active component of the monastery and therefore not something negative or neutral. The only limitation is that burial in the main church is forbidden. This is a general rule of Eastern Christianity. The exceptional burial of important personages (i.e. emperors) was allowed only during the Byzantine period. Rare incidents of church burials happened until the 19th century, but were characterised as “inappropriate” by the

⁶¹³ We have to add here that all this process is supported by the constant reading of the piece of St. John the Climacus [which is included in the personal canon of (some of) the monks] and the guidance of the Abbot.

⁶¹⁴ The *rason* therefore becomes the only material lays that belongs in his whole mundane life. The *rason* is part of both the individual and communal aspects of his life.

⁶¹⁵ The most important part of the priest’s stole.

formal church.⁶¹⁶ The holy relics used for the foundation or consecration of the building are nowadays the only human elements buried in the church.

The funeral of an ordinary monk is held in the *lite*, whereas that of a priest is held under the central dome of the church. During the ceremony all the brotherhood holds lit candles. An icon of the Holy Trinity is placed on the dead monk's chest. The service is longer than the ordinary funeral and includes a collection of prayers in which the devotees ask God's forgiveness for the dead monk and his entrance to Paradise, as typically expressed in the following passage from the service:

Therefore I beg you all, and implore you, to offer prayer unceasingly for me to Christ our God, that I be not assigned for my sins to the place of torment; but that He assign me to the place where there is Light of Life.⁶¹⁷

Let the body indeed be dissolved into the elements [out of which it has been compounded] and let the soul appointed a place in the Choir of the Justice.⁶¹⁸

After the service the relic is transferred to the cemetery while a *Trisagion*⁶¹⁹ is also chanted and the bell rings in a slow, mourning rhythm. [Figure 11.1] The process is called "Exodus" and is a ritual inscription of part of the monastery connected to the crossing of a very important immaterial boundary of the individual's life. Monks with lit lanterns are followed by the psalters, the priests and the rest of the monks. During its course, the litany stops and prayers are read. The mourning sound of the bell connected to the chanting of the monks becomes the special soundscape for this occasion, which is also connected to the chanting and the sound of the censer's bells. It follows the processional inscription of the route from the *katholikon* to the cemetery, adding new qualities to the liminal dynamics of the silent atmosphere. In particular, the dead body is carried in parallel with the north side of the main church of Gregoriou and reaches the cemetery, passing through the second small entrance of the monastery. During this procession three stops are made and prayers are read for the dead monks of the monastery. The following map is indicative:

⁶¹⁶ Konstantinos Kallinikos, *The Christian Church and the Activities in It*, (Athens: Grigoris Publications, 1969), pp. 65-68.

⁶¹⁷ Fr. N Vaporis, (ed), *Funeral Service. An Orthodox Prayer Book*, (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1977), p. 117.

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 113.

⁶¹⁹ A set of prayers dedicated to the death of a devotee.



Figure 11.1: Experiential Map of the Ritual Procession of the Funeral.

After the body is placed (without the *sagisma*) in the grave, the priest casts soil and pours olive oil taken from the oil candle that is placed in front of the icon of Christ in the cemetery's church,

making the sign of the cross. Every monk then has to repeat thirty three times the prayer: “Jesus Christ Son of God let the soul of your servant (name of the monk) be reposed”. After this, the body is covered with soil.⁶²⁰ This procedure is usually followed by the singing of the paschal hymn: “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and on those in the tombs bestowing life”, signaling for the monks the material departure of the dead.

The Cemetery and the Grave

The recipient of the dead monk’s body, therefore, is the cemetery, situated six metres away from the eastern wall of the complex (30 metres above sea-level). Surrounded by the gardens of the monastery, it is a small piece of land with six graves and a two-storey chapel. The graves of the monks lie at its eastern part. [Figures 11.2 & 11.3] They are plain pit-like graves covered with soil. A wooden cross at the dead monk’s head and a vertically placed slab at his feet demarcate each grave. His name and age are written on the wooden cross.⁶²¹

The grave can be seen as the creation of a void, an artificial cave to accommodate a human body, echoing the sacred associations with earth since ancient times. The corpse is placed in it with his eyes looking towards the sky, while his soul is believed to have departed. According to Christian theology, the body is already in a state of waiting for the Second Coming in which it will be

⁶²⁰ See also Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*:

This process has a number of similarities with ancient Greek funeral rites that were also connected to the departure of the dead body from mundane life to the afterlife and also included the display of the dead body on a bed surrounded by the family, its transfer to the cemetery and in-situ libations. In particular, the individual burial was introduced in ancient Greece just after the break with the Mycenaean during 1200 BC. Nevertheless, the dead body is still connected to its family, as for example the noble families have clearly demarcated grave enclosures. (p. 191) The cemetery is usually placed outside the polis, as in the case of the Kerameikos of Athens (p. 192). The funeral is divided in three different stages: the prothesis, the ekphora and the funerary banquet. The after the dead body was washed and dressed it was placed on a special bed and displayed in the house in order to be venerated for a whole day. Death is considered to be something unexpected and “the whole house has fallen from the state of normality” with the women lamenting and the relatives tearing their hair, beating their breasts and scratching their cheeks. (p. 192) Early the next morning the ekphora takes place; the procession of the dead body to the grave surrounded again by people expressing their sorrow about the loss. The funerary involves sacrifices: gifts to take with him/her during this passage, “destructive sacrifices”, libations and a funerary banquet (pp. 192-193). Initially the latter used to take place around the grave and later back in the house. The grave is signed by a stele on which the name of the deceased and often an epigram are inscribed. (p.194) During the fifth and fourth centuries these steles usually acquired human form representing the dead person and being included in the funerary rituals (being washed and libation being addressed to them). The funerary rituals are repeated in the third, ninth and thirtieth day after the death. Mourning period is then finished and the relevant rituals are again conducted in the framework of the annual funeral celebrations of the polis. (p. 194)

⁶²¹ Ioannis Volanakis, *The Holy Monastery Of Saint Gregorios at Mount Athos: History – Art – Architecture*, (Mount Athos, 2003), pp. 128-140.

resurrected along with the soul as an undivided *hypostasis*.⁶²² This part of the landscape therefore encompasses a small lot of land, in which six crosses are placed. The cross plays an important role in the landscape of a graveyard. As Ken Worpole argues:

The cultural overlay between the cross and an assumed state of nature comes in the religious-cultural tradition of the verdant cross, as capable of flowering into life again, and thus a sign of resurrection. It is therefore seen as an organic part of the landscape, as well as a human intervention.⁶²³

The “silent-scape” of the monastic territory becomes really intense in this area which for the monks is connected to the idea of infinity. In it the “planted” crosses sprout almost organically out of the earth, pointing towards the sky and being associated with the *anticipation* of the resurrection of the whole person (body and soul). The inscriptions on them remind the living monks of the specific dead person, and on the other “invite [them] (...) to confront the ever-present possibility of their own death, attending in the face of that possibility to who they are and measuring what gives significance to their lives (...)”.⁶²⁴ At the same time the small chapel with the ossuary is also interconnected with the monastic community as an integral part of its liturgical life.

The small graveyard of Gregoriou monastery therefore becomes an active part of the intermediate zone between the untouched natural environment and the organised one of the monastery, carrying important religious associations. For the monks the *kemeterio* is not only a part of this boundary. It is a threshold whose architectural formation relates to the materialization of the individual’s movement from the mundane to the otherworldly, and partial return to the former. The dead body of the monk is temporarily buried on the edge of the monastic complex, being both inside and outside it. After three years, his skeleton is unearthed to re-join the community in a different way than previously. Entering the chapel, the skeleton is materially incorporated in the communal ritual life of the monastery as it is placed in the ossuary. Every Saturday a liturgy is held in this chapel in which a memorial service is included, commemorating the dead monks of the community. In it a plate of *kollyvo* is offered and blessed. A *kollyvo* is a sweet made of boiled wheat, sugar and nuts. The grains of wheat

⁶²² See also, Archbishop Lazar Puhalo, pp. 5-13.

⁶²³ Ken Worpole, *Last Landscapes. The Architecture of the Cemetery in the West*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2003), pp. 39 & 40.

⁶²⁴ Karsten Harries, p. 296.

symbolize the desired resurrection of the departed souls, which is also connected to the repetitive seasonal regeneration of the planted seeds. The *kollyvo* is distributed to the monks and visitors during the meal, contributing to the performance of the memory of death.⁶²⁵ The skeletons link the monks to their memory of death, while also (according to the Christian tradition) waiting for their salvation. Hence the orientation of the graves and the chapel towards the East is also a way to materialize the liminal character of the cemetery that is connected to a life stage closer to the Heavenly Jerusalem than the others experienced in the *hesychast* practice of the brotherhood. Hence the material progress of the paradoxical movement towards the ineffable is also materialized in the case of the cemetery through the simultaneous silent bodily absence and hidden presence (in the grave) of the individual.



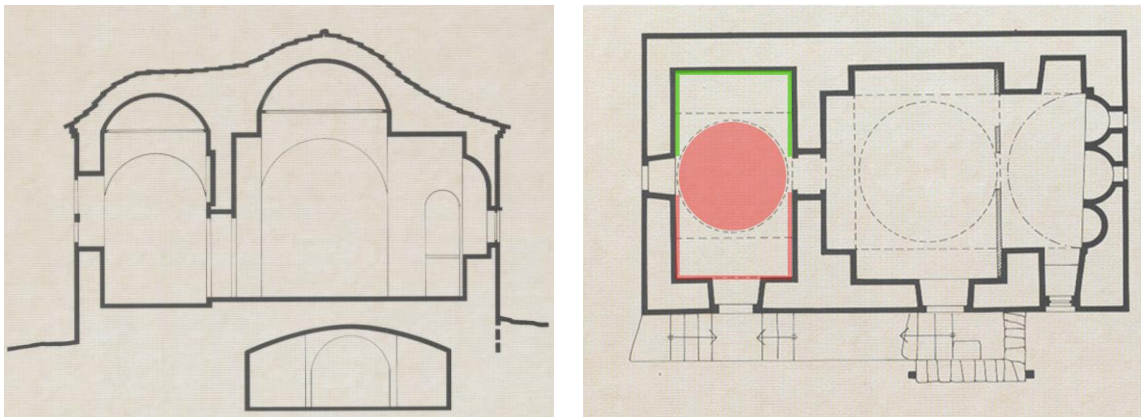
Figures 11.2 & 11.3: External views of the cemetery.

In the narthex of the chapel of the cemetery of Gregoriou monastery, the individual interacts with representations that can be divided into two main themes: Lauds and the Second Coming.⁶²⁶ [Figures 11.4 & 11.5] The first relates to the three last psalms of David (148, 149, 150) in which he calls on the whole Universe to praise God. They are depicted on the dome, the southern half of the east wall and the southern half of the west wall. The Second Coming is represented on the north wall, the northern half of the west wall and the northern half of the east wall. On the lower zone of the lantern the sun, the moon, the stars and the zodiac cycle are

⁶²⁵ Memorial services are also held in the important feast in commemoration of the celebrated saint.

⁶²⁶ The chapel was built in 1728 and iconographed in 1739.

depicted. This ancient expression of cosmic dynamics is also connected to the verse of the Lauds «Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars» (Psalm 148:3).



Figures 11.4 & 11.5: Section plan and floor plan of the cemetery chapel. The depictions of the Lauds are represented with red colours and the depictions of the Second Coming with green.

The representation of Lauds gradually develops on the walls always combined with the corresponding text. This synthesis also includes the depiction of a chorus of young men and women in 18th century dress dancing circular folk dances. According to the archaeologist I. Volanakis, this paradoxical depiction of the chorus connected to Lauds in the cemetery relates to a joyful approach to death as the end of the mundane *hesychast* struggles and the opening to the possibility of Heavenly Jerusalem.⁶²⁷ Circular dance can be interpreted as a symbol of regeneration, as it has been incorporated in rituals accompanying seasonal changes and initiation ceremonies since ancient times.⁶²⁸ The representation of the Second Coming in the rest of the narthex supports this view. In this sense, the narthex, that is the passage from the outside to the main church, also symbolizes the passage from mundane life to the Second Coming, supported through the eastern location of the Holy Altar and indicated by the axial movement that connects the two domes. Directly related to the idea of the end of human life, the frescoes also aim at the enhancement of the “memory of death” adding to its liturgical performativity. Being something more than two-dimensional depictions, the icons contribute to the dramaturgy, allowing the ascetic to interact visually with the represented themes. The role of the painted walls as an instrument of recollection is activated also in the case of this building, asking for the *mindful gaze* of the participants in the Saturday liturgies.

⁶²⁷ Ioannis Volanakis, p. 104.

⁶²⁸ On this see: J. W. Fitton, “Greek Dance”, *The Classical Quarterly, New Series*, 23: 2 (November, 1973), pp. 254-274. Dagmar Motycka Weston, “Greek Theatre as an Embodiment of Cultural Meaning”, in Paul Emmons, John Hendrix and Jane Lomholt (eds), *The Cultural Role of Architecture. Contemporary and Historical Perspectives*, (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 7-11.



Figure 11.6 (Left): The “Last Judgement” in the narthex of the cemetery chapel.



Figure 11.7 (Right): The iconostasis of the cemetery chapel.

Under the chapel we find the Ossuary. [Figures 11.8 & 11.9] It resembles a built **cave** in which the relics of the dead monks are tightly placed. The space is overwhelming. The only natural light comes from the opening of the entrance, while four low niches create the cross-like cavity. The Ossuary is placed just under the central dome, supporting its *Axis Mundi* associations and the coexistence of the dead, the living and the divine. Darkness, humidity and the low vaults of the roof create an environment that differs from the external one. This unique experience is also enhanced by the presence of the relics that reflect one’s future. Their role is not a decorative one and the way they are displayed resembles a storage room.⁶²⁹ The name and age of the dead monks are written on their skulls which are located in a different place from the rest of the bones. The ossuary is therefore an event of *ritual storage* of the relics of the dead, open to the embodied interpretation of the living, either through the communal rituals held in the chapel of the ossuary or through individual silent meditation in the space.

⁶²⁹ See also: Ken Worpole, p. 21:

Yet with regard to the emotions and thoughts that are stirred by the sight and experience of burial places, there is an obvious impulse that dominates all others: our sense that we too are destined for death, and that this “ultimate form of phenomenological awareness”, as the philosopher Françoise Dastur has written, “is constant in our perception of the world”. Thus the landscapes of the dead rightly exert a specific and compulsive hold on the human imagination, because they are reminders of the transience of human life, most particularly, of course, our own. Because they mix feelings of both beauty and anxiety – or even dread – they can rightly claim to be called Sublime.



Figures 11.8 & 11.9: The Ossuary.

Outsiders do not usually visit the graveyard and its chapel. There is no specific restriction for their entrance in this area but it seems that they do not really include such a possibility in their travel. Two references to Athonian cemeteries are found in the accounts of travellers and they are both connected to the feeling of uncanny sacred qualities, the result of the embodied approach to death's sense of disorder and discontinuity. In this sense, for Ralph Harper walking with a group of monks and pilgrims through the gardens of Staurinikita monastery to reach the cemetery and prayer in the ossuary communicated an atmosphere of mystery, even if he did not pray.⁶³⁰

Moreover, Heinz Nubaumer describes in a characteristic way how a monk takes care of the cemetery of Xenofontos Monastery at every sunset. This care is connected for Harries to a guarding of the boundary between life and death and a sense of protection of the performed relationship between the two poles.⁶³¹ According to Nubaumer:

At night, when all the daily activities have been completed, the most beautiful task is performed. A young monk with a dark blue gown of work starts cleaning the small kemeterion of Xenofontos monastery. He removes the needles and leaves of the cypresses and the orange trees that are nearby. Kneeling over the graves he re-arranges the pebbles that make the sign of the cross on the pit and re-paves with his hands the soil that covers it. He then enters the underground ossuary and refills the oil lamps in front of the piled bones that resemble dried branches.

He lights the censer and starts a silent process along the shelves of hundreds of skulls that reach the roof. He incenses every "layer" of skulls with a sense of

⁶³⁰ Ralph Harper, *Journey from Paradise: Mount Athos and the Interior Life*, p. (...)

⁶³¹ Karsten Harries, p. 298.

devotion. He acknowledges my presence with a nod of gratitude. At some point there is some time for him to share a small bench with me. This is the place of the great truth, he says smiling, while the setting sun illuminates from the open door some series of skulls.⁶³²

Hence, as Worpole says, “landscapes of the dead are always, simultaneously, landscapes of the living”⁶³³ as they deal with a discontinuity in life that the former have already experienced and the latter are going to experience. Cemeteries deal with the crossing of a boundary or even a gap that cannot be explained, and thus its presence is voiceless. Their placement at the periphery of the complex and its eastern orientation dynamically contribute to this. The Athonian monks try to deal with this gap between life and death, either through participation in the communal rituals connected to it, or to silent prayer and “memory of death”. Communal rituals relate to the funeral and the memorial services for the dead person. The former is the most important one. It coincides with the liminal phase of the person’s journey and it can also be divided into a number of stages according to the dead body’s movement in the monastery: from the cell of the dead monk to the narthex or the chapel (where he is waiting for the funeral stage), from the narthex to the *lite* or the main church (where the funeral is held), from the church to the cemetery (where the burial is conducted). Gap, void and silence hence play an important role in the architectural formation of the cemetery. Each grave becomes a capsule of a dead silent decomposing body. The silence there is very intense as the monks go only to pray or to participate in the Saturday service held in the chapel. Finally, the unearthed dried skeleton is ritually placed in the cave-like ossuary embodying the expectation of the Second Coming.

⁶³² Heinz Nußbaumer, *Μόνος και όμως όχι μόνος. Άρωμα Αγίου Όρους στον κόσμο μας από τις εμπειρίες ενός προσκυνητή/ Alone But Not Alone. A Sense of Mount Athos in our World through the Experiences of a Pilgrim*, μετάφραση στα Ελληνικά Δ. Μαντζούρης/translation in Greek: D. Mantzouris, (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Επτάλοφος/ Athens: Eptalofos Publications, 2007), (Πρώτη έκδοση στα Γερμανικά: 2006/ First Edition in German: 006), pp. 113-114.

⁶³³ Ken Worpole, p. 20.

Conclusions

This thesis examined the role of embodiment in the Athonian topography, underlining the importance of spatial, temporal and aural boundaries and intermediate zones within it. Arguing that topography is something more than modern traditional cartography, it investigated the meaningful “mapping” of different places through the movement of the monks and the outsiders. The study sought to answer a number of questions connected to its unique character: What is the role of embodiment in the experience of sacred places? What is the role of spatial, temporal and aural boundaries and intermediate zones in the peninsula? How are the constant repetition of the same ritual actions, silent prayer, and the journey of the outsider reflected in the organisation and embodied performance of the Athonian landscape? Answers to these questions were given in the chapters of the thesis through the exploration of liminality in the embodied experience of an organic, always changing topography.

In this context, the study suggests liminality as a tool to explain the meaning of the phenomena there. Liminality relates to the reciprocal communication between two or more components of the topography, carrying the character of both the departure and the return. We saw that Mount Athos is a liminal place for both the insiders and the outsiders. For the former it is the concrete environment of their movement towards the realization of the paradoxical coexistence of positive and negative theology through repetitive pilgrimages of prayer. For the latter it is the liminal/liminoid stage of a journey, the place standing between the departure from their everyday life and their return to it. In this context, we realized that different boundaries and intermediate zones play a role in the orchestration of a variety of movements that may even seem discordant. The austere entry regulations, the daily repetition of the same actions, the practice of silence, the practice of desert and wandering asceticism, and the journey of pilgrims and tourists are movements through which Athonian topography is meaningfully performed. Liminality in the sacred topography of Mount Athos is not only connected to the penetrability of **built, natural** and **temporal** boundaries, but also involves all the intermediate zones that divide and at the same time unite different parts of the topography.

In this sense, the penetration of natural and built **spatial boundaries** was shown to play an important role in the peninsula. Since Byzantine times the combination of the peninsula’s coast and the artificial fence along its neck has created a limit between the outside and the inside that

acquires an intense border character, also enhancing the utopian qualities of the place. This contributes to the uniqueness of the interior's experience that can be characterized as "otherworldly", something also enhanced by the preservation of the quite untouched natural environment and the limited construction activity.

Therefore, the **footpaths** have been shown to act as important liminal zones, running through the edges of different parts of the peninsula and mapped most accurately through the pre-reflective movement of the walker. They are **embodied phenomena** shared between the walker and the natural landscape that may be either part of the initiation process of a pilgrim or included in a more profane touristic/naturalistic journey. In their case, the inability of the two dimensional cartographic representations to communicate the specificities of a place is really intense. They are only mapped through the repeated walks and remain unmapped as they always change due to climatic variations and frequency of use. This is also underlined through their distinction with the new dirt roads which serve the movement of the few monastery cars and intensely alter this landscape. The latter introduce a scale that is different from that of the footpaths, changing also the intensity of the silent qualities of the Athonian natural landscape as always carrying the possibility of a moving car. This is also reflected in their configuration making them easily represented as clear lines in a conventional map. Moreover, repetitive (processional or not) pilgrimages to the peak of the mountain (re-actualisation of the *theosis* experience and the event of the Transfiguration) and the solitary, silent practice of desert and wandering asceticism add to the definition of **liminality as an embodied phenomenon** and confirm its character as a condition in which different **polarities** interact.

Furthermore, the built boundaries of the coenobitic monastery contribute to its embodied topography through the materialization of the polarity: **hierarchy** and **unity**. The built boundaries of both the general organization of the monastery and the main church hierarchically divide the spaces, creating different zones. The study has demonstrated that the permeability of these boundaries plays an important role in the liturgical life of the complex, as the idea of union is constantly expressed through their penetration. As we saw, silence and sound always have the ability to penetrate the solid parts of the walls, suggesting a sense of **material-immaterial transparency**, where, although one cannot see what is happening behind a stone wall, one can always hear and be oriented towards the source of sound, or be involved in

an intentionally preserved silence-scape. Their openings orchestrate the movement of the people, the light, the sound and the incense, allowing for a degradation of the presence of these elements to occur. The arrangement of the silent cubicles of the cells and the stalls around the periphery of the monastery and the church respectively enhances these processes, leaving the almost-void intermediate spaces to become the stages of important aural and human choreographed movements. Communal processions (annual litanies, *talanton* rites, daily services and meals, funerals) combine everything in a meaningful embodied narrative passing through these built limits. The different spaces defined by the latter ones are always in an aural communication with each other, the silent open areas of the complex and the sonic ritual inscriptions in them. The importance of liminal spaces in the coherence of the topography is also testified in the organization and liturgical experience of the intermediate space between the church and the refectory and the peripherally located cemetery of the community. The use of these spaces and their liminal architectural organisation influence each other, suggesting an organic comprehension of the built environment that is based on the bodily performance of its hesychast inhabitation and remains open to the interpretation of the stranger. Contributing to the attunement dynamics of liminality, thus, this *material - immaterial transparency* of different intermediate zones (walls, in-between void spaces, aural environment) enhances the **narrative understanding of the topography** and allows the different events of place to be meaningfully interconnected.

Aural liminal zones play, therefore, an important role on Mount Athos, filling the void between the different components of the peninsula in a meaningful way. This study has suggested that the most important component of the Athonian atmosphere is **silence**. Silence in the topography has a double character, connected to both the elimination of sounds and the limitation of visual interaction with the surrounding environment. It plays the role of both a boundary and a language. It demarcates the personal sphere of the monks and becomes a means of communication during a number of different events that is defined by a sense of repetition and rhythm. At the same time, silence of sound and sight imposed on the visitors, contributes to the creation of a dynamic silence-scape that changes when communal ritual movements enter in it **inscribing a new aural zone**, whose character also involves chanting, censuring, reading and playing musical instruments (bell, *talanton*, *semantron*). These movements change the way aural liminal zones are perceived, orienting the individuals towards the sources

of the sounds and communicating different messages connected to the liturgical performance of the place. Moreover, varying proportions of these elements in the atmosphere of the peninsula create aural boundaries that demarcate different parts of the territory, contributing to a topography that can be fully experienced only in an embodied way. The silence perceived during walking along the footpaths, for example, is different from the one of the monastic complexes as mainly connected to a sense of isolation that involves the rare meeting of other wanderers and the more direct interaction with natural landscape and sounds. Silence becomes a key component of Mount Athos always realized through its interaction with more audible qualities, suggesting also the role of **liminality as a condition of attunement** between the different components of a place-event that may seem even discordant.

The thesis also highlighted the temporal qualities of liminality in which the entrance-exit model is also expressed through the order of Athonian time and its interpretation by the outsiders. A series of **temporal boundaries** define Athonian life to some extent. The hierarchical organization of the community's life, the well programmed daily life and the festive calendars choreograph monastic life according to a rhythmical repetition of similar actions that co-operates with silent prayer, that by definition includes the constant recitation of Jesus prayer. Entering in this temporal horizon, the temporary presence of the outsider changes the ordered life by introducing elements of freer movements and personal identity (retrieval of past experiences, processes of self-examination and so-forth), extending the definition of liminality to include his harmonic orchestration in the temporal horizon of the topography.

The **outsiders'** perception of the Athonian topography illuminates the liminal character of the peninsula as they read the landscape in a different way than the monks, highlighting the imprint of this polarity on the embodied topography. Either as the liminal stage of their pilgrimage or the liminoid phase of a more profane/touristic journey, their temporary stay on the peninsula usually follows a predefined route controlled by the relevant Athonian rules. Crossing or transgressing the different in-between zones, the outsider enhances the dynamics of place, also suggesting quite an **open form of the communal rituals' narrative** as he is allowed to attend some of the rituals and gradually be initiated. Touristic experiences also influence the way the different places are bodily interpreted in the framework of a theatrical or naturalistic experience. The thesis suggests that liminality in this case is connected to the preservation of the distance

between the insider and the outsider, creating sometimes a performers-audience condition. Walking along the paths may be a way to interact with a well preserved natural environment in the framework of an alternative mode of tourism. Thus, art, architecture and events are enclosed in a kind of **immaterial cabinet**, as the notion of display conditions the experience of the individual. Silent observation becomes, therefore, the initial reaction of all the visitors that in some cases (pilgrims and existential visitors) is also followed by an active participation in the different events. The dynamics between the insiders and the outsiders is not always balanced, as the increasing number of the visitors may disturb the life of the monks, as in the case of the *katholikon* of Gregoriou monastery where an empty stall may be the subject of a conflict.

Therefore, the thesis argues about the importance of body-movement in the organisation and experience of architecture and natural landscape, reintroducing embodiment in the theoretical discourse about architectural design and perception. It highlights the importance of **concrete experience** of a place in which **enacted bodies** move activating meaningful interconnections between its different components. The Hermes-Hestia model, as this was presented in the first chapter, expresses the dynamic combination between different levels of experiential spatiality in which insiders and outsiders move in the topography that opens either as the stage for the choreographed ritual events or as a field of silent prayer and freer exploration. The embodied enactment is a way to read and understand the topography, experienced not as something static, but as a narrative of different place-events interconnected according to the plot of the movement of the body-subject. This process remains open to (unexpected or not) alterations, possible improvisations and new members' participation. *Liminality* relates, therefore, to a collection of interwoven movements the role of which is illuminated when a tangible or an intangible intermediate zone appears calling for its possible penetration. It is there, on the formal or informal thresholds, that the different movements meet and either harmonically coexist or are conflicting with each other. This is also reflected on the organisation of space and preservation of natural landscape. On the one hand, the design and performance of monastic architecture includes the **choreography** of the different rituals in a reciprocal relationship with the silent presence of the monks and the freer movements of the outsiders. On the other hand, the footpaths, the caves and the desert ascetic shelters intensely carry the element of **ephemeral**, open to changes depending on environmental conditions and use. Illuminating the importance of **movement**, **boundaries** and **encounters**, the thesis argues about the

understanding of the topography through this open meaningful interpenetration of its different parts during walking, communal ritual, silent meditation and the journey of the outsider.

Summarizing, the study claims its originality and makes significant contribution to the history and theory of sacred topography in the manner in which it views and analyses Athonian peninsula through the synthesis of primary sources and studies from various academic realms. Focusing on perceptual phenomena, it suggests an alternative to the usual examination of the case study that is mostly connected to the collection and objective presentation of facts. Introducing liminality as a tool to investigate sacred topography as the active field of silent prayer, communal rituals and the journey of the outsider, it provides a new way of understanding Mount Athos. In this context, the thesis argues that liminality is an embodied phenomenon that allows the interconnection of different place-events or even components of a place-event that may even seem discordant with each other. It plays the role of orchestration or attunement of these events allowing the harmonic synthesis of the embodied narrative of the topography. Therefore, the different liminal zones of Athonian topography are always in a process of penetration, echoing the liminal role of the peninsula in the experience of both the insiders and the visitors. They carry the dynamics of a reciprocal relationship between the two planes that divide, fulfilled even through the exchange of different silent qualities. *Crossing* or *transgressing* a boundary, *entrance* and *participation*, *exit* and *transformation*, *flow through* and *sensual unification* are actions through which the integrity of the topography is performed.

It should be added here that further research on various components of this thesis could enhance its arguments as new evidence and sources emerge. For example, the embodied topography of the Athonian desert could be more emphatically investigated through fieldwork, taking into consideration a number of methodological issues raised during the fieldtrips of this study. Moreover, comparative work on other religious traditions connected to mysticism that were only superficially touched on in the thesis would open the possibility of applying its theoretical framework to a wider range of sacred landscapes. Finally, the questioning of traditional cartographic approaches, the illumination of the embodied topography and the included experiential diagrams also open new design-based research paths connected to the mapping of the specificities of the place.

Bibliography

“A woman in Mount Athos. The Bold Descriptions of Maryse, Choisy”, in the newspaper *Macedonia*, Sunday 14 July, 1929, p. 1.

Acheson Kris, “Silence as Gesture: Rethinking the Nature of Communicative Silences”, *Communication Theory*, 18 (2008), p. 535-555.

Adams Dr. Paul C., “Cyberspace and Virtual Places”, *Geographical Review*, 87:2, (April 1997), pp. 155-171.

Αγίου Γρηγορίου Παλαμά/St. Gregory Palamas, *Έργα/Works*, Volume 10, (Athens: Εκδόσεις Μερετάκη Γ. Ελευθερίου Το Βυζάντιον/Meretakis G. Eletheriou Editions, The Byzantium, 1995).

A.I.B. *Μία βραδυά στην Έρημο του Αγίου Όρους/ A night at the Desert of the Holy Mountain*, (Thessaloniki – Greece: Εκδόσεις Ορθόδοξη Κυψέλη).

Alexandrinus G., from Great Lavra Monastery, *A Guide to Mount Athos*, (Athens, 1957).

Anatolios Khaled, “Heaven and Earth in Byzantine Liturgy”, *Antiphon*, 5:3, pp. 1-10.

Anderson Isabel, *A Yacht in the Mediterranean Seas*, (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1930).

Andriotis Konstantinos, “Sacred Site Experience. A phenomenological Study”, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 36:1 (2009), pp.64-84.

Antariksa Antariksa, “Study on the Philosophy and Architecture of Zen Buddhism in Japan: On syncretism Religion and Monastery Arrangement Plan”, *Dimensi Teknin Arsitektur*, 30:1 (July 2002), pp. 54 – 60.

Archimandrite Georgios, *Orthodox Monasticism and Mount Athos*, (Mount Athos: Holy Monastery of St. Gregorios, Mount Athos, 1998).

Archimandrite George, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of St. Gregorios on Mount Athos, *Theosis – The True Purpose of Human Life*, (Mount Athos: Holy Monastery of St. Gregorios), 2006.

Archimandrite Ioannikios, *Athonian Gerontikon*, (Thessaloniki – Greece: Holy Hesychast Complex of Saint Gregorios Palamas, 1992).

Archimandrite Sophrony, *The monk of Athos: Staretz Silouan*, (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973).

Augustine Morris, “Zen and Benedictine Monks as Mythopoeic Models of Non-egocentered World views and Lifestyles”, *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 6 (1989), pp. 23-49.

Austin Langshaw, John, *How to Do Things With the Words*, edited by J.O.Urmson and Marina Sbisa, President and Fellows of Harvard College, (America, 1962).

Bandiera Nancy, Ann, *The Medieval Labyrinth Ritual and Performance: A Grounded Theory Study of Liminality and Spiritual Experience*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2006.

Bagger Matthew, *The Uses of Paradox (Religion, Self-Transformation and the Absurd)*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

Baker Vanessa G., *Women's Pilgrimage as Repertoire Performance: Creating Gender and Spiritual Identity through Ritual*, Unpublished PhD dissertation, Graduate College of Bowling Green, State University, May 2010.

Baldovin John, F., S.J., *The Urban Character of Christian Worship. The Origins, Development and Meaning of Stational Liturgy*, (Roma: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1987).

Bales Alexander, Fernández, "Mapping Rituals in a Carthusian Monastery: La Certosa Di Calci", *Journal of Architectural Education*, 54:4 (May 2001), pp. 264-267.

Balthasar Hans Urs von, *Cosmic Liturgy. The Universe according to Maximus the Confessor*, (San Francisco: Communio – Ignatius Press, 1988).

Barnes Jonathan, *The Presocratic Philosophers*. (USA & Canada: Routledge, 1982), (First Publication: 1979).

Barry Fabio, "Walking on Water: Cosmic Floors in Antiquity and the Middle Ages", *The Art Bulletin*, 89:4, (Dec. 2007), pp.627-656.

Bauman Zygmunt, "From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity" in Hall, Stewart and Gay, Paul du (eds), *Questions of Cultural Identity*, (London: Sage Publications, 1996), pp. 18-37.

Beck Guy L., "Hinduism and Music", in Guy L. Beck (ed), *Sacred Sound. Experiencing Music in World Religions*, (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Willfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), pp. 113-140.

Beck, Guy L., *Sacred Sound. Experiencing Music in World Religions*, (Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006).

Bell Catherine, *Ritual. Perspectives and Dimensions*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Belhassen Yavin Caton, Kellee and Stewart, William, "The Search for Authenticity in the Pilgrim Experience", *Annals of Tourism Research*, 35:3 (2008), pp. 668-689.

Belting Hans, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

Berleant Arnold, *Aesthetic Experience of Environment*, translated from English to Greek by Murto Antonopoulou and Nicolaos Gogas, Edited by Georgia Apostolopoulou, (Athens: Foundation of Panagiotis and Efi Micheli, 2004), (First edition in English: 1992).

Billetta Rudolf, "Der Heilige Berg Athos" in *Zeugnissen aus sieben Jahrhunderten*, Volumes A – D, (Wien – New York – Dublin: Mosaic Publications, 1993), pp. 125-127.

Birnbaum Ruth, "The Uniqueness of Martin Buber", *Modern Ages*, (Fall, 1998), pp. 389-396.

Böhme Gernot, "Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics", *Thesis Eleven*, 36 (1993), pp. 113-126.

Boisvert Matthew, "A Comparison of the Early Forms of Buddhist and Christian Monastic Traditions", *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 12 (1992), pp. 123-141.

Boorstin Daniel, *The Image. A guide to Pseudo Events in America*, (New York: Atheneum, 1975).

Bordeianu Radu, "Orthodox – Catholic Dialogue: Retrieving Eucharistic Ecclesiology", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 44:2, (Spring, 2009), url: <http://www.questia.com/library/1G1-205746291/orthodox-catholic-dialogue-retrieving-eucharistic>.

Bria Ion, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy. Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective*, (Geneva: WCC Publication, 1996).

Brockhaus Heinrich, *Die Kunst in den Athos-Klöstern* (1924)

Bryer Anthony and Cunningham, Mary (eds), *Mount Athos and Byzantine Monasticism – Papers from the Twentieth-eighth Spring, Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, March, 2004*, (Great Britain: Variorum, 1996).

Buber Martin, *I and Thou*, A new translation by Walter Kaufmann, (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark).

Burkert Walter, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, translated by John Raffan, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher, 1985).

Bullfinch T., *The Age of Fable*. (Boston: S.W.Tilton, 1861).

Burridge Peter, *The Development of Monastic Architecture on Mount Athos: with Special Reference to the Monasteries of Pantocrator and Chilandari*, (York: Heslington, 1976).

Buttimer Anne, and Seamon, David (eds), *The Human Experience of Space and Place*, (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1980).

Cabasilas Nicholas, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, (S.P.C.K, 1983).

Cabasilas Nicholas, *The Life in Christ*, (Crestwood –New York, 10707: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974).

Campbell Joseph, *The Hero with the Thousand Faces*, (Oxford: Princeton University Press), 2004.

Caputo J.D., *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997).

Casey Edward S., "Border versus Boundary at La Frontera", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 29:3, pp. 384 – 398.

Casey Edward S., "Boundary, Place, and Event in the Spatiality of History", *Rethinking History*, 11:4, (December 2007), pp. 507-512.

Casey Edward S. *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-world*, (Indiana University Press, 1993).

Casey Edward S., "How to Get from Space to Place", in *Senses of Place*, Steven Feld and Keith Basso (eds), (Santa Fe, Mexico: School of American Research Press, 1996).

Casey Edward S., "'Jeff Malpas' Place and Experience: A philosophical topography'", *Philosophy and Geography*, 4:2 (2001), pp. 225-230.

Casey Edward S., *Remembering: a Phenomenological Study*, (Bloomington, USA: The Indiana University, Press, 1997).

Casey Edward S., *Representing Place: Landscape Painting and Maps*, (Mineapolis – London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

Casey Edward, S., "The Edge(s) of Landscape: A Study in liminology", in Jeff Malpas (ed), *The place of Landscape. Concepts, Contexts, Studies*, (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2011), pp. 91-110.

Casey Edward S., *The Fate of Place – A Philosophical History*, (Berkeley; California: University of California Press, 1997).

Cassirer Ernst, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Volume 2: Mythical Thought*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1971).

Certeau Michel de, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

Charizanh Georgios, *The Foundation and the Origins of the Liturgy of the Athonian Realm*, (Thessaloniki, Greece: Stamoulis Editions, 2007).

Charkiolakis Nikolaos, *Tradition and Development in the Architecture of the Holy Monastery of Stauronikita*, (Mount Athos: Holy Monastery of Stauronikita, 1999).

Chatzinis Giannis, "The secret of Mount Athos", *Nea Estia – Mount Athos*, (Christmas, 1963), pp. 127-137.

Chatwin Bruce, *The Songlines*, (London: Vintage, 1998).

Cheal David, "Ritual: Communication in Action", *Sociological Analysis*, 53:4, The Unique and the Shared in Religion and Society, (Winter, 1992), pp. 363-374.

Cheney De Girolami, Liana and Hendrix, John (eds), *Neoplatonic Aesthetics. Music, Literature and the Visual Arts*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004).

Chen Pi-yen, "Sound and Emptiness: Music, Philosophy and the Monastic Practice of Buddhist Doctrine", *History of Religions*, 41:1, (Aug. 2001), pp. 24-48.

Chitty Derwas, *The Desert a City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestian Monasticism Under the Christian Empire*, (Crestwood –New York, 10707: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997).

Choisy Maryse, *A Month Among the Men*, (Salem: Pyramid Books, 1962).

Chryssavgis John, *John Climacus – From the Egyptian Desert to the Sinaite Mountain*, (England: Ashgate, 2004).

Clement Olivier, Η θεολογία της εικόνας Κριτική παρουσίαση στο βιβλίο του Leonide Ouspensky 'Δοκίμιο για τη θεολογία της εικόνας'/The Theology of the Icon. Critical Presentation of Leonide Ouspensky's Book: *The meaning of the icons*", translated in Greek by Dimitra Karamperi, in www.myribiblos.gr.

Cohen Erik, *Contemporary Tourism. Diversity and Change*, Tourism Social Science Series, (Elsevier, 2004).

Coleman Simon, and Elsner, John, *Pilgrimage. Past and Present in the World Religions. Sacred travel and Sacred Space in the World Religions*,(London: British Museum Press, 1997).

Coleman Simon, and Peter Collins, "The Shape of Faith or the Archtitectural Forms of the Religious Life", in E. Atwech and U. Keenan (eds), *Materializing Religion: Expression Performance and Ritual*, (2006), pp. 32-44.

Coleman Simon, "Do you Believe in Pilgrimage? Communitas, Contestation and beyond" *Anthropological theory*, 2:3, pp. 355-268.

Corbin Alain, "Auditory Markers of the Village", in Bull Michael and Back Les (eds), *The Auditory Culture Reader*, (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2004), pp 117-125.

Coulter James A., *The Literary Microcosm. Theories of Interpretation of The Later Neoplatonists*, (leiden: E.J.Brill, 1976).

Coward H. and Foshay T. (eds) *Derrida and Negative Theology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998).

Coyne Richard, *Derrida for Architects*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

Coyne Richard, "Mystery philosopher fakes own death" and "The One and the Many" in his blog: <http://richardcoyne.com>.

Coyne Richard, *The Tuning of Place: Sociable Places and Pervasive Digital Media*, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2010).

Crossley Nick, "Ritual, Body Technique and (Inter)subjectivity", in *Thinking through Rituals. Philosophical Perspectives*, Kevin Schilbrack (ed), (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 31-51.

Daley Brian, E., "The "Closed Garden" and the "Sealed Fountain": Song of Songs 4:12 in the Late Medieval Iconography of Mary", in Elizabeth B. Macdougall (ed), *Medieval Gardens* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, Colloquium 9, 1986), pp. 253-278.

Danforth M. Loring, and Tsiaras Alexander, *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece*, (Princeton University Press, 1982).

Davies Douglas, *Anthropology and Theology*, (Oxford-New York: Berg, 2002).

Dawkins R.M., "Notes on Life in the Monasteries of Mount Athos", *The Harvard Theological Review*, 46:4 (Oct. 1953), pp. 217-231.

Dawson Lorne L. & Cowan Douglas E. (eds), *Religious Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, (New York, London: Routledge, 2004).

Day Abby, "Propositions and Performativity: Relocating Belief to the Social", *Culture and Religion*, 11:1 (March 2010), pp. 9-30.

Deflem Mathieu, "Ritual, Anti-structure and Religion: A discussion of Victor Turner's Processual Symbolic Analysis" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 30:1, 1991, pp. 1-125.

Derrida Jacques, "Chora", translated from French by Ian McCloud, in Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman, *Chora L Works*, (The Monacelli Press, 1997), pp. 15-32.

Derrida J., *On the Name*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), (First publication in French: 1993).

Diletto Lorenzo, *Peregrination in the Holy Mountain*, (Athens: Estia, 2003).

Dixon Mark H., "The Architecture of Solitude", *Environment, Space, Place*, 1:1 (Spring 2009), pp. 53-72.

Dolezal Mary-Lyon, and Mavroudi, Maria "Theodore Hyrtakenos' Description of the Garden of St. Anne and the *Ekphrasis* of Gardens", in Anthony Littlewood, Henry Maguire and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahm (eds), *Byzantine Garden Culture*, (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002), pp. 105-158.

Dora Veronica Della, *Imagining Mount Athos. Visions of a Holy Place from Homer to World War II*, (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2011).

Dora, Veronica, della, "Mythological Landscape and Landscape of Myth: Circulating Visions of Pre-Christian Athos", in G. Backhaus and J. Murungi (eds.) , *Symbolic Landscapes*, (Springer Science and Business Media B.V, 2009), pp. 109-131.

Douglas Davies, *Anthropology and Theology*,(Oxford-New York: Berg, 2002).

Douglas, Mary, *Purity and Danger. An Analysis of Pollution and Taboo*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).

Drillock, David, "Music in the Worship of the Church", *Jacob's Well, Newspaper of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey Orthodox Church in America*, 1996, www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org

Dubisch Jill, *In a Different Place: Pilgrimage, Gender and Politics and a Greek Island Shrine*, (Princeton University Press, 1995).

Dwight H., "The Hoary Monasteries of Mount Athos", *The National Geographic*, 30 (1916).

Eade John and Sallnow, Michael (eds), *Contesting the Sacred. The anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, Routledge, London, 1991.

Γέροντος Ιωσήφ Βατοπαιδινού/ Elder Josef from Vatopaidi, *Ο Γέροντας Ιωσήφ ο Ησυχαστής / Elder Josef the hesychast*, (Mount Athos: The Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi, 2008), (First edition in Greek: 1983).

Eliade Mircea, *Cosmos and History – The Myth of the Eternal Return*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959).

Eliade Mircea, *Images and Symbols. Studies in Religious Symbolism*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1952).

Eliade Mircea, *Patterns of Comparative Religion*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1958).

Eliade Mircea, *Symbolism, the Sacred and the Arts*, edited by Diane Apostolos - Cappadona, (New York: Crossroad, 1986).

Eliade Mircea, *The Sacred and the Profane, - The Nature of Religion, The Significance of Religious Myth, Symbolism and Ritual within Life and Culture*, (A Harvest/ HBJ book, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987).

Eliade Mircea, *The Two and the One*, translated by J. M. Cohen, (London: Harvill Press, 1965).

Elgood Heather, *Hinduism and the Religious Arts*, (London and New York: Cassell, 1998).

Ellwood Robert, *Mysticism and Religion*, (New York & London: Seven Bridges Press).

Encyclopedia of Monasticism, (London: Fitzroy Dearbon Publishers, 2000).

Ernst Carl, W., "Interpreting the Song of Songs: The Paradox of Spiritual and Sensual Love", Web Site of Carl C. Ernst, 24 January, 2003, <http://www.unc.edu/~cernst/articles/sos-intro.htm>.

Evdokimof Paul, *Orthodoxy*, (Athens: Rigopoulos Editions, 1965).

Fenning Steven, *Mystics of the Christian Tradition*, (New York: Routledge, 2001).

Fitton J. W., "Greek Dance", *The Classical Quarterly, New Series*, 23:2 (November, 1973), pp. 254-274.

Fivush Robyn, "Speaking Silence: The Social Construction of Silence in Autobiographical and Cultural Narratives", *Memory*, 18:2, pp. 88-98.

Flemming Lebeck, "The concept of the Subject in the Philosophical Hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer", *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 14:2, pp. 221-236.

Florensky Pavel, *Iconostasis*, translated by Donald Sheehan and Olga Andrejev, (U.S.A.: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996).

Florofsky Goerge, , *Issues of Orthodox Theology*, (Athens: Artos Zois, 1973).

Florofsky Archpriest Georges, "St Gregory Palamas and the tradition of the Fathers" *Church, Tradition: An Orthodox View*, The Collected Works of Georges Florofsky, Volume 1, (Vaduz, Europa, Buchervetriebsanstalt, 1987).

Fortunato Mariamna, and Cunningham, Mary, B., "Theology of the Icon", in Mary Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Theology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.136-149.

Fountoulis I., "Liturgical Life", in Stilianos, Papadopoulos (ed.), *Simonopetra – Mount Athos*, (Athens: ETBA, Hellenic Industrial Development Bank, 1991).

Frazer J. G., *The Fasti of Ovid*. 5 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1929).

Frazer J. G., *The Golden Bough*, (New York: Macmillan, 1951).

Friedrich Paul, *The Meaning of Aphrodite*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978).

Fujii Masao, "Maintenance and Change in Japanese Traditional Funerals and Death-related Behavior", *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 10 (November 1983), pp. 39-64.

Gadamer Hans Georg, *Truth and Method*, (London: Continuum Publishing Group, 1989).

Paul Leslie Garbor, "Reconstructing Solomon's Temple", *The Biblical Archaeologist*, 14:1 (February 1951), pp. 1-24.

Gaskin Tara, Kathleen, *Interpretation and Conservation of Sacred Space: A Ritual Based Approach*, Unpublished MSc Thesis in Architecture, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, July, 2012.

Gedeon Manouil, Athos, (Athens: Ermis, 1990).

Gennep Arnold van, *The Rites of Passage*, (London: Routledge, 1960).

Gertel Sharon, E.J. (ed), *Thresholds of the Sacred. Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens*, (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 2006).

Gikas Giannis, "The Paths of Mount Athos (Where all the mystical Athonian history has walked)", in *Anthology of Literary texts about Mount Athos*, Ioannis Xatzifotis (ed), (Athens: Iolkos, 2000), (In Greek).

Gilmour C. John, "Dewey and Gadamer on the Ontology of Ritual", *Man and World*, 20 (1987), Netherlands, pp.205-219.

Giusti Fontana, Gordana Korolija, "Mapping the Movements of the Walker – a Spatio – Dynamic Method of Designing a Responsive Environment for the 21st Century Pedestrian Culture", September 2005.

Giusti Fontana, Gordana Korolija, "Urban Strolling as the Measure of Quality", *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 11 (2007), pp. 255-264.

Goehring James, "The Dark Landscape: Ideology and Power in the Christian myth of Desert", *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 33:3 (2003), pp. 437-451.

Goffman E., *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1959).

Golitzin Alexander, "Hierarchy versus Anarchy? Dionysius Areopagita, Symeon the New Theologian, Nicetas Stethatos and their Common Roots in Ascetica Tradition", *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 38 1994, pp. 131-179.

Golitzin Alexander, "Topos Theou: The Monastic Elder as Theologian and as Theology. An Appreciation of Archimandrite Aimilianos", in Conomos, Dimitri and Speake, Graham (eds), *Mount Athos, the sacred bridge: The spirituality of the Holy Mountain*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), (first edition: 2005), p. 201-242.

Goodman Lenn E. (ed), *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, (New York: State University of New York, 1992).

Gothoni Rene, "Mount Athos During the Last Centuries of Byzantium" in Jan Olof Rosenqvist (ed), *Interaction and Isolation and Late Byzantine Culture*, (Stockholm: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 2004), pp. 57-69.

Gothoni Rene, *Paradise within Reach: Monasticism and Pilgrimage on Mount Athos*, (Helsinki, Finland: Helsinki University Press, 1993).

Gothoni Rene, "Pilgrimage as dialogue", in Gothoni Rene & Speake Graham (eds), *The Monastic Magnet. Roads to and from Mount Athos*, (Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Brussels, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Vienne: Peter Lang), pp. 97-108.

Gothoni Rene, *Tales and Truths: Pilgrimage on Mount Athos Past and Present*, (Helsinki, Finland: Helsinki University Press, 1994).

Gould Graham, *The Desert Fathers on Monastic Community*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

Athanasius, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, translated by Gregg R. C., (New York, Ramsey, Toronto, 1980).

Grimes, Ronald L., *Beginings in ritual Studies*, (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982).

Grimes Ronald L., "Jonathan Z. Smith's Theory of Ritual Space", *Religion*, 29:3 (1999), pp. 261-273.

Gusfield R. Joseph, and Jerzy Michalowich, "Secular Symbolism: Studies of Ritual, Ceremony and the Symbolic Order in Modern Life", *Annual Review of Sociology*, 10 (1984), pp. 417-435.

Hanh Thich Nhat, *Buddha Mind, Buddha Body. Walking Towards Enlightenment*, (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 2007).

Hannaford John Alfred Victor, *Two Australian Pilgrimages*, Unpublished MPhil Thesis, Australian Catholic University, August, 2001.

Haran Menahem, "The Uses of Incense in the Ancient Israelite Ritual", *Vetus Testamentum*, 10:2 (April 1960), pp. 113-129.

Harper Ralph, *Journey from Paradise: Mount Athos and the Interior Life*, (Editions Du Beffroi, 1987).

Harrison Nonna, Verna, "The Human Person as Image and Likeness of God", in Cunningham, Mary B. and Theokritoff, Elizabeth (eds), *The Cambridge Companion of Orthodox Christian Theology*, (Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 78-92.

Harries Karsten, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1997).

Harvey Susan, Ashbroook, *Scenting Salvation. Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

Halsuck F., *Athos and its monasteries*, (New York: Kegan Paul Trench, Trubner & CO. LTD., 1924).

Hedstrom Brooks, Darlen L., "Divine Architects: Designing the Monastic Dwelling Place," in Roger Bagnall (ed.), *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 450-700, ed.*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 368-389.

Hedstrom Brooks, "Darlene, L., The Geography of the Monastic Cell in Early Egyptian Monastic Literature", *Church History*, 78:4 (December, 2009), pp. 756-791.

Heidegger Martin, *Being and Time*, (Oxford & Cambridge: Blackwell, 2000), (First English Edition: 1962).

Heidegger Martin, *Being and Time*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

Heidegger Martin, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" in Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, Edited by David Farrell Krell, (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 356.

Heidegger Martin, *On the Way to Language*, translated by Peter D. Hertz, (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper and Row Publishers, 1971).

Heidegger Martin, "The Pathway", translated by Thomas F. O' Meara, in Thomas, Sheehan (ed), *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2010), pp.69-72.

Hein Hilde, S. *The Museum in Transition. A philosophical Perspective*, (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2000).

Hendy David, *Noise: A Human History of Sound and Listening*, (London: Profile Books LTD, 2013).

Hieromonk Nikeforos from the Skete of the Small Saint Anne, *Athos. The Holy Mountain*, (Mount Athos: Small Saint Anne, 2001).

Hirschfeld Yizhar, "The Foundation of the New Laura", in Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (eds), *Asceticism*, (New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 267-280.

Holloway Julian, "Make-believe: Spiritual Practice, Embodiment and Sacred Space", *Environment and Planning, A*, Volume 35, 2003, (pp.1961-1964), pp. 93-115.

Hollywood Amy, "Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization", *History of Religions*, 42:2 (November, 2002), pp. 93-115.

Holmes Augustine, *A Life Pleasing to God – The Spirituality of the Rules of St. Basil*, (Darton: Longman and Todd ltd).

Hori Ichiro, "Mountains and Their Importance for the Idea of the Other World in Japanese Folk Religion", *History of Religions*, 6,:1 (August, 1966), pp. 1-23.

Howe Leo, "Risk, Ritual and Performance", *The Journal of the Royal Anthropology Institute*, 6:1, (March, 2000), pp.63-79.

Humphrey Caroline, and Laidlaw, James, *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual – A Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

Hyde Lewis, *Trickster makes this world: Mischief, myth and art*, (New York: North Point, 1998).

Howard Deborah and Moretti Laura, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice*, (Yale University Press, 2009).

"Indeed, the Avaton of Mount Athos was Transgressed by a Woman", in the newspaper *Empros*, Wednesday, 29 April, 1953, pp. 1 & 3.

Ingold Tim, *The Perception of the Environment. Essays on livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

Irigaray Luce, *Spéculum de l'autre femme*, (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1974).

Isar Nicoletta, "Chora: Tracing the Presence", *Review of European Studies*, 1:1 (June, 2009), pp. 39-55.

Isar, Nicoletta, "Chorography – A Space for Choreographic inscription", *Bulletin of the Transylvania University of Brasov*, 2:51 (2009), pp. 263-268.

Isserlin et al B.S.J., "The Canal of Xerxes on the Mount Athos Peninsula", *Annual of the British School at Athens*, 89 (1994), pp. 277-284.

John The Divine, *The Revelation*, (Oxford: Printed at the University Press for the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1864).

Johnson Elsa, "Hesychasm, Iconography and Tintinnabulation: Reflections on Art, Music and Theology", *Anamnesis*, 4 (May, 2007).

Johnston Sarah Iles, "Myth, Festival and Poet: The Homeric Hymn to Hermes and Its Performative context", *Classical Philology*, 97:2 (April, 2002), pp. 109-132.

Jones, Lindsay *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison*, (Cambridge: Mass Distributed by Harvard University Press for Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, 2000).

Jung de, Pieter *Philosophical perspectives of Ritual [A summary of the essay 'Perspectief of Rituelen']*, Workshop on Ritual in early Judaism and early Christianity, 26-29 August, 2009, Helsinki, Finland.

Kadas Sotiris and Zias, Nikos (eds), *The Holy Monastery of Saint Gregorios. The wall-paintings in the Katholikon*, (The Holy Mountain – Mount Athos, 1998).

Kalamaras George, *Reclaiming the Tacit Dimension: Symbolic Form in the Rhetoric of Silence*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994).

Kallinikos Konstantinos, *The Christian Church and the Activities in It*, (Athens: Grigoris Publications, 1969).

- Kambanis Markos (ed), Spyros Papaloukas. *The Mountain Athos Paintings*, (Mount Athos, 2004).
- Karaflogka Anastasia, "Religious Discourse and Cyberspace", *Religion: An International Journal*, 32 (2002), pp. 279-291.
- Karamanou Anna, "Mount Athos and Human Rights", *Newspaper:Eleutherotypia*, 06.02.2003, also available in: www.karamanou.gr.
- Karolidou P., *The Current Condition of Mount Athos*, (Athens: Paliggenesias Press, Company of Hellenism, 1896).
- 1
- Kavoulaki Athena, "Processional Performance and the Democratic Polis", in Simon Goldhill and Robin Osborne (eds), *Performance culture and Athenian democracy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 293-320.
- Kaza Stephanie, "Buddhist Views on Ritual Practice. Becoming a Real Person", *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 20 (2000), pp. 45-53.
- Kenna Margaret, "Icons in Theory and Practice: An Orthodox Christian Example", *History of Religions*, 24:4 (May, 1985), pp. 345-368.
- Kepnes Steven "Buber as Hermeneut: Relations to Dilthey and Gadamer", *The Harvard Theological Review*, 81:2 (April, 1988), pp. 193-213.
- Kirou Dimitris, *Ascending towards the Peak of Mount Athos*, (Poligiros, Greece: Perfecture of Chalcidiki, 2001).
- Konidaris Ioannis, M. *The Mount Athos Avaton*, (Athens: Sakkoulas Editions, 2003).
- Kordosis Michalis, *Athonian Monastic life and Folk History/Αγιορείτικη ζωή και λαογραφία*, (Thessaloniki, Greece, 1976).
- Korom Frank j., "Of Navels and Mountains: A Further Inquiry into the History of an Idea", *Asian Folklore Studies*, 51:1 (1992), pp. 103-125.
- Kotoulas Dimitrios, "The Natural Environment", in Stilianos, in Papadopoulos (ed.), *Simonopetra – Mount Athos*, (Athens: ETBA, Hellenic Industrial Development Bank, 1991), pp. 47-56.
- Kotsi Filareti, *La communication enchantée. Une anthropologie reflexive du tourisme religieux autour du Mont Athos(Grèce)*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Sciences de l' Information et de la Communication, Ecole Normale Superieure Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Lyon, 2003.
- Kotsi Filareti, "The Enchantment of a Floating Pilgrimage. The Case of Mount Athos, Greece", in *Vrijetijdstudies*, 17:2 (1999), pp. 5-20.
- Koufos Nikolaos, *Holy Week on Mount Athos*, (Mount Athos: The Holy Monastery of Iveron, 1997).

Koumarios, Pavlos, "Symbol and Reality in the Divine Liturgy", *Synaxi*, 71 (July – September 1999), pp. 22-37.

Koutsouris F. Dimitrios, *Saint Gregory Palamas. His life and his works*, (Athens: Grigoris Editions, 2004).

Krumnow Kristi, L., "Womb as Synecdoche: Introduction to Irigaray's Deconstruction of Plato's Cave'", *Project Muse*, 13:1-2 (Spring/Fall, 2009), pp. 69-93.

Kunzler Michael, *The Church's Liturgy*, (London – New York: Continuum, 2001).

Lacoste Jean, Yves, *Experience and the Absolute. Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man*, translated by Mark – Raftery – Skeban, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), (first publication in French: 1994).

Λαδιά Ελένη, / Ladia, Eleni, "Η όραση και το Άγιο Όρος"/"The vision and Mount Athos," in Ioannis Xatzifotis, *Ανθολογία Λογτεχνικών Κειμένων για το Άγιο Όρος/Anthology of Literary texts about Mount Athos*, (Athens: Iolkos Publications, 2000), (First edition: 1977), pp. 222-225.

Lagopoulos Alexandros F., "The Religious Symbolism of the Byzantine City", *Αρχαιολογία και Τέχνες/ Archeology and arts*, 64, pp. 65-74.

Langdon Merle K., "Mountains in Greek Religion", *The Classical World*, 93:5, The Organization of Space in Antiquity, (May – June, 2000), pp. 461-470.

Lang Richard, "The Dwelling Door: Towards a Phenomenology of Transition", in David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer (eds), *Dwelling, Place and Environment*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 201-213.

Lebech Flemming, "The Concept of the Subject in the Philosophical Hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 14:2, pp. 221-236.

Leeuw Gerardus, van der, "From Religion in Essence and Manifestation: A study in Phenomenology", in Jeffrey Carter (ed), *Understanding Religious Sacrifice*, (London, New York: Continuum, 2006).

Leeuw Gerardus, van der, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation: a study in phenomenology*, translated by J.E. Turner, (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1938).

Lehari Kaia, "Mythopoetics of Stone", in A-T Tymieniecka (ed.), *Analecta Husserliana*, CIV (2009), p. 393-402.

Leggett T., *Zen and The Ways*, (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1989).

Lexicon Der Antike, (Herausgeber), Bibliographisches Institut, 9. Auflage, Leipzig 1987.

Lidov Alexei, *Hierotopy. Spatial Icons and Image-paradigms in Byzantine Culture*, (Moscow, 2010).

Lidov Alexei (ed), *Iconostasis: Origins, Evolution, Symbolism*, (Moscow, 2000).

Alexei Lidov, "New Jerusalems. Transferring of the Holy Land as Generative Matrix of Christian Culture" in Alexei, Lidov (ed), *New Jerusalems. Hierotopy and iconography of Sacred Spaces*, (Moscow: Indrik, 2009), pp. 5-10.

Lidov Alexei, "Spatial Icons. The Miraculous Performance with the Hodegetria of Constantinople" in Lidov Alexei, (ed), *Hierotopy. Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, (Moscow: Progress-tradition, 2006), pp. 325-372.

Lidov Alexei, "Holy Face, Holy Script, Holy Gate. Revealing the Edessa paradigm in Christian Imagery", in A. Calderoni Mazetti, C. Dufour Bozzo, G. Wolf (eds), (Venezia, 2007), pp. 145-162.

Lidov Alexei, "The Byzantine World and Performative Spaces", in Alexei Lidov (ed), *Spatial Icons. Performativity in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, (Moscow: Indrik, 2011), pp. 17-26.

Lind Tvarno, Tore, *The Past Is Always Present: The Revival of the Byzantine Musical Tradition at Mount Athos*, (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2012).

Lindsay Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison*, (Cambridge, Mass: Distributed by Harvard University Press for Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, 2000).

Littlewood Antony, Maguire, Henry, and Wolschke-Bulmahn, Joachim (eds), *Byzantine Garden Culture*, (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002).

Livieratos Euaggelos, (ed) *Όρους Άθω, Γης και Θαλάσσης Περίμετρον. Χαρτών Μεταμορφώσεις/Mount Athos: Between the earth and the sea. Its transformations through maps*, (Thessaloniki: National Map Library, 2000).

Loch Sydney, *Athos: The Holy Mountain*, (Michigan: The University of Michigan, 1957).

Lossky Vladimir, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1991), (First Publication: 1957).

Louth Andrew, *Denys the Areopagite*, (London: Continuum, 2001), (First Publication: 2001).

Louth Andrew, "Light, Vision and Religious Experience in Byzantium", in Mathew T. Kapstein (ed.), *The presence of light – Divine Radiance and Religious Experience*, (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).

Louth Andrew, *Maximus the Confessor*, (New York: Routledge, 1999).

Louth Andrew, "The Eucharist and Hesychasm, with Special Reference to Theophanes III, Metropolitan of Nicae", Perczel, I., Forrai, R. and G. Geréby (eds), *The eucharist in theology and*

philosophy. Issues of doctrinal history in East and West from the Patristic age to the Reformation, (Leuven: Leuven Univ. Press, 2005), pp. 199-205.

Louth Andrew, *The Origins of Christian Mysticism*, (Oxford University Press, 2007).

Lupton Deborah, *Food, The Body and the Self*, (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996).

MacWilliams Mark, "Virtual Pilgrimages on the Internet", *Religion: An International Journal*, 32 (2002), pp. 315-336.

Marion J. L. "In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking of "Negative Theology", in John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon, *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, The Indiana Series of the Philosophy of Religion, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 20-42.

McCannel Dean, "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings", *The American Journal of Sociology*, 79:3 (November, 1973), pp.589-603.

Μαλαβέτας Θεόδωρος / Malavetas, Theodoros, Άγιον Όρος/Mount Athos, (Αθήνα: Ελληνική Εκδοτική Εταιρεία, 1943).

Malpas Jeff, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006).

Malm William, *Traditional Japanese Music and Musical Instruments*, The Yamaguchi Kan Series, (New York: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1959).

Mango Cyril, *Byzantine Architecture*, (Milan/ London: Electa/Faber and Faber, 1978/1986).

Marinatos Nanno, "Striding Across Boundaries: Hermes and Aphrodite as gods of initiation", in David B. Dodd and Christopher A. Faraone (eds), *Initiation in Ancient Greek Rituals and Narratives. New Critical Perspectives*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 130-151.

Marion J.L., *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, translated by T.A. Carlson, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

Marion J. L., "In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking of "Negative Theology"", in Caputo, John, D. and Scanlon, Michael, J., *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 20-42.

Masao Fujii, "Maintenance and Change in Japanese Traditional Funerals and Death-related Behavior", *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 10 (November 1983), pp. 39-64.

McCannel Dean, "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings", in *The American Journal of Sociology*, 79:3 (November, 1973), pp. 589-603.

McCormick Finbar, "Iona: the View from Ireland", electronically published in the framework of the Iona Research Conference", 10-12 April 2012, in <http://www.ionahistory.org.uk/researchconference>.

McKimmon James, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, (Cambridge University Press, 1987).

McNamara Denis R., *Catholic Church Architecture and the Spirit of the Liturgy*, (Mexico: Hillenbrand Books, 2009).

Merleau-Ponty Maurice, *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated from the French by Colin Smith and Kegan Paul, (London, 1962).

Merrill Christopher, *Travelling to Athos*, translated by Nikos Koutras, (Athens: Metaichmio Publishers, 2004).

Merton Thomas, *Monastic Observances. Initiation into the Monastic Tradition 5*, Monastic Wisdom Series, (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2010).

Meyendorff Paul, Introduction in St. Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*, translation, introduction and commentary by Paul Meyendorff, (Crestwood, New York, 10707: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984).

Meyendorff John "Mount Athos in the Fourteenth Century: Spiritual and Intellectual Legacy" *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 42 (19880, pp. 157 – 165.

Meyendorff John, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality*, translated by Adele Fiske, (Crestwood, New York 10707: St. Valdimir's Seminary Press, 1998).

Meyendorff Jean, *The Byzantine Heritage in the Orthodox Church*, (Athens: Armos, 1990).

Michelis P.A., *Aesthetic Examination of Byzantine Art*, (Athens, 1978).

Migne JP, (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus, Series Graeca*, (Paris, 1857).

Miller Patricia, Cox, "Dreaming the Body: An Aesthetics of Ascetics", in Vincent L. Wimbusch and Richard Valantasis (eds), *Asceticism*, (Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 281-299.

Mitsukuni Yoshida and Tsune, Sesoko, (eds), *Naorai. Communion of the Table*, (Tokyo: Cosmo Public Relations Corp., 1989).

Montiglio Silvia, *Silence in the Land of Logos*, (Princeton University Press, 2012).

Moody, Ivan "Liturgy, Music and Silence", *Ibero-Slavica 2011, A Yearbook*. Compares-International Society for Iberian-Slavonic Studies, Clepul 5, pp.75-81.

Morewedge, Parviz, (ed), *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, (New York: State University of New York, 1992).

- Morinis Alan, *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, (Greenwood Press, 1998).
- Morison E.F., *St. Basil and His Rule – A study in Early monasticism*, Henry Frowde, (London – Edinburgh – New York – Toronto – Melbourne – Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1912).
- Morita Kiyoko, *The Book of Incense. Enjoying the Traditional Art of Japanese Scents*, (Kodansha: Kodansha University Press, 2007).
- Mortley Raoul, *From Word to Silence: The way of negation, Christian and Greek*, Volume Two, (The University of Michigan Press, 1986), Electronic publication: <http://epublications.bond.edu.au>.
- Muller Anne, “Presenting Identity in the Cloister: Benedictine and Mendicant Concepts of space”, in Muller Anne and Stober Karen (eds), *Self-Representation of medieval religious communities*, (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2009), pp. 143-166.
- Murray Placid, “Liturgical Principles for Church Architecture”, *The Furrow*, 13:9 (September, 1962), pp. 499-515.
- Mylonas Paulos, “The architecture of Mount Athos”, *Nea Estia - Mount Athos*, (1963), pp. 189-207.
- Najim Michael and Frazier T.L., *Understanding the Orthodox Liturgy. A guide for participating in the Liturgy of St. John the Chrysostom*, in www.frmichel.najim.net/liturgyvid.pdf.
- Needham Rodney, *Exemplars*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).
- Neil Roy, J., “Rite, Gesture and Meaning: Incense in worship of the Eucharist outside Mass”, *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, 116:2 (2002), pp. 175-196.
- Nelstrop, Louise, Magill, Kevin and Onishi, Bradley B., *Christian Mysticism. An Introduction to Contemporary Theoretical Approaches*, (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2009).
- Nolan Mary Lee and Nolan, Sidney, “Religious Sites as Tourism Attractions in Europe”, in *Annals of Tourism Research*, 19 (1992), pp. 69-74.
- Nußbaumer Heinz, Μόνος και όμως όχι μόνος. Άρωμα Αγίου Όρους στον κόσμο μας από τις εμπειρίες ενός προσκυνητή/ Alone but not Alone. A sense of Mount Athos in our world through the experiences of a pilgrim, μετάφραση στα Ελληνικά Δ. Μαντζούρης/ Translation in Greek: D. Mantzouris (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Επτάλοφος/ Athens: Eptalofos Publications, 2007), (First Edition in German: 2006).
- Ochs Elinor and Capps, Lisa, “Narrating Self”, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 25 (1996), pp. 19-43.
- Otto Rudolf, *Mysticism: East and West. A Comparative Analysis of the Nature of Mysticism*, (London: MacMillan and Co. Limited, 1932).

Otto Walter, *The Homeric Gods: The Spiritual Significance of Greek Religion*, translated by, Moses Hadas, (Great Britain: Thames & Hudson, 1979).

Ouspensky Leonid, and Lossky, Vladimir, *The Meaning of the Icon*, (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999).

Ouspensky Leonide, "The Problem of the Iconostasis", *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly*, 8 (1964), pp. 186 – 218.

Ouspensky Leonid, *Theology of the Icon*, Volume 1, translated by Anthony Gythiel with selections translated by Elizabeth Meyendorff , (Crestwood NY, 10707 – 1699: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992).

Ousterhout Robert, "The Holy Space: Architecture and the Liturgy", in Linda Safran (ed), *Heaven on Earth. Art and the Church in Byzantium*, (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), p. 81-120.

Pabst Adrian & Schneider Christoph (eds.), *Encounter Between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy: Transfiguring the World Through the Word*. (Surrey: Ashgate Pub. Ltd., 2008).

Palade Michaela, "Aspects of Mount Athos Contribution to the Maintenance of the Triconchial plan in Romanian Sacred Architecture", *European Journal of Science and Theology*, 3:4 (December 2007).

Palioura Maria Mirka, "Theodore Ralli's Diary on his Travels to Athos (1885)", *Proceedings of the 8th Biennial Conference of Astene* (The Association for the Study of Travel in Egypt and the Near East) U.K., pp. 78-87.

Palmer Gerald, "Silence over Mount Athos", *Orthodox Life*, (November-December 1968), p. 33.

Παναγιωτόπουλος Ι. Μ. / Panagiotopoulos, I.M., *Στο Περιβόλι της Παναγιάς – Αγιορείτικα και άλλα οδοιπορικά/ In the courtyard of Theotokos – Athonian and other peregrinations*, (Αθήνα: εκδόσεις Ακρίτας).

Papachrysanthou Dionysia, *The Athonian Monasticism: Beginning and Organisation*, (Athens: Educational Institution of the National Bank of Greece, 1992).

Papadopoulos Stilianos, (ed), *Simonopetra: Mount Athos*, (Athens: Hellenic Industrial Development Bank ETBA SA, 1991).

Papanikolaou Aristotle, "Personhood and its Components in twentieth-century Orthodox Theology", in Cunningham, Mary B. and Theokritoff, Elizabeth (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), (First Published: 2008), pp. 232-245.

Papadatos Stauros, *The Problem of the Athonian Avaton*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of the School of Law, Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki – Greece, 1969.

Parrinder Geoffrey, *Mysticism in the World's Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

Patrich Joseph, Sabas, *Leader of Palestinian Monasticism. A Comparative Study in Eastern Monasticism, Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, (United States of America: Dumbarton Oaks, 1995).

Payne Paul, Daniel, *The Revival of political Hesychasm in Greek Orthodox thought: A study of the Hesychast basis of the thought of John S. Romanides and Christos Yannaras*, PhD thesis, Institute of Church- State studies, Baylor University, 2006.

Pazarli Maria and Livieratos, Euaggelos, "Ou topos or the place (topos) of Athos?" in Euaggelos Livieratos (ed) *Όρους Άθω, Γης και Θαλάσσης Περίμετρον. Χαρτών Μεταμορφώσεις/Mount Athos: Between the earth and the sea. Its transformations through maps*, (Thessaloniki: National Map Library, 2002).

Pearson Peter, *A Brush with God: An Icon Workbook*, (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2005).

Pentcheva Bissera V., *The Sensual Icon. Space, Ritual and the Senses in Byzantium*, (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010).

Peters Edward, "Omnia permixta sun: Where's the Border?", *The Medieval History Journal*, 4:9 (2001), pp. 109-127.

Pezze Dalle Barbara, "Heidegger on Gelassenheit", *Minerva – An internet Journal of Philosophy*, 10 (2006).

Picard Max, *The World of Silence*, translated by Stanley Godman, (London: The Harvard Press), (first published in German in 1948).

Plato *Timaeus*, translated by R. G. Bury, (London: Harvard University Press, 1981).

Plexidas Ioannis, *The Refit of Man – Introduction to the anthropological thought of Nicholas Cavašilas*, (Trikala – Athens: Προτυπες Θεσσαλικές Εκδόσεις, 2007).

Ploritis Marios, *The Byzantine Theatre*, (Athens: Kastaniotis Editions, 1999).

Plotinus *Enneads*, translated by Stephen McKenna, (London: Faber and Faber, 1956).

Politsky Sister Rosarie, *The Historic Relationship Between Sacred Art, Sacred Architecture and the Roman Catholic Liturgy and the Sacramental Aspects of the Aesthetic Experience*, unpublished MSc Thesis, (The Ohio State University, 1983).

Popovic Svetlana, "Dividing the Indivisible: The Monastery Space – Secular and Sacred", *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta*, 44 (2007), pp. 47-65.

Popovic Svetlana, "The Byzantine Monastery: Its Spatial Iconography and the Question of Sacredness", in Alexei Lidov, *Hierotopy, Studies in the Making of Sacred Space*, (Moscow, 2006), pp. 150-185.

Popovic Svetlana, "The 'Trapeza' in Cenobitic Monasteries: Architectural and Spiritual Contexts", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 52 (1998), pp. 281-303.

Potamianos Iakovos, *The Light in the Byzantine Church* (book in Greek), (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2000).

Preston James J. "Spiritual Magnetism An Organizing Principle for the Study of Pilgrimage", in Alan Morinis (ed) *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, (London: Greenwood Press, 1992).

Prokopiou Giorgos, A., *The Cosmological Symbolism of the Architecture of the Byzantine Church*, (Athens: Pirinos Kosmos, 1990).

Puhalo Archbishop Lazar, *The Soul, the Body and Death*, (Synaxis Press).

Pullan, Wendy, " 'Sacred Space' as Mediation", in *Het kerkgebouw in het postindustriële landschap/ The church in the post-industrial landscape*, (Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer, 2004), pp. 246-263.

Puchner Walter, "Acting in the Byzantine Theatre: Evidence and Problems", in Pat Easterling and Edith Hall (ed), *Greek and Roman Actors. Aspects of an Ancient Profession*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 304-326.

Pustzai Bertalan, *Religious Tourists. Constructing Authentic Experiences in Late Modern Hungarian Catholicism*, (Jyvaskylan: JYVASKYLAN YLIOPISTO, 2004).

Quatrone C., "The Celebrant: Priest or Pastor. An Investigation of the Mystical Prayers of the Divine Services of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church", *Orthodox Life*, 46:4 (1996), pp. 17-41.

Quinn Patrick, "Drawing on Mount Athos: The Thousand Year Lesson", *Places*, 2:1 (1985), pp. 32-47.

Ragon Michel, *The Space of Death. A Study of Funerary Architecture, Decoration and Urbanism*, translated by Alan Sheridan, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983).

Ralli Theodore Jacques, *At the Mountain of Athos. Experts from the Diary of a Painter*, translated in Greek from French by Mirka Palioura, (Athens: Kastaniotis Editions, 2004).

Rapp Claudia, "The Idea of the Ancient Greek Polis in Early Medieval Byzantium: The Ancient City and its Features", in *Athens Dialogues E-Journal*, <http://athensdialogues.chs.harvard.edu>.

Redick Kip, "Wilderness as Axis Mundi: Spiritual Journeys on the Appalachian Trail", *Symbolic Landscapes*, 1 (2009), pp. 65-90.

Reininger Gustave (ed), *The Diversity of Centering Prayer*, (New York: Continuum, 1999).

Ralph Edward, *Place and Placelessness*, (London: Pion, 1976).

Reznikoff Iegor, "On Primitive Elements of Musical Meaning", *JMM – The Journal of Music and Meaning*, 3:2 (Fall 2004/Winter 2005), url: <http://www.musicandmeaning.net/issues/showArticle.php?artID=3.2>, (date of access: 15 April, 2013).

Ricoeur Paul, *The Function of Narrative/H Αφηγηματική λειτουργία*, translated in Greek by Vangelis Athanasopoulos, (Athens: Kardamitsas Editions), 1990, (First Edition in French: 1979).

Ricoeur Paul, *Time and Narrative*, Volume One, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983).

Robert Jean, "Hestia and Hermes: the Greek imagination of motion and Place", *Unpublished manuscript*, 1996, url: <http://www.pudel.uni-bremen.de/pdf/HESTIA.pdf>, pp. 1-6.

Rousseau Philip, *Pachomius. The making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt*, (Belkeley – Los Angeles – New York: University of California Press, 1985).

Rossi Vincent, "Sacred Cosmology in the Christian Tradition", in the *Ecologist*, (January, 2000).

Ryan Chris, "Stages, gazes, and constructions of tourism", in Chris Ryan (ed), *The Tourist Experience*, (London: Thomson, 2002), pp. 1-26.

Safran Linda, (ed), *Heaven on Earth. Art and the Church in Byzantium*, (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 1997).

Saint John, *The Ladder*, translated by the Archimandrite Jeremiah from Sinai, (Athens: Aster Publications, 1969).

Saint Simon the Athonite (Athens: Akritas Publications, 1987).

Santos Maria de Graca, Mouga, Pocas, "Religious Tourism: Contributions towards a clarification of concepts", in Fernandes, C. McGettigan, F. And Edwards, J. (eds), *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage – Atlas: Special Interest Group*, (1st Expert Meeting), (Fatima, Portugal: Tourism Board of Leiria, 2003), pp. 27-42.

Schafer Murray *The Tuning of the World*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977).

Scherrer Fr. Stephen, "Hindu Asceticism", url: http://www.stevenscherrer.com/admin/upload/Hindu_Asceticism.pdf.

Schmemman Alexander, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*, (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003).

Schmidt Emanuel, "Solomon's Temple", *The Biblical World*, 14:3 (September 1899), pp.164-171.

Schulz Christian, Norberg, *Genius Loci: Towards a phenomenology of architecture*, (London: Academy Editions, 1980).

Schulz Christian Norberg, "The phenomenon of place", in *Designing Cities. Critical Readings in Urban Design*, Alexander R. Cuthbert (ed), (Oxford, Melbourne, Berlin: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 125-137.

Schweiker William, "Beyond Imitation: Mimetic Praxis in Gadamer, Ricoeur and Derrida", *The Journal of Religion*, 68:1 (January, 1998), pp.21-38.

Schweiker William, "Sacrifice, Interpretation, and the Sacred: the import of Gadamer and Girard for Religious Studies", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, LV/4, pp. 791-810.

Seaford Richard, *Dionysos*, (New York: Routledge, 2006).

Seamon David, "A Way of Seeing People and Place: Phenomenology and Environment-Behaviour Research", in *Theoretical Perspectives in Environment-Behavior Research* S. Wapner, J. Demick, T. Yamamoto, and H Minami (eds.), (New York: Plenum, 2000), through K-State Research Exchange, (<http://krex.kstate.edu/dspace/handle/2097/1697>).

Seamon David & Mugerauer, Robert (eds), *Dwelling, Place and Environment: Toward a Phenomenology of Person and World*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), (First Edition in English: 1985).

Seamon David, "Interconnections, Relationship and Environmental Wholes: A phenomenological Ecology of Natural and Built Worlds", in *Phenomenology and ecology : the Twenty-Third Annual Symposium of the Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center : lectures*, Melissa Geib (ed.), (Pittsburgh: Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center, Duquesne University Press, 2006,) through K-State Research Exchange (<http://krex.k-state.edu/dspace/handle/2097/1692>).

Seaquiss Carl, "Ritual Individuation and Ritual Change", in *Method and Theory in the study of Religion*, 21 (2009), pp. 340-360.

Sidiropoulos Giorgos, *Mount Athos. References to its Human Geography*, (Athens: Kastaniotis Editions, 2000).

Sidiropoulos Giorgos, "Small Athonian Formations", in Euaggelos Livieratos (ed), *Όρους Άθω, Γης και Θαλάσσης Περίμετρον. Χαρτών Μεταμορφώσεις (Mount Athos: Between the earth and the sea, Its transformations through maps)*, (Thessaloniki: Εθνική Χαρτοθήκη (Ethniki Chartothiki, 2002), p. 345-354.

Simmel Georg, "Bridge and Door", *Theory, Culture & Society*, 11 (February 1994), pp. 5-10.

Shackley Myra, "A Golden Calf in Sacred Space?: The Future of St. Katherine's monastery, Mount Sinai (Egypt)", *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 4:3-4 (1998), pp. 124-134.

Shakespeare Nicholas, *Bruce Chatwin*, (London: The Harvill Press & Jonathan Cape, 1999).

Shakespeare Nicholas and Chatwin, Elizabeth (eds), *Under The Sun: The Letters of Bruce Chatwin*, (New York: Penguin Group, 2010).

Shengli Liu, "Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Space – Preliminary Reflection on an Archeology of Primordial Spatiality", in *The third BESETO Conference of Philosophy*, session 5, pp. 131-140.

Sherrard Philip, *Athos. The Mountain of Silence*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960).

Slavin Sean, "Walking as a Spiritual Practice: The Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella", in *Body and Society*, 9:1 (2003), pp. 1-18.

Smith Dennis E., *From Symposium to Eucharist. The Banquet in the early Christian world*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

Smith-Hill Connie, "Cyberpilgrimage: A Study of Authenticity, Presence and Meaning in Online Pilgrimage Experiences", *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, 21:2 (Summer 2009).

Smith Valene, "Introduction – The quest in guest", *Annals of Tourism Research*, 19 (1992), pp. 1-17.

Smyrnakis Gerasimos, *The Holy Mountain*, (Mount Athos: Panselinos), 2005, (First Published in Greek: 1903).

Snodgrass Adrian and Coyne, Richard, *Interpretation in Architecture. Design as a way of thinking*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

Speake Graham, *Mount Athos: Renewal in Paradise*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002).

1

Stahle Viktor, Goran, "Ritualization and the religious self at a Hindu goddess-temple", Centre for Theology and Religious Studies, Upsala University, in <http://www.teol.lu.se/indiskareligioner/conference04/13996670/panel5stahle.pdf>, pp. 1-8.

Steiner Carol and Reisinger, Yvette, "Understanding Existential Authenticity", *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33:2, pp. 299-318, 2006.

Steinsholt Kjetil, & Traasdahl, Elin, "The Concept of Play in Han-Georg Gadamer's Hermeneutics: An Educational Approach" in Steart Reifel (ed), *Theory in Context and out, Play and Culture Studies*, 3 (2001), pp. 73-96.

Stergioulis Vasileios, *All-night Vigils at the Peak of Mount Athos*, (Larisa, 2005).

Stoddard Robert, "Tourism and Religious Travel: A Geographic Perspective", *Comunicacao apresentada na Conferencia Tourism, Religions and Peace*, Milano, 30 May – 2 June.

Stroik Christopher, *Path, Portal, Path. Architecture for the Rites*, (Chicago: Liturgy training publications, 1999).

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*, (Crestwood – New York, 10707: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1986).

St. Dionysius, the Areopagite, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, Philokalia*, Volum 3, (Thessaloniki: Πατερικές Εκδόσεις «Γρηγόριος Ο Παλαμάς», 1986).

St. Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*, (Crestwood – New York 10707: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984).

St. John The Divine, *The Revelation*, (Oxford: Printed at the University Press for the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1864).

St. John Climacus, *The Ladder*, translated by the Archimandrite Jeremiah from Sinai, (Athens: Aster Publications, 1969).

St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, translated by Archimandrite Lazarus Moore, (London: Harper and Brothers, 1959).

St. Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogia*, Introduction: Dimitru Staniloae, (Athens: Εκδόσεις της Αποστολικής Διακονίας της Ελλάδος/ Apostoliki Diakonia Editions, 1997).

St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Homilies, First Oration*, third Russian Edition, (Moscow, 1892).

Saint Symeon the New Theologian, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Saint Mamas of Xirokerkos, *Works, Volume Three: Hymns – Letters*, Digital Patrologia, Department of Cultural Technology and Communication, University of Aegean, url: http://khazarzar.skeptik.net/pgm/PG_Migne/Symeonis%20Junioris_PG%20120/Epistulae.pdf, Date of access: 30 March 2013.

Suzuki DT., *Zen and Japanese Culture*, (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1983).

Talbot, Alice Mary, “Holy Men of Mount Athos”, in Rene Gothoni and Graham Speake (eds), *The Monastic Magnet: Road to and from Mount Athos*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008), pp. 41-62.

Talbot Alice – Mary, “Mealtime in Monasteries: the Culture of the Byzantine Refectory” in Bryer Anthony, Brubaker, Leslie, Linardou, Kallireo (eds), *Eat, Drink and be Marry: (Luke, 12:19): Food and Wine in Byzantium, Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies*, (United Kingdom: Ashgate, 2007).

Talbot Alice, Mary, “Women and Mount Athos: Insights from the Archives of the Holy Mountain”, Lecture, 14 February 2012, The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, in <http://www.ascsa.edu.gr/index.php/news/newsDetails/alice-mary-talbot-women-and-mt.-athos-insights-from-the-archives-of-the-hol>.

Teodoreanu Nicolae, “For a Theology of the Sacred Music”, in www.arches.ro/revue/no07/art12.html.

Thapa Shanker, *Buddhist Monasticism in Theory and Practice*, (Walden Book House, 1995).

The Holy Monastery of Saint Gregorios, *The Proskinitarion*, (Mount Athos: Gregoriou Monastery Editions, 2012).

The Holy Monastery of Saint Gregorios, *The Wall-paintings in the Katholikon*, (Mount Athos: Gregoriou Monastery Editions, 1998).

The Holy Monastery of the Annunciation, *Saint Athanasios the Athonite* (Ormilia, Macedonia: The Holy Monastery of the Annunciation, 2003).

The Holy Monastery of Vatopedi (Mount Athos: The Holy Monastery of Vatopedi, 1996).

The Holy Mountain, a Millennium of Orthodox Spirituality and Art, (Athens: Karakotsoglou Editions, 1960).

The Homeric Hymns, translated with an Introduction, Notes and Glossary of Names by Michael Crudden, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Theocharides Ploutarchos, Miltiadis Poliviou, "The Archontariki and the Hospitality in the Monasteries of Mount Athos", *Archeologia*, 50 (1991), pp. 27-37.

Theoklitos monk of Dionysiou Monastery, *Saint Gregory Palamas – His Life and Theology*, (Mount Athos).

Theokritoff Elizabeth, "Creator and Creation" in Mary Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Tilley Christopher, *A Phenomenology of Landscape. Places, Paths and Monuments*, (Oxford/ Providence, USA: Berg, 1994).

Tolias Giorgos, "Athonian Sacred Cartography. The Beginning", in Livieratos, Euaggelos (ed) *Όρους Άθω, Γης και Θαλάσσης Περίμετρον. Χαρτών Μεταμορφώσεις (Mount Athos: Between the earth and the sea. Its transformations through maps)*, Εθνική Χαρτοθήκη (Thessaloniki: Ethniki Chartothiki), 2002, (In Greek), pp. 145-180.

Toti Marco, "The Inner Dimension of Pilgrimage to Mount Athos", in Gothoni Rene and Speake Graham (eds), *The Monastic Magnet: Road to and from Mount Athos*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008), pp. 109-122.

Tschumi Bernard, *Event-Cities*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 1994).

Tuan Yi Fu, "Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective", in S. Gate and G. Olsson (eds), *Philosophy of Geography*, (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1979), pp. 387-427.

Tuan Yi-Fu, *Space and Place. The Perspective of Experience*, (Mineapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), (First Edition in English: 1977).

Turner Victor and Edith, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

Turner Victor, "Frame, Flow and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality", *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 6:4 (December, 1979), pp. 465-499.

Turner Victor, "Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow and Ritual.", Edward Norbeck (ed.), *Rice University Studies: The Anthropological Study of Human Play*, 60.3 (Summer 1974), pp. 53-92.

Turner Victor, "The Centre out There: Pilgrim's Goal", *History of Religions*, 12:3 (Feb., 1973), pp. 191-230.

Turner Victor, *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-structure*, (Chicago, Illinois: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969).

Tweed Thomas A., *Crossing and Dwelling. A Theory of Religion*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2006).

Ulyat Tony, "Gestures of Approach: Aspects of Liminality and Labyrinths", *Literator*, 32:2 (August 2011), pp. 103-134.

Urry John, *The Tourist Gaze*, (London: Sage, 2002).

Ustinova Yulia, *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind. Descending Underground in the Search for Ultimate Truth*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Vaporis Fr. N (ed), *Funeral Service. An Orthodox Prayer Book*, (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1977).

Vernant Jeane-Pierre, *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*, (London: Routledge, 1983).

Vasiliu Dana, "On the Threshold of Bliss: Translating Sacred Space in Early Gothic Cathedrals", *Translation Studies: Retrospective and Prospective Views*, 1 (2008), pp. 117-127.

Vesely Dalibor, "Design and the Crisis of Vision", *Scroope: Cambridge Architectural Journal*, (1995-1996), pp. 67-70.

Vincie Catherine, "Living from a Eucharistic Vision: Solidarity in the Body of Christ", *International Colloquium on Rituals for Life*, Leuven , BELGIQUE (28/10/2004), 86:2-3 (2005), pp. 135-149.

Volanakis Ioannis, *Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory. History-Art-Architecture*, (Mount Athos: Private Edition of the Monastery of Gregoriou, 2003).

Wan, Ning, "Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience", *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26:2, 1999, pp. 349-370.

Ware Kallistos, “‘My helper and my enemy’: the Body in Greek Christianity”, in Sarah Coakley (ed), *Religion and the Body*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 90-110.

Ware, Kallistos, Bishop of Diokleia, “St. Athanasios the Athonite: Traditionalist or Innovator?”, in Anthony Bryer and Mary Cunningham (eds), *Mount Athos and Byzantine Monasticism – Papers from the Twentieth-eighth Spring, Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, March, 2004*, (Great Britain: Variorum), 1996.

Ware Bishop Kallistos, *The Inner Kingdom*, Volume 1 of the Collected Works, (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2000).

Wark McKenzie, *Telesthesia. Communication, Culture and Class*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012).

Webb Ruth, “The Aesthetics of Sacred Space: Narrative, Metaphor and Motion in ‘Ekphraseis’ of Church buildings”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 53 (1999), pp. 59-74.

Weightman Barbara A., “Sacred Landscape and the Phenomenon of Light”, *Geographical Review*, 86:1 (January, 1996), pp. 59-71.

Weston Motycka Dagmar, “Greek Theatre as an Embodiment of Cultural Meaning”, in Paul Emmons, John Hendrix and Jane Lomholt (eds), *The Cultural Role of Architecture. Contemporary and Historical Perspectives*, (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 5-17.

Wharton E. *The Cruise of the Vanadis*, (New York: Rizzolu, 2004).

Whitehouse Harvey, “Emotion, Memory and Religious Rituals: An Assessment of two Theories”, in Kay Moltion and Marouska Svasek (eds), *Mixed emotions – Anthropological Studies of Feeling*, (Oxford: Berg, 2005), pp. 91-106.

Whittaker Thomas, *The Neo-platonists. A study in the History of Hellenism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1918).

Williams George H., *Wilderness and Paradise. The Biblical Experience of the Desert in the History of Christianity and the Paradise Theme in the Theological Idea of the University*, (New York: Harper and Brothers).

Williams Sean, “Buddhism and Music”, in *Sacred Sound. Experiencing Music in World Religions*, (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Willfrid Laurier University Press), 2006, pp. 169-190.

White Walker, Andrew, *The Artifice of Eternity: A Study of Liturgical and Theatrical Practices in Byzantium*, Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, (Maryland: University of Maryland, 2006).

Wood Robert, “Silence, Being and the Between. Picard, Heidegger and Buber”, *Man and World*, 27 (1994), pp. 121-134.

Worpole Ken, *Last Landscapes. The Architecture of the Cemetery in the West*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2003).

Worthen W.B., "Drama, Performativity and Performance", *PMLA*, 103:5 (October 1998), pp. 1093-1107.

Wortley John, *Studies on the Cult of Relics in Byzantium up to 1204*, (United Kingdom: Ashgate Variorum, 2009).

Xatzifotis I.M., *Everyday life in the Holy Mountain*, (Athens, Greece: Papadima, 1999).

Yeftits Athanasios, *Christ. The Land of the Living*, (Athens: Indiktos, 2007), (In Greek).

Young Karl, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, Volumes 1 & 2, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933).

Zaidman Louise Bruit and Pantel Pauline Schmitt, *Religion in the ancient Greek City*, translated by Paul Cartledge, (Cambridge, New York, Victoria: Cambridge University Press, 1992), (First publication in French: 1989).

Zecher Jonathan, L., *The Symbolics of Death and the Construction of Christian Asceticism: Greek Patristic Voices from the Fourth through Seventh Centuries*, Doctoral Thesis, Durham University, 2011, Available at Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/3247/>.

Zielinski Thaddeus, *The Religion of Ancient Greece. An Outline*, translated from the Polish with the author's co-operation by George Rapall Noyes, (London: Oxford University Press, 1926).

Ziton Fr. Theodore, "Liturgy and Life: The Use of Incense in Church", *World Magazine*, Publication of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, 1968, electronic form: www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org

Zizioulas John, *Being as a Communion in Personhood and the Church*, (Crestwood, New York 10707: St. Vladimir's Press, 1985).

Zizioulas Ioannis, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The unity of the Church in the Divine Liturgy and the Bishop during the first three Centuries*, translated by Elizabeth Theokritoff, (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001).

Internet Sources

1. "Athos Weblog", Creator: Mr. Wim Voogd, url: <http://athos.weblog.nl>.
2. Friends of Mount Athos web-page, url: <http://www.athosfriends.org/>
3. European Parliament web-portal: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/portal/en>
4. Web-portal of the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance: <http://www.ocso.org/>
5. MacCulloch, Diarmaid, "Voices and Silence in Tanakh and Christian New Testament", Gifford Lectures 2012, University of Edinburgh, Online through: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/humanities-soc-sci/news-events/lectures/gifford-lectures/series-2011-2012>.
6. "Centre for the Aesthetic Revolution", <http://centrefortheaestheticrevolution.blogspot.co.uk/2007/05/maria-papadimitriou-to-fly-over-mount.html>.
7. Oxford Dictionaries, url: <http://oxforddictionaries.com>.

8. MacCulloch, Diarmaid, "Catholic Christianity and the arrival of asceticism", 100-400, Gifford Lectures 2012, University of Edinburgh, Lecture Two, url: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmozaTn196M> (date of access: 21 May 2013).
9. MacCulloch, Diarmaid, "Voices and Silence in Tanakh and Christian New Testament", Gifford Lectures 2012, University of Edinburgh, Lecture One, url: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhBByJepyEw>, (date of access: 21 May 2013).

Archives

1. Centre for the Protection of the Athonian Culture (K.E.D.A.K), Thessaloniki – Greece

A. Folder: Re-design of the Refectory and the Ancillary Spaces

- (Number of Plan: 7), Re-design of the Refectory and the Ancillary Spaces – Roofplan at Oven.
- (Number of Plan: P6), Re-design of the Refectory and the Ancillary Spaces – Ground floor plan.
- (Number of Plan: P8), Re-design of the Refectory and the Ancillary Spaces – First floor plan.
- (Number of Plan: P6a), Re-design of the Refectory and the Ancillary Spaces – Furniture at Trapeza.
- (Number of Plan: Y17), Re-design of the Refectory and the Ancillary Spaces – Section T3 – T4.
- (Number of Plan: P2), Re-design of the Refectory and the Ancillary Spaces – Second Basement plan.
- (Number of Plan: P4), Re-design of the Refectory and the Ancillary Spaces – First basement plan.
- (Number of Plan: P7), Re-design of the Refectory and the Ancillary Spaces – Ground floor roofplan.
- (Number of Plan: Y10), Re-design of the Refectory and the Ancillary Spaces – First floor plan.
- (Number of Plan: Y13), Re-design of the Refectory and the Ancillary Spaces – Second floor roofplan.
- (Number of Plan: Y8), Re-design of the Refectory and the Ancillary Spaces – Ground floor plan.
- (Number of Plan: Y9), Re-design of the Refectory and the Ancillary Spaces – Ground floor roofplan.
- (Number of Plan: Y12), Re-design of the Refectory and the Ancillary Spaces – Second floor plan.
- (Number of Plan: Y11), Re-design of the Refectory and the Ancillary Spaces – First floor roofplan.
- (Number of Plan: Y2), Re-design of the Refectory and the Ancillary Spaces – Second basement plan.
- (Number of Plan: Y3), Re-design of the Refectory and the Ancillary Spaces – Second basement roofplan.
- (Number of Plan: Y4), Re-design of the Refectory and the Ancillary Spaces – First basement plan.
- (Number of Plan: Y5), Re-design of the Refectory and the Ancillary Spaces – First basement roofplan.

B. Folder: Seashore Guest House

- Title of the plan: Seashore Guest House – Ground floor plan (Date: January 1987).
- Title of the plan: Seashore Guest House – First floor plan (Date: January 1987).
- Title of the plan: Seashore Guest House - South View (Date: January 1987).
- Title of the plan: Carpenter of Gregoriou Monastery – Basement floor plan (Date: January 1987).

- Title of the plan: Carpenter of Gregoriou Monastery – North View (Date: January 1987).
- Aim-Report for the Completion of the Onshore Guest House of the Holy Monastery of Gregoriou, Archives of K.E.D.A.K.: In the Aim-Report of the project (signed in December 1987).

2. Technical Chambers of Greece (Athens – Greece)

- Euaggelos Mastellos, *A Historical Analysis and a Preservation Proposal for the Kellion of Saint Prokopios of the holy monastery of Vatopedi, Mount Athos*, Unpublished M-Arch Dissertation, May 1990.
- Christos Michaelides and Nikolaos Xydias, *Preservation of the hut of the Holy Annunciation of our Lord, Nea skete, Mount Athos*, Unpublished M Arch Dissertation, Department of Civil Engineering, University of Thessaloniki-Greece, Thessaloniki, July 2008.

3. The Archive of Gregoriou Monastery

A. Independent Items

- Title of the plan: Guest House – Internal Wing – (Lebitostasia).
- Title of the plan: Western Wing – Roofplan.
- Title of the plan: South Wing – First floor plan.
- Title of the plan: Floor plan of the Refectory’s Ancillary spaces.

B. Folder: North-Eastern Wing

- (Number of the Plan: A1), General master plan.
- (Number of the Plan: A2), Section.
- (Number of the Plan: A3), Floorplan of the sacristy.
- (Number of the Plan: A4), Floorplan of the library of the old books, General organisation.
- (Number of the Plan: A5), Floorplan of the library of the new books 1, General organisation.
- (Number of the Plan: A6), Floorplan of the library of the new books 2, General organisation.
- (Number of the Plan: A7), Floorplan of the space where icons are kept.
- (Number of the Plan: A8), Floorplan of the Chapel of St. John the Forerunner, General organisation.
- (Number of the Plan: A9), Floorplan of the laboratories of icon-painting and electronic data processing.
- (Number of the Plan: A10), Floorplans of the cells.

C. Folder: South-Eastern Wing

- Title of the Plan: Section.
- Title of the plan: First floor plan.
- Title of the plan: Second floor plan.
- Title of the plan: Ground floor plan.
- Title of the plan: Basement floor plan.

D. Folder: Preservation of the Western Wing

- Title of the plan: Second Basement floor plan.
- Title of the plan: First Basement floor plan.
- Title of the plan: Ground floor plan.
- Title of the plan: First floor plan.
- Title of the plan: Second floor plan.

- Title of the plan: Section T1-T1.
- Title of the plan: Section T2-T2.
- Title of the plan: View 1.
- Title of the plan: View 2.

E. Photographs on the following topics:

- Holy Saturday Rituals (Number of photographs: 4).
- Easter Monday Rituals (Number of photographs: 8).
- Great Friday (Number of photographs: 1.)

4. Mount Athos Centre (Thessaloniki – Greece)

- Folder: “Five Centuries of Pregrinations to Mount Athos, 15th Century – 1930”.
- A collection of 354 travellers to Mount Athos from 15th century until 1930 including short biography, description and a list of relevant published or unpublished pieces.

List of Figures

Introduction

Figure 1: The Map of Greece with the Athonian peninsula highlighted in red. [Source: <http://myweb.unomaha.edu/~kbuskirk/geog3000/maps.htm>].

Figure 2: The Athonian Peninsula [Source: http://www.chalkidiki.com/athos/mount_athos.html].

Figure 3: The Monastery of Gregoriou [drawing by author]

Figure 4: Fieldwork Sketch of the different attitudes of the monk's body in the monastery [sketch by author]

Figure 5: A page from the Guests' Books of Gregoriou Monastery [photo by author]

Figure 6: A page from the Guests' Books of Gregoriou Monastery [photo by author]

Chapter One: Sacred topography: Place, Body, Boundaries

Chapter Two: Embodied Movement in *Hesychasm: Xeniteia*, Ritual and Silence

Figure 2.1: Christ's Transfiguration [Source: <http://www.saint.gr/747/saint.aspx>]

Figure 2.2: The Tabernacle (drawing by author)

Figure 2.3: Moses Receiving the Ten Commandments at the Peak of the Mountain [Source: <http://www.saint.gr/2341/saint.aspx>].

Figure 2.4: The Great Laura Monastery (10th century): The central position of the church in the complex and the way the openings on its walls allow the liturgical performance of the idea of the "Entrance" (circular rituals and importance of the middle entrances). [Source: Paulos Mylonas, Drawing Documentation of the Twenty Monasteries of Mount Athos, (Mount Athos), 1963].

Figure 2.5: The silent-scape of Gregoriou monastery during the morning and the evening (after Vespers). [drawing by author]

Figure 2.6: The silent-scape of Gregoriou monastery during the morning and the evening (after Vespers). [drawing by author]

Chapter Three: The journey of the stranger at Athos

Chapter Four: The General Periphery of the Peninsula: Border VS Boundary

Figure 4.1: The fence along the neck of the peninsula [Source: <http://denandbarb.blogspot.co.uk/2010/05/p-day-outing-to-ouranoupoli.html>].

Figure 4.2: The fence along the neck of the peninsula [Source: http://www.geocaching.com/seek/cache_details.aspx?guid=2388c1f1-6905-4e0c-827b-900a07b77ad1].

Figure 4.3: Mount Sinai, St. Catherine's monastery, Annunciation icon (photo: courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition to Mount Sinai), [Source: Mary-Lyon Dolezal and Maria Mavroudi, Theodore Hyriakenos' Description of the Garden of St. Anna and the Ekphrasis of Gardens, in Antony Littlewood, Henry Maguire and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (eds), *Byzantine Garden Culture*, (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks), 2002, p. 138].

Figure 4.4: The Mother of God, *Hè Chora tou Achorètou*, (Main Church of the Monastery of Chora in Istanbul) [Source: <http://www.rel.gr/photo/displayimage.php?album=34&pos=62>].

Figure 4.5: The combination of the Athonian peninsula and the Mother of God (Russian Card, 1873). [Source: Veronica Della Dora, *Imagining Mount Athos* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2011), p. 117].

Figure 4.6: The island of Utopia (1518), [Source: Euaggelos Livieratos (ed) *Όρους Άθω, Γης και Θαλάσσης Περίμετρον. Χαρτών Μεταμορφώσεις (Mount Athos: Between the earth and the sea. Its transformations through maps)*, Εθνική Χαρτοθήκη (Ethniki Chartothiki), Thessaloniki, 2002, p. 243]

Figure 4.7: The Athonian peninsula in Henricus Martellus Germanus Insulari (1480-1490), [Source: Euaggelos Livieratos (ed) *Όρους Άθω, Γης και Θαλάσσης Περίμετρον. Χαρτών Μεταμορφώσεις (Mount Athos: Between the earth and the sea. Its transformations through maps)*, Εθνική Χαρτοθήκη (Ethniki Chartothiki), Thessaloniki, 2002, p. 253].

Figure 4.8: A “floating pilgrimage” of a local church of the Greek town of Patras during June 2009. Monks from the Holy Monastery of Dionysiou brought out Holy Relics to be venerated by the pilgrims [Source: <http://anastasiosk.blogspot.com>].

Figure 4.9: A “floating pilgrimage” of a local church of the Greek town of Patras during June 2009. Monks from the Holy Monastery of Dionysiou brought out Holy Relics to be venerated by the pilgrims [Source: <http://anastasiosk.blogspot.com>].

Figure 4.10: Theodore, Jacques, Rallis, *Resting in a Greek Monastery*, [Source: <http://artsalesindex.artinfo.com/asi/lots/3789386>].

Figure 4.11: Color Photograph of the marble throne by Cuville in 1914-1918 [Source: <http://athosweblog.com/2009/11/06/912-chair/>].

Figure 4.12: Spyros Papaloukas, The depiction of Olga Papalouka as if standing on Mount Athos (1929) [Source: Markos Kambanis (ed), Spyros Papaloukas. *The Mountain Athos Paintings, (Mount Athos)*, 2004, p. 143].

Figure 4.13: Maria Papadimitriou, “To Fly Over Mount Athos” (2007), [Source: <http://centrefortheaestheticrevolution.blogspot.co.uk/2007/05/maria-papadimitriou-to-fly-over-mount.html>].

Figure 4.14: The Tower of Ouranoupolis [Source: http://amanataki.blogspot.co.uk/2012/03/2011_27.html].

Figure 4.15: Ouranoupoli: Male Visitors waiting to buy their ticket. [photo by author]

Figure 4.16: Ouranoupoli: Exterior views of a shop selling “Athonian Things”. [photo by author]

Figure 4.17: The monastery of Zografou and its arsanas [Source: <http://www.panoramio.com/photo/8572151>].

Figure 4.18: Docheiariou Monastery [Source: <http://www.chalkidiki.com/athos/docheiariou.html>].

Figure 4.19: The arsanas of Konstamonitou Monastery [Source: <http://www.panoramio.com/photo/9459164>].

Figure 4.20: Xenofontos Monastery [Source: <http://www.gohalkidiki.com/en/photogallery/photo-gallery.asp?PhotoCategoryENG=Mount%20Athos>].

Figure 4.21: St. Panteleimon Monastery [Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/impassion81/4508149658/>].

Figure 4.22: General view of the port of Daphne [Source: <http://orthodoxwiki.org/File:Dafni-Athos-Halkidiki.jpg>].

Figure 4.23: Arriving at the port of Daphne [Source: <http://agioritikesmimes.pblogs.gr/2011/09/2906-to-abaton-toy-agiou-oroy-den-prosballei-kanena-anthrw-pino-.html>].

Figure 4.24: Arriving at the port of Daphne [Source: <http://agioritikesmimes.pblogs.gr/2011/09/2906-to-abaton-toy-agioy-oroys-den-prosballei-kanena-anthrw-pino-.html>].

Figure 4.25: Daphne: A small shop selling Athonian handcrafts and books. [photo by author]

Figure 4.26: Daphne: The Customs Office of Mount Athos. [photo by author]

Figure 4.27: Blog depiction of the path towards Panagouda [Source: <http://www.agiooros.net>].

Chapter Five: The Mountain, the Cave and the hermitage

Figure 5.1: Ioannis Komninios' depiction of Mount Athos, 1701 [Source: Euaggelos Livieratos (ed) *Όρους Άθω, Γης και Θαλάσσης Περίμετρον. Χαρτών Μεταμορφώσεις (Mount Athos: Between the earth and the sea. Its transformations through maps)*, Εθνική Χαρτοθήκη (Ethniki Chartothiki), Thessaloniki, 2002, p. 156].

Figure 5.2: Alessandro dalla Via's depiction of Mount Athos [Euaggelos Livieratos (ed) *Όρους Άθω, Γης και Θαλάσσης Περίμετρον. Χαρτών Μεταμορφώσεις (Mount Athos: Between the earth and the sea. Its transformations through maps)*, Εθνική Χαρτοθήκη (Ethniki Chartothiki), Thessaloniki, 2002, pp. 160-161].

Figure 5.3: Ascending towards the Shelter of the Mother of God. [Source: Vasilis Stergioulis, *All-night vigils at the peak of the mountain of Athos, (Larisa, Greece), 2005, pp.65-80*].

Figure 5.4: Ascending towards the Shelter of the Mother of God. [Source: Vasilis Stergioulis, *All-night vigils at the peak of the mountain of Athos, (Larisa, Greece), 2005, pp.65-80*].

Figure 5.5: Preparing the meal in the kitchen of the Shelter of the Mother of God. [Source: Vasilis Stergioulis, *All-night vigils at the peak of the mountain of Athos, (Larisa, Greece), 2005, pp.65-80*].

Figure 5.6: The processual ascension towards the peak and the peak of mount athos. In the second photograph one can recognize the shadow of the mountain on the sea. [Source: Vasilis Stergioulis, *All-night vigils at the peak of the mountain of Athos, (Larisa, Greece), 2005, pp.65-80*].

Figure 5.7: The processual ascension towards the peak and the peak of mount athos. In the second photograph one can recognize the shadow of the mountain on the sea. [Source: Vasilis Stergioulis, *All-night vigils at the peak of the mountain of Athos, (Larisa, Greece), 2005, pp.65-80*].

Figure 5.8: Ascending the Mountain of Athos: 1. "Stavros", the point where the different paths meet, 2. The Shelter of the Mother of God, 3. The peak of the mountain of Athos [The background is the updated map of the Friends of Mount Athos].

Figure 5.9: The Shelter of the Mother of God, October 2011 [Source: <http://athos.weblog.nl/category/mountain/>].

Figure 5.10: The Shelter of the Mother of God, October 2011 [Source: <http://athos.weblog.nl/category/mountain/>].

Figure 5.11: The Shelter of the Mother of God, October 2011 [Source: <http://athos.weblog.nl/category/mountain/>].

Figure 5.12: The new developments at the peak of Mount Athos, October 2011 [Source: <http://athos.weblog.nl/category/mountain/>].

Figure 5.13: The new developments at the peak of Mount Athos, October 2011 [Source: <http://athos.weblog.nl/category/mountain/>].

Figure 5.14: The new developments at the peak of Mount Athos, October 2011 [Source: <http://athos.weblog.nl/category/mountain/>].

Figure 5.15: “The first pictures of the newly build chapel on the summit of the mountain by Martin Drozd from Slovakia”, July 2009 [Source: <http://athos.weblog.nl/category/mountain/>].

Figure 5.16: “The first pictures of the newly build chapel on the summit of the mountain by Martin Drozd from Slovakia”, July 2009 [Source: <http://athos.weblog.nl/category/mountain/>].

Figure 5.17: Cave at *Karoulia* area [Source: <http://findingthewaytotheheart.blogspot.co.uk/2012/02/arise-cry-aloud-in-night-lamentations.html>].

Figure 5.18: The Area of *Karoulia* (August 2012). [photo by author]

Figure 5.19: The Area of *Karoulia* (August 2012). [photo by author]

Figure 5.20: The inaccessible caves at *Karoulia* [Source: <http://personal.pblogs.gr/2008/20081201.html>].

Figure 5.21: The inaccessible caves at *Karoulia* [Source: <http://personal.pblogs.gr/2008/20081201.html>].

Figure 5.22: The inaccessible caves at *Karoulia* [Source: <http://personal.pblogs.gr/2008/20081201.html>].

Figure 5.23: The different places that “Joseph the Hesychast” lived in the area that he wandered: 1. The peak of Mount Athos, 2. The shelter of the Mother of God, 3. *Katounakia*, 4. *Karoulia*, 5. The desert of Saint Basil, 6. *Skete* of Saint Anne, 7. *New Skete* [background map: courtesy of the Friends of Mount Athos].

Figure 5.24: Elder Joseph the Hesychast and the group of his disciples [Source: <http://full-of-grace-and-truth.blogspot.co.uk/2009/08/elder-joseph-hesychast-and-cave-dweller.html>].

Figure 5.25: Elder Joseph and Elder *Arsenios* [Source: <http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2009/09/elder-arsenios-cave-dweller-1886-1983.html>].

Figure 5.26: The hut at the *Skete* of Saint Anne [Source: http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2009_08_16_archive.html].

Figure 5.27: The hut at the *Skete* of Saint Anne [Source: http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2009_08_16_archive.html].

Figure 5.28: Images from the hut in *New Skete*: The interrelation between the natural cavity and the built boundaries is very intense disclosing this kind of in-between the natural and the artificial. [Source: http://parratiritis.blogspot.co.uk/2011/10/blog-post_5971.html].

Figure 5.29: Images from the hut in *New Skete*: The interrelation between the natural cavity and the built boundaries is very intense disclosing this kind of in-between the natural and the artificial. [Source: http://parratiritis.blogspot.co.uk/2011/10/blog-post_5971.html].

Figure 5.30: Images from the hut in *New Skete*: The interrelation between the natural cavity and the built boundaries is very intense disclosing this kind of in-between the natural and the artificial. [Source: http://parratiritis.blogspot.co.uk/2011/10/blog-post_5971.html].

Figure 5.31: Images from the hut in *New Skete*: The interrelation between the natural cavity and the built boundaries is very intense disclosing this kind of in-between the natural and the artificial. [Source: http://parratiritis.blogspot.co.uk/2011/10/blog-post_5971.html].

Figure 5.32: Images from the hut in *New Skete*: The interrelation between the natural cavity and the built boundaries is very intense disclosing this kind of in-between the natural and the artificial. [Source: http://parratiritis.blogspot.co.uk/2011/10/blog-post_5971.html].

Chapter Six: The Footpaths

Figure 6.1: A “map”/diagram depicting the different distances according to the time of walking spent to bridge them, [Source: G. Alexander from Great Laura, *Guide of Mount Athos*, (Mount Athos, Greece), 1957].

Figure 6.2: Handmade Signs along the footpath that connects Gregoriou and Simonopetra monasteries [Photograph by author].

Figure 6.3: Handmade Signs along the footpath that connects Gregoriou and Simonopetra monasteries [photograph by author].

Figure 6.4: A map of the path that connects the Gregoriou Monastery to Simonopetra Monastery and its elevation, FoMA Project for Paths.

Figure 6.5: A depiction of the footpath that connects Gregoriou with Simonopetra Monastery (left) by monk Markos. Monk Markos is an Athonian ascetic that published a small pilgrims' guide in 2000. In it maps such as the above are included. They are the result of repeated walks and experiential measurements according to the walkers' paces, the walking time and other components of walking experience. Therefore, their drawing is different from the modern cartographic one.

Figure 6.6: Part of a map showing also the footpath that connects Gregoriou and Simonopetra monasteries. It was created by Reinhold Zwerger, a frequent pilgrim at Mount Athos since 1956. During his long journeys there he kept detailed diaries, made drawings and sketches and mapped in a quite detailed way the network of roads and footpaths. His map, published in 1982, is considered to be one of the most "accurate" ones. The map follows the modern cartographic approach with clearly designed contour lines, and abstractly represented footpaths.

Figure 6.7: View from the first part of the route.

Figure 6.8: View from the first part of the route.

Figure 6.9: View from the second part of the route.

Figure 6.10: View from the second part of the route.

Figure 6.11: View from the third part of the route.

Figure 6.12: View from the third part of the route.

Figure 6.13: The last part of the route.

Figure 6.14: The last part of the route.

Figure 6.15: Experiential Maps of the Silent Scape of the Footpath that connects Simonopetra and Gregoriou Monastery. The darker it is the more intense the silence was experienced.

Figure 6.16: Experiential Maps of the Silent Scape of the Footpath that connects Simonopetra and Gregoriou Monastery. The darker it is the more intense the silence was experienced.

Figure 6.17: The footpath that connects Simonopetra with Gregoriou Monastery.

Figure 6.18: The footpath that connects Simonopetra with Gregoriou Monastery.

Figure 6.19: FoMA institution has been mapping the footpaths of Mount Athos 10 years now. This is the updated map. The footpaths are symbolised with the red colour and dirt roads with white and orange. The yellow circles show where the former meet the latter ones for the specific part of the peninsula (Courtesy of the Friends of Mount Athos Institution).

Figure 6.20: FoMA institution has been mapping the footpaths of Mount Athos 10 years now. This is the updated map. The footpaths are symbolised with the red colour and dirt roads with white and orange. The yellow circles show where the former meet the latter ones for the specific part of the peninsula (Courtesy of the Friends of Mount Athos Institution).

Chapter Seven: Temporal Limits: Programmed monastic life

Figure 7.1: Image from the initiation rite of a monk of Vatopedi monastery that passes from the stage of microschemos to the megaloschemos one. The rite is held in front of the main entrance of the Iconostasis, signalling its liminal character. The images are from the blog of Vatopedi Monastery and are followed by an extensive description of the relevant *rite of passage*. [Source: <http://vatopaidi.wordpress.com/2010/03/24/mega-shima-11/>].

Figure 7.2: Image from the initiation rite of a monk of Vatopedi monastery that passes from the stage of microschemos to the megaloschemos one. The rite is held in front of the main entrance of the Iconostasis, signalling its liminal character. The images are from the blog of Vatopedi Monastery and are followed by an extensive description of the relevant *rite of passage*. [Source: <http://vatopaidi.wordpress.com/2010/03/24/mega-shima-11/>].

Figure 7.3: Image from the initiation rite of a monk of Vatopedi monastery that passes from the stage of microschemos to the megaloschemos one. The rite is held in front of the main entrance of the Iconostasis, signalling its liminal character. The images are from the blog of Vatopedi Monastery and are followed by an extensive description of the relevant *rite of passage*. [Source: <http://vatopaidi.wordpress.com/2010/03/24/mega-shima-11/>].

Figure 7.4: The daily cycle of the church as this was depicted by Renè Gothoni in his book *Paradise within Reach: Monasticism and Pilgrimage on Mount Athos*. Using a cycle to represent the sequence of the different rituals he underlines its repetitive aspect following the passage of each day of the year. [Source: Renè Gothoni, *Paradise within Reach: Monasticism and Pilgrimage on Mount Athos*, (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press), 1993, p. 73]

Figure 7.5: Monk sitting in his stall and “playing” his praying rope [Source: <http://www.pemptousia.gr>].

Chapter Eight: The general organisation of the monastery and the cell

Figure 8.1: Hasluck’s ideal model and Patrick Quinn’s “formal plan” of an Athonian Monastery [Source: F. W. Hasluck, *Athos and Its Monasteries*, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. LTD, New York: E.P.Dutton & CO), 1924, p. 93]

Figure 8.2: Patrick Quinn’s “formal plan” of an Athonian Monastery [Source: Quinn, Patrick, “Drawing on Mount Athos: The Thousand Year Lesson”, *Places*, Volume 2, Number, 1, 1985, p. 34].

Figure 8.3: The Heavenly Jerusalem, Manuscript of parchment, 1255-1260, Trinity College, Cambridge [Source: <http://www.apocalyptic-theories.com/gallery/newjerusalem/trinity.html>].

Figure 8.4: God Geometer, Manuscript Illustration, [Source: Clark Kenneth, *Civilization*, (New York, Harper0, 1969, p.52].

Figure 8.5: Patrick Quinn’s drawing of the Simonos Petras Monastery [Source: Quinn, Patrick, “Drawing on Mount Athos: The Thousand Year Lesson”, *Places*, Volume 2, Number, 1, 1985, p. 34].

Figure 8.6: Simonopetra Monastery [Source: http://www.trekearth.com/gallery/Europe/Greece/Macedonia/Halkidiki/Mount_Athos/photo1333376.htm].

Figure 8.7: Gregoriou Monastery: The General Organisation.

Figure 8.8: A section of the Gregoriou Monastery (Fieldwork on Mount Athos, July 2010).

Figure 8.9: The main entrance of the monastery.

Figure 8.10: The main entrance of the monastery.

Figure 8.11: Ascending the uphill road: the rhythmically planted cypresses and the semi-circular seat.

Figure 8.12: Ascending the uphill road: the rhythmically planted cypresses and the semi-circular seat.

Figure 8.13: Ascending the uphill road: the rhythmically planted cypresses and the semi-circular seat.

Figure 8.14: The gardens of the monastery.

Figure 8.15: The gardens of the monastery.

Figure 8.16: The second covered entrance of the monastery.

Figure 8.17: The second covered entrance of the monastery.

Figure 8.18: The side wall of the *katholikon*.

Figure 8.19: The side wall of the *katholikon*.

Figure 8.20: Map and Section of the different spaces of the monastery drawn during my fieldwork there in August 2010.

Figure 8.21: The silent-scape of Gregoriou monastery during the morning hours and the evening ones (after Vespers).

Figure 8.22: The silent-scape of Gregoriou monastery during the morning hours and the evening ones (after Vespers).

Figure 8.23: Experiential map of the ritual procession of the Sunday of Orthodox.

Figure 8.24: Experiential map of the ritual procession of the Great Friday.

Figure 8.25: Photograph of the Great Friday procession (Courtesy of Gregoriou Monastery).

Figure 8.26: Experiential map of the ritual procession of the Easter Monday.

Figure 8.27: Photograph of the ritual procession of the Easter Monday (Courtesy of Gregoriou Monastery).

Figure 8.28: Photograph of the ritual procession of the Easter Monday (Courtesy of Gregoriou Monastery).

Figure 8.29: Photograph of the ritual procession of the Easter Monday (Courtesy of Gregoriou Monastery).

Figure 8.30: Photograph of the ritual procession of the Easter Monday (Courtesy of Gregoriou Monastery).

Figure 8.31: Photograph of the ritual procession of the Easter Monday (Courtesy of Gregoriou Monastery).

Figure 8.32: The exterior of a *kodra* at Gregoriou Monastery.

Figure 8.33: The interior of a cell at Gregoriou Monastery.

Figure 8.34: The *talanton* ritual [Source: <http://www.filidaquilone.it/num012santarelli.html>].

Figure 8.35: A monk biting the *semantron* [Source: <http://gabrielsmessage.wordpress.com/2011/04/13/i-appeared-before-thee-in-the-sanctuary-that-i-might-see-thy-glory/>].

Figure 8.36: Experiential map of the first talanton procession.

Figure 8.37: Experiential map of the second talanton procession.

Figure 8.38: Experiential map of the third talanton procession.

Chapter Nine: The main church (*katholikon*): “Voiceless Presences” and Communal Ritual

Figure 9.1: The *katholikon* of Gregoriou Monastery: Sections [The Drawing Used as the Basis Found In: Kadas, Sotiris and Zias, Nikos (eds), *The Holy Monastery of Saint Gregorios. The wall-paintings in the Katholikon*, (The Holy Mountain – Mount Athos), 1998, plan 9].

Figure 9.2: The *katholikon* of Gregoriou Monastery: Sections [The Drawing Used as the Basis Found In: Kadas, Sotiris and Zias, Nikos (eds), *The Holy Monastery of Saint Gregorios. The wall-paintings in the Katholikon*, (The Holy Mountain Mount Athos), 1998, plan 9].

Figure 9.3: The *katholikon* of Gregoriou monastery: Floor plan.

Figure 9.4: The hierarchical organisation of the *katholikon* of Gregoriou Monastery.

Figure 9.5: The dome and the floor-motif of the Narthex.

Figure 9.6: The dome and the floor-motif of the Narthex.

Figure 9.7: The eastern wall of the Narthex.

Figure 9.8: The eastern wall of the Narthex.

Figure 9.9: The ritual of the *lite*.

Figure 9.10: The cave-like interior of the *lite*.

Figure 9.11: The cave-like interior of the *lite*.

Figure 9.12: The cave-like interior of the *lite*.

Figure 9.13: The eastern wall of the *lite*, the floor motif and the two moveable icons in front of the entrance to the main church.

Figure 9.14: The eastern wall of the *lite*, the floor motif and the two moveable icons in front of the entrance to the main church.

Figure 9.15: The eastern wall of the *lite*, the floor motif and the two moveable icons in front of the entrance to the main church.

Figure 9.16: The central dome and the northern choir of the main church.

Figure 9.17: The central dome and the northern choir of the main church.

Figure 9.18: The central dome and the northern choir of the main church.

Figure 9.19: The Ritual of the *Antidoron*.

Figure 9.20: The floor –motif under the main dome.

Figure 9.21: The floor –motif under the main dome.

Figure 9.22: An iconostasis. *A.* The worship row: 1. The royal/holy door; *a,b* The Annunciation; *c,d,e,f* The four evangelists. 2. The communion of the apostles, 3. The liturgists. 4. Saint of event of the church's dedication. 5. Panayia. *g,7.* North and south doors, angels or sainted deacons. 9. Other icons, *B.* The Deesis row: 10,11, 12 Christ, the Panayia, John the Baptist. *C.* Row of the great liturgical feasts. *D.* Row of the prophets. 13. The Virgin of the Sign, *E.* Row of the patriarchs. 14. The Old Testament Trinity. [Adapted from Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of the Icons*, St. Vladimir's Press, Crestwood, New York, 1982, pg.62 as used by permission by Margaret, Kenna, "Icons in Theory and Practice: An Orthodox Christian Example, in *History of Religions*, Vol. 24, No. 4, May, 1985, pp. 345-368].

Figure 9.23: The *proskynitarion* in front of the iconostasis in the *katholikon* of Gregoriou monastery.

Figure 9.24: Drawing of two stasidia [drawing by author].

Figure 9.25: A monk sitting on his *stasidi* [Source: <http://www.diatheke.org/Athos/index.php?content1=Monastic%20life/monastic%20life>].

Figure 9.26: Moses' Prayer in the Battle against the Amalikites. From the Spanish Bible, Ms.I.J.3, fol.45, v., (Illuminated manuscript, Spain, c. 1400/1425). [Source: <http://www.kunst-fuer-alle.de/english/fine-art/artist/image/spanisch-buchmalerei/17427/45/116760/moses-&-defeat-of-amalekites--c-1400-25/index.htm>].

Figure 9.27: Sections of a stasidi depicting the three different body-postures [drawing by author].

Figure 9.28: Monks sitting in their stasidi with their heads bowed and their hood lowered [Source: <http://www.pemptousia.com/category/vatopaidi-monastery/monastic-life/>].

Figure 9.29: Monks sitting in their stasidi with their heads bowed and their hood lowered [Source: <http://sfantulumunteathos.wordpress.com/category/manastiri-schituri-sihastrii-chilii-colibe/simonopetra/>].

Figure 9.30: The Restoration of the Holy Icons. Eighteenth century fresco of the *lite* of Gregoriou Monastery. [Source: *The Holy Monastery of Saint Gregorius, The wall-paintings in the katholikon, The Holy Mountain (Mt. Athos)*, 1998, p. 250].

Figure 9.31: The Apostles Receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord [Source: *The Holy Monastery of Saint Gregorius, The wall-paintings in the katholikon, The Holy Mountain (Mt. Athos)*, 1998, pp. 140-141].

Figure 9.32: These two images are taken during an all-night vigils in the main church of Gregoriou monastery. They depict in a characteristic way the role of artificial light in the

liturgical atmosphere. The mobile candleholder placed under the central dome and in front of the main entrance of the iconostasis underlines the importance of both the main axis and the dome.

Figure 9.33: These two images are taken during an all-night vigils in the main church of Gregoriou monastery. They depict in a characteristic way the role of artificial light in the liturgical atmosphere. The mobile candleholder placed under the central dome and in front of the main entrance of the iconostasis underlines the importance of both the main axis and the dome.

Figure 9.34: A typical Eastern Christian Church [Source: <http://www.holycross.al.goarch.org/tour.html>].

Figure 9.35: The Ritual of the Incense [drawing by author].

Figure 9.36: A censer [Source: <http://christ-prayer.org/page200.html>].

Figure 9.37: Chanting in the *Katholikon* of Gregoriou Monastery in the all-night vigils of Great Saturday, (with courtesy from the Archive of the Monastery).

Figure 9.38: Chanting in the *Katholikon* of Gregoriou Monastery in the all-night vigils of Great Saturday, (with courtesy from the Archive of the Monastery).

Figure 9.39: The relics of Saint Fotini the Samaritan and Saint Anastasia the Roman that are kept in the Holy Chancel of the *katholikon* of Gregoriou Monastery. [The Holy Monastery of Saint Gregorios, *The Proskinitarion*, (Mount Athos: Gregoriou Monastery Editions), 2012, p. 81]

Figure 9.40: The relics of Saint Fotini the Samaritan and Saint Anastasia the Roman that are kept in the Holy Chancel of the *katholikon* of Gregoriou Monastery. [The Holy Monastery of Saint Gregorios, *The Proskinitarion*, (Mount Athos: Gregoriou Monastery Editions), 2012, p. 81]

Chapter Ten: The Refectory (*Trapeza* - τράπεζα): Communal Meals after the liturgies

Figure 10.1: The Refectory of Great Lavra Monastery [Source: <http://www.mylopotamos.com/TypikonOrous.htm>].

Figure 10.2: The Refectory of Simonopetra (photograph by author).

Figure 10.3: Laying the table for the meal at Docheiariou Monastery [Source: National Geographic – Mount Athos, *The Great Ark. A Traveller's Album*, 2009, (In Greek), p. 68]

Figure 10.4: During the meal at Xenophontos Monastery [Source: National Geographic – Mount Athos, *The Great Ark. A Traveller's Album*, 2009, (In Greek), p. 69]

Figure 10.5: Plans of the complex church-refectory of the monasteries: 1.Great Lavra, 2.Gregoriou, 3.Simonopetra. The intermediate space is indicated with red. [Source of the Plans: Paulos Mylonas, *An illustrated dictionary of Mount Athos*, (Berlin: Wasmuth), 2000].

Figure 10.6: The space between the *katholikon* and the refectory of Gregoriou Monastery.

Figure 10.7: Plan of the refectory (With pale red the tables of the guests, with dark brown the table of the priest of the day, with light brown the tables of the monks, with blue the reader's pace).

Figure 10.8: The Refectory.

Figure 10.9: The Refectory.

Figure 10.10: The Refectory.

Figure 10.11: Diagram and section of the Sunday rituals of the Refectory (Fieldwork on Athos, August-September 2011 and August 2012).

Figure 10.12: Diagram and section of the Sunday rituals of the Refectory (Fieldwork on Athos, August-September 2011 and August 2012).

Chapter Eleven: The Cemetery and the Grave

Figure 11.1: Experiential map of the ritual procession of the funeral.

Figure 11.2: External views of the cemetery.

Figure 11.3: External views of the cemetery.

Figure 11.4: Section plan and floor plan of the cemetery chapel [Volanakis, Ioannis, *Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory. History-Art-Architecture*, (Mount Athos: Private Edition of the Monastery of Gregoriou), 2003, p.128]

Figure 11.5: Section plan and floor plan of the cemetery chapel [Volanakis, Ioannis, *Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory. History-Art-Architecture*, (Mount Athos: Private Edition of the Monastery of Gregoriou), 2003, p.128].

Figure 11.6: The “Last Judgement” in the narthex of the cemetery chapel [Courtesy of Gregoriou Monastery].

Figure 11.7: The iconostasis of the cemetery chapel [Courtesy of Gregoriou Monastery].

Figure 11.8: The Ossuary.

Figure 11.9: The Ossuary.

Appendix I: A short description of Athos peninsula

Figure I.1: Geological map of the Athonian Peninsula (From the Geological map of Greece, Institute of Geology and Underground Research). [Source: Konstantinos Ganiatsas, Flora and Fauna of the Athonian Peninsula, (Mount Athos: Agioritiki Biliothiki, 2003)].

Figure I.2: Plan of Xerxes’ canal in Choiseul-Gouffier’s *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce*, 1791, (Getty Research Institute Special Collections), [Source: Veronica della Dora, “Mythological Landscape and Landscape of Myth: Circulating Visions of Pre-Christian Athos”, G. Backhaus and J. Murungi (eds), *Symbolic Landscapes*, (Netherlands: Springer Science and Business Media B.V.), 2009, pp. 109-131].

Figure I.3: 11th Century OT map possibly showing the Athonian peninsula [Source: Euaggelos Livieratos (ed) *Όρους Άθω, Γης και Θαλάσσης Περίμετρον. Χαρτών Μεταμορφώσεις (Mount Athos: Between the earth and the sea. Its transformations through maps)*, Εθνική Χαρτοθήκη (Ethniki Chartothiki), Thessaloniki, 2002, p. 38].

Figure I.4: 11th Century OT map possibly showing the Athonian peninsula [Source: Euaggelos Livieratos (ed) *Όρους Άθω, Γης και Θαλάσσης Περίμετρον. Χαρτών Μεταμορφώσεις (Mount Athos: Between the earth and the sea. Its transformations through maps)*, Εθνική Χαρτοθήκη (Ethniki Chartothiki), Thessaloniki, 2002, p. 38].

Figure I.5: The ground floor and the first floor of the *Kellion* of Saint Prokopios.

Figure I.6 (Left): New Skete (source: http://thriskeftika.blogspot.com/2009/11/blog-post_2976.html)

Figure I.7 (Right): The communal core of New Skete (source: http://www.imma.edu.gr/macher/subjects/athos/monasteries/new_skete.html)

According to Greek mythology, Athos was the one of the Giants who challenged the Gods during the *Gigantomachy*.⁶³⁶ He threw a massive rock at Poseidon which fell in the Aegean Sea, creating the peninsula of Athos.⁶³⁷ Herodotus informs us that the Pelasgians from Lemnos occupied the promontory, then called *Acte*, and Strabo reports five cities on it: *Dion*, *Thyssos*, *Olophyxos*, *Acrothoi* and *Eretria*. Archeologists have not managed to define their exact position. Two more cities, *Acanthus* and *Sane*, were founded during the Classical period.⁶³⁸ During his first expedition, Xerxes spent three years trying to open a canal at the narrowest point of the peninsula, the area called *Sane*, the natural neck between Athos and the prefecture of Chalkidiki. Its length was about two kilometres and its breadth and depth enough to allow the parallel sailing of three *triremes*. Its shape was not a linear one but followed the formation of the ground to eliminate the difficulty of the project. The canal seems to have collapsed some time after its construction.⁶³⁹ Furthermore, Vitruvius says that the architect of Alexander the Great, Dinocrates from Rhodes, known for his urban design of Alexandria, proposed to transform the mountain of Athos into a statue of Alexander the Great holding a city in his left hand and a cup in his right one in which the water of all the streams of the mountain would have been collected and then poured into the sea.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁶ Gigantomachy is the symbolic battle between the cosmic order of the Olympians led by Zeus and the nether forces of Chaos led by the Giant Alcyoneous.

⁶³⁷ Hieromonk Nikeforos from the Skete of the Small Saint Anne, *Athos. The Holy Mountain*, (Mount Athos: Small Saint Anne, 2001), p. 21.

⁶³⁸ Veronical della Dora, *Imagining Mount Athos. Visions of a Holy Place from Homer to World War II*, (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2011), p. 25.

⁶³⁹ Veronical della Dora, p. 26-27.

⁶⁴⁰ Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, ii, 1–2, as quoted in Victoria della Dora, p. 116.

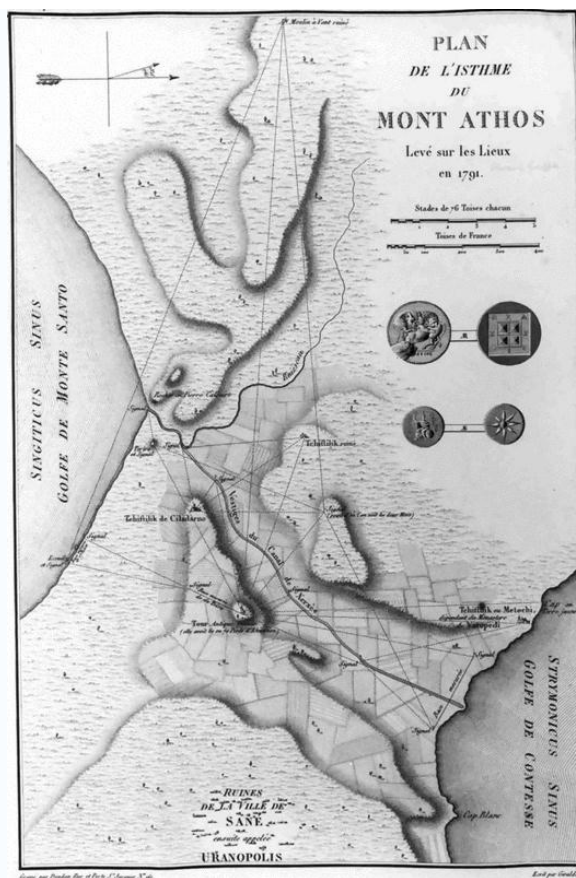


Figure 1.2: Plan of Xerxes' canal in Choiseul-Gouffier's *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce*, 1791, (Getty Research Institute Special Collections).

This antique sacred landscape was combined with the Christian *sacred* element through a tradition which says that the Mother of God (*Panagia*) and St. John the Evangelist sailing from Joppa to Cyprus were forced by a storm to anchor near the port of *Klement*, close to the present monastery of Iviron. While *Panagia* was walking ashore, a voice was heard saying: "Let this place be your inheritance and your garden, a paradise and a heaven of salvation for those seeking to be saved".⁶⁴¹ Since then, the peninsula has been connected with the Virgin and is considered to be *her garden*, a theme often depicted in the representations of Mount Athos and Virgin Mary.

The first written evidence of the presence of ascetics on Mount Athos dates back to the 9th century. It is also said that after the Islamic conquest of Egypt in the 7th century, orthodox monks from the Egyptian desert came to Mount Athos to find shelter for their spiritual life,

⁶⁴¹ Philip, Sherrard, *Athos- The Mountain of Silence*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 5-6.

something that is not strongly confirmed by the historical and archaeological findings.⁶⁴² It was in 943 that the boundaries of Athos were officially inscribed by the Emperor's abassadors.⁶⁴³

According to historian Dionysia Papachrysanthou, in the Byzantine period the Athonian monk would go through three phases. First, he spent a period at a monastery. After being blessed by the abbot, he could start his life as a hermit. When he reached the "perfection of asceticism", he usually returned to the world in order to communicate his new knowledge. There were several ways of *anchoritic* life: the life of the hermit, the *anchorit* with students, and the *anchorites* who were directly connected to a (coenobitic) monastery.⁶⁴⁴ Athonian monasticism evolved through three relevant stages: the **ascetic**, the communal/**civic** and the **coenobitic**. The first hermits settled in the mountainous environment of Athos, seeking absolute isolation. Later, some of them were grouped in "lavras", which allowed the co-existence of independent monks during the holy services in a common church. Finally, during the 10th century the monk Athanasius of Trebizond founded the first coenobitic monastery in Athos (based on Stoudios' Monastery of Constantinople), the Great Lavra.⁶⁴⁵ This monastic model was applied in all of the Athonian monasteries.

The important sacred character of the peninsula in that period is possibly expressed in an unnamed OT-shape map of the 11th century depicting the known Christian world (*imago mundi*). These maps were symbolic geographical representations of the world through the combination of images and words. They were meaningful expressions of a number of different places, parts of a sacred (most of the times) landscape. In one of these pre-rational maps, a mountain at the end of a peninsula is seen in the middle of the place-names Macedonia, Thessaloniki,

⁶⁴² Dionysia, Papachrysanthou, *Ο Αθωνικός Μοναχισμός – Αρχές και Οργάνωση/Athonian Monasticism – Origins and Organization*, (Αθήνα/Athens: Μορφωτικό Ίδρυμα της Εθνικής Τράπεζας της Ελλάδος), pp. 31-39.

⁶⁴³ Graham, Speake, *Mount Athos: Renewal in Paradise*, (Yale University Press, 2002).

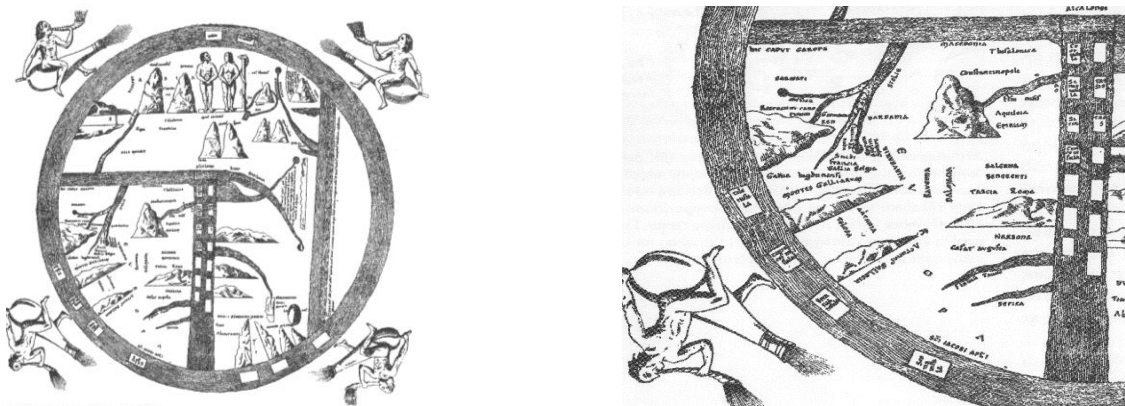
⁶⁴⁴ Dionysia, Paachrysanthou, pp 56-64.

⁶⁴⁵ See also: Graham, Speake,: "what Athanasios built was not a lavra on the sort that he had lived in himself at Kyminas, a collection of cells grouped round a central church like a modern Athonite skete, but a fully-fledged coenobitic monastery such as existed in Stoudios Monastery of St. John the Baptist. No such a monastery had previously existed on Athos (pg.42).

See also: John, Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality*, translated by Adelf Fiske, (Crestwood, New York 10707: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998):

Cenobitism, first brought to Mount Athos by St. Athanasius, is the form of monasticism popularized the West by St. Benedict. The vows of chastity, obedience and poverty are carried out in the heart of a closely organized community whose strict rules determine precisely the least detail in the monk's life. Liturgical prayer, obedience to the abbot and absolutely despoilment of all personal possessions are its essential elements. (pp. 73-74).

Constantinople and Epirus. Possibly, the mountain of Athos, the most characteristic element of the peninsula, this mountain plays an important role in the narrative of the *imago mundi* situated near Mount Sinai and represented just under Adam and Eve participating in an ideal Christian world (*cosmos*).



Figures I.3 & I.4: 11th Century OT map possibly showing the Athonian peninsula.

This evolution resembles that of the Egyptian desert ascetic community, possibly disclosing the sharing of ascetic models. The Athonians use of the writings of these fathers, such as the ones of Basil the Great and St. Theodore the Studite, testify to a dynamic *hesychast* tradition. Gradually, a network of huts (*kalyves*), cells (*kellia*), *sketes*, and twenty coenobitic monasteries was organised on Athos.⁶⁴⁶ The following table indicates the foundation's dates, founders and first abbots of the twenty Athonian coenobitic monasteries⁶⁴⁷:

⁶⁴⁶ Archim. Aimilianos, "Monastic Life", in Stilianos, Papadopoulos (ed.), *Simonopetra – Mount Athos*, (Athens: ETBA, Hellenic Industrial Development Bank, 1991), p 118.

⁶⁴⁷ Based on elements from the official site of Mount Athos (www.mountathos.gr) and: Reneè Gothoni, "Mount Athos During the Last Centuries of Byzantium", in Jan Olof Rosenqvist (ed.), *Interaction and Isolation in Late Byzantine Culture*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), p. 65.

MONASTERIES	FOUNDATIO N DATE	1ST ABBOT	FOUNDER	Nationality [descent14 th century]
GREAT LAVRA	963	St. Athanasius		Greek
VATOPEDI	972 – 985	Athanasius, Nicholas, and Antony		Greek
IVERON	10th century	St. John the Iberian		Iverian
CHILANDARI	12 th century	St. Savvas (Stefan Nemanja)	Stefan and Rastko Nemanja	Serbian
DIONISIOU	1356-1362			Greek
KOUTLOUMOUSIO U	1169	Unknown	Unknown	Romanian
PANTOCRATOR	Not Known(1358 already in existence)	Unknown	Unknown	Serbian
XEROPOTAMOU	10 th century	Blessed Paul	Emperor Constantine VI Porphyrogenetu s	Greek
ZOGRAFOU	972		George the Painter	Greek
DOCHEIARIOU	11 th century	Eythimios	Euthimios	Greek
KARAKALOU	Early 11 th century	Monk Karakallas	Monk Karakallas	Greek
PHILOTHEOU	End of 10 th century	Monk Philotheos	Monk Philotheos	Greek
SIMONOPETRA	1257	St. Simon	St. Simon	Serbian
HAGIOU PAULO	1108	St Paul of Xeropotamo u	St. Paul of Xeropotamou	Serbian
GREGORIOU	14 th century	Ascetic Gregorius	Ascetic Gregorius	Serbian
ESPHIGMENO	10 th or 11 th century			Greek
STAYRONIKITA	10 th or 11 th century		Nicetas or,Stayronicetas Nicephorus	Greek
XENOFONTOS	10 th or 11 th century	St. Xenofon	St. Xenofon	Greek
PANTELEIMON				Russian
KONSTAMONITOU	11 th century		Monk Konstamonitis	Serbian

Mount Athos is connected to *hesychasm*. Even in the case of the first Athonian coenobitic monastery, Great Lavra, by St. Athanasius in 963 an attempt of combining *hesychasm* that was mainly practiced in solitary life-styles and the coenobitic model of St. Theodore the Studite is underlined.⁶⁴⁸ In the fourteenth century Mount Athos became an important centre of *hesychasm*, a practice which was intensively followed by most of the Athonians. During this period, *hesychasm* was challenged by a monk called Barlaam of Calabria. It was the Athonian monk Gregory Palamas, the later archbishop of Thessaloniki, that defended *hesychasm*, “[stressing] ... the bodily presence of Christ in the sacramental life of the church (which was questioned by Barlaam)...”.⁶⁴⁹ In 1351 Gregory’s doctrine of *hesychasm* became the official teaching of the Orthodox Church, which led to the increase of the importance of monasticism, and especially of the Athonian one.⁶⁵⁰ Since then, Mount Athos has always been considered as an active field of *hesychast* practice in which hermits and coenobitic monks seek salvation through prayer.

During the Ottoman occupation, the Athonian monasteries experienced a gradual decline. They protected their political autonomy and religious freedom by paying affordable taxes until the second half of the sixteenth century. Though, serious violations of the peninsula, increase of the taxes and repetitive efforts of monastic estates’ confiscation led to its decay. Some of the Athonian coenobitic communities, thus, turned into *idiosyncratic* ones, creating a second group of monasteries on Athos. While the coenobitic monasteries referred to a wholly communal life, in the *idiorythmic* ones the monks lived independently and met only during the everyday services and some of the meals. Today, all the monasteries are coenobitic. And only the *sketes*, follow this semi-communal way of life.⁶⁵¹

During the middle of the first half of the twentieth century Mount Athos experienced quite a long period of decline due to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the Balkan wars. Gradually the Athonian population was dangerously decreased and the monastic structures fell into a ruinous state. This condition changed in the early 1970s with novices entering the

⁶⁴⁸ Archimandrite Aimilianos, “The House of God and the Gate of Heaven”, in Stilianos, Papadopoulos, p 118.

⁶⁴⁹ Graham Speake, *Mount Athos: Renewal in Paradise*, p 88.

⁶⁵⁰ Peter, Burridge, *The development of monastic architecture on Mount Athos: with special reference to the monasteries of Pantocrator and Chilandari*, (York: Heslington, 1976), p 35.

⁶⁵¹ Graham, Speake, *ibid*, pp. 113-156.

monasteries and big-scale projects of restoration of being held.⁶⁵² For a number of Christian Orthodox scholars, this happened due to a “spiritual regeneration” when the religious qualities of a number of Athonian abbots and “elders” attracted new monks and pilgrims. The entrance of Greece in the European Union (1981) led to the financial improvement of Mount Athos and the further protection of its *sui-generis* legal status. Furthermore, the nomination of the peninsula as a Unesco Heritage Monument in 1988 illuminated globally the cultural importance of the site. Today, Mount Athos is still considered to be a distant ascetic community attracting visitors of different motivations, from pilgrims to recreational tourists.⁶⁵³

Kellion

Athos contains three main types of monastic structures. The *kellion* is a small monastic structure surrounded by a piece of land, directly related to one of the twenty coenobitic monasteries. A chapel, some cells, a small guest house and ancillary spaces are organically organized, leading to an amorphous architectural result. According to Michalis Kordosis, the *kellia* are *micrographies* of a monastery of a quite self-sufficient character.⁶⁵⁴ In the *kellion* lives an “elder” around whom a number of monks are gathered. The number of the members of the group generally does not exceed six (three monks and three novices). The model of life there is based on the relationship of spiritual father and spiritual children. This family-type model is also enhanced by the limited space.⁶⁵⁵ Each *kellion* has to be financially independent through an *ergoxeiron*, a hand-craft. A characteristic example is the *Kellion* of St. Prokopios, belonging to the Holy Monastery of Vatopedi. Its *ergoxeira* are icon-painting and incense-making.⁶⁵⁶ It comprises a small L-shaped two-storey building gradually built during the 15th century around a free standing earlier chapel.⁶⁵⁷ On the ground floor the chapel was surrounded by storage rooms, a bakery and a still

⁶⁵²The total population of the 20 coenobitic monasteries in 1903 was 7432 monks, in 1971 1145 monks and in 2000 was 1610 monks.

⁶⁵³Graham, Speake, *ibid*, pp. 157-194.

Giorgos, Sidiropoulos, *Mount Athos: References to its Human Geography*, (Athens: Kastaniotis Editions), 2000, pp. 145-155.

⁶⁵⁴ Michalis, Kordosis, *Athonian Monastic life and folk history/Αγιορείτικη ζωή και λαογραφία*, Thessaloniki, Greece, 1976, pg.37, (My translation).

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 38.

⁶⁵⁶ The material used in this paragraph about the *Kellion* of St. Prokopios is from the unpublished undergraduate thesis: Euaggelos Mastellos, *Historical Analysis and Preservation of the Kellion of St. Prokopios of the Holy Monastery Vatopedi*, Unpublished Diplommat Thesis in Architecture, (Germany: May 1990).

⁶⁵⁷ A *lavra* is one of the first monastic organizations. It regards a number of ascetics living in huts around a common core.

of *tsipouro*, a traditional Greek drink. On the first floor there were a chapel, two guest lounges (one for the winter and one for the summer), four cells, three guest rooms, a large kitchen and storage rooms. During the late 1980s, only one very old monk lived there. He was the last member of the group of its ascetic inhabitants.⁶⁵⁸ In 2002 the *Kellion* was given to four monks.

Prayer, agricultural work and rest are the three basic activities of the monks. In the *kellion* of Saint Prokopios, the monks work growing vegetables and making wine, olive oil and honey. In earlier times, the end of a temporal cycle -season, harvest etc- was followed by a feast. Today the *kellion* celebrates only the day of Saint Prokopios, 8 July, through an extended morning service and a meal. Usually, after the matins on that day the service of the blessing of the waters is held and the whole *kellion* is consecrated through the pouring of Holy Water.

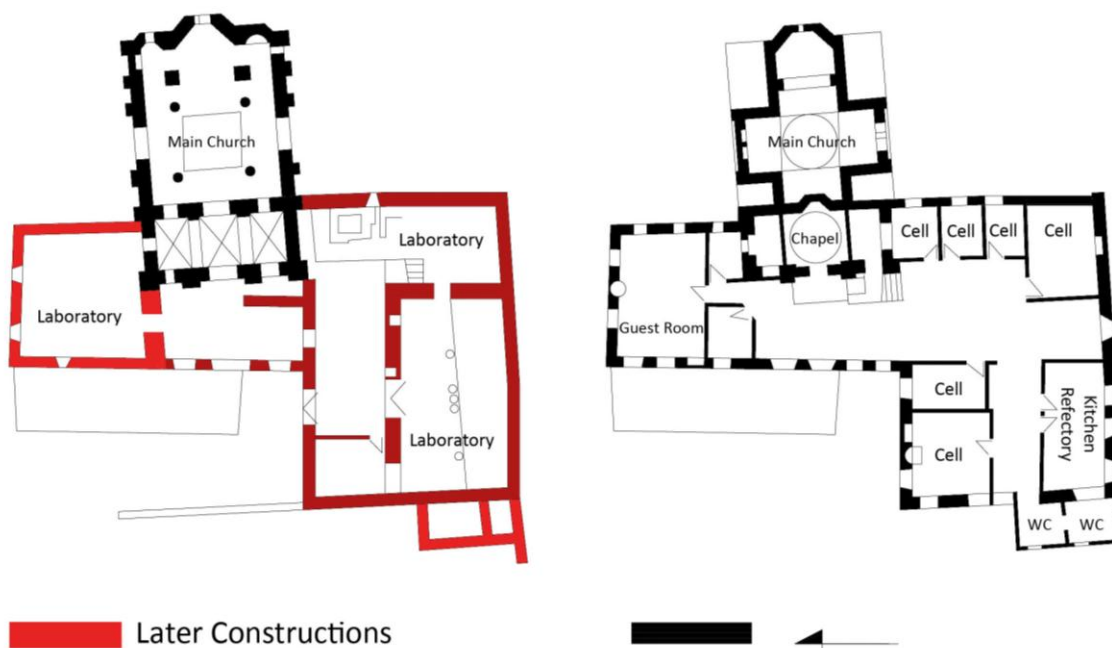


Figure I.5: The ground floor and the first floor of the *Kellion* of Saint Prokopios.

According to the monks there, the heart of the *kellion's* family is understood to be the chapel.⁶⁵⁹ The ascetic has to serve both his individual and collective struggle. A morning service, Vespers and Compline are held daily in the chapel. It is a compressed, Greek cross-plan, domed church with narthex. Now that the chapel is ruined, a 15th century smaller chapel on the second floor, just over the narthex, has become the core of the life there. As it is too small to house the four

⁶⁵⁸ Euaggelos Mastellos.

⁶⁵⁹ The information is based on interviews of the four monks that occupy the *kellion*.

monks, it plays the role of the chancel and its sacred sphere is extended to include part of the corridor along which a row of stalls and a lectern are placed to serve the needs of the ceremonies. In the case of Saint Prokopios, the services are followed by the meals in the dining area of the kitchen. This is not the case with all the *kellia*, as in most of them the ascetics have proper lunch and dinner. The meals are not performed in a ritual way as no readings and chanting are included in them. The *kellion* is also open to the strangers, but in a moderate way. They usually know the pilgrims/visitors from before. The strangers can experience almost all the spaces of the *kellion*, except from the cells. In them, the ascetics practice *hesychasm*, serving their personal relation to God.⁶⁶⁰

Skete

The *sketes* are monastic complexes that administratively “belong” to one of the twenty coenobitic monasteries, functioning partly independently. Their organization is based on the model of the *lavras* and the connection between a central complex of communal buildings (church, refectory, common room) and the cells spread in the desert. The ascetics lived alone in their cell and met at the services every Saturday and Sunday.⁶⁶¹ The first *sketes* were created on Athos during the 10th century. We know about the existence of 11 *sketes* during this period that would gradually be abandoned. The rebirth of this ascetic organization on Athos during the 17th century was fulfilled through the foundation of the *Skete* of St. Anne and was possibly connected to the decline of the peninsula during the Ottoman occupation.⁶⁶² As in the case of a Palestinian *lavra*, a *skete* is conditioned by a “polarity” between the “*kyriakon*” (communal core) and the “*kalivi*” (hut). The *kyriakon* is a small complex of a refectory, a guest house and some administrative buildings, built around the main church in which all the monks participate in the Sunday liturgy. The *Dikaïos* (Δίκαιος: Fair) is an elect monk from the mother-monastery in charge of the maintenance of the *skete*.

The hut of the *skete* has the morphological characteristics of the previous century’s traditional houses of the prefecture of Chalkidiki, slightly differentiated by the addition of the chapel that

⁶⁶⁰ The Spiritual Father is sets the canon for each monk in relation to his needs and abilities.

⁶⁶¹ Dionysia, Papachrisanthou, pg.65.

⁶⁶² Giorgos, Sidiropoulos, “Small Athonian Formations”, in Euaggelos Livieratos (ed), *Όρους Άθω, Γης και Θαλάσσης Περίμετρον. Χαρτών Μεταμορφώσεις (Mount Athos: Between the earth and the sea, Its transformations through maps)*, (Thessaloniki: Εθνική Χαρτοθήκη (Ethniki Chartothiki, 2002), p. 348.

serves the liturgical needs of the monks. The interior is organized according to the monastic life of the group of the monks that live there. It is a grouping of monastic spaces: a church, cells, secondary spaces. The hut functions relatively independently, following the way of life through which its “elder” decides to teach the *hesychast* practice to his disciples. The chapel is the core of this monastic *microcosmos*. All the huts are held together through their reference to the common *kyriakon* – heart of the wider whole.

According to Giorgos Sidiropoulos, the network of roads and paths of the *skete* follows a general division into two different sub-networks. The first one is part of a chief road network that carries most of the visitors and is connected to the wider Athonian road-network. The second one is an independent, “shadowy” and more organic network of footpaths that connects the different huts and is mainly used by the monks.⁶⁶³

A characteristic example of a *skete* is the New *Skete*, situated along the shore, just under the peak of Mount Athos between the monastery of Saint Paul (to which it belongs) and the *Skete* of Saint Anne. The initial foundation of the *skete* dates probably 10th century. Its location was nearer to St. Anne and its name was the *Skete* of the Cross. During the second half of the 11th century it was moved nearer to the sea, where the hut of the Presentation of Christ is now located. The current New *Skete* was founded in the 18th century. Its *kyriakon* was built between 1739 and 1757 and is dedicated to the Assumption of the Mother of God in memory of a hierophanic vision of an ascetic. It is a triconchial church with a narthex and an exonarthex. The church is surrounded by the refectory, the library, the guest house and the chapel of Saint Constantine, creating thus the communal core of the different huts that are irregularly located around it. The cemetery with its chapel (dedicated to the Holy Fathers) and its Ossuary are also included in the *skete*'s core.

⁶⁶³ Giorgos Sidiropoulos, *ibid*, pp. 122-124.



Figure I.6 (Left): New Skete.



Figure I.7 (Right): The communal core of New Skete.

Being an active part of the complex, the hut of the Presentation of Christ was founded during the 18th century and its chapel is said to be the former *kyriakon* of the *skete*. Since 2007 it has been uninhabited due to the bad condition of the building. It regards a complex of an inverted L - shape on the south-eastern edge of which there is a cruciform chapel. Its organization comprises successive building phases connected to the increasing need for more space. On the level of the church there is also a guest lounge, the kitchen and four cells. Three more cells and the traditional oven are at the lower level. The organic formation of the whole may be related to the *idiorrythmic* mentality of a *skete*, according to which each elder is free to apply his own program of work and prayer to the members of his hut. The relation between the chapel and the guest lounge resembles the one of connection between the refectory and the main church which plays an important role in the coenobitic monastery as we will see later. Moreover, the quite separated wing of the cells indicates a division between the *private* and the *public*.⁶⁶⁴

The assembly of the different huts around a common core and the central role of the chapel in the hut depict also the *liminal* qualities of an Axis Mundi, experienced both individually and communally. Nevertheless, the organic architectural formation of the complex is influenced more by a sense of individuality/independency. Each of the ‘families’ follow their own program of life knowing that they share a common goal (communion with God), something that is recollected through their participation in the common Saturday and Sunday services and meals.

⁶⁶⁴Further research on the life in the *skete* would possibly illuminate further the relation between the architectural formation and the experience there.

In addition, there are also two other types of *sketes*. The one is a *skete* of a coenobitic character, following the organization of a monastery. The life there is, also, based on the relationship between the monk (cell) and the community (church, refectory, courtyard). The third is about the assembly of a number of huts that do not have a core of communal buildings. Assemblies like this can be found in the Desert of Athos, like the aforementioned *Karoulia*, and in the *Kapsala* situated near the capital of *Karyes* being also known as “the desert of *Kapsala*”.⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶⁵ Giorgos, Sidiopoulos, ‘Small Athonian Complexes’, in Euaggelos Livieratos (ed), *ibid*, pp. 349-350.

Appendix II

Performativity, Ritualisation and Ritual Play

Performativity refers to the ability of an action to act out what it means. Ritualization happens when an action gradually acquires a ritual character, answering a number of criteria. This appendix presents the two main approaches to ritualization, the one of the theorist of religion, Catherine Bell, and the other of the theologians Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw. The former connects ritualization to strategic practices, and the latter builds upon the connection between ritual action and individual intentionality. This appendix examines how the notions of performativity and ritualization are combined with the notion of 'ritual play' to illuminate different aspects of Athonian topography.

Performativity and Ritual

The term "performative" was first used by the philosopher of language, John Langshaw Austin, who argued about the *active* character of certain expressions:

[These utterances are] perfectly straightforward utterances, with ordinary verbs in the first person singular present indicative active (....) Furthermore, if a person makes an utterance of this sort we should say that he is doing something rather than merely saying something. (...) We should say rather that, in saying what I do I actually perform that action.⁶⁶⁶

Ritual is 'performative' as it creates what it names. The participants and audience are the main human poles that bodily perform it. Repetitively conducting symbolic actions, rituals are believed to be a way for people to contact the "sacred". They are performed by specific actors/celebrants (i.e. priests) and open to the embodied interpretation of an audience in the context of a religious belief system.⁶⁶⁷ Religious spaces become the fields in which a number of built, unbuilt and human components are harmonically combined according to the emplotment of the ritual praxis. For example, the ritual of the Holy Communion gives meaning to the iconostasis, which acquires intense threshold qualities during this process. Bread and wine is

⁶⁶⁶John, Austin, "Performative utterances", in Robert J. Stainton (ed), *Perspectives in the Philosophy of language – A concise anthology*, (Canada: Broadview Press, 1999), pp. 240-241.

⁶⁶⁷Vanessa, G. Baker, *Women's pilgrimage as repertoirc performance: creating gender and spiritual identity through ritual*, Unpublished PhD dissertation, Graduate College of Bowling Green, State University, May 2010, p. 43.

carried by the priest from the chancel to the threshold and is consumed by the devotees. The processional walking of the devotees embodies a symbolical movement from the visible to the invisible. Hence, ritual is both performative and transformative. By changing the character and the meaning of a space it also creates a new event of place.⁶⁶⁸ This is also connected to the tripartite structure of (social) rituals. According to Arnold Van Gennep, the second and most important stage, the liminal one, has the power to transform the individual(s) participating in the event into what “will be” or “should be”.⁶⁶⁹

Ritualization – The ‘practice’ approach of Catherine Bell

According to the theorist of religion Catherine Bell, ritualization is a dynamic process based on the combination of thought and action. It is a strategic practice held in different social situations during which *ritualized agents* are produced through the creation and preservation of meaningful relationships. Repetition plays an important role in this process as it is a way for these relationships to be confirmed and maintained.⁶⁷⁰ Focusing on Bourdieu’s concept of ‘habitus’, Bell seeks to extend the traditional approaches of ritual(ization). ‘Habitus’ is the individual’s personal sphere of embodied action that is gradually formed through the repetitive performance of individual and collective practices. It is always in the process of *being formed* and at the same time it is intensely *formative*.⁶⁷¹ Characteristically, Bell argues: “(...) the **habitus** is the principle by which individual and collective practices are produced and the matrix in which objective structures are realized within the (subjective) dispositions that produce practices”.⁶⁷² In this sense, practice is a strategic action happening in a certain context that is able to reproduce an image of an ordered, powerful world.⁶⁷³

⁶⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 59.

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid*, pp.61-62.

⁶⁷⁰ Amy Hollywood, “Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization”, *History of Religions*, 42:2 (November, 2002), pp. 113.

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 99.

See also, Goran, Viktor, Stahle, “Ritualization and the religious self at a Hindu goddess-temple”, Centre for Theology and Religious Studies, Upsala University, in <http://www.teol.lu.se/indiskareligioner/conference04/13996670/panel5stahle.pdf>:

Bell’s reasoning is to a large extent grounded in Pierre Bourdieu’s concept “habitus”. The concept habitus is a concept that transcends the dualisms of individual and collective, intrapsychical and social, mind and body, by grounding human functioning in embodied practices. (p. 4).

⁶⁷² Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory – Ritual Practice*, (New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 79.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 81. & pp. 87-88.

Ritualization is a way of conducting specific actions in a way that makes people believe that they are important or powerful. This could involve the repetition of a well established tradition or innovative improvisations. Formality, fixity and repetition, thus, become the means of communicating the special character of a practice that is privileged compared to other activities.⁶⁷⁴ This means that the framework (spatial, temporal, cultural, semantic) in which these practices take place plays an important role in their emergence as special ones.⁶⁷⁵ The ritual body is always in an embodied dialectical relationship with its context, aiming at its “strategic manipulation” or “reproduction”.⁶⁷⁶ A space, hence, is ritualised when a number of different (ritual) practices consecrate it as important and powerful. For example, repetition of the Holy Eucharist in the church of an Athonian Coenobitic monastery, held at the same time every day ritualises the space transforming it into the most important building in the complex. Bread and wine is transformed into the body and the blood of Christ and are ritually eaten by the devotees. Seen as a practice of ritualization, the Holy Eucharist can be characterised as an “orthopraxis” that has the power of individual and communal transformations, also reflected in space.⁶⁷⁷ The congregation of people coming from different directions (monks, priests, pilgrims, tourists) in the church leads to a scheme of a well ordered, ‘centered community’, that is always opposed to a ‘dispersed population’. This may also reflect the opposition between a ‘higher’ reality and a ‘lower’ one.⁶⁷⁸ This is inscribed in space through the raised altar that is hidden behind the iconostasis, the lifting and lowering of voices and eyes the different body postures and gestures (prostrations, kneeling, making the sign of the cross).⁶⁷⁹

Ritualization – The “action” approach of Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw

In contrast to Bell’s approach, the theologians Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw argue about the important role of intentionality in ritualization. For them: “ritualization implies an agent’s adopting a particular attitude to his or her action below that ritual action is still ‘directed’, but the relation between intention and action is subtly transformed, so that it is

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 90-93.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 220.

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 99.

⁶⁷⁷ Catherine, Vincie, “Living from a Eucharistic vision: Solidarity in the Body of Christ”, *International Colloquium on Ritual*

For Life, Leuven , BELGIQUE (28/10/2004), 86:2-3 (2005), pp. 135-149.

⁶⁷⁸ Catherine, Bell, p. 101.

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 101 & 109-110.

different from action in general”.⁶⁸⁰ Ritualized acts appear as already formed.⁶⁸¹ The actors are trying to write them through their performance and at the same time they stop being the authors and become engaged in the whole process as receivers of an event that is experienced as predefined according to a number of “religious values”. In this sense, ritual acts seem to be open vessels ready to communicate with the rest of the world through their apprehension by the actors.⁶⁸² They have their own space and time characteristics, usually organised in “rhythmically”, repetitive events. They are forms of communication connected to “boundary marking events” and expressed through multi-sensual happenings that involve the transmission of a message from an emitter to a receiver.⁶⁸³ But this does not mean that the exact acts are ritualized. It is always the relationship between the intentions and the action that ritualizes the latter one and this is called by the writers the ‘actor’s ‘ritual commitment’ that can be applied to any kind of action.⁶⁸⁴ It is this conversion that makes an action, a ritual one.

According to Humphrey and Laidlaw, actions of ritualization may be identified by four main characteristics. First, their character is not connected to the individual’s intention. Secondly, they are organised according to a number of (ritual) rules. Moreover, they have a sense of independence/autonomy that involves specific characters and histories and, finally, they are bodily apprehensive.⁶⁸⁵ For the writers, the intentionality of an action relates to a reflexive understanding of the action during its actual conduct and not to something that has already been thought before it takes place.⁶⁸⁶ Thus, strictly connected to Merleau Ponty’s “incarnate intentionality”, ritualized actions open to “movements that indissolubly are movements and consciousness of movement”. Ritualized actions are structured on the basis of “prescription” as people have to follow rules that clearly form the context in which the relation between

⁶⁸⁰ Caroline, Humphrey and James Laidlaw, *The archetypal actions of ritual – A theory of ritual illustrated by the jain rite of worship*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1994, p. 4.

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 5.

⁶⁸² *Ibid*, pp. 11-12.

⁶⁸³ *Ibid*, pp. 75-77.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 88.

See also, in the same book:

By “ritual commitment” we do not mean that the actor holds any particular beliefs, such as that the ritual is sacred or really will cure illness, only that he or she is now committed to a particular attitude or stance, and that this is different from stances taken towards everyday actions. (...) In adopting the ritual stance one accepts, that is, that in a very important sense, one will not be the author of one’s acts. (pp. 97-98).

⁶⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 89.

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 93.

individual acts and archetypes is placed. Meaningfully enacting the given act the individual becomes an active participant (actor) of a ritual praxis.⁶⁸⁷

The embodied perception of an action is up to a point related to culture and the creation and preservation of a tradition. Body techniques adopted to serve certain actions become part of a tradition, constituting an amount of experienced information that is shared between the members of a group of people, and also transmitted and evolved (even sometimes changed) from generation to generation. Hence, a ritualised action cannot be only individual. It is in a constant to-and-from movement between individual and collective.⁶⁸⁸ “Prototype” and its embodied interpretation by the individuals becomes an important issue in this process, as people base on it the reproduction of acts that have already been learnt.⁶⁸⁹ For example, a church is formed so order that all the senses be directed towards the chancel, thus activating the embodied engagement of the individual in a process of ritualization, during which simple spatial conditions (e.g. the sequence of differently lit spaces, the repetition of the same seating, prayers, odours and movements) are being transformed into parts of rituals that are combined with the contact of the sacred element. Different movements, such as the eating and drinking of the Holy Gifts, are being repeated in the same way at a specific time of a certain day, following the prototype of the Mystical Supper. The role of personal volition comes at a second stage as improvisations need to pass through a process of ritualization first, in order to be harmonically included in the action.⁶⁹⁰

The notion of play in Hans-Georg Gadamer’s *Truth and Method*

In his book *Truth and Method*, the philosopher Hans Georg Gadamer argued that an interpreter is engaged in the process of interpretation because of the dynamics of “play”.⁶⁹¹ “Play” is an active part of the context in which it occurs, serving the movement of our embodied understanding “back and forth between [this] part and the whole [in which it exists]”.⁶⁹²

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 106.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 136.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 145.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 157.

⁶⁹¹ Kjetil, Steinsholt & Elin Traasdahl, “The concept of play in Han-Georg Gadamer’s Hermeneutics: An Educational Approach”, Steart Reifel (ed), *Theory in Context and out, Play and Culture Studies*, 3 (2001), p. 75.

⁶⁹² *Ibid*, p.79.

The playing field on which the game is played is, as it were, set by the nature of the game itself and is defined for more by the structure that determines the movement of the game from within than by what it comes up against –i.e. the boundaries of the open space-limiting movement from without.⁶⁹³

Tradition plays a vital role in these processes. People, taking part as actors in the play belong in a historical continuum. Tradition indicates the frameworks in which we have the possibility to participate in the playful interpretation of (a part of) the world. Traditions are not restrictive conditions, as they are always followed by the freedom of preserving and extending them and thus keeping them alive through a dynamic contribution. In this sense, we always interpret a space in the context of historical continuum. We are set in a horizon of understanding which is developed and expanded after every new experience. Play gives the opportunity to the individual to deal with the tension between the known and the unknown, the familiar pre-understanding and the new *other*. It allows for a “real fusion of horizons” to occur.⁶⁹⁴ In play, thus, the individual is transformed into another self, while interacting with the world. Play is a process always renewing itself through repetition and incessant change”.⁶⁹⁵ Its intensive character is also enhanced by non-copying repetitions.

Therefore, play requires two human poles in order to be activated, the actors and the audience. Usually players, interchange between being an actor and being a spectator, realising the movement between the world and the self, the part and the whole. In this sense, the play always gives the opportunity to the people to go out of their everyday routine, entering another reality.⁶⁹⁶ Therefore, the boundary between the space of play and the rest of the world is not something clear as the possibility of the former is based on its dialectical relationship with everyday life:

By “belonging” and “being in the world” our fore-understanding and prejudgements arise. These fore-qualities constitute our horizon of possible understanding. All understanding is thus fundamentally tied to the historical tradition through our continued participation in the world, our horizon of understanding is expanded.⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 107.

⁶⁹⁴ Flemming, Lebech, “The concept of the Subject in the Philosophical Hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer”, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 14:2, p. 230.

⁶⁹⁵ Kjetil, Steinsholt & Elin Traasdahl, p. 87.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 90.

⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 93.

Ritual and Play

Mimesis plays a key role in the understanding of the relation between ritual and play. For Gadamer, through mimesis and presentation play relates to “a performance of a thing’s being” and not just to a copied repetition. Interpretation is included in the mimetic event, calling for an audience to interact with art and architecture. “Audience” is connected to the word *theoros* (θεωρός) that in ancient Greece was the witness of sacred events.⁶⁹⁸ Play is therefore connected to a *double mimesis* as both the performers and the audience present themselves during the action. These processes lead, for Gadamer, to truth and understanding as a *transformation into figuration* occurs.⁶⁹⁹ In ritual play embodied mimetic figurations of a specific tradition (texts, rituals, heroes and so forth) are interconnected. As William Schweiker suggests: “by religion, we mean then, the sense of what claims individuals and communities as ultimate in and through the figurations of experience and understanding wrought by the beliefs, rituals, symbols, and actions of a community”.⁷⁰⁰ Through ritual movement a religious response to the world is fulfilled, usually expressing a “liminal” passage from the ordinary to the non-ordinary, a break of the everyday time and space. This is also fulfilled through repetitively conducted bodily movement.⁷⁰¹

Inscription

⁶⁹⁸ William, Schweiker, “Sacrifice, interpretation, and the sacred: the import of Gadamer and Girard for religious studies”, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, LV:4, p. 796.

See also in the same:

[Gadamer] understands mimesis relative to play performative action and thereby frees it from being tied to realistic representation (Vorstellung). More specifically, Gadamer takes “play”, or “Spiel” as a clue relative to texture of being. He sees mimesis relative to Spiel claiming that mimesis “does not mean something made after something already known, but, rather to being something to presentation so that it is present in this way in sensual fullness” (p.794).

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 796.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 798.

See also: Pieter de Jung, “Philosophical perspectives of Ritual [A summary of the essay ‘Perspectief of Rituelen’]”, *Workshop on Ritual in early Judaism and early Christianity*, 26-29 August, 2009, Helsinki, Finland, p.4.

See also, William, Schweiker :

(...)religions through manifold interpretive practices are mimetic figurations of experience and understanding through which individuals and communities seek to present the primal –and mysterious relation of the human, world and what claims them as ultimately important. A religion is a mimetic path to a figurative relation to what is sensed as ultimate in and through “world”. Moreover, a religious tradition is always doubly mimetic. Its the presentation of a community’s construal and understanding of the relation of human, world and the ultimate. (p.798).

⁷⁰¹ Amy Seek, p. 13.

Clifford Geertz's notion of "inscription" illuminates the experiential spatiality of ritual play. Basing his argument on Paul Ricoeur's theory of narrativity, Geertz underlines the role of "inscription" as the fixation of meaning which supports the text analogy for the case of social action. Whereas the actual conduct of a social action disappears just after its completion, its implications are retained through their inscription and possible repetition in space and time.⁷⁰² In this sense, according to Geertz, the communicative role of ritual is based on its ability to carry different meanings. When a ritual is performed, the possibility of the acting agents' enactment opens to the reality of experience. They receive a meaningful prescription and try bodily to inscribe it in space and time. Prescription and inscription contribute in the constitution/disclosure of a sacred place. Sacred art and architecture are dynamically involved in this process. They carry a number of symbolic meanings that are activated through multi-sensual ritual choreographies. Listening to and singing hymns, smelling incense, remembering a past event, kneeling, sitting and bowing one's head at certain moments become small embodied inscriptions of ritual character that fill the space of communal action. Embodied inscription opens the individual or the whole congregation to a process in which their intentionality, past life and elements of identity influence the ritual, at the same time being influenced by it. What is already inscribed opens to the interaction with the inscribing, the fixed meanings with the processes that fix it, re-actualize it or even change it.

Both schools of ritualization and Gadamer's approach of "play" share the prescription-inscription model. Every inscription (play, presentation and so forth) is a new *intentional/intensional* embodied action that may work in a strategic matter through the power of praxis seen as an embodied expression of the individuals' concern for the sharing of meanings through social interaction.⁷⁰³ Space, thus, becomes the field in which people interact, writing a narrative that is always carried by the architecture, the landscape and their depictions (drawings, texts, diaries, photographs).

Mount Athos

⁷⁰² Leo, Howe, "Risk, Ritual and Performance", *The Journal of the Royal Anthropology Institute*, 6:1 (March, 2000), p. 65.

⁷⁰³ Catherine Bell, p. 2.

Hence, according to Gadamer, during the performance of a ritual play both the subject matter and the audience are interconnected in an “event of truth”. Its relation to the “mimetic figuration” of a tradition enhances ritual’s harmonic incorporation in different levels of everyday life, such as the political, social or religious ones. The ritualization of specific actions and their transformation into ritual ones is also an active part of these processes, connected or not to a strategic consecration of different places. The *suis generis* character of Mount Athos can be examined according to these ideas.

Ritualization of different actions, such as the daily services or the meals lead to the creation of this unique topography. The arrangement of the buildings also supports these ritual actions. For example, the refectory of a coenobitic monastery is always placed in connection with the main church allowing for a liturgical interrelation that is daily performed. Every meal follows a service re-enacting different past religious events, like the early Christian meals of *agape*.

This becomes obvious even in the buildings (e.g. the monastery is built according to the pre-figuration of the Second Coming) or in landscape (e.g. the intense meaning of the existing mountain of Athos or the distinct experience of landscape of the Athonian Desert). The monks follow a program which divides the day into hours of work and prayer. Most of the day, the space is performed through rituals or the silent constant recitation of a prayer. In this sense, the intentionally preserved silence is a way of ritualising the open spaces and the cells transforming them into places of hesychast character. At the same time, ban on the entrance of women is connected to the notion of “avaton” (meaning untrodden) that regards a traditional way of keeping a religious place morally purified through the avoidance of physical inter-sexual communication. In this sense, “avaton” can be seen as a strategic rule, repetitively applied to the peninsula that enhances a “sacred”, almost utopian, character. The movement of the male visitors in the peninsula is also controlled by a number of “avaton” regulations. For example they have to obtain a visa in order to enter and they are allowed to spend only four days on Mount Athos and only one day in each of the monasteries.

Thus one may argue that through the performance of mimetic figurations of traditional stories, monks work on the maintenance of the “sacred” environment strictly combining it with the Byzantine period (supporting, thus, the value of the still active Byzantine monuments). Hence,

they create a certain context in which the architecture and the landscape are experienced through their ritualization. A religious life is repetitively performed in the same places every day, reaffirming the hesychast character of the peninsula. Play, serves both the life in the monastery and the journey of the traveller. It is a field that carries the prescriptions of religious traditions and lets human experiences be inscribed on the performed choreography. Sometimes, there exist fusions of horizons as, for example, monks and travellers participate in the same rituals or as they all use the same network of paths.

Today, the ritualization of actions in Mount Athos could probably borrow elements from both practice and action theories. On the one hand, there is an intense strategic policy to maintain the Byzantine profile of the area, something which is followed by a character of “importance” and “power”. On the other hand, its experience from humans opens to the relation between action and intention. This space is transformed into a place of special significance during the performance of which monks and some visitors interpret it as sacred in a number of different degrees, depending on their identity and their motivation. The maintenance of the Byzantine element serves several purposes and becomes an important factor of Athos’ powerful profile.⁷⁰⁴ Its administratively independent character combined with the Byzantine element, support an image of a-place-out-there which is really different from our common everyday sphere. In parallel, the Byzantine element genuinely supports hesychast spirituality. From another point of view, *byzantinism* becomes a way of preservation of the uniqueness of this environment something that besides positive religious aspects is further related to social (pilgrimage, exclusion of women e.t.c) and financial ones (conservation of architectural heritage and tourism). Thus, while monks seek to preserve the genuine Athonian conditions of worship, they also contribute to the maintenance of a multi-layered system. The basis of these processes is ritualization, as it is through its performance that Athonian architecture and landscape acquires its distinctive character.

⁷⁰⁴ See, Rene Gothoni, “Mount Athos During the Last Centuries of Byzantium” in Jan Olof Rosenqvist (ed), *Interaction and Isolation and Late Byzantine Culture*, (Stockholm: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 2004), pp. 57-69.