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THE PASSAGE TO IMMORTALITY:

An anthropological insight into an Orthodox hagiorite monastic community.

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Thesis Submitted for M.A.

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Durham University
Anthropology Department

UNIV. DURHAM
14 FEB 1995

Abstract

In order to convey the meaning of monastic life style in comparison to its lay context, the thesis will examine the monkish use of metaphors concerning secular images and relationships. Additionally, the thesis will attempt a detailed description of the environment within the monks practice their relationship to the divine, the monastery.

The main anthropological discrimination (secular, divine) used to define the distance between man and God is methodologically accurate. However, it is more precise to say that the distinction between man and monk-man, in its native use, corresponds to the opposition between the lay-man (**Laikos**) and the spiritual-man (**Pneumatikos**). Respectively, the distinction between the divine and the secular, into the frame of this research, will be based on the opposition between spiritual life and secular one.

Entering into a discourse concerning divinity does not necessarily mean attributing the divine exclusively to this vague "morpheme" called "God" (**Theos**). To my perception, there is a variety of graduations between God and man. Each graduation claims a share of the divine and secular in different proportions, representing the different steps of a ladder uniting heaven with earth. For example, God, Christ, the saints, the living saints, the hieromonks, the monks, the celibate priests, the lay priests and the laity.

Divinity starts from sainthood. The distinction

between the divine and the secular world is not to be understood merely in the opposition between the monks and the laity. The monks differ from laity and they definitely comprise a category of "others", for, they wish to attain to the saints' qualities by following their life-style.

Regarding Orthodox sainthood, we find many cases where the mother of a martyr is considered to be a saint exactly because she witnessed, as Godbirth (Panagia) did, the death of her son. She may also join the sphere of sainthood because her son or daughter were declared saints. The saintly qualities of the descendant are imputed to the ancestor, in other words the usual direction of transmission has been reversed. I propose to call this phenomenon "reversed atavism"; I intend to explain it in reference to the way kinship is perceived in villages. As a matter of fact the use of kinship terminology in Christian context is not a novel. Although it is used to give emphasis on spiritual ties rather than blood relations, it still holds something of the secular context.

The moral of the Orthodox monasticism is defined to a significant degree by its theology. Regarding this the Christian Orthodox Dogma functions as a limitation against all kinds of theological novelties.

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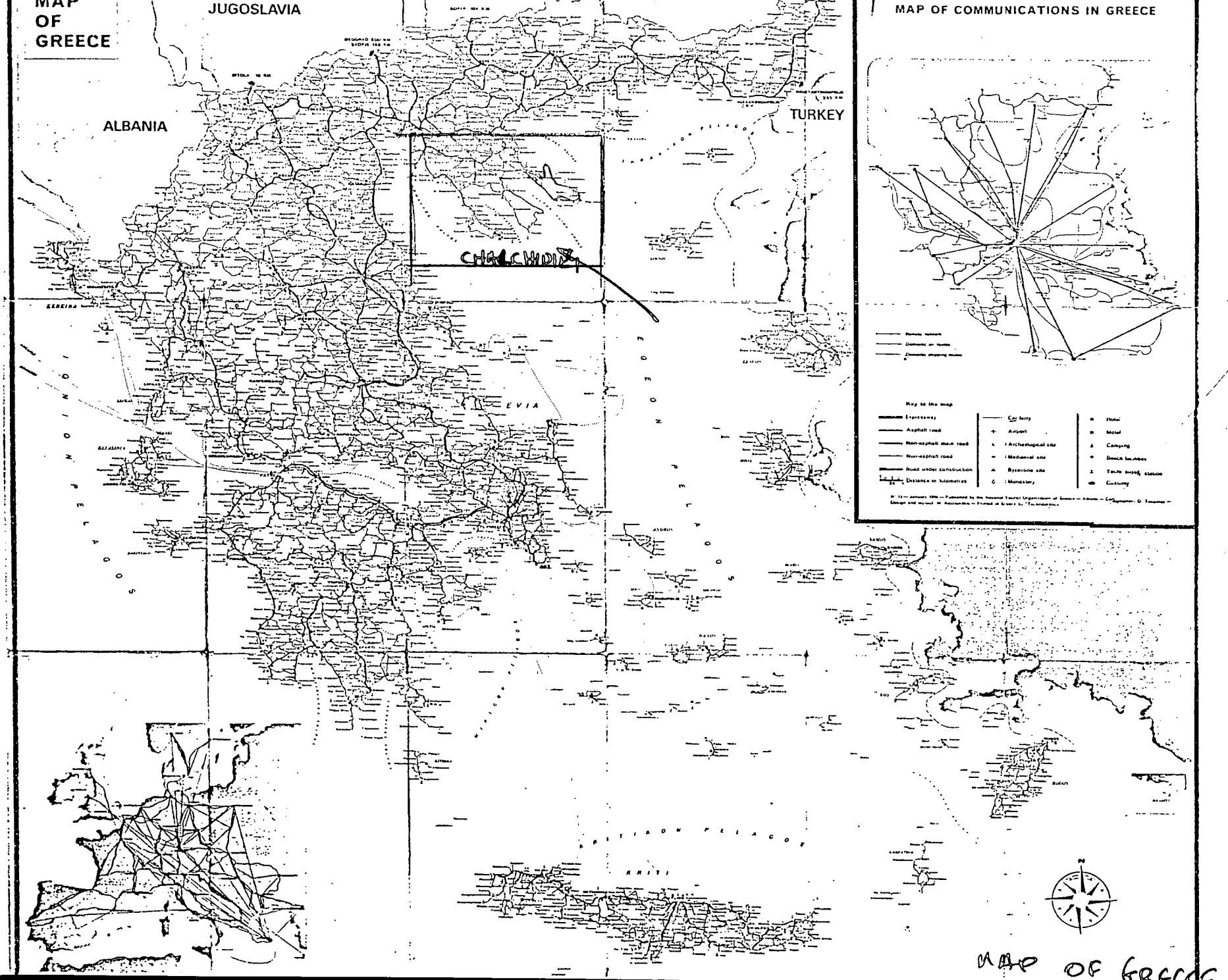

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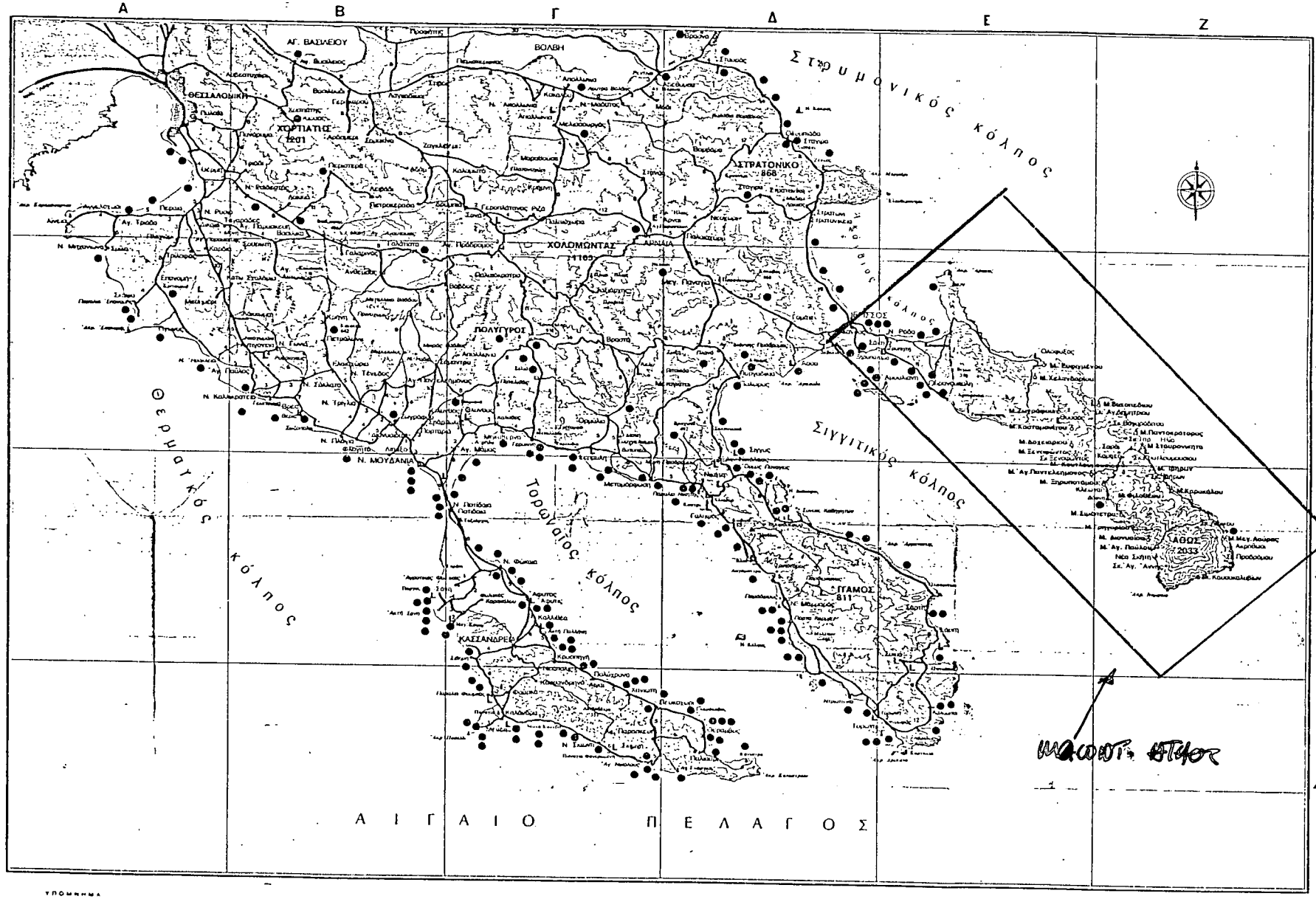

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MAP OF CHALCHIDIKI

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Ἡ χερσόνησος τοῦ Ὄρους Ἄθω μετά τῶν ἐπ' αὐτῆς Ἱστορικῶν, Βυζαντινῶν, Ἱερῶν Μονῶν καὶ Σκητῶν
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Δικαιοῦται ἡ ἀνατύπωσις
Νόμος 2387/1970
Ἀπόφ. Ἀρείου Πάγου 576/1974

Hagiography (

Ὁ Μοναχός - ἀσκητής Ἀχίλλειος κοντά στό ἀσκητήριό του

 TYPICAL HAGIORITE MONK

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

> "When people realize the chasm between their hopes and the reality of their existence, they try to bridge it with a leap of faith which is an exit from their world interpreted as: this is not the real world this is not the truth". (J.M.Yinger, 1968:9)

Introduction

This thesis is principally the result of bibliographic research. However, it is also based upon preliminary fieldwork of two months conducted in the eastern peninsula of Chalkidiki, a region in northern Greece. In this work I aim at creating an anthropological outline of a monastic community which is situated in a wider monastic society, of Holy Mount (**Hagion Oros**). The Holy Mount -also known as Mount Athos- consists of twenty Monasteries. These twenty monasteries schematize the Athonic State, which, though under the Greek State authority and answerable to the Patriarchate of Constantinople, is self-ruled (A. A. Aggelopoulos, 1987). The Holy Mount is the place where the tradition of the "ascetic" monasticism has been kept alive for more than ten centuries.

The initial motive for the undertaking of this thesis

was to come to an understanding of what is to be a believer (**Pistos**). I visited the monastery in order to comprehend what it means and what it entails for a monk to live as monastic. The hagiorite monks -as I intend to show in the unfolding of this thesis- comprise an extreme case of the religious figure because they experience their relationship to the divine differently to the laity.

The monks consist a unique category of the believer in the area of social study. The whole spectrum of monastics' daily life is a display of their subjection to the divine. Monasticism encloses in its function, as a representation of the ideal community, the symbolism of a distinct perception of divinity. This symbolism will be used to support both my descriptions and my interpretations concerning their life-style. However, in order to convey the meaning of this unique life style in comparison to its lay context, one has to stress the use of metaphors of secular images, and relationships, otherwise the phenomenon of "**anachorisis**" (departure) will remain a privilege within the limitations of theology.

In addition to this and in order to give a sufficient portrait of an hagiorite monk, one is obliged to attempt a minute description of the environment into which the monks practice their relationship to the divine, the monastery. I will attempt to do that, in three ways.

Firstly, I intend to give a glimpse of the mythology "covering" Mount Athos (Chapter 3). Hence I shall describe

the distinct way by which the pilgrims and monks refer to the hagiorite monastic tradition and thus portray the particular way they conceive divinity. The living mythology I encountered in Mount Athos, proved to be a very suited, though dangerous way to engage in a discourse regarding sainthood. Legendaries (sinaxaria), i.e lifes of saints, can be used, as I believe, in this context as a supplementary means to enter this space of divinity and thus to clarify and probably re-define the interaction between the well known distinction of secular and divine.

The profound tension within Orthodoxy may spring from the opposition between the divine and secular world represented by monks and laity respectively. Yet, the divine capacities and qualities, as portrayed through miracles, are even more elaborated and refined than we might imagine. For they possibly reveal the attributes of the saints and perhaps through this, the distinct levels of divinity.

According to the monks the sphere of divinity is not actually represented by them -fortunately they proved to be modest- but rather from those monastics who managed, after years of retreat, to reach the higher levels of holiness, thus creating the image of the "perfect" and inspire the thaumaturgical recounting. This exemplary image instigates mythology as expressed mainly by thaumaturgical and heroic actions.

Another, second way of understanding what it is to be an hagiorite monk, derives from examining the everyday life:

the actual functioning of the monastery. This is a necessary complementary approach in order to examine the way this particular monastic ideology is lived in practice (chapters 4, 5). Moreover, the same symbolism, encountered in the initiation process, springs up in even the slightest details of the monastery's life and therefore a most thorough symbolic analysis can be undertaken. It is in this regard, that I have attempted a minute examination of the monks' action in the Church (church-going), as well as, the working activities and the proffering of hospitality.

There are two axes around which the life of a monk revolves. The first concerns his organic role in the monastery, expressed by the nature of his "**diakonima**" (willingly offered work) and the second, his participation in the services, the liturgy (**Liturgia**). Both those two actions express the "public" or social substance of a monk's life, for they both run counter -for reasons which I will explain below- to his solitary and maybe his ascetic image.

Thirdly, I will try to describe the stages of a monk's initiation, the process through which a layman transforms to a monk (Chapter 6). That is to say, I will try to trace the itinerary, from a person's "worldly" individuality until his tonsure where he enters the space of "other-worldly" individuality, meets with divinity and becomes a "renouncer". This involves a series of related rituals culminating in the ritual of "**Koura**" (= tonsure).

Using the anthropological literature on initiation

rituals -principally that of V. Turner (1967)- I propose to examine this process of initiation, which is a rite of passage, paralleled -mainly by the monks- to the process through which a couple passes from their acquaintance to the marriage.

One can distinguish four stages in this process. The first is the stage of acquaintance, where the person lives his first novice period in the monastery. Second is the stage where the person becomes a novice-monk. The third starts with the ritual of the first tonsure, that involves the taking of the first vows, where the person is considered fully as a monk and finally, the fourth and final stage starting with the second tonsure, followed by even more strict vows.

The fact that one can find analogies between the stages of a monk´s life, from his first entrance in the monastery until his final tonsure, and the couple´s life until their wedding, provided me with the opportunity to use metaphors based on the secular world; Thus, placing the monks´ relationship with an inchoate divinity in a domain of objects, actions and relationships which are more immediate. In this regard the divine becomes understandable and approachable.

Of course, the rituals of initiation make use of a complex symbolism, utilizing elements of all important Christian rituals, for example baptism, (the tonsure of the baby) or -as I have already implied- wedding and even the

rituals of death. One can reasonably argue, that the initiation rituals involve in their slow unfolding -a "way"- a continual resumption of rituals (Kallistos Ware, 1979:8). For the life of a monk in a monastery of Mount Athos is a continual ritual, a grooming for his second -and final- death, which brings him closer to God and to the idea of resurrection; "**anastasis**", the Orthodox concept of eternity.

The monastic tradition of Mount Athos has been kept alive for more than ten centuries, therefore no analysis can be undertaken without taking into account the historical dimension, something which I briefly venture on during chapter two. For example, the fact that different monasteries are following different calendars, ranging from the old Byzantine to the modern one, can only be explained through a historical analysis. In the monasteries of Mount Athos time is not calculated by the clock and very interesting questions concerning the relative notion of time can be discussed in this context.

A Brief history of Mount Athos

Holy Mount Athos (Hagion Oros) is an autonomous and self-governed territory of the Greek State (Agelopoulos, Ecclesiastical History, 1987:78). It occupies almost the whole of the most Eastern of the three peninsulas of Halkidiki, stretching about 40 km in length and having a breadth of 8-12 km, covering an area of 332.5 square

kilometres. In the centre of the peninsula of Mount Athos rises a long range of hills and mountains, culminating in Mount Athos itself, 2,033 metres above sea level. The border of this monastic state, where it meets the rest of Greece, is marked by an imaginary line drawn from Francocastro on the western coast across to Cape Arapis on the opposite coast, passing close to the foothill of the mountain "Meghali Vigla" (Megas Zigos).

Until the 3rd Century BC, many small Greek towns existed on the peninsula of Athos, principally colonies originating from Chalkis and Eretria. Frequently are these towns referred to in the works of the classic authors, Homer, Thucydides, Plutarch, Apollonios. The most important of them were Sani, Ouranoupolis, Thisson, Kleones, Dion, Akrathos and Olofixos. Later, for unknown reasons, these towns declined or were destroyed and the area took on the virginal aspect that we know today.

Human activity reappeared on Mount Athos after almost a thousand years. On the 7th Century AD, the monk Peter the Athonite appears on Mount Athos. Soon a stream of monks manifest themselves there originating from the Christian areas of the East, where the Arabs had predominated. From this period dates the establishment of the first Christian monasteries of Mount Athos, where gradually a large number of monks, ascetics and hermits gathered, drawn by the security and isolation offered by its inaccessible postion.

On the 10th Century, monk Athanasios the Athonite and

Peter of Xiropotamos built and systematically organized monasteries, where the monks of the region would gather to live in coenobiums (op.cit.:47-55).

Life in Mount Athos was organized on the model of a community, with the help and the practical support of the Byzantine emperors and other nobles and notables of the age.

In 972 AD, for the first time, an official "charter" for mass on Mount Athos was drawn up by Athanasios the Athonite. The text was written on goat - hide- and thus called the "Tragos" (meaning "he-goat") - and is signed by the emperor Ioannis Tsimiski. (Christou, The Holy Mount, 1987:113). A second "charter", the original of which has not survived, was drawn up later, in the time of the emperor Constantine of Monomachos (1042-1054).

During the period of Latin domination over Byzantium (1204-1261), Mount Athos suffered frequently and heavily from plundering and pillage by Latin invasions. The sweep of Catalan mercenaries under Anthronicos Paleologos (1282-1328) were just as destructive. From the three hundred existing monasteries only twenty-five survived the holocaust of the Catalan's destructive fury.

After the siege of Thessaloniki by the Turks (1430) and the fall of Constantinople (1453), both Sultan Mourat II and Mohamet I, respected and recognized the autonomy of Mount Athos, even sanctioned a set of privileges for the monks living there. Thus Mount Athos, autonomous and substantially self-governed throughout the most part of the centuries-long

Turkish domination, reverently preserved the Greek-Orthodox tradition, thus contributing to the rescue of the Greek race and culture.

Nevertheless, the survival of the monks in the years under Turkish rule was not always assured by the privileges but provisionally granted by the conquerors. Subsequently heavy taxes, frequent persecution and coercion by the Turks altered the initial prosperity.

Under these new conditions, the 16th Century saw the coenobitic life of the monasteries begin to break up due to economic decline, and **idiorythmic** monasteries (settlements where each monk takes care of himself) as well as **sketes** (smaller monastic settlements) began to be set up. The situation improved later with the support of the Greek -in the main- princes of the Danube Principalities, who contributed through their important material donations to the regeneration and restoration of the Mount Athos monasteries. From that date the dominant Monasteries of Mount Athos became were sanctioned.

During the second half of the 18th century, the Athoniada School was founded on the initiative of the Prior of the monastery of Vatopedio, Meletios (1748) and of the Patriarch of Constantinople, Kirillos V, who donated resources for the running of a unique centre of culture during the Turkish domination.

After the liberation of Mount Athos (1912) the Holy Community voting on October 3rd 1913, declared Mount Athos as

an inseparable part of the Greek dominion. The sovereignty of Greece over Mount Athos was recognized in the International Treaties of London (1913), Bucharest (1913), Neyilly (1919) and Sevres (1920). (Agelopoulos, op.cit.:78, Christou, op.cit.:337).

Today about 1600 Orthodox monks of different nationalities live in the twenty monasteries (most of them are Greek Nationals) and in the numerous hermitages scattered over the 60 kilometres of the eastern prong of the Halkidiki peninsula of modern Greece.

Mount Athos is not under the authority of the Greek Church. According to the Greek constitution (Article 105) Mount Athos is considered to be self-ruled within the boundaries of the Greek state. The Greek constitution in co-ordination with the "**Katastatikos Chartis**" (Athonite constitution) according to the legislative decree of 1926, designates the limits of the organization and the function of all institutions. The representation of the Greek state in Mount Athos as well as the administration of the monasteries involves a series of issues, concerning the political dominance of one nation over another in the Balcans. The Orthodox religion was the mean through which the "unification" of different nations consisting the Byzantine Empire was accomplished. An attentive study of this issue reveals the existence of other important ones, concerning Orthodoxy and the Byzantine Empire, monasticism and the Church in Byzantium, Ethnicism and the Byzantine Empire,

Greekness and Orthodoxy (see Constitution of Mount Athos, Article 6 about Nationality and Article 5 about Heterodox), the examination of which requires a thorough historical analysis that this thesis cannot afford to undertake.

Methodology

I am fully aware of the fact that the subjects I want to examine, demand a whole fieldwork or even more. Mount Athos is actually a monastic state. A cluster of twenty monasteries, twelve sketes, one hundred and fifty huts and quite a few cells. This monastic society and the particularity of its ascetic character requires an extended research work.

Orthodox hagiorite monasticism, as a religious phenomenon, has a distinct and idiomorphic expression which reveals the distinction between the centre and the periphery, of the contemporary Greek culture. By this I mean that religion in the monastic community composes the main aspect of their life, contrary to the lay's communities where religion is just an aspect amongst others.

Therefore, one of the main tasks of this thesis will be to give a profile of the Orthodox monasticism to the English speaking reader. In order to do that, emphasis must be given on the similarities and moreover, on the differences from the western Church Order and monastic tradition. That is to translate the Orthodox Christianity into terms of the

Catholic or the Anglican one. Of course, I will attempt to do that indirectly up to a feasible extent, for the aim of this study is not a comparative one.

Nevertheless, I am aware of the shortcoming inherent in the undertaking. The data collected will be limited in two senses. Firstly, the quantity will be limited. I did not have the opportunity to follow the life of the monastery for a whole calendar year; I was not in position, for example, to witness important rituals. Moreover the depth of interaction is strongly affected. One of the most important tasks of a fieldworker is to manage to express his endless questions in a "language" meaningful to his informants. This is a continual process of learning for the anthropologists and also a matter of empathic understanding (Marcus and Fischer, 1986).

Before I go on, I find it necessary to array some of the difficulties raised by the study of the religious phenomenon itself.

The first difficulty deals with the transformation from a theological language to a socio-anthropological one. This transformation is quite dangerous for someone to attempt, due to the fact that, behind the monks' language and behaviour lies a hidden system of meanings, values and actions; a system often distinct from the secular world. By trying to be consistent to the monks' conception of "reality", I often found myself involved in a theological discourse rather than an anthropological one while, by trying to be consistent to

anthropology, I often found myself trapped in my predetermined ideas concerning their life. The monks themselves have said to me: "**Yia va milisis yia tous hagious prepi na ginis hagios**", meaning "to talk about the Saints you must become a saint yourself".

The second difficulty deals with the fact that I was studying not just some monastic society but an Orthodox one. Since I am an Orthodox too, I had to overcome the "subjectivity" conditioning my perception. However, the particularity of the Orthodox monasticism forced me to look closely into the Christian doctrinal differences and thus, to create even more obstacles toward lingual transformation.

The third difficulty deals with the fact that the monks do not form a homogeneous category. Some of them were "uneducated" and thus, more easy to be understood, whereas others were very spiritual and educated consequently quite difficult to be approach. Although the reality exhibited to me was one, I was often confused by the variety of their speeches.

Due to the lack of an extended fieldwork I am forced to adopt a line of approach to the subject which immediately relies on literary accounts. There is a very large bibliography on Mount Athos, yet I will particularly focus on three authors. The first is Archimandrite Vasileios, Abbot of one of the monasteries´ I visited during my stay in Mount Athos. Arch. Vasileios is considered a fabulous theologian and his book titled "Hymn of Entry" (1984), provided me with

valuable data concerning the role of the Church in the monkish life. Another revealing book of his called, "The Holy Mount Athos and the Culture of Our Nation" (1990), edited under the supervision of the Sacred Community of Mount Athos (a committee of monks comprising the government of the monastic state), illuminates the **ethos** of hagiorite monasticism. The second author, Hieromonk Symeon Grigoriatis, is Peruvian by nationality and ex Catholic. Symeon has written two books trying to give a rather poetic outlook of hagiorite monastic experience: "The Holy Mountain Today" (1983), and "Sober Intoxication" (1985). He used to reside in a coenobitic monastery (coenobium: the term will be explained further on), but the interview he gave to the journalist Stathis Tsagarousianos (magazine "Tetarto", 1986), become the occasion of his evacuation from the monastery. He now lives in a cell by himself, however, he remains famous and much respected. The third is Archimandrite Ioannikios and his book called, "Athonikon Gerontikon", is a collection of small stories and apophtegms ranging from the start of the monastic life in Mount Athos up to date.

Those three authors will be used as informants, because as I believe, their literary work is representative of the monkish life covering a great deal of the variety of hagiorite monasticism.

Theoretically, it would be fruitful to examine the distinction between Orthodox doctrine and lay understanding and practice of these doctrines. Something which has been

attempted satisfactory in the ethnographic work of Campbell (1963, 1974, 1979), Du Boulay (1982, 1984a), Rushton (1982) and M. Iossifides (1989). In this manner, we would be able to discern how the monks blend Orthodox theology with lay beliefs to create their own relationship with the divine.

It would be interesting though, to examine in terms of metaphors the relationship between accepted Orthodox doctrine and the actual interpretation and influence of the secular world upon doctrine as used and understood by the monks. Although this is not an easy task, through examining the power of symbols such as marriage, hospitality, friendship as derived from the secular world, one inevitably reaches to reasonable conclusions concerning the monkish person-hood. It should not be forgotten that the monks were born and raised in lay households, in lay environments. Though their life histories were nearly impossible to obtain, for reasons that I have already explained (limited fieldwork etc), it became clear to me that only few monks come from highly religious backgrounds while, the majority's upbringing does to assume the religious habit.

The monks are influenced directly by the secular world, thus bring to the monasteries secular outlooks and beliefs. It is in this account that I find it fairly logical to attempt to draw parallels between the monks and the lay people.

The tools of my analysis

In my work, I seek to examine along lines of symbolic and metaphoric interrelations the interaction between the monks of a coenobitic monastery (coenobium).

According to Marcus and Fischer (1986:26), interpretive anthropology functions simultaneously in two levels: It provides insightful descriptions of other cultures, and it reflects on the scientific foundation of these descriptions. Relevant to this approach is the idea of conceptual deconstruction, also known as post-structural anthropology (Culler, 1982:55-56).

The examination of hagiorite monasticism sparks off a double level of study. In the first the monks will be examined as potential saints and in the second as a laity. By doing this, I will keep one foot in the worldly image of man's identity to give a "real" picture of the monkish life and the other into the out-worldly, or other-worldly one thus, making the distinction between "inside" and "outside", the divine and the secular comprehensible.

I intend to present these two conflicting images by using metaphors and symbols. Following Fernandez (1986:31), I subscribe to his definition of symbols; as abstract sign-images; as images replete with felt but unconceptualized meanings, which have lost their direct link with the subjects on which, in specific contexts, they were first predicated. Noting Wheelwright (1962), Fernandez argues that symbols

are used as metaphoric statements and can be translated back into metaphors. Although this sounds identical, I find this path quite satisfactory. That is to say, discussing symbols as metaphors.

Metaphors have the capacity to enlighten the relationship between subject and object whereby the inchoate and abstract are given form and shape by being predicated upon objects that are more easily identifiable. (Black 1988, Turner 1987).

Explaining how metaphors seem to mediate between the secular and religious worlds should be the main task of this thesis, aiming at a clear understanding of either the similarities or the differences of those worlds. For example, "**Panagia**" (Virgin Mary) as the mother of God can be seen as a metaphor likening Panagia to the roles secular mothers should assume in relation to their children. Therefore the image of the mother of God becomes the ideal image of the secular mother giving Her a divine power beyond human comprehension. Yet, for the monks Panagia is the mother of the lord and therefore the only adorable female feature in their society. The monks consider themselves as Her children, Mount Athos as Her garden and the monasteries as Her courtyard where they "play" like kids. "In the matriarchal community of the Holy Mountain, where, at least for us monks, the reign of the Mother of God is clearly perceptible..." (Hieromonk Symeon Grigoriatis, 1983:11).

The image of the secular mother as an object of a

metaphor illuminates the subject, Panagia. In turn Panagia becomes the subject of a metaphor to be modified by the object (mother). This peculiar match-making between the secular and the divine portrays a terrestrial domain of the religious sphere. For, in the end the initial object (mother) takes the place of the initial subject (Panagia) to be modified in turn, on the other way around. In other words the mother of the God borrows the maternal characteristics of a secular mother, and it serves our metaphor no longer as a subject but as an object ready to modify in turn the initial object, and to rehabilitate it as subject. I am not claiming that I have answered the question concerning the relationship between religion and social structure, "the relationship is that of plausibility... It is a dialectical relationship. Sometimes religion will be an independent variable and in other situations a dependent variable." (Campbell-Jones, 1979:31).

The analysis of symbols through metaphors is not only justified as a language characteristic but also as an action itself. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) note, "our conceptual system, which is largely metaphorical, governs both how we think and how we act." The way we perceive things predicates the way we react, but often the use of metaphors is not conventional, therefore the change of the conceptual metaphor creates "crevices" in the action. In turn the action varies the conception; a new understanding forms a new practice. The new experience stabilizes a new perception. This

continual process reveals the continuity, as well as the discontinuity of meaning.

Although it is not easy to draw parallels between the monks and the lay people, due to the fact that the monks' world is an "isolated" one, there is a great deal of interaction with the secular world. Each year thousands of pilgrims visit the monasteries especially in summer time. The interaction between monks and laity, fundamentally alters the formers' life. This is another reason why monks' life will be the subject of a metaphor, through which I will try to describe the monastic life as "real".

In that process of gaining understanding "the outlandish or perpetual state of affairs will be terrestrialized i.e. construed against one's knowledge of the physical and empirical aspects of the actual world". (Levin 1988:131).

Approaching the monks' world through metaphors is justified on two counts. Firstly, the images and metaphors discussed here have been part of the Christian Church since its inception and before that, part of the Judaic tradition. Therefore in this thesis not only do I try to examine "how the monks have appropriated symbols and metaphors but also how these symbols and metaphors, used throughout the Church's history, may be understood by today's monks; how the intellectual and emotional appeal and power of these symbols and metaphors may be experienced in a contemporary context". (M. Iossifides, 1989:13).

The fact that the monastic phenomenon manifests itself

differently in different cultures cannot be ignored. The monks were not born in a monastery and even if we accept that the hardship of their life forms their personality in a particular way, we are obliged to examine how the forms and the classification of their previous secular life are reproduced into the monastery. It is also necessary to find out to what extent their practices, values and meanings resemble or differ from those of the broader society. And we do that to the extent that the culture is not arbitrary, "it denotes a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and toward life" (C. Geertz 1968:3).

A dispute concerning the secular and the divine

This study aims at locating the distinctive principles that make the monastic life appear and be in reality different from that of laity. More specifically, in the area of religion the distinction between the secular and the divine needs to be fixed on the base that the study of religious figures is, after all, the study of humans. Under this axiom a discourse concerning the monks springs out not from the study of the divine but basically from that of the secular. For, the divine is an abstract category which is mainly purported ontologically. Therefore to avoid the ossification

of this methodological convenient tool (the distinction between the divine and the secular) one is obliged to terrestrialize the first leg of this opposition. In other words to define divinity in relation to its earthly vehicles: the monks, the priests and even the laity.

This approach is somehow out of the granted of the Christian ideology. However, it is affirmed from Orthodox theology where in the face of Christ it unites two different substances into one entity. According to the Hagiorite monks Christ symbolizes this "inevitable" meeting of secular with the divine, therefore He is considered and called **Theantropos** (God and man at the same time).

Entering into a discourse concerning divinity does not necessarily mean attributing the divine exclusively to this vague "morpheme" called "God" (**Theos**). To my perception, there is a variety of graduations between God and man. Each graduation claims a share of the divine and secular in different proportions, representing the different steps of a ladder uniting heaven with earth. For example, God, Christ, the saints, the living saints, the hieromonks, the monks, the celibate priests, the lay priests and the laity.

It is essential to every theistic conception of God and that also includes monastics as representing an extreme case of religious human beings, that "it designates and precisely characterizes deity (divine) by the attributes spirit, reason, purpose, good will, supreme power, unity, selfhood. The "nature" of God is thus thought of by analogy with our

human nature of reason and personality; only, whereas in ourselves we are aware of this as qualified by restriction and limitation, as applied to God the attributes we use are "completed", i.e. thought as absolute and unqualified. Now all these attributes constitute clear and definite concepts: they can be grasped by the intellect; they can be analysed by thought; they even admit of definition. An object that can thus be thought conceptually may be termed rational. The nature of deity described in the attributes above mentioned is, then, a rational nature; and a religion which recognizes and maintains such a view of God is in so far a "rational" religion." (R. Otto, 1972:1)

The secular as an object of study constitutes for the ethnographer a complex, yet, a tangible category. In contrast, the divine as expressed in the sensitive area of religion is a more elusive matter to grasp, for it is by definition abstract. However, one is obliged to start from the general acknowledgment that the divine exists through the secular. To ignore that the monks communicate through the idioms of secular attitudes, is to ignore that they are born and reared into the secular world. Alternatively, to deny that the monks may also represent divinity is to deny that they abide by the rules of the monastic institutions.

Regardless of the final outcome of this thesis, my intention was not to show how secular the divine may be, but quite the opposite: How divine the secular may appear. The fact that the secular terrestrializes the divine is witnessed

by secular metaphors ascribed to divinity. Terms like Father (**Patir**), Son (**Ios**), used to portray the divine, embody a very lay legacy. None the less, the divine as presented by monks utilizes its own distinctive vocabulary. Terms like "**Kenosis**" (emptying), "**Perichorisis**" (interpenetration), are used to give another dimension in the interaction between monks and the divine and amongst the monks themselves.

In this regard, one can reasonably argue that the secular terrestrializes the divine as much as the divine transcends the secular. The main anthropological discrimination (secular, divine) used to define the distance between man and God is methodologically accurate. However, it is more precise to say that the distinction between man and monk-man in its native use, corresponds to the opposition between the lay-man (**Laikos**) and the spiritual-man (**Pneumatikos**). Respectively, the distinction between the divine and the secular in the frame of this research lies on the opposition between spiritual life and secular one.

Regarding the opposition above, if laity stand at one pole of the opposition between the secular and the divine, monks do not always stand at the other extreme. Not all monks of a monastery are called Pneumatikoi and further more, not all the Pneumatikoi are thought to be saints (Hagioi). Ideally divinity is identified with priesthood (Hierosini), but in practice this is not uniform.

The monks through lay mentions are not called anchorites nor are they called out-worldly individuals. The

most frequent title characterizing the monks is "**Kalogeros**", meaning nice old man. They are also called "**Hagioi anthropoi**", meaning divine men. This hagiotic terminology attributed to human beings (laity or monks), is used to ascribe excess goodness, innocence, gentleness and lack of ulterior motives.

Namely, the monks by being an actual evocation of the divine, insinuate its presence. Monasticism can be seen as a method which aims at covering the distance between two poles: The secular and the divine. Monasticism is an ascetic method through which the monk empties his thought from its secular content to reload it with another meaning. This meaning has an aesthetic value that makes the life of a monk different from that of a lay.

The monastic's spiritual life attracts immediately the eye of the observer. It has become visibly clear to me, after two months of fieldwork, that spiritual attitude alters the monks' male identity. However, spirituality is not a unity. Each monk "is another person, name, summons (klisi), character. The functional (liturgiki) community accepts everyone. Equality is not flattening -that would be a disaster (Archimandrite Vasileios, The Holy Mountain and the culture of our nation, Sacred Community, 1990:10).

As I have already mentioned into the monastery different monks convey through their attitudes, the "amphisemia" of the divine and secular in different proportions. For, not all the monks have the same education,

nor have they the same social background. Into the confines of the monastery a spiritual man may be a confessor, an Eldest or even just a simple monk. For reasons that I explain in chapter two (subheading: Athonite hesychasm, p 66), a spiritual monk is not an intellectual.

In this work I intend to view the monks as consisting a category of the "Laiko-pneumatikos", that is to say, lay and spiritual at the same time. Actually, spirituality will not be faced as a static category, but as an itinerary, as a way which has as a departure point the lay status and as a momentum the divine one.

As we shall see in chapters four and five the monks are on the move to the salvation (**sotiria**) of their soul. Thereafter the monkish life-style is subjected to the transcendence of the divine. For example, the monks are dressed in black habit, they grow beards, they work for the benefit of the pilgrims, they participate in the liturgies by chanting and praying, they are deprived from enjoyment and luxuries, they worship Christ and Godbirth (Panagia) but moreover, they insist on sexual abstinence.

This unusual way of being makes the monastic life-style appear in the eyes of the laity as, at least, peculiar. Pilgrims' comments concerning the hagiorite monks vary in contrasting ways. Some pilgrims describe them as exemplars and some other as half-mad or even boring. To modern Greeks, especially those who have not visited Mount Athos, the incorporation of males under a common roof -which presupposes

the unequivocal absence of female- is seen with suspicion. Jokes referring to the monks, assuming homosexuality, are a disgusting yet, very usual theme of laughter. Also, the press with its hostile attitude has contributed to the creation of this anti-monastic reputation (see Newspaper "Ethnos" 1987, 1991).

The First Approach

The bus from Thessaloniki arrived at Ouranoupolis at 9am. Ouranoupolis is the last secular village on the way to the Holy Mount. After this boundary, the monasteries of Mount Athos mushroom like little cottages thrown in the wood. When I entered the first boat from Ouranoupolis, a man, probably a policeman took my national identity card. It was given back to me from the police department of Daphne, where I paid 2000 drachmas (approximately six pounds) to get the stay permit (Diamonitirion) which lasts seven days. With it one can visit any of the twenty monasteries he wishes to.

From Ouranoupolis I took the boat to Daphne and from there another tiny boat that distributes the pilgrims to the monasteries of the west side of the peninsula. I got off the boat at the small harbour of L. monastery.

Each monastery has its own harbour called "skala" or "arsanas". I had to walk from the coast for forty-five minutes climbing up a hill to reach the monastery. The first thing which attracted my attention was a big yellow sign with

the following warning written in five languages, (Greek, English, German, French and Italian): "It is entirely forbidden: The entrance of the women, the approach of crafts without a special permit, the stay of persons without a stay permit. Any violation of the above involves serious penal sanctions" (Signed by The Sacred Community of Mount Athos).

I had already started subjecting myself to the mystic atmosphere of the S. monastery. When I passed through the main gate (approximately around 14.00), I was getting deeper and deeper into that feeling. The monastery however, looked deserted; I was expecting to see the monks but none of them was around. Finally, a young novice showed me the way to "Archodariki" (reception room). I sat down on one of the chairs to rest from the ascent. After five minutes a white-bearded monk appeared. He was very clean and quite handsome for his age. He welcomed me and asked me to sign in the visitors book. The visitors book is a big notebook where one has to write his name, the place of origin, date of birth, profession and destination.

While I was signing, the monk left me alone. He came back after a few minutes with a plate which contained a "loukoumi" (a small sweet), a glass of water and another small glass of "ouzo" (a very strong alcoholic drink). After the welcome procedure called "**tratarisma**" (treat) had finished, the monk sat opposite me and asked me: "**ap' ekso ercheste**". (Do you come from outside?) It took me a couple of seconds to understand what the monk meant by the word "**ekso**".

Usually in secular context, the use of the word ekso implies abroad, but in this case the monk meant outside Mount Athos; the secular world. I answered "yes" and I seized the opportunity to introduce myself.

I told him who I am and I explained the reason for my visit. I showed him a copy of the letter which I had sent them one month earlier asking for their permission to stay for three months in their monastery. He listened to me with patience, yet with reservation. After I had finished, he told me he did not know anything about my letter and he advised me to address myself to the "**epitropos**" who stands for the Abbot during his absence. He took the copy of my letter and he left.

When he came back after thirty minutes he led me in front of the epitropos' office. I knocked at the door and he replied "**Amin**" (hamen) instead of "**empros**" (come in) which is the usual treat. I stepped in, to see a man in his early thirties sitting behind his desk, holding the copy of my letter in his hands. I explained the situation, while he was scrutinizing me from head to toe. Finally he asked the reason of my visit. After I had explained myself, he told me that they had never received my letter. He also informed me that he had contacted the Abbot on the phone and the latter knew nothing about it as well.

In my effort to elicit an answer, the epitropos tried to convince me that to have a complete picture of Mount Athos, it would be convenient to visit not only one, but all

the monasteries. Although, I tried to explain the importance of studying one monastic community, he did not seem to understand my point. While my arguments were becoming stronger, he told me that the monastery is very small, and that they cannot afford to give me a quiet place to work because during summer time the number of the pilgrims overly increases.

None the less and while our conversation was coming to an end, he told me that it would be helpful if I had some references from somebody who knows me and is known by the monks. For example, somebody from the theology department of either the Universities of Athens or Thessaloniki. Of course, I left his office deeply disappointed.

The next six days I visited four different monasteries, where the monks offered me their hospitality but they refused in the same gentle way to accept me for a longer period. Therefore I decided to follow the advice of the epitropos. Eventually, I. Foundoulis, Professor of the theology department of University of Thessaloniki (Aristotelion), gave the solution to my problem. I explained the detailed project of my thesis and he, as an academic, understood it and provided me all the means needed for my acceptance in Mount Athos. As a theologian Dr Foundoulis is well known to the monks, therefore his reference helped me appear less stranger (**ksenos**) to their eyes.

CHAPTER 2

Background socio-religious history of early Eastern Christianity

Introduction.

The issues raised in this chapter emerge from the fieldwork itself. The Orthodox monastic culture embodies the idiosyncrasy of its history. Therefore, historico-ecclesiastical data concerning early Christianity will be presented with the goal to familiarize the reader with the object of this research. Also, this chapter aims at elucidating all the necessary parameters concerning monasticism, thus helping toward a better understanding of the problematic upon which the writing of this work stand. Orthodox monasticism however, as an object of research, involves a range of different issues which are impossible to be covered within the limits of just one M.A thesis.

The beginning of a discourse concerning hagiorite monasticism is based upon two evident observations. Firstly, the monasteries of Mount Athos are mono-gender communities; communities consisting of males only. The second observation is that monastic life is highly ritualistic. The monks spend at least one third of their day participating in the services taking place into the Church. These two distinct observations reveal, explain and prove, at an introductory level, that the daily life of a monk in the monastery differs

from that of a lay person.

"The monks depart from the society of the laity, the secular world, to create a community able to defend not only the Christian morals and values, but also, the salvation of the soul through the winning of self" (Tsausis 1984:583). The monastic expression "withdraw the in-worldly" (**engatalipo ta en-cosmia**)", illuminates the prerequisite of monasticism: "**anhoritism**", originating from the Greek word "**anachorisis**", meaning departure. Under this consideration, monastic life and its ascetic context could be considered following Weber's terminology, slightly altered by Dumont, as "world-renouncing" asceticism and the monks as "other-worldly" individuals.

The use of imagistic and metaphorical notions of "leaving" society is common to many religious traditions, yet, this should not be perceived as a literal description. For example, terms which literally describe a spatial or geographical change are said to refer more properly to a psychological or spiritual one. The monks' "otherness" is often justified by the opposition between "inside" (**mesa**) and "outside" (**ekso**) the world. The question I was asked when I first visited a monastery; "do you come from the world", or "do you come from outside", proves this argument.

However, the hagiorite monks also say: "It is not the place, but the way that makes the difference", (**den einai o topos alla o tropos**) (Archimandrite Ioannikeios, 1991:143). One of the most ancient names for Christianity is simply the

"Way". In the Acts of the Apostle we read: "About that time, there arose no little stir concerning the **Way**" (19:23), and also, "a rather accurate knowledge of the **Way**" (24:22). The monks -even today- do not simply proclaim a message but rather a method; a way of being, a life-style which is, by necessity, in opposition to that of a lay life-style and, within the religious framework, more highly valued (Edmunds, 1986:118).

Monasticism as a distinct life-style was incorporated into the frame of the Christian Church in an attempt to realize to the full the moral values of the Christian religion (Matzaridis, 1985:81). Due to that, monastics present themselves as religious "exemplars" (Weber, 1977a:285), because as they say, "**dialexame ton discolo dromo gia tin sotiria**", meaning "we have chosen the difficult way to salvation".

Sexual abstinence and fertility.

The denial of a worldly life according to the monks leads to the salvation of the soul promising eternal life after death. The monks say: "**die now in order to live after**". Death promises divine fertility. The hieromonk Symeon Grigoriatis writes: "as an Orthodox monk I believe in the fertility of zero" (op.cit.:10).

The limits between life and death in monastic life are indiscernible. Leach (1961) has outlined what is essentially

a sophistication of the argument about the way in which religious ideology uses the promise of rebirth to negate the finality of death. Also, Bloch and Parry in their book, "Death and the regeneration of life" (1982), show that sexuality, as the source of human procreation, is often an ambiguous symbol seen as the source of death and opposed to non-human fertility. In other words, the fecundity or productiveness of that resource which is culturally conceived as vital to the social order (Bloch and Parry op.cit.:7) is often set in opposition to human sexuality and reproduction. Celibacy promises divine fertility. It promises both continuity without the death of the individual and a return to humankind's true nature (**pragmatiki fisi**). Within the Christian tradition the final goal is the eternal life after death.

Death as implied in the story of the fallen came to be the result of sex crime. More specifically it was the woman in the fatal face of Eve that enticed Adam to crime. Therefore the abstinence from sexual intercourse was regarded as promising fertility and continuity. This conception of fertility was strongly espoused particularly during the first few centuries after Christ's death when Christians, as part of the millenarian movement, awaited the imminent Second Coming of Christ and sought to prepare themselves physically and spiritually for this event.

Such beliefs, as Pagels (1988:11-13) shows, were revolutionary. Because although the myth of the Beginning

had been invoked by the Jews to support their marriage practices, Jesus' teachings challenged this reading of Genesis. Not only did he preach against divorce but also against marriage (Matthew 19:1-12). After Christ, Paul took the teachings even further. Although he admits that marriage is not a sin, he none the less sees it as a solution for those too weak to battle against their sexual desires (Pagels op.cit.:17). However, Bottomley (1979:1-3) suggests that such teachings may have been in reaction to the Roman world which increasingly emphasized the division of the body and the soul. This stand-point is also adopted by hieromonk Symeon Grigoriatis; he insists that this division does not exist into the frame of the Eastern Church (op.cit.:32).

Christianity was influenced by the Judaic thought in which body and soul constituted the image of God. Thus, though Paul did preach celibacy, he did not preach against the body (Bottomley op.cit.:43). After all the Eucharist and the Incarnation, the enfleshing of God were central to the Christian doctrines. It was only during the Renaissance when attention was diverted from the social body to the individual, that the body was divorced from the spirit and became an object of contemplation (Bottomley op.cit.:163).

One century later, the immanence of the Second Coming had waned. Christians began to protest more rigorously against the radical asceticism (Pagels op.cit.:21-26). Thus, when Clement of Alexandria spoke against those celibates who boasted they understood the gospel better than anyone else,

he actually spoke for the majority of Christians who were more concerned to accommodate themselves to ordinary social structures than to challenge them. Clement on the other hand reinterpreted Genesis, rejecting the idea that Adam and Eve's primary sin was to engage in sexual intercourse. To him sexual intercourse was part of God's original creation and those who engaged themselves in procreation were cooperating with God.

The Original Sin, however, lays not in sexual intercourse, as Augustine was later to argue (Sherrard 1976:8-11, also Bottomley op.cit.:81-96) but in disobeying God's commandment, not to eat from the tree of knowledge, a view supported by the Orthodox Church (Ware 1984:227-230). According to the Eastern Church we are not damned by original sin; our actions, including intercourse are not in themselves wrong. What is wrong is the manner in which we are engaged in those actions, something which brings us back to the "way". Underlying this conception of human existence is the belief that as humans we are responsible for our own actions; that like Adam and Eve we can choose between good and evil. In this fallen condition it is true that human will becomes weakened and the intellect clouded, making the path of sin easier to be followed. Yet, it is also true that humans can choose good over evil thus once again finding their true nature in God. It remained however, that even Clement regarded marriage as second best to celibacy (Sherrard op.cit.:6-7). However, celibacy is immediately linked with

the idea of single-mindedness which consisted the basic principal of the anchorite and later on monastic ideal.

The idea of single-mindedness

Lawrence C.H, in his book, Medieval Monasticism (1984) writes: "The word monk itself derives from the Greek word **monos**, meaning alone. Monks were people who had withdrawn from society to pursue the spiritual life of solitude. As Jerome, one of the early Western converts to the monastic life, wrote to another convert, Paulinus of Nola, in the year 395, "If you wish to perform the office of a priest, live in cities and townships, and make the salvation of others the gain of your soul. But if you desire to be what is called a monk, that is a solitary, what are you doing in cities, which are after all the dwelling places not of solitaries but of the many?". (Longman, London, 1984, p 1, quoting Jerome , Epistle 14).

Despite Jerome's conception of what it is to be a monk, S. Collins argues, based on recent scholarship on the subject of translation in and between Hebrew, Syriac, and Greek, that the meaning of the Greek word **monachos**, from which Latin **monachus** and English **monk** are derived, is not "alone" but "single" in the ordinary sense of "unmarried". Yet, he continues: "naturally, there is an immediate -though not logically necessary- connection between the social status of singleness and the idea of the non-sexual, chaste life-

style.

In the history of Christian asceticism, as we saw, the phenomenon of women and later on men, living together in urban settings, consecrating themselves to a life of celibacy is very early indeed (third century); The development of this in Syria, where people called (in Greek) **monachoi** came together both physically and spiritually in a **covenant** (Qyama), certainly predates the Heremitism of the Egyptian desert in the 3rd and 4th centuries". (Steven Collins, 1988:107).

S. Collins also argues that in English, the word "celibate" tends to denote directly the fact of chastity. The Latin etymology of the word "**coelebs**", suggests only the status of being unmarried; and thus in French, to describe a man or a women as "un(e)celibataire" is only to say that he or she is unmarried without any farther suggestions about his or her private life.

In the Greek context the words used to describe a person as a celibate, are more complicated; there are actually two words used for that purpose, "**a-gamos**" and "**parthenos**". The first one "a-gamos" declares the persons social status. It derives from the word "gamos", meaning marriage. The negative prefix "a" (=un) has been added; thus the word means unmarried, (see N. Kouhtsoglou, S. Georgakopoulou, Dictionary of Greek language, 1961:5). To characterize somebody as agamos, means you are making a comment on his social status rather than talking about

his/her chastity, or his/her private life.

The second word, "parthenos", literally means virgin, yet, it has three different usages. In the same dictionary (op.cit.:1472), we read; parthenos, meaning man or girl, who though grown up, has not copulated yet with a woman or a man. Also parthenos, meaning incorruptible, (metaphorically for the wood, means untouched or intact), and finally parthenos, meaning, Godbirth (= **Theotokos**). There is also the word "**parthenia**" originating from the word parthenos which means either virginity, when it refers to a bodily quality, or chastity when it refers to a psychic one. It is important to mention that the monks make use of the word "parthenos", when emphasizing on the psychic virtue of the person.

There are also two more terms referring to a man´s social status . The first is "**anipandros**" which also means un-married. The second is "**eleutheros**", meaning "free". Fundamentally, what defines a monk, is basically the fact of remaining unmarried, or leaving the marital state, for the life of consecrated celibacy. From a sociological point of view, obviously enough, religious figures do not leave society, but merely exchange one social position for another; Often indeed, toward a much more conspicuous and involved one. This view is confirmed by my experience in both the monasteries I have visited. The monks´ participation in the Liturgies and in the work comprise a very accurate proof of this argument.

In all traditions, what P. Brown has described in the

early Christian (Syrian) context as the "ritual of dissociation" produced by asceticism and other things, has the effect of creating and maintaining a new social role rather than abandoning all such roles". (S. Collins op. cit p 106).

Based on that belief, our analysis concerning the monks' singleness, could be paralleled with man's pre-marital autonomous identity, that is to say as a lay, possibly as "**palicari**", where the person leaves his life without commitments of marital life and he blends his life with heroic characteristics (Papataxiarchis, Notion of the person in Aegean Greek fiction, paper submitted in L.S.E).

Yet, the passage from the lay level to the divine one is quite risky, because a monk has devoted himself to God, under extremely heavy vows. The monk is single-minded. This helps him avoid the multiplicity of ordinary life and concentrate on his main task, which is his personal union with God. This inner unity and the un-destructive character of his celibacy makes him perfect, like Christ who was an adult, male, but unmarried Jew. These thoughts were confirmed both in a conversation I had with Father T. in L. monastery and with Father I. in A. monastery. Father T. said to me: "we follow exactly the path, that Christ our Lord has indicated to us". And Father I. added: "we are called, monachoi (alone), but as you see we are not monachoi, there are thirty-two monks in this monastery". Therefore the monks' singleness is immediately connected with the ideal of

"self-sufficiency". Something which is proved -as we shall see further on- from both the values and the activities governing and organizing their lives.

The formation of the institution of the Church

According to the ancient Church beliefs, people's aim through life, should be an interior rather than an exterior wondering. It is at the end of the 3rd century that a flow toward the desert emerges. That occurs within the sense of Christian Church. Soon this flow would expand to become the beginning of the monastic life. (Christou 1987:29).

Nevertheless this life-style was formed into the frame of the Christian Church in an attempt to push to its extreme the moral values of the Christian religion (Matzaridis, 1985:81). The formation of monasticism overlaps with the early formation of the Church. The creation of the first Christian communities followed the example of the Judaic synagogues of dispersion. Although these new Christian communities were independent, they would keep their ties with the initial one, that of Jerusalem (Weber, 1965). In the early Christian communities the use of the word Church (ecclesia) and community were identical, for, communities started as gatherings of believers.

Common beliefs, therefore, functioned as the uniting link. Matzaridis (1985) argues that the constitutional apprehension of Church derives from the local (coinobetic)

use of it (op.cit.:47). In Paul's epistles, in the Acts of apostles, and in John's Apocalypses we find the word Church used both in singular and plural to specify exclusively religious communities and their worshipping gatherings (M. Siotou, "I enotis tis apostolikis ecclesias kai i ermineia ton hagion grafon" 1973:44-45, also Zizioula, "i enotis tis ecclesias en ti theia eucharistia kai to episkopo kata tous tris protous aionas" 1965:29-30).

Matzaridis in opposition to Troeltsch, claims that the Church did not appeared as "complexio oppositorum", nor was there a second phase in the historical development of Christianity which succeeded the initial one (op.cit.:49). However, it is clear that the toleration of Christianity starts with the dominance of the Byzantine Empire.

The form of the Church takes its diocenean characteristics following the paths of a social organization (Ostrogorsky, 1969, also Meyendorff, 1982). There is a consensus, in between various scholars, concerning the issue of Church's identification with the notion of (Holy) Eucharist (Matzaridou, "Koinoniologiki theorisis tis enotitos tis ekklisias kai tou dogmatos" 1975:64).

As the monastic "movement" grew from the third century onwards, so did the influence of the religious in society (Brown 1973). Therefore measures had to be taken to circumscribe the movement within the boundaries of diocesan authority.

The link between the Church ecclesiastics and the

monasteries was provided by the **Hegoumenos** (Abbot). In the Eastern Orthodoxy few monks were or are ordained. Those that are ordained become in essence priest-monks and they are called **Hieromonachi**. Often the Hegoumenos and Hieromonachos are the same single person combining the role of high monk and consecrated priest. These men are needed in the monastery to perform the Eucharist and other sacraments.

Yet, unless ordained, the monks are not part of the Church hierarchy. In their dependence upon the clergy the monastics closely resemble the laity. Yet, monks have the potential to become part of the Church hierarchy; Indeed throughout Byzantine history bishops were often recruited from monasteries. As bishops however, forced by the nature of their position to act within the world, their dedication to God took another, more worldly aspect.

The Council of Chalcedon in 431 (the fourth Ecumenical Council) decreed that monks should devote themselves to prayer and fasting and should not seek to intervene in ecclesiastical or political affairs. Though solitaries were beyond direct imperial control, limits were set to their numbers and their movements restricted by placing them under the control of a parent monastery. Episcopical consent, dedication and blessing was decreed necessary for the founding of a new monastery. All the monasteries were placed under the jurisdiction of the bishops unless they were under direct Patriarchal or imperial control. The monasteries of Mount Athos were granted autonomy, though they still owed

allegiance to the Patriarch.

The Early Church and Byzantium

The toleration of Christianity in Europe starts in ancient Byzantium on 313 AD with Emperor Constantine. In the East the ecclesiastical organization became an important part of the administration of the Empire. The Patriarch of Constantinople ranked next to the Emperor, but he was responsible for the gathering of the Ecumenical Councils (Synod). The councils were authorized for the clarification of dogma. In this regard, the councils represented the whole body of the Church. It was the Emperor's authority to chose the Patriarch from the three candidates submitted by the Sacred Synod, consisted of the assembly of all archbishops and metropolitans. It was him who implemented the policies and dictated the Church. Thus, the secular and religious spheres were deeply intertwined. They created an organic whole, an empire blessed by God, whose representative was the Emperor (and the Patriarch symbolizing the unification of the secular and the divine) and whose court was a copy of the Father's court in Heaven (see Ostrogorsky, 1969. Also Meyendorff, 1982).

Yet, the Emperor had not complete control. Although he had the supervision of the Church he had no power at all over the content of the faith (the dogma). Moreover, he was not considered to be a divine being opposite to the Roman

Emperors. Christ, according to the orthodox dogma, is the only King (Meyendorff 1982:14). That meant, that it was the Emperor's post, not the person, representing God. The Emperor was coronated (crowned) by the Patriarch and he was acclaimed by the representatives of the Senate, the army and the people. He was an autocrat, the sole interpreter and implementor of the Law, but simultaneously he was subjected to it.

In the West, the Roman Empire collapsed with the sack of Rome in 410 effecting an almost total breakdown of law, education, trade, banking and communications. The Church, the most important institution to survive, was thus the obvious heir to Rome (Bottomley, 1979:97), hence increasingly called upon to act as both spiritual and secular leader. Thus, the Pope was the person to carry on the tradition according to which the Emperor was the earthly God's representative. This differentiation reflects upon the opposition of the doctrine between the Eastern and the Western Church (see Orthodoxy and Papacy, 1983:29-39).

In the Western tradition of the Church, Christ is the "**archiereas**" (head-priest) in Heaven and the Pope on Earth, whereas in the Eastern one, Christ is "archiereas" both in Heaven and on Earth (Runciman, Byzantine style and civilization, 1987:14-16; Meyendorff, op.cit.:51).

In the west the Pope established a monolithic, highly organized structure with pronounced legalistic tendencies, not only in organizational matters but also in the definition

of faith. Therefore in the Western Church due to the way the Pope organized and elucidated the doctrine of faith and belief "there was no room for vague, ill-defined mysteries" (Iassifides op.cit.:24).

By contrast to the East, invasions never managed to penetrate into the heart of the administrative and religious world of Byzantium. Schools of higher education flourished. The clergy, were specifically trained to perform the mysteries of the Church, were discouraged from actively involving themselves into secular affairs, though they often did. Lay intellectuals however, could and did involve themselves in theological debates. Actually the theologians represented the ideal scholars of that period and therefore theology was the ideal discipline (see for example, The life of Hagios Nickolaos Kavasilas). Thus, the great division between laity and clergy in the East was less emphatic than that developed in the West.

It is clear even today that these historic differences profoundly influenced the philosophical foundations of the Eastern Church. After the schism the Orthodox Dogma declared its particularity as opposed to the Western Church and its dogma as represented by the Pope. The Orthodox were inclined towards mysticism. Their attitude towards doctrine was apophatic, believing that God cannot be conceived by the human mind. Something which is better revealed in the great "hesychastic" controversy which arose between the Hesychasts and the Barlaamists (next subheading). Both Western and

Eastern traditions believed that deification, as realized by the God-man Christ, is the goal of human existence. Yet, for the Orthodox, deification was recognized as a doctrine that could not be reduced to rational categories but rather had to be experienced.

The Orthodox Church held and still holds that no institution or external authority, including the Church, stands between person and God. Yet, this is not absolutely correct because the Spiritual Fathers were the mediators between lay people and God; While the clarity of the dogma was kept through them because they were exercising God's grace. The authority of the Orthodox Church did not suppress the authority of the "charismatic" leaders, (the monastics, the holy persons, the saints), as long as they understood their leadership within the context of the sacramental communion of the Church, a sacrament which could only be granted by a clergyman consecrated by a bishop. Actually it was through the Church that their Holiness was recognized. That is to say there was no division between the lay Priests and the monastics. E. Troeltsch (Gesammelte Schriften, Vol I. p 94) claims that the development of the Christian Church created a chasm between it and the people reflecting the difference between strict Christians (anchorites) and the laities. Yet, monasticism and the worldly Church managed to fill this gap by supporting one another, exactly because they both were parts of the one and only Church of Christ (Matzaridis, Sociology of Christianity, 1985:81-84).

For, central to Orthodox theology is the liturgy and it is only through the liturgy (see Saint N Kavasilas The interpretation of the Sacred Liturgy, 1991), that the prophetic and charismatic role of the Orthodox monastics is ultimately legitimated, or allowed to exist. Thus, Eastern Christianity did not affirm the primacy of grace and the power of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The relationship between the institutional Church and the charismatic leadership, did not remain unresolved because the first incorporated the second by idealizing them. The Orthodox tradition of Sainthood is full of celibate and anchorite monks. The Byzantine Church never bound itself to an exhaustive code of ecclesiastical laws. Even the institutional Church recognized the possibility that the norms could be upheld without applying the law but by exercising mercy. This was identified as "ikonomia", which was not simply an exception of established rules but an act imitating God's love and implied repentance on the part of the sinner (Meyendorff op.cit.:34-35; Hammond, 1956:21).

Byzantine theology gave greater credit to Saints or Prophets as authorities in the field of theology than the Latin West did. Actually, the terms Saint and anchorite are up to a great extent identical. This charismatic mysticism, however, sometimes could lead, at its extreme expression, to a denial of the sacraments and thus, a denial of the institutional Church (Meyendorff op.cit:33, 197-215).

In 1054 AD the contrast in beliefs and doctrine, added

to social and political tensions between the East and West, leading to what is called the Great Schism. Arnakis (1952:246) the well known dictum of Lucas Notaras, the chief councillor of the last Byzantine Emperor: "It is preferable for us to see the Turkish turban in the midst of the City rather than the tiara of the Latin Cardinal", a statement which foretold the events to come too accurately. This proves that, although at a national level there is an opposition between the Greeks and the Turks, on a religious level this opposition exists between the Catholic and the Orthodox Church. The dream of a unified Christendom centred in Constantinple was never to be realized.

Church and Monasticism During the Turkish Occupation and after the Liberation

During the occupation the Ottomans, in their effort to impose authority, they used and practiced an indirect ruling governmental system whereby the Orthodox Church was the main link between the Sultan and his Greek subjects. Due to the non-existence of political authority from the side of the subjects, the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Orthodox Church which -as I have already mentioned- ranked next to the Emperor took over. It is in this regard that even today the priests are called "**Despotis**" (despot), a title (office) borrowed from the politics by the ecclesiastics who were suppose to substitute for their authority during the

occupation.

This substitution on behalf of the Church assumed a high degree of autonomy in religious and cultural matters which by the time acquired a large number of political functions. In the time the Patriarch became not only a spiritual leader but also the enthnarch of the enslaved Greek nation. On the other hand his supreme power had been supported by a financial backing provided by the Orthodox Phanariote Greeks who sought to exploit and protect their economic and political interests in Constantinple through the Church's spiritual and political influence.

However, local bishops, moreover simple priests and monastics, kept their distance from all religious powerful posts in order to keep themselves apart from secular manners. During the first years of the occupation monasteries were used as places of refuge and prayer. The coenobitic monastic communities functioned as communal farms. Due to the difficulty of practicing the Orthodox beliefs freely, libraries and the knowledge gained during the Byzantine period was put aside or ignored. In this process of non-intellectual approach of the divine contributed the western influences amongst the wealthy Orthodox in Constantinple which seemed to be despised especially by the hagiorite monks.

According to Runciman (1968), during this period the monks like the local clergy lost their taste for learning. It is obvious that Runciman ignores the hesychastic tradition

(see next sub-heading), as well as, the "mystic" one which flourished in Mount Athos and in Phanari respectively composing the essence of the Orthodox Church. It is true however, that monastics sought to maintain religious purity and this persistence led, on the one hand to their seclusion and on the other, to an opposition against the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

In 1821 the revolution for independence broke out. It was motivated from some of the Orthodox Phanariote Greeks, the Danube principalities and the Greeks living in Western Europe. The revolution coincided with the interests of the artisans and merchants of Western Europe who, at the same period expanded their trade. The Western-trained intelligentsia facing difficulties during the 18th century took also advantage of the increasingly economic position of the peasants who were under the yoke of local landlords and gave an impetus for a change toward nationalistic directions. By doing this they propagated Western cultural ideas which had been dominated by the anti-Western orientation of the Orthodox Church.

The Church and most of the Phanariotes but mainly the landowners were ambivalent concerning this revolution. Actually they were hostile to the idea of over-throwing Ottoman rule, not only because they feared a possible failure of the revolution, but also because they did not wish to lose their privileges within the existing Empire. Finally, they joined and supported the rebels only when they were convinced

that the movement was irreversible.

Mouzelis (1978:189) suggests that "the weak role taken by the high clergy coupled with the anti-clerical views of the western influence intelligentsia account for the relative ease with which the political elite of the new nation-state were able to establish the autonomy of the autochthonos Greek Church vis-a-vis its traditional head, the Patriarch of Constantinple. In this manner, the religious authorities were placed under the direct control of the State, a subordinate position within which the Church still finds itself today." This may account, in part, for the Church's often tacit, sometimes explicit, support of various oppressive regimes, often reinforcing the anti-clerical feelings amongst Greeks. Yet, it remains true that despite this anti-clerical feeling, Orthodox local priesthood had an energetic role in the revolution. It is also true that the language, possibly the most important tool of a nation's identity, was kept alive by the intensive care of the clergy; And it is in this regard that even today religion and nationalism are closely linked. It is well known that to be a Greek is to be Orthodox and the opposite: to be Orthodox means to be Greek. (Loisos 1981:35)

The Athonite Hesychasm: An interesting conflict

Although, during the Byzantine period monastics functioned within the frame of the Eastern Church, the hagiorite

monasticism appears to develop in the periphery of the Byzantine Empire. Thus, by referring to the hesychast controversy it is because it has, in my opinion, the potential to illustrate two main issues. Firstly, the distinction between Eastern and Western Christianity and secondly, the opposition between monastics and ecclesiastical hierarchy.

According to the hagiorite monks the soul (**psichi**) of a man consists of three different qualities: **Logiki, Noera** and **Zotiki**. Each of these three qualities serve to fulfil a different human need. Logiki is for thinking, Noera is for feeling and Zotiki is for moving. Each quality rules a different part of the human body. For example, Logiki lies in the brain, Noera in the heart and Zotiki in the genitals organs. Human attitudes can be explained in reference to one of these qualities. According to the monks an intellectual person has developed the first quality, whereas a masculine man has developed the third one. In their belief these three qualities should grow equally and proportionally although the third is less appreciated.

Based on this belief the monks insist that Western Christianity has been founded on an emphasis to the first quality. The statement, "the Westerners ignore Noera" (**i ditiki agnoun tin Noera**), is often cited as a discrimination of the difference between the Western and the Eastern conception of Christianity.

Eastern monasticism was developed in the desert or in

the mountains. The opposition between the city and the desert implies the distinction between the secular (political or ecclesiastical) authority and the divine one. All the anchorites (hermits or monastics) inspired respect and to avoided the consolidation of Church with the state, just because they were not involved with what we call worldly matters. Monasticism was based upon the new testament, as opposed to the old testament which equated the "chosen people" with the nation and finally with the state (Meyendorff op.cit.:22).

The theological tradition of Orthodox monastic life is known as "**Hesychasm**" (Meyendorff, 1956:9). In the first half of the 14th Century, Mount Athos and Thessaloniki were the dominant religious centres of Orthodoxy in the Balkans. It was therefore to be expected that it should be here that the great religious dispute should break out between the Hesychast monks, adherents of the "prayer of the heart", and the Barlaamists, who opposed them.

The Hesychast monks of Mount Athos, with Gregory Palamas, later Bishop of Thessaloniki, at their head, fought vigorously and passionately and finally succeeded in imposing their theological viewpoint regarding the divine substance across the entire Byzantine Empire (Dorotheos Monachos, Vol 1, 1986:66-77).

According to Philotheus Kokkinos, Gregory pursued the Hesychast life in various monastic centres on the Holy Mountain, as well as on the nearby mountain of Beroea. When

the Calabrian monk Barlaam began a campaign against the Hesychasts, attacking them as heretics, as Messalians (**omfalopsychi**), Gregory defended them and was henceforth involved in boiling debates.

Barlaam's opinion concerning the hesychastic tradition can be epitomized in his following letter: "I had been introduced by them (the monks) to outrageous and queer teachings, products of seduced belief and unbridled imagination, that a respectable man with mind and preliminary thought find hard to accept. They gave me their teachings about the exciting flingings of the spirit and the soul, the transactions of devils with the soul, the differences between white and red lights in the body, the imaginary intakes and extraction of breath from the nostrils, ..., and finally, about the joining of Lord with the soul in the inside of the navel, with a tangible way and with full certainty of heart...(Lettre V. a Ignace, Ed G. Schiro, dans Barlaam Calabro, Epistole Greche, Palerme, 1954:323-324. Quote from Jean Meyendorff 1983 (1959):111).

About 1341 the superiors and principal monks of Athos came out in Gregory's support with the document called the "Hagiorite Tome". The Council of St. Sophia, under the presidency of the Emperor, condemned Barlaam (1341). Gregory was still to face strange and sudden changes of fortune. He was imprisoned, excommunicated, but later raised to the Archbishopric of Thessaloniki; He was then captured by Turkish corsairs and spent a year in custody. In 1368 his

doctrine was declared the official teaching of the Byzantine Church.

Gregory did not discuss the "Jesus Prayer" (Christ have mercy on me, etc) specifically as a topic of its own, but it is taken for granted in almost all his writings, since he was replying to attacks directly aimed against him. The most original and controversial aspect of his theology was his understanding of the "uncreated light" and his distinction between the divine essence and the divine energies. It was the Jesus prayer that led Gregory to develop these ideas, since the vision of the divine light was for Gregory the normal goal of Hesychast Prayer and of the invocation of the name of Christ. It was in connection with these views of his on the uncreated light that violent conflict developed. I shall not embark on this controversy, for I am not in a position to elaborate any further.

The Jesus Prayer was the cause of the Palamite controversy and of the animosity created between Greeks and Latins. This stream of simple and tender devotion expanded in the 14th century into an estuary of hostile quarrels. Monks who had learnt to contemplate in peace launched into battle about the intellectual concepts in which their contemplation was expressed.

Emerging from this conflict there is a book called Century of Kallistos and Ignatius Xanthopoulos (PG 147, cols. 636-812; English translation - from the Russian - in Kadloubovsky and Palmer, Writings from the Philokalia on the

Prayer of the Heart, pp. 164-270). The Century constitutes a complete rule of life for the Hesychast. The centre of this life is the Jesus Prayer. Regarding the technique, the Century recommends the formula "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.". What is more important is that the Century inserts the Jesus Prayer into the general ascetic context. It lays down as a fundamental principle that there can be no **hesychia** without Orthodox faith and good works; the danger of quietism is thus eliminated. Next come precise practical directions: about silence, the reading of scripture, nightly vigils, prostrations (300 a day), fasting (a diet of dry vegetables, bread and water; wine is sometimes allowed), communion "with a pure heart", psalmody for those who are not yet capable of concentrating on the Jesus Prayer. Throughout these detailed recommendations the spiritual goal is always kept in view. The aim is to attain a state in which the soul devoted to the Jesus Prayer can say, "I am wounded with love" (see Kallistos Ware, The Jesus Prayer: a monk of the Eastern Church, 1987:60-64).

The tradition of the Jesus Prayer is kept alive in Mount Athos. It is used as a mean of identifying the difference between the secular and the monastic world, as well as the difference between the Ecclesiastical Church and the monastics and, finally the difference between the Western and the Eastern perception of Christianity. The distinction between the "heart" (**Kardia**) and "mind" (**mialo**), is thus used to illuminate this controversy between the two main branches

of Christianity. The hieromonk Symeon Grigoriatis writes: "The Western culture objectifies God and creation, instead of cultivating knowledge through personal love and amplitude of heart. Its scientific knowledge, however successful and useful it may be, is dispersed information without a unifying axis, for there is no awareness that the real dimension of man and nature is theological. This scientific knowledge is of a relative significance and fills man with pride, it frustrates him, it makes him boring for it castrates his soul" (Hieromonk Symeon Grigoriatis, 1983:24-25).

In chapter four of this thesis, concerning the role and the meaning of Church, I intend to present further elongations of the palamite conception of the divine involving the human body.

The last quote of Grigoriatis, however, exemplifies why the monks often discouraged me from continuing the study of monasticism for, according to their perception, this topic cannot be approached by the use of my scientific logical methods. To explain this in detail, monks believe that if one is to understand the monkish experience must first surrender his "in-worldly" manners and thoughts and dedicate himself mentally and bodily to God. Otherwise there is no chance to conceive the essence of monastic life. Empiricism and the methods of social science are not considered adequate to comprehend the monks. In other words initiation plus inward participation is the necessary procedure for such an achievement.

Monasticism in the East

Monasticism in the East as well as in the West has its roots in the desert of Egypt (Archimandrite Placide Deseille, L' Evangile au desert: Brief history of monasticism, Greek Edition "Tinos", pp 19-35). During the persecution of the third century many Christians, men and women, sought refuge in the wilderness. Although, Christianity dominated officially in the Byzantine Empire and martyrdom was no longer a means of achieving grace, places of solitude and safety were thought of as shelters from worldly pleasures providing an appropriate alternative for the subjection of the body and mind to the harsh demands of ascetic discipline. It is true however, that the desert has also been regarded as the devil's place, therefore it presented the greatest challenge to the soul (see next chapter).

Monasticism has taken three chief forms (Bishop K. Ware, 985:45-48, also Cambridge Medieval History Vol IV part II, The Byzantine Empire, p 165-184; Hammond, 1956:79:90). The first form consists of the hermits, people leading solitary lives in huts or caves. Their historic model is Saint Antony of Egypt (251-356). Nowadays the number of the hermit monks has been reduced yet, there are still quite a few living in the so called desert of Mount Athos. Actually there are two kinds of monks living the life of the hermit; The first kind are the confirmed ones; Monks who decided to

dedicate themselves to even more strict asceticism. They exercise a specific retreat called "the prayer of the heart" (Bishop Kallistos Ware, 1987:53-64). The second kind of hermits consists of monks who used to live with a companion of two or three monks but due to the decline of the recent decades have been left alone. These monks recede in establishments of sovereign monasteries. There is also a third un-classified kind of hermits in Mount Athos who do not have a permanent residence, called "**planites**" monks (Dorotheos Monachos, Holy Mount, Vol II, 1986:66). This third kind is not very respected from the rest of the monks who live in Mount Athos establishments. Some of them have not been tonsured, or have been sent away from a monastery classified as inconvenient (Christou, The Holy Mount, 1987:344).

The second form of monasticism is the communal life. This style was initiated by Saint Pachomious of Egypt (286-346) who established the first coenobium. The coenobitic monastery was a type of school, a training ground to guide and discipline its members toward the greater spiritual life of the hermit. This type of monasticism is mostly encouraged in Mount Athos.

Conversely, Saint Basil (c. 329-379), regarded solitary withdrawal as spiritually narrowing and selfish since it could not put into practice the Christian teaching of brotherly love. Christians, to be truly such, must live together. Thus, the coenobitic life required that men

practice the virtues of patience, humility, modesty. The life of the monks of a coenobitic monastery revolves around liturgy and "diakonima" (work), (Sherrard, Athos: the mountain of silence, 1960:36).

The third monastic form is the idiorythmic (one who follows its own rhythm). This system appeared in the late 14th century. Monks cook and eat in their cells either alone or in small groups. The participation in the liturgy is not as strict as in the coenobitic monasteries. The monks also retain use of their private property.

These types of monasticism have never served as a point of contention within the monastic tradition. Whether the individual's search for God takes place in solitude or through the subordination of self to the monastic community is of no great importance (Nicol, Meteora: the rock monasteries of Thessaly, 1963:24). Yet, the change of system from coenobitic to idiorythmic is strictly prohibited (see Constitution of Mount Athos, Article 85), whereas the opposite is encouraged.

Furthermore, in Orthodox monasticism, there are no orders such as in Western Christianity. "No religious orders exempt from that jurisdiction [the jurisdiction of local bishops] ever developed in the East, as they did in medieval West. The thought of St. Basil, with its insistence on the unity of the Church, certainly contributed to that vision of monasticism as part of the general body of Christians" (Meyendorff 1982:205). A monastic is simply a member of one

great community which includes all monks and nuns. Moreover, there should be no distinction between monks and nuns. Indeed, in Greek language there is no word for convent, all religious houses being called monasteries.

CHAPTER 3

Holiness: A discourse concerning divinity through miracles and legendaries

Introduction

In this part of my work, my observations and monks' apt statements, as well as literal and oral accountings of "miracles", will be used in order to begin a discourse concerning monasticism and sainthood. I intend to specify through the use of monastic terms the ingredients comprising the conception of "**Hagiosini**" (holiness or sanctity).

I define miracles as mythological encounters concerning divine intervention in the worldly physical state of affairs, for the benefit of the secular world. The distinction drawn between a saint and a non-saint can be used in this context to clarify a particular area in the symbolic sphere of divinity.

The living mythology that I encountered in Mount Athos, is not the only way to engage in a discourse regarding sainthood. Legendaries (sinaxaria), i.e lifes of saints, can be used, as I believe, in this context as a supplementary means to enter this space of divinity and thus to clarify and probably re-define the interaction between the well known spheres of secular and divine. This secondary approach has the additional advantage, of entering in another discourse concerning gender dichotomies in the same symbolic sphere.

The profound tension within Orthodoxy may spring from the opposition between the divine and secular world represented by monks and laity respectively. Yet, the divine capacities and qualities as portrayed in miracles are even more elaborated and refined than we may imagine. For, they possibly reveal the attributes of the saints and perhaps through this, the distinct levels of divinity.

As the monks believe it is not them who represent divinity -fortunately they proved to be very humble- but rather those monastics who managed, after years of retreat, to reach the higher levels of holiness, creating thus the image of the "perfect", inspiring the thaumaturgical recounting of their achievement.

This exemplary image instigates mythology as expressed in thaumaturgical and heroic actions. In this regard one may claim that "hagiosini" constitutes a higher level within the area of divinity, starting from simple monastics and ending to Christ. Different terms, like "**hagios**" and "**osios**" describe different levels within the area of divinity, therefore their understanding may prove useful for a classification of the way the divine order is perceived.

It is essential to mention that none of the monks I have talked with gave me a sufficient answer of what a saint is. My insistence to give emphasis on monastic holiness through sainthood, is justified from the fact that the monks have assured me that orthodox saints cannot be seen out of the context of their own saintly experience. They are

exemplars for the monks. (see Archimandrite Vasileios, 1990). As exemplars they do extraordinary things, they mediate, interfere, create the impossible, do miracles.

Miracles as living mythology: "Thaumatology"

A discourse regarding this specific issue of sainthood in reference to miracles can be conducted satisfactory -as I hope to prove- for an extra reason. Miracles can be seen as a living mythology with a sacred tale. I call this living mythology "**thaumatology**", originating from the Greek word "**thauma**" (meaning miracle). It is through this monastic thaumatology that I will attempt to draw the profile of the Orthodox saint. As Turner and Turner (1978:6) point out, in another case, "miracles are essential for many if not for all shrines since they serve as places uniting heaven and earth; bridging the gap between the spiritual and the mundane world. Icon and relics are the material objects through which this linkage is made. The thaumaturgical objects which are permanently on display are associated with a divine historic past."

Father I. one of my closest informants told me : "**Gia na miliseis gia tous hagious prepei na gineis hagios**", meaning, to talk about the saints you must become a saint yourself. This statement sounds more absolute than it really is, for if only the saints can talk about saints then the conclusion drawn is obvious: Nobody can talk about the

saints. Yet this is not so. It seems that both monks and pilgrims consider that the best way to portray the image of a saint, is to refer to his actions. The monks and laity I have talked with in Mount Athos, often commended sainthood through miracles. Therefore it is not surprising that the lives of the saints in the Orthodox Christian tradition are expressed in a mythological way.

Approaching sainthood through miracles has also the great advantage of catching a glimpse of the "atmosphere", oral or literary, in which the recounting is conducted. By treating "collective representations as sign-systems, one might hope to go further than the pious show of unmasking them and account in detail for the mystification which transforms culture into a universal nature" (Roland Barthes, 1976:9).

The mythical construction of "language" prevents the monkish perception of sacred, from falling to a terrestrial level; However, this is by nature unavoidable. "All language, as so far as it consists of words, purports to convey ideas or concepts; -that is what language means;- and the more clearly and unequivocally it does so, the better the language. And hence expositions of religious truth in language inevitably tend to stress the rational attributes of God". (R. Otto, 1972:2)

The excellence of a religious "language" however, lies in the difficulty of uniting the "signifier" with the "signified". We say "G-o-d", as signifier, but we have an

insufficient experience or knowledge of the signified. The "religious" languages however, in their miraculous context, can be seen as uniting this gap. And they accomplish that by construction of a unique language. This "language" of course includes a "langue" and a "parole" (Saussure, 1971:21,23-27,30,33). Both the langue and the parole of myth construction are used in such a way as to emphasize the possible presence of the signified.

In the monastery the presentation of even insignificant facts, has to take a mystic or a magical character. For the monks, facts are supposed to be something more than they really seem to. This is what they call "**paramithia**" (myth). Paramythia as a language, "writes history and given that history is narration, it demonstrates the ideology and the culture" (K Marx, Das Kapital, I Buch, 1,3,2, a Dietz Verlag, Berlin 1957:109).

The narration of miracles takes the character of what the monks call "**paramithia**" (myth). The same terms were used by a novice monk in L. monastery. He said: "I came here to find myth (paramithia) and consolation (parigoria)". Symeon Grigoriatis says: "I became a monk seeking for the absolute; seeking the transcendence of myself, the mythical (paramithitiko) light" (Interview in Magazine "Tetarto", January 1986:66). He adds: "I wanted to break the ties of death with a miracle" (op. cit.:67). The writer S. G. Pentzikis says: "I believe in myth making, because myth is the everlasting truth" (Interview in Magazine "Tetarto", June

1985:99). Finally when the journalist S. Tsagarousianos (op.cit.: 1986:66) asks Symeon Grigoriatis: "Do you know that you have become part of the new Greek mythology?", the latter answered: "It is nice when a nation holds its mythical thought vivid. It is nice when a nation seeks constantly for the myth (paramithia), and this has nothing to do with the objects of a myth (mithos)".

It is obvious that "**mithos**" (a myth, story) and "**paramithia**" (myth) for both Pentzikis and Symeon are not identical terms. Paramithia is a sensual perception of divinity. It therefore involves mystery rather than imagination. Though in lay context, the verb "**paramithiazo**", which results from the term paramithia, means saying lies, according to the monks' mysticism is better unfolded in the construction of paramithia (myth). So paramithia is the supreme truth.

The difference between the terms paramithia and mithos, is that the second is the myth itself, whereas paramithia is the implicit outcome of the myth. Actually the difference between those two terms derives from their practical usage. The myth is blended with paramythia to construct a parole, the parole of miracles (thauma). Parole as performance of realizing possibilities of structure/langue. However, paramithia can exist out of the myth whereas the opposite is impossible. Paramithia incorporates the transcendency of mystery (**tou mistiriou**) and it uses the myth as a means of simplification in order to transcend reality.

The word paramithia -as noted- involves notional elements of another term the monks use; the term mysticism, or mystery. It is important to stress that mystery in its religious context involves the actions of the spiritual (**Pneumatikos**) persons and their interference with the divine. The term Pneumatikos is used to characterize qualities which cannot be held by a secular person. In other words what creates mystery is spirituality (**Pneumatikotita**). "Thus the word spirituality at once implies life, a living experience, a personal involvement". (Bishop Antonie, 1977:33). In Mount Athos the word Pneumatikos is also used to designate the priest-monk from the simple monk or the very old monks from the very young ones.

Myths and miracles consist an alternative way to refer to divinity for both monks and laity. Indeed a very secular one. The secular perception of the divine in miracles terrestrializes and at the same time transcends the impossible. As Ceorge Every notes in his book "Christian Mythology" (1987:7), "the word myth is used of tales concerning wonders performed by gods and heroes...it is also used in a extended sense of a story told to throw light on a mystery that cannot be explained."

The "parole" of miracles is, however, tactfully avoided in monastic theology. For monastic theology is structured on a "langue" which makes a very discrete use of this "parole". While "parole" and "langue", determine each other -the same way that parables and metaphors illustrate symbols, becoming

vehicles of the possible inconceivable meaning of hagiosini- the more spiritual the monk is, the more his parole takes the character of a unigue construction. All parole, as Pr Layton argues, depends upon a langue. Parole is a deployment of langue, the same way a game is a deployment of the rules to win the match.

Mystery, as implied in miraculous recounting is replaced by theologians and the monks by the word spirituality. "The term spirituality, is one which is very widely employed at the present time, even though there is no branch of theology which precisely corresponds to it. Formely the term **mysticism** was more widely used, but of recent years there has been a tendency to set it aside, in favour of the term **spirituality**." (Bishop Antonie, op.cit.:33).

Miracles and the worshipping attitude

A discussion about miracles (thaumata) inevitably portrays the saint's image. In other words it is a saint's action that determines his "hagiotita" (holiness); the ability to interfere, reverse, stop and finally change the current state of affairs. A person who has this ability is gifted and therefore he is considered a saint.

Bishop Antonie argues that even today sainthood imitates Christ's exemplary experience: "The model of (the saint's) tenderness is the **kenosis**, the condescension of

Christ. The **kenosis**, the self-emptying of Christ is, in itself, the supreme form of tenderness. By his **Kenosis** he desired to open up a way into their hearts. The Saint is always ready to sacrifice and to take to himself the suffering of others, but he is also an unshakable wall against which all can lean for support. In sharing thus the lot of others the Saint sometimes shows great discretion, while at other times he expresses himself without reserve. It is hardly necessary to speak of the total absence of self-interest in his relationships" (Bishop Antonie, op.cit.:2-3).

In Mount Athos I was often advised to visit Father P. The latter is called a modern saint (**sinchronos hagios**), for he is thought to have the so-called "**dioratiko charisma**"; that is to say, the ability to help people take the right decision, based on his competence to predict the future. Father P. has become what we call a modern "legend" thus perpetuating the mythological tradition of the saints of Mount Athos (see Magazine Tetarto 1985:102). The thaumaturgical action reveals the measure of his contact with the divine and thus dissociates him from the other monks. The ability to create a miracle and thus to interfere in the physical state of affairs, is a "charisma" that only a few hold. "Saints can see into the most secret states of soul in others, neglecting to help them triumph over their weaknesses and conquer their difficulties. Thus the saint is sought out as a confidant for the most intimate secrets. For he is able to discern in others a scarcely articulated need, the whole

of their capacity to desire what is good." (Bishop Antonie op.cit.:2). In this regard saints are considered closer to God, mediating between the secular and the divine world. Hieromonk Symeon Grigoriatis writes: "The repentant monk asks Christ, the Vanquisher of death, for help and mercy, through the prayers of all his saints." (op.cit.:12).

The narration of the monastery's history was always told in terms of miracles. Historical facts were recounted so as to sound identical to incidents of saints' lifes. Actually, the monastery's past events had been reduced to small stories concerning the saints' accomplishments. Inevitably, the outcome of the monks' own device of narrative history, was a mixture of history and myth. In L. monastery, Father T. told us that the founder of the monastery who was also its patron, protected the residents of the monastery from all kinds of disaster, but fire. It was surprising to hear how the saint's "promise" had been gently "corrected" to fit the unfortunate fact that the monastery had caught fire, four times since its first initiation. The latest in the summer of 1990. There is a parallel here with the foundation of Therabada Buddhist monasteries in new settings. Here too mytho-history is used to legitimate the continuity of the tradition. (Bell 1991:95, Carrithers 1984:133).

Before I go on I find it necessary to clarify the way I perceive history in this context. As we all know the social anthropologist derives most of his primary data from direct

personal observation and inquiry, "studying social life as and where it is lived, partly at least through the medium of a particular culture. The interconnections of events, with the structure of ideas, values, and social relations, but from the perspective of the present rather than the past. Although the past may be one source of the imperatives which control the shape and content of men's action in society, its role in determining how men behave now is secondary to the interconnections between their "current" beliefs, actions and institutional arrangements. Current custom replaces the past as the repository of the springs of social behaviour. The past, as the subjects of study themselves see it, ...becomes explicable at least in large measure as a mirror for the present. The past so viewed is the product of the present and may be treated to a considerable extent as myth. In this extreme view, which is not devoid of explanatory power, history is virtually relegated to the status of Malinowski's mythological charter." (I. M. Lewis, 1968:11). It seems that E. H. Carr comes very close to defining history similarly. "History is an unending dialogue between the present and the past", and "the past is intelligible to us only in the light of the present", and below, "history acquires meaning and objectivity only when it establishes a coherent relation between past and future." (Carr, What is History, 1964:30, 55, 130).

In the case of the monks, the bowing in front of icons (hagiographies) and the crossing as well as the kissing of

the saints bones, are obviously different ways of paying one's respect to an "**in-existence**" dead body. I say in-existence because worshipping in front of icons and relics is done in a way that turns object into subject; it is as if the saint's dead body is still somehow a living agent. Father I. told me "when a person becomes a saint his body becomes holy as well". At his demise the saint's holiness lingers.

It is not coincidental that a saint's hagiosini is recognized according to the monks by the smell of his relic. In Greece people use different words to distinguish a man's dead body from an animal's one. They call the human's dead body "ptoma", whereas an animal's body is "psofimi". Psofimi refers to an animals body in a condition of decomposition. It is never used to refer to human corpses. Obviously this distinction emphasizes the difference of "substance" between man and animal. Moreover, the use of the word "leipsanon" (relic) in comparison to "ptoma" (corpse) is used to discriminate the difference in "substance" between man and a saint. The pleasant smell of a saint's relic is a proof of his divine substance that immediately separates him from the world of the secular dead.

Like holy persons, icons offer a tangible means of communication with the divine. They are a linkage between the material and the transcendental order. "An icon is made of substances derived from all parts of the created world, from animal, vegetable and mineral resources. The prohibition on mixing and blending colours prevents the blurring of their

individuality, and each substance makes a contribution to the whole in itself and through its relationship with the rest... The icon is a microcosm of the relationship between the material world, human beings, and the divine power believed to have created them all (Kenna 1985:348).

The picture of genuflection and of kissing of icons and saints relics, by monks and laity, proved to be the theme of a frequent annotation in my notes. I was often advised to pray and ask a favour from a saint's relic.

After the end of Vespers and before the special service dedicated to Panagia, a monk would narrating a brief outline of the monastery's history for the pilgrims information . By the end of the recounting all the pilgrims were led to a room attached to the left side of the Church, formed as a chaplaincy where the saints' relics are kept. One could see through the glass coffins the gold and silver-covered bones. Different coffins held different parts of different saints skeletons; a hand, a head, sometimes just a finger. The pilgrims as well as the monks bowed and kissed the glass of the coffins while crossing themselves. Under each bone there is a small hand written sign with the saint's name on it.

In comparison to the Abbeys I visited in England the hagiorite monks do not exhibit, as the former do, the saint-abbot's possessions; for example, a ring, or a part of his eccentric habit. Most of the hagiorite monasteries hold a great deal of valuable objects, ranging from the Byzantine period onward, but although most of these items have a great

archeological value, witnessed from the fact that are sheltered in very safe places, monks indeed consider bones and relics as more important. When asked, they attributed this to their miraculous power.

Icons are important worship element, like the saints they depict. And in this respect one can better understand why one of the earliest clashes between monasteries and the established Church and State was the Iconoclastic Controversy (c.711-843). At stake was the power of the holy man and the closely associated veneration of icons.

It was quite surprising to find out that the fame of a relic contributes to the monastery's reputation. The divine prestige of a monastery would often be imputed to the miraculous power of the items possessed; usually an icon of Panagia or a saint's bone (for example the well known for its miraculous power icon of Panagia called, "Axion Esti", or the left hand of saint Anna; Panagia's mother). Thus, there seems to be an immediate correlation between the monastery's identity and some eminent event or miracle.

Today, pilgrims and monks on Mount Athos when chatting about a monastery, often refer to a certain miracle for which the monastery is famous. The worshipping attitude toward items representing the divine nature and presence of saints, prove to be a considerable explanation of why all conversations regarding monks' and saints' lives would always end up getting a mythical character.

An insightful view of this thaumaturgical apprehension

of the divine could possibly reveal how the real incidents are used to construct a myth. This kind of falsification of historical incidents served the purpose of upgrading a secular discussion about saints to a divine one. This transformation is created to perpetuate a tradition which presents the monks as "athletes" (originating from the Greek word "athlos" meaning, achievement). As Levin (1988:131) writes: "If the language of a poem is taken literally, then the world depicted by it, is indeed a creation. For that world is achieved not by some simple and uninteresting modification of the actually obtaining state of affairs, but rather by a radical and fundamental departure from that state. The result, we might say, is an "impossible" possible world. Such a world is not simply experienced; it is created."

Miracles and the roles of saints in monastic, lay and evangelic context

Blum and Blum (1970:88-94), Campbell (1964:342), Christian (1989:174-175), Cutileiro (1971:270-272) and Pina Cabral (1986:163), suggest that one cannot simply liken the relationship between saints and humans with a patron-client relation established in secular contexts. One should rather distinguish, as Christians do, the various forms these relations take.

I have to admit that my initial aim was to give an

outline of this mythological narration. Thereafter I decided to study miracles as described, firstly, in the gospels, secondly in Mount's Athos oral and written accountants and, thirdly in lay ones. Methodologically this has proved quite fruitful since the stories concerning the divine grace in either the secular or monastic literature portray how and when people conjure up the divine power of saints. In this manner, the distance in perception of miracles between these three contexts seems to be more or less unaltered throughout the centuries.

As Finnegan points out, with regard to oral poetry, it would be as wrong to assume unthinkingly that oral traditions are necessarily long-lasting (Finnegan 1977:36-39, as paraphrazed by Layton, 1989) as it would be to assume they have no historical validity. Finnegan concludes that there is no universally valid theory of oral transmission. The same is clearly true of visual arts: some favour innovation, others favour adherence to strictly determined models (Layton 1981, ch.5). Anyway, creative interpretations in religion "is necessitated by the structure of human culture: to narrate the myth, selections must be drawn from a pool of defined terms, and particular relationships must be highlighted" (Layton 1985,1989:15).

The study of the thematic material of these miraculous incidents leads inevitably to the conclusion that there is at least a connexion between the historical juncture and the human needs fulfilled in saints' miraculous rendering. A

comparison of miracles recounted in Mount Athos and lay literary accounts as well as those in the gospel prove this argument. The form these miraculous stories take are primarily three. The first is the donation of materialistic goods. The second deals with the healing of incurable diseases and the third concerns the saints' patronage (ability). The resurrection of people is not absent even in modern miracles.

Only one of the thirty miracles of Christ is mentioned in all four gospels: this is the multiplication of bread by Jesus. From all thirty miracles of Christ it seems, that neither the healing of incurable disease, nor the exorcisms of the possessed, nor even the resurrection of dead (like Lasarus), provoked such an appeal as the miraculous food reproduction; Solution to the problem of survival. Not all the miracles referred in the gospels have the same gravity. Moreover, it seems to me that each evangelist has his own preferences. For example Matthew centralizes his narrations in the speech and in the teachings of Christ. The eighteen miracles he refers to comprise examples of His miraculous ability. The detailed description of miracles that we found in both Mark's and Luke's gospels are absent in Matthew's. Mark's gospel refers to seventeen miracles without making any allegorical use of them. Luke who refers to nineteenth miracles has obviously been under the influence of the ancient Greek demonological medicine. He narrates twelve miracles of exorcism, whereas, Mathew six and Marc only four.

On the other hand John restricts himself to only eight miracles. Miracles are for him stories which carry an implicit meaning. Because a miracle is a symbolic reference to reality therefore its use is allegorical. For example, the healing of the blind implies that Christ is the source of the spiritual light; the multiplication of bread signifies that Christ Himself is food. In particular, John is the only evangelist who refers to the miracle of the transformation of the water to wine in the marriage of Canaah. In John's gospel there is no spectacular interference of the divine in secular phenomena (see Seraphim Papakostas, Athens, 1983).

In all the discussions I had with several monks they all agreed that the New Testament miracle of greatest importance refining to Christ's holiness is His resurrection. It is not coincidental that the Orthodox Church and Orthodox Greeks, broadly speaking, consider Easter as the most important celebration of Christianity. Something which is justified in the glorious representation of his mortuary ritual. (see Danforth 1982, 1984, also Papadiamandis 1988:67-208). A great topic concerning the relevant concept of "anastasis" (resurrection) can be raised here relating this issue with the conception of eternity and cyclical time. Religious ideology has often used the promise of rebirth to negate the finality and social disruption of death (Leach 1961). Moreover, cyclical concepts of time serve to deny the irreversibility of birth, life and death, asserting instead that from death a new birth follows. According to Orthodox

Christianity this predominant ideology springs out from the idea of resurrection. Given this, it is not surprising that mortuary rituals are often associated with concepts of regeneration in a effort to deny the irreversible and terminal nature of death proclaiming a new beginning (Hertz 1960). The resurrection of Christ is thought to be the most important moment of His life-story, placing Him at the top of the saints' hierarchical order, next to God "Father", as a "Son", and part of the Holy Trinity.

Yet, there are two kinds of resurrection in the gospels. The first is that of Lazarus and the other that of Christ. These two different forms of the same miracle do not compose a common category. The monks do not celebrate Lazarus' resurrection. When I asked Father G., "Why?" He replied "Lazarus will die again, he was not ascended". According to the monks the specific distinction between those two resurrections is the Christ's Ascension Day. Therefore His holiness is not merely qualified by His miracles, but from the fact that he was resurrected and ascended. And it is for this reason that His holiness is superior in comparison to that of the saints, appertaining to that of His Father.

From this ultimate point onwards the domain of sainthood is constructed. The Christian mythology begins with the miracle of miracles; the resurrection of Christ Himself. The image of Christ, is the image of an exemplary. Thus, Christ is the central figure of a monk's life,

representing the ideal monk, the saint of saints. "Christ is the Alpha and the Omega. Christ is the monk's path, his foot on the path and the aim of the path, Christ is the beginning and the End, He is the lover and the beloved and his name is love." (Hieromonk Symeon Grigoriatis, op.cit.:18).

The thematic material of this discourse about miracles in Mount Athos dealt with the saints' dissuasive (abortive) or positive action. In the first, the saint's role was one of a patron and in the second the role of a benefactor. In the first instance the object-subject was assumed to hold the qualities of a patron, thus protecting the monastery's residents from either outsiders or invasions, or even natural calamities such as earthquakes. In the second case the object-subject saint was assumed to be a benefactor and healer, offering material goods and rehabilitating people with disordered health. (Archimandrite Ioannikeios, Athonikon Gerondikon, 1991:211-232). Resurrection is also a famous theme in monastic thaumaturgy. There are three instances of monks who have resurrected to die again (op.cit.:211-232).

Yet, the multiplication of food seems to be an even more popular theme of this miraculous divine presence. For obvious reasons this kind of miracles are associated with poverty and in fact people who like miracles are poor. Poverty finds consolation in them. Food donation, in all the monasteries I visited, proved to be a very central theme of miraculous recounting.

Equally important, in lay thaumatology, are miracles concerning the overcoming of sterility. In the book by L. Kakisis "Miracles in Procreation" (1985), one can find thirty-one cases of sterile women who got pregnant after they abandoned medical treatment and invoked the divine intervention of various saints. The common characteristic of these miracles is that the saint appears during sleep in the dream, assuring the imminent pregnancy. In many of these cases the women who had been blessed had previously been alienated from the Church.

It is very important to stress here two viewpoints expressed in the ethnography of Greece. Firstly, woman is seen as very near to the Church, as making preparations for all the celebrations and services (Du Boulay 1974). Secondly, the role of the woman is supposed to be fulfilled when she becomes a mother (Du Boulay 1986). And of course it is interesting to note that the epithet of Panagia is **Theotokos**, meaning Godbirth. It is the grace of Panagia that usually mediates for the benefit of the barren woman.

The overcoming of infertility is a very old miracle concerning Sarah and Abraham in the book of Genesis. Going back to lay miracles in L. Kakisis' book we find a typical story featuring a sterile woman. Panagia reveals to the woman in her dream and She ensures her that she will conceive that very day even though she is menstruating (op.cit.:24). In some ways this miracle resembles to that of the immaculate conception. What proved to be uniform in lay as well as in

monastic miracles is the supreme miraculous power of Godbirth that made Her an adorable figure par excellence. Stories of miracles concerning Panagia's grace are indeed a very ordinary topic. The monks worship Her grace daily in a service exclusively dedicated to Her. Correspondingly, in the "outer world", thousands of pilgrims gather each August and evoke her grace in the island of Tinos.

The conclusion drawn from this limited study is that the monastic and the lay thaumatology carry the "stigma" of Genesis but mostly that of the gospels. That is to say, current "thaumatology" borrows all the characteristics of the evangelical one. The difference lies in the fact that today's thaumatology, especially in the lay context, deals less with the production of food, for, nowadays the problem of hunger in modern Greece has been quite solved.

The monastic thaumatology on the other hand, maintains the tradition of patron saints, whose miraculous actions have been diverted to those of a benefactor. The appearance of the patron saint seems as novelty to evangelistic thaumatology. The miracles concerning patronage are likely to correspond to the catastrophes the monasteries suffered from invasions (see Christou, op.cit.:177-180, 155-158, also Dorotheos Monachos, op.cit.:44-47, 78-101). The patron-saint tradition is held in monasteries which have been invaded several times in the past. It is for this reason that all the monasteries are encircled by walls. In these cases of miracles, myth and history have created an interesting

mixture. Anyway, the creation of miracles can be imputed to myth-making and the latter can possibly be explained by reference to historical incidents. Alternatively, it seems to me that the need for protection in monastic thaumatology is in accordance with the juncture between the narrator and the history. Incidents of different historical periods inspire miraculous mythology. It should be expected that in periods of famine the divine outbreak takes the character of the food-gift. This is what monastics attribute to the "**ikonomia**" of the divine grace.

Negative protagonists: Temptation and devils.

It is important to stress that although the hagiorite thaumatology makes use of a positive protagonist; the saint, on the other hand in the same scenarios there is space left for a negative protagonist under a variety of names such as, devil (**diavolos**), demon (**demonas**), temptation (**pirasmos**) and thought (**logismos**). Saints and demons seem to symbolize the eternal conflict between the sacred and the evil, the "good" and the "bad".

The prevalence of good over evil broadens the limits of hagiorite thaumatology and gives emphasis on monkish heroism. The use of different terms ascribed to evil position it in a range of different symbolic areas. For example, the use of the terms devil and demon imply that evil is an outside, independent entity which aims at creating hindrances to the

monk's path toward completion. In contrast, the use of the terms temptation (**pirasmos**) and thought (**logismos**), as also referring to devils and demons, seem to place evil inside the monk's body and mind. These two terms are identified with the qualities of the monk's secular substance. Bear in mind that the reference to saints on the one hand and to demons and devils on the other is equally popular (see Archimandrite Ioannikeios op.cit.:159-176). The itinerary from the earthly world to the heavenly one is thereafter a constant fight against evil wherever this evil might exist.

When I asked Father O., "Why do you put on the one side the saints and on the other the demons?", he answered: "**den to kanoume auto, kai o diavolos dimiourgima tou theou einai**" meaning, "we do not do this, devil is also a creature of the God". When I asked him "Why does not God help him gain the kingdom of heaven?" he simply answered: "The devil does not want to be saved". When I insisted on questioning, Father O. narrated a story. He said: "When God created the world he asked the ten "angelic" orders to bow to his greatness, but, the devil was the only one to refuse, and he refused because he was selfish. His selfishness has condemned him to his evil role."

In the same conversation Father O. often referred to evil by making use of the words "peirasmos" and "logismos". In these cases the evil was imputed not outside himself but inside him. He said: "**Egoismoi, syngrouseis, ola gyrnane piso synechos. Kathe mera paleuo me tous peirasmous kai tous**

logismous. Kathe mera anagasomai na kano mia nea archi", meaning, "Selfishness, clashes, everything turns back constantly. Every day I fight with temptations and thoughts. Every day I have to start from the scratch." Father O. told me an interesting story (myth) proving these alternative ways of perceiving the presence of evil: Once there was a man who was seriously thinking of going to Mount Athos to escape from the tantalizing influence of the evil. When he finally took the decision the devil appeared in front of him and he said: "Bear in mind: the first person to meet there, is me myself".

For Father O. the distinction between the sacred and the evil would shape inner conflicts. However, it seems that the existence of evil is necessary, for it gives to the monkish experience a very "athletic" character. Jean Meyendorff in her wonderful book "St Gregoire Palamas et la mystique orthodoxe" (1956) claims that the desert appears as the perfect type of world to the renouncer, for it is completely hostile to God and subject to the power of evil. Fighting against the evil in the core of the devil´s kingdom is thought to be the best way to accomplish the divine grace (op.cit.:17). It is important to see, in the same book, how the first Christian depictions portray the image of the devil. He is often placed in icons on the one side of the picture opposite to saints, naked and ugly, like all the cursed.

However, there is an antidote against evil and temptations; the cross with its dispelling power. The cross

is a symbol of eternal life. Although it refers to death, for as we all know Christ was crucified on it, the cross is used as a metaphor for the eternal life that awaits all humans after death. Devils on the other hand, represent a permanent death therefore the sign of the cross as opposed to this sort of death has extreme apotropaic power. Furthermore, it is in this regard that both monks and pilgrims regularly cross themselves at all times of the day on even quite trivial occasions. In the monastery I was told: "cross yourself as often as you can, because the devil fears the sing of cross."

Sainthood in Legendary context

Thaumatology demonstrates the saints' "actions" as congruent with the way people perceive the interference of the divine within the secular. But there is further means through which to comprehend sainthood, merely the study of legendaries (sinaxaria). The conclusions I have reached to through studying these legends, provide an opportunity to offer distinctive support for anthropological consideration concerning gender boundaries. Because, while worship in both the divine and secular spheres appears to be evenly distributed between the male and the female saints, in the image of Christ and Panagia respectively, it seemed to me that thaumatology tends towards the face of Panagia. Thus, towards the face of a female figure.

Approaching sainthood through accounts of the saints' lives as presented in legendaries (sinaxaria) has the advantage of illuminating the criteria by which the official Church proceeds to saint-making. The outcome of my research regarding this issue renders two rather interesting considerations.

The first is that the official Church does not have any particular criteria by which a miracle is classified as true or false, or when declaring someone a saint. The book of Manouil Gedeon "Hagiopoiiseis" (1984), give great emphasis on martyrdom. On the same time, Father N. Protopappas, manager of the Church radio station in Athens, says: "Miracles are not so important for they occur frequently. What is more important is the saint's life, who creates the miracle." (Magazine "Epsilon", Eleutherotypia, 1991).

The second consideration deals with the fact that the recognition of a saint's miraculous power corresponds to his "decent" life. In that case decency is identified with martyrdom, thus reproducing the Orthodox tradition, throughout which the saints are to be seen as martyrs. It was Father I. who suggested I should delve into Orthodox legendaries (Sinaxaria), where I would possibly find elements concerning the saints' lives. Just as he suggested, it proved to be very helpful in drawing general conclusions about sainthood.

In this essay I make use of four different legendaries. The first is that of the monk Moyses, "<u>Engamoi</u> <u>Hagioi</u> <u>tis</u>

Ecclisias", (Ed. Akritas, 1988). I met this monk in Mount Athos and he helped me to find a copy of his work. This legendary refers to all the married saints of the Church. The second is "Vioi Hagion", (Ed. Astir, 1985). The third is "Hagiologion", (Ed. Mt Athos, 1992), and the last is "Periliptikon Hagiorite Sinaxari, (1992). Yet, from what I was told, the most significant legendary seems to be that of saint Nikodimos, a six volume work, which I did not have the opportunity to examine. Studying the saints' lives did not prove an easy task, for not all the legendaries are identical. For example, the hagiorite ones often refer to saints who cannot be cross-check in others. It seems that present day monks do consider as saints some monk-saints to whom the "lay" legendaries treat with indifference.

My study concerning the saints through legendaries comprises the impetus for a statistic presentation of sainthood. Numbers and percentages presented in tables will be used here as serving the purpose of an approximate estimation. In most of these legendaries one may come to some conclusions concerning the social background of the saints. For example, some were supposed to have been princes or holders of high officials. Yet, most of the data lacked historical documentation, so I will not dwell on them. "It must be remembered that in the medieval as in the ancient world biography was a branch of rhetoric. Lives of the saints were meant to be read aloud for purposes of edification" (George Every op. cit.:96). Moreover, not all

the conclusions drawn from this study will be referred to here, for, what I primarily intend to examine is that which dealt with the proportion between priest-saints and monk-saint, as well as, between male and female sainthood and the causation leading to saint-making.

The first conclusion drawn from this study is that in the sphere of sainthood the dominant figure is that of the male saint. The proportion (ratio) between male and female saints is four to one.

		Saints
Male		**822**
Female		**209**
Total	=	**1031**

Table a

As we see in table a., from a total of one thousand and thirty one saints, eight hundred and twenty two were males, while it is two hundred and nine females. Celibacy tends to coincide with the male rather than the female gender. In table b., we see that from a total of eight hundred and twenty two male saints only two hundred and thirteen were married.

Celibacy however, does not appear to be a characteristic of female sainthood. From a total of two hundred and nine female saints only fifty two remained celibates.

	Male Saints		Female Saints	
Married	213		157	
Celibate	609		52	
Total	822	+	209	= 1031

Table b

Out of one hundred and fifty seven married female saints more than two/thirds became mothers and out of two hundred and nine, more than three-quarters have died as martyrs.

Motherhood in the divine sphere seems to be identified with that of the secular world. Motherhood is a part of the women's destiny, or aim (fisikos pro-opismos) in life. In the villages, as elsewhere in Greece, women achieve adulthood only upon marriage and the child-bearing. Motherhood ultimately defines female identity. It is only through marriage and the acquisition of a husband and home that a woman can realize her physical and social destiny (du Boulay 1986:139 and Papataxiarchis 1991:47).

On the other hand it seems that the marital status does not serve equally male sainthood. Out of two hundred married male saints more than half finally become monks monastics, and from a total of eight hundred and twenty, two more than half died as martyrs. Yet, martyrdom varies from gender to gender. For example, the martyrdom of female saints is identified with the maintenance of chastity. Martyrdom for female married saints comes in the form of the woman

witnessing the death of her own children who are crucified or killed for their Christian beliefs and values. Male martyrdom is quite different, for example, half of the eight hundred and twenty two male saints died as martyrs. Yet, martyrdom is not centred on chastity, but on the saint's refusal to change his beliefs even at the cost of his life, something which is regarded as a great sacrifice leading to salvation.

The general conclusion is that male martyrdom appertains to the drama of Christ, whereas female martyrdom appertains that of Panagia (Godbirth). Anyway, martyrdom appears to be the main factor in saint-making. It is important here to mention that after the end of the Turkish occupation in the mid nineteenth century, the conditions toward martyrdom changed rapidly. In both genders martyrdom becomes identified with solitude, poverty and chastity maintenance.

Nevertheless, martyrs were labelled in two ways. First, those who held the office of a priest called: "Ieromartyres". Secondly, those who were simply monks called: "Osiomartyres". Out of one thousand saints, less than one-tenth were priests. Of course the term Ieromartyras is inappropriate for female saints, for women are not allowed to hold the office of a priest in Orthodox Christian tradition .

In many cases the mother of a martyr was regarded as a saint, exactly because she witnessed, as Panagia did, the

death of her son. She may also join the sphere of sainthood because her son or daughter were declared saints. The point I wish to make here deals with the fact that the saintly qualities of the descendant are imputed to the ancestor. That is to say the usual direction of transmission has been reversed. I propose to call this phenomenon "reversed atavism", and I intend to explain it in reference to the way kinship is perceived in villages. As a matter of fact the use of kinship terminology in Christian context is not novelty. Although it is used to give emphasis on spiritual ties rather than those of blood, it still holds something of the secular context. The monks are supposed to be the "children" of Godbirth. Christ is supposed to be Son of God. And the monastic community is supposed to be the Brotherhood of Monks (Monachiki Adelfotita).

The use of secular kinship metaphors (Son of the Father or children of God's mother) illuminate the sharing of a common substance, which does not immediately corresponds to a blood tie. The secular kinship terminology is ascribed to the spiritual realm. For, though the terms may be the same, there is a shift in emphasis from the material world and life as re-creative continuity extending into the future; A view strongly held also in villages, to emphasize on the spiritual world, toward which each soul strives in order to achieve lasting grace and unity with God upon death. This symbolic unification abolishes while at the same illuminates the distinction between the secular and the divine.

It is this shift from secular to divine which fundamentally alters how the kinship terms are understood and used in the monastery. To explicate the shift in meaning M. Iossifides, following Schneider (1980) takes up the concepts of "substance" and "codes of contact". She writes: "The villagers' belief in blood as the defining substance of kinship, unaffected by one's conduct towards one's kin, though adhered to by the nuns at one level is, at another, level subsumed by the belief that through conduct one can transform one's "natural" substance. The human substance of this world is transformed into something divine. Conduct determines substance." (op.cit.:117-118)

Father I. told me: "**kai o theos egine anthropos gia na givei o anthropos theos**", meaning, "God became a man so that the man would become God". Symeon Grigoriatis (1983:19) utilizes another metaphor to describe exactly the sharing of "substance" between God and man, writing: "As when you put a piece of iron into the fire, the iron becomes fire by participation with the fire, while remaining iron by nature". People in villages say that looks and even personality, can be transmitted through blood (see Campbell op. cit.:166, and Cutileiro op.cit.:114).

The image of female saint in Mount Athos

"The holy Mountain is for all Orthodox the spiritual and

beautiful garden of the mother of God (**to perivoli tis Panagias**). This Garden is the largest community of Orthodox monks in the world. In the matriarchal community of the holy mountain, where at least for us monks, the reign of the mother of God is clearly perceptible..." (Symeon Grigoriatis, op.cit.:11-13). In the hagiorite community of celibate males, the figure of the female saint (Panagia), appears to be the predominant one. Why is it so? And how do the monks perceive Her image? The answers to these questions justify the portrayal of the role and position of women and men as they are found principally in rural context by ethnographers of Greek society. In other words the position of the male and female saint in the context of the Orthodox sainthood verifies at another level the anthropological observations. The secular and the divine seem to be in harmony here. Motherhood defines female identity (du Boulay 1986:139, Papataxiarchis 1991:47) in both the secular and the divine sphere.

There is a mytho-historic account concerning the inaccessibility of Mount Athos to women. When in 1347 Helen, the wife of the Serbian King, Stefan Dusan, visited Mount Athos, and attempted to go deeper into the narthex of the church there a voice was heard to come from Panaghia's picture saying: "Don't walk any further. What do you want, you a woman, in this place. You might be a queen but there is another queen ruling here." (Christou op.cit.: 125). The first official prohibition concerning women was put down in a

Convention of Manuel Paleologos in 1406. (Ph Meyer Haupturkunden 207. Actes de Protaton, No.260). This prohibition expands to include also female mammals. (See Christou op.cit.: 124).

Panagia rules supremely on Mount Athos and the only other female saint to be acknowledged there, is her mother, saint Anna. In all monasteries there is a chapel dedicated to Her, where the monks go daily for an hourly service. There are no chapels dedicated to other female saints, except one which is dedicated to the mother of Panagia, Anna (Christou op.cit:124-125). The phenomenon of "**reversed atavism**" appears again in this case. The descendant inherits his divine qualities to the ancestor. Anna gives birth to Panagia, Panagia gives birth to Christ, Christ becomes Son of the God, Panagia becomes the saint of saints and the Godbirth, Her mother in turn becomes also a saint. Motherhood is highly appreciated.

The image of Panagia is the image of a mother. To extend this metaphor to its extremes, means to employ the image of Panagia as the monks do in Mount Athos. Panagia for the monks is the ideal mother; It is through motherhood that Her role as a woman, becomes acceptable. Mount Athos is Her kingdom and She is the queen, and the servant, in the same way the woman is queen in her house and no other woman can dispute her primacy. As Edmunds (1986:327) notes, the cult of Mary is based on an earthly dimension of Mary, who as a mother shares the daily experiences, emotions and

relationships with humans. It is for this reason that both secular and divine prescriptions of Panagia appear to convey Her as the main source of charity, something which is witnessed in most of the miracles.

Investigation of the domestic/public dichotomy and its relationship to gender roles is especially important in Greece where, as in other Mediterranean societies, the dichotomy is highly developed and strongly gender linked. Within any Greek village, there is a sharp physical demarcation between the private sphere, bounded by the walls of the house, and the public areas, the streets and the squares (Hirschon, 1978, 1981). In some areas of Greece, the house is likely to be occupied by an extended family; in others, the conjugal family is more common residential unit. The family's privacy is guarded both symbolically and physically by the house in which it dwells. Although the houses in most Greek villages are clustered closely together, forming a nucleated settlement, they are arranged so that maximum privacy is assured (Dubisch 1976, Friedl 1962). This privacy is also assured in the monkish cells, yet, I do not intend to view the monastery as a household as M. Iosifides (op.cit.:94-103) does for the convent, even though there is a basis for such an attempt. For example, the monks often stated, "we are like a family here" (**eimaste mia oikogenia edo**). "Oikoyenia" (family) in its broadest usage, means all those upon whom one can depend for enduring, unconditional loyalty and support (Campbell 1963:78). The same metaphor-in

its extreme use- is utilized in villages serving to identify the community as a bounded and unified entity (Pina Cabral 1986:150-151).

The house, the center of domestic life, is both physically and morally associated with the woman (du Boulay 1974). The women is ideally restricted to the house as the location of many of her basic tasks. As mothers, women seem to serve as intermediaries between the natural, the social and the spiritual worlds. In S. monastery for example, the thaumaturgical icon of Panagia, according to monks narrations was often found outside the temple, thus protecting the monks. The role of Godbirth, thus the role of mother is to protect and mediate between two different worlds. This intermediate role is exemplified by the activities of cleaning and washing, indications of both the physical and moral cleanliness of the household (Dubisch 1986:206, Friedl op.cit.:42-43). The woman as housewife is responsible for keeping the house clean, cooking, setting out the clothes and feeding the children. In this sense she can be considered as the servant of all residents in the house, the same way that Panaghia is God´s servant. The woman is in the house, "mesa sto spiti" or "oikouros".

Nevertheless, the house becomes her kingdom within the frame of which the woman defines her dominance while simultaneously protecting her chastity (de Boulay, 1986). This view identifies directly with that of the Church. Bishop Petros Christodoulias in his book "Panaghia" writes:

"...and of course a woman that has to do all this work in the house, has no time to do the unnecessary, harmful work out of the house". Any work which is to be done out of the house and is unrelated to it, is considered "unnecessary" and "harmful". The woman is typically described as being "in the house" (Mesa sto spiti), or "it is the woman who holds the house together" (i gineka sigrati to spiti), or "without woman you can't maintain a house" (choris tin gineka to spiti den ginete), or "woman is second God" (i gineka eine defteros Theos), or "woman can become like the mother of God" (isa me tin Panagia), or "woman is the mother of God, she is the church" (i gineka eine i mitera tou Theou, eine ecclesia) (Du Boulay op.cit.: 141). Yet, Panagia is not often associated with virginity, as in Catholic Europe, but with the image of Theotokos (Godbirth). It is Her motherly quality that is central to Her symbolic position.

All these anthropological observations accord with a vision of female sainthood that wants even women saints tied to motherhood. In this regard it is understandable that most of the female saints were mothers. For, the image of women is identified, even in female sainthood, with that of the mother.

In this regard one can easily explain why "as women, the nuns are viewed by many villagers as deviants and social failures since they have not fulfilled their procreative purpose in life" (M. Iossifides, op.cit.:15). Yet, this view expands to the point of including the monks as not being

"real" men. The monks' abstinence from sexual intercourse as well as their religious manners put them apart from the "macho" archetypes of the lay man. For example, when I was sitting in the monastery's yard the novice P. approached kindly and requested me not to sit on the bench with my legs crossed because as he said: "the Fathers do not like it to sit that way" (**den aresei stous monachous na kathestai stauropodi**). Stauropodi is a very manly way of sitting in the coffee shop, a place where men meet. According to the monks this way of sitting in the monastery demonstrates lack of respect, or lack of timidity.

The public sphere in villages, on the other hand, is open freely to men, and ostensibly it is the men who shape events in it. "Women do not loiter in public space as men do, but rather enter it only to perform specific tasks or on particular occasions, such as "**panigiria**" or saint's day celebrations." (Dubisch 1976). But it could be argued that exclusion works both ways, and that generally in rural Greece it is considered better for a man not to spend too much time in the house, but instead to pass his leisure hours with other men in some public space like the "**Kafenio**", coffeehouse, a place traditionally forbidden to women (Loizos 1981).

To return to the monks, they are not allowed to leave Mount Athos without a written permission. The same applies to the domain of the monastery (Katastatikos Chartis, Article 96, Aggelopoulos 1987:152). However, one is obliged to

define in the space of the monastery the limits between the public and the private. If I insist on using the term private rather than the term domestic, it is because the latter applies better since the monastery is regarded as an entity. The private sphere, and therefore privacy in the case of hagiorite monks, goes with solitude. Consequently, the dichotomy between the public and the private identifies with the areas where the monks function as a community, and those where they function as "individuals". There is no place in the monastery equivalent in function to the village square (**platia**) nor is there a "kafenio". Broadly speaking I would say that the public sphere for monks starts and finishes in the Church. Working (**diakonima**) and eating together (**trapeza**) provide two inevitable exceptions. However, the monks spend most of their time in their cells. There is a common room in the monks' aisle, yet, monks generally prefer to visit each other in their cells.

Conclusion: Life here life there: reality and imagination

The conclusion coming out from this limited study is that the difference between the monks and laity is insufficient to fully explicate the profound distinction between the sacred and the evil, the divine and the secular. In the divine sphere there are different levels of divinity, represented by God, Christ (the Son), and by the saints. Christ is also a saint, but moreover He is a God. The saints on the other

hand represent an altogether lower level of divinity. The saint of all saints is the mother of Christ. A mother-image saint (that of Panagia) seems to monopolize preferences in the sphere of sainthood, something which is illustrated in the recounting of most miracles.

Divinity starts from sainthood. The distinction between the divine and the secular world is not to be understood merely in the opposition between the monks and the laity. The monks differ from laity and they definitely comprise a category of "others", for, they wish to attain to the saints' qualities by following the same life-style. As Turner argues: "The monastics often find themselves betwixt and between the human and the divine world, for they too are humans, though they, unlike the laity, seek to attain deification and their true nature to God" (op.cit: 1985:52).

The monks use different terms to refine the way they perceive the divine world. The term **hagios** as well as the term **osios** are not only used to clarify the possible disimilarity of them to laity, but furthermore to separate the monks from the saints. Father K. stated: "Ti iero kai vevilo paidaki mou, ola iera kai ola vevila einai", meaning, (this world that we live in) "everything is sacred and evil at the same time". The monks can be seen as potential saints because they live the way saints lived, but due to the fact that they possess no saintly qualities, they remain very close to the secular world.

My assiduity to define what finally hagiosini is, led

Father I. to new explanations. Yet, his use of rhetorical schemes, directly taken from the sphere of theology, did not always assisted my comprehension. He talked about the distinction between "**ktiston**" and "**aktiston**" (created and un-created) and about the only real existing difference between the "creator" (**dimiourgos**) and the "creation" (**dimiourgima**). Anyway, he ended his unavailing efforts by saying: "You cannot distinguish people from each other. All people are created saints, for a single man can be a whole world and a whole world can be a single man. Christ, for example is both." Father I. realized that I could not follow his thoughts, so he took my notebook and made the following sketch.

```
                                                  ____________
[_______saints_____________________][_Saints_]
                 ____________The_world____________________
```

He then explained: "We are all saints in this world but the saints of the Church are saints with capital "S", whereas the rest are saints with small "s". "I asked if by the "S" (capital) saints he means the monks saints. Father I. then revised the sketch as below and asked a question:

```
                                                  ____________
[_Lay_Saints_][_____Monastic_Saints_________]
                 ____________Saints_____________
```

If all these are saints with capital "S", how many of them, in your opinion, have followed the monastic way?". Anticipating his answer to this question I drew a demarcation line on the left side and he accepted it. Next I asked:

```
[_____saints_____][_Saints___]
_____monks_____
```

"If all these are the monks how many of them are saints with capital "S" and how many are just saints?". Without hesitation he declared: "Only very few of them" and he drew the bracket on the very right side of my sketch.

According to the monks, the only "real" distinction is that between the "created" (**ktisti**) and the "un-created" (**aktisti**) energy of the God. The holy area is un-created, whereas, the secular is the created one.

Through the data collected and presented in this chapter, one may come to a schematization of the distinction between the divine and the secular areas. The boundary between actiston and ktiston cannot be crossed, no matter how spiritual one may become. Celibate priests and monks are more likely to be posted in an intermediate area between the divine and the secular. Saints, for example, reach the point at which they can visualize the un-created (aktisti) essence of the Holy area. Contact, as have I said before, determines substance.

In table c., I try to classify the different levels (areas) of divine and secular spheres, in an attempt to elaborate the classical Durkheimean distinction between the "sacred" end the "evil" (divine and secular). At the top of the diagram lies the holy area, represented by the holy trinity. In the bottom of table c. stands the secular area, represented by the laity. Between them, two intermediate

areas exist. The first is that of the saints, and the second that of the celibate monk-priests, monks and finally lay priests. The upper intermediate area appertains to that of the holy, whereas the lower intermediate area appertains that of the secular.

The saints sanctity, as we saw in miracles, is less powerful and important of that of Panagia (for the latter is the mother of God). Their place lies somewhere between the human and the divine. Panagia is the highest saint in the scale of sainthood. It is also implied that Panagia is a member of the Holy Trinity, symbolizing the unity of the world (through Church) and the unity of the family. Monastics are -as they say- "married" to the divine therefore their involvement with holiness is something more than affinity, it ascribes better as the relationship between male and female.

```
          _____________________________
         [      Father (God)            ]
         [      Son (Christ, God)       ]__Holy area
         [      Holy spirit (Mother...?) ]  (Holy Trinity)
         [______________________________]
         [      Panagia, Mother         ]
         [              _Hiero-martyrs  ]__Higher interme-
         [      Saints_[                ]  diate Divine
         [             [_Osio-martyrs   ]  area, Sainthood
- - - - - [- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - ]- - - - - - - - - -
         [      Hiero-monks ]           ]
         [      Lay priests ] Celibacy  ]__lower interme-
         [______________________________]  diate divine
         [      Lay-priests             ]  area.
         [______________________________]
         [      Laity                   ]__Secular area
         [______________________________]
```

Table c.

Only very few monks are priests in the monastery.

Priests (Hieromenoi) represent a refined monastic category. They are the mediators between the divine and the secular. Although priests are not part of the "official" monastic hierarchy they have, as performers of the ritual, a closer contact with the divine and therefore they are placed on a higher rank. The priest quality is maintained even in sainthood. Saints who were priests are called Hieromartyres, whereas, saints who did not hold the priest office are called Osiomartyres. Being "**hieros**" is more important than being "**osios**".

In the lowest intermediate sphere we find the lay priest. Lay priests are married and therefore closer to human thus afar from divine "nature". Lay priests comprise the beginning of the secular world. When talking about a lay priest Father T. said: "**den itan para enas aplos papadakos**", meaning, "he was nothing but just a little priest".

As I have pointed out in the slow unfolding of this chapter, the divine sphere starts from sainthood. The saints are proclaimed as such after their passing. Saints were referred to me as dead-immortals (**eine nekroi-athanatoi**). To be a saint is to have died yet, remain immortal. In the end of a monk's burial ceremony, the brotherhood of monks exclaims in chorus: "**athanatos**", meaning immortal.

Rationally to adore immortality should mean to marvel life, yet, for the monks this is not so. The monastic admiration for immortality implies their aversion not only toward secular life, but to all sentient life. Living as if

you have died stresses awareness of the significance of life after death, since divinity starts after death. This awareness, as I intend to show further on, reflects upon all monastic values.

According to the monks the earthly life takes its meaning only when it is coloured with spirituality, thus with mystery. The hagiorite monks insist on the notion that life deprived of mystery is nothing but a boring and senseless experience. Father Symeon in one of his interviews says: "I suffer from something; I am bored with living" (Magazine "Tetarto" January 1986). Only mystery seems to comprise an important reason for the monks to live. However, mystery - the interaction between the secular and the divine, between man and God- takes place merely in the Church.

The life of a monk makes sense when it appertains to "life in death", or as the monks say, "zoe en tafo". "The Holy Mountain is a community of the dead, or more exactly a community of the dying, of the inexistentialist. I mean the monk dies daily in order to live. Voluntarily he becomes dead to the world. He may arrive at inexistence in order to exist beyond existence." (Symeon Grigoriatis, 1983:12). The price for immortality is life itself, and that equals to living the present as if you have died.

Death, however, is just a gate, the passport to enter divinity or as the monks say: "Death is the age-old problem. Yet, at the same time is the *litrosis* (salvation)" (op.cit:12). In fact the dark habit among other things

symbolizes death. The monks poetically say; "we have been dressed up the night".

The point that I wish to make in sum, is that the real distinction between divine and secular world springs out from the opposition between death and life, corresponding to the distinction between the society of the dead-alive (sainthood) and the society of the living (people). In other words, the distinction between the secular and the divine finds, in monks' point of view, its ultimate vindication as a discrimination between mortal life and immortal one. The hagiorite monks seem to have bridge this gap by placing their saints in the sphere of living. By doing this, immortality is reduced to a basic component of their ideology and finally to something practically real.

In most monasteries the saints' relics are kept in a side chapel next to the main Church. This chapel is thus formed as if the saints could raise from their tabernacles, sit in the chairs and talk. Accordingly, in Catholic Churches one can see that saints and eminent personalities are buried into the Church. A second evidence proving the argument of the saints symbolic presence into the Church, is that the walls are decorated with huge hagiographies (icons).

The interrupted unity between the secular and the divine, created by death, is represented by the saints' symbolic presence throughout hagiographies. The worlds of the mortals and the immortals do meat and interact symbolically into the Church. According to the monks the

Church is the vehicle which unites the gap between the world of mortals and that of immortals. The Church functions and acts in monastic symbolism as a lift which unites Earth with Heaven, secular with the divine, mortality with immortality, death with life. This is the reason why the walls of the Church are decorated with the graphs of all the saints: of all those who have gained eternal life.

CHAPTER 4

Life in the Church: The transcended notion of time

Introduction

In this chapter I wish to introduce the reader to a discourse concerning the role of the Church in the monastic community. I chose to concentrate on this issue because the life of a monk in the Church, called Liturgical life (**liturgiki zoe**), comprises a considerable part of his daily activities.

I hope to illuminate, firstly the way by which the Church organizes everyday life into the monastery, and secondly the symbolism referred to the services and the Liturgy.

In fact the Church at a symbolic level is conceived as a melting-pot through which one has to dive in so as to "unite" himself with the society of all those who, according to the monks, have defeated death. As I have tried to show in chapter three, the society of the dead-immortals comprises the sphere of divinity. In the Church the monks usurp symbolically these divine characteristics.

The fact that the Church lies at the center of the monastery shows its symbolic importance to monastic life. This importance in respect to my personal anthropological contemplation will be determined to an explanatory, concerning the role of the Church in monastic life. This explanatory, however, will make use of two different

approaches.

The first approach will stand on an observational level by which I will describe the Church's decoration, its practical and symbolic construction. In addition to this I will comment on the worshipping attitude of the monks and the interaction between those who perform the services, the rest of the monks and the pilgrims. The monkish worshiping attitude, as I intent to show, varies by analogy to the parts into which the Church is divided. To explain the reason for this I will use not only the data gathered in the field but also an interesting discussion I had with the eminent theologian, high priest and lecturer at the theology department of University of Durham, Dr G. Dragas.

The second approach will be based on the monks' point of view; Specifically on the metaphors they use to describe their churchly experience, as well as the meaning of the Church from a theological angle. By this second approach, the monkish views concerning their life in the Church will be used, as a supplementary means, to enter the abstract sphere of mystery.

I will attempt to present mystery in the simplest possible and comprehensible way, by translating the monks' religious culture -and by this I mean their theological culture- into a sociological discourse. Of course, I have to admit in advance, that my efforts to push forward meanings and perceptions of monastic culture concerning the issue of Church, will be of a limited value due to my poor theological

background. Nevertheless, I find it hard to restrict myself because, as I have pointed out elsewhere, monastic theology provides, in my point of view, a tool toward interpreting monastic ideology.

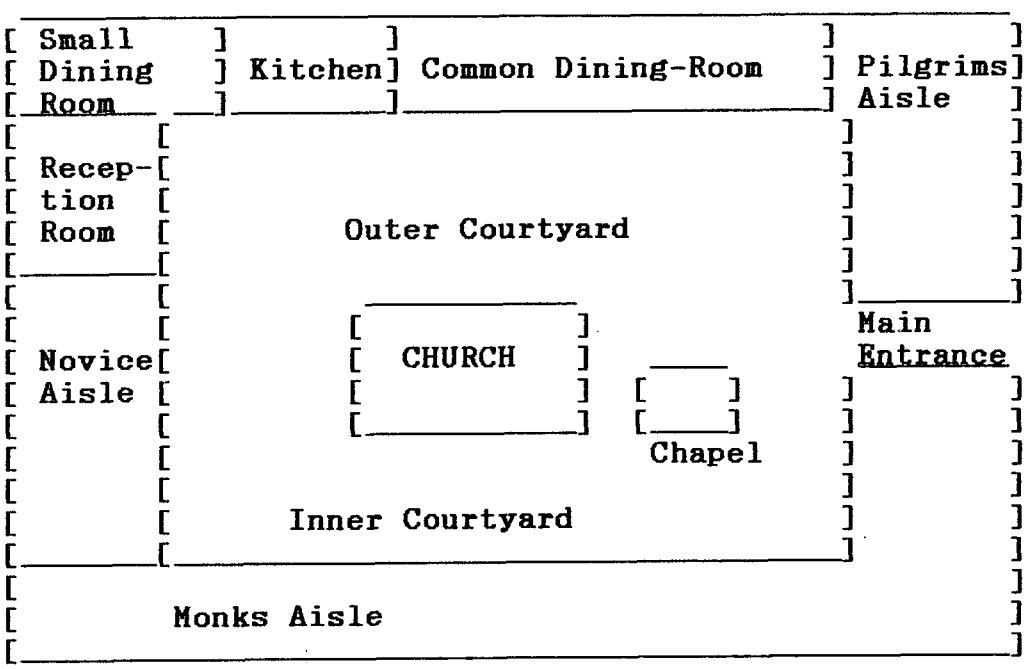
Before expanding on my presentation, it would be helpful to initiate the reader into the confines of the monastery, emphasizing on an area description into which the monks practice their religious culture. By doing this I intent to show how physical and symbolic boundaries retain the dichotomies, as well as the possible interaction between the monks and the laity.

Boundaries in the monastery: Public and private

The monastery has one main entrance. Entering this, one faces the dignified harmony of the stone-made buildings and their wooden-dressed balconies that comprise an excellent spectacle of extreme beauty for even the most difficult taste. The hagiorite monasteries are usually three-storeyed buildings like castles, for they are wrapped in very thick walls, however, nothing but simplicity is there, nothing eccentric. The style of rural architecture makes the monastery look, despite its huge size, either as an old mansion or as a simple village-house.

One side of the monastery is for the pilgrims and the opposite one is for the monks, making the interaction between laity and monastics as avoidable as possible. Respectively,

the courtyard near the monks' aisle, in the back of the Church, is the inner one, whereas, the other, near the aisle where the visitors reside, is the outer one. Visitors are not allowed to walk in the inner courtyard, as it is left exclusively for the monks. If somebody passes this imaginary boundary he is kindly advised to leave the place, unless he is well known to the monks, that is to say, he is not a stranger (**ksenos**).



Ground Plan of the Monastery.

On the right hand as you enter the main entrance there is the reception room called Archodariki and nearby this there is the small dining room where the visitors eat by themselves during the days of the monks' fasting. Next to that there is the kitchen and near by the kitchen the big Common Dining Room called "**Koini Trapeza**".

What is in the diagram applies to the ground plan of the ground floor. On the second and third floors there are more rooms and sitting rooms for the pilgrims. In some monasteries these floors contain the libraries and the places where the valuable items are kept safe.

I have to admit that data concerning the monks' private life are quite limited. My interaction with the monks, did not reach to the point where I could witness moments from their life in the cells.

During my stay in the monastery, though the monks I use to talk with often visited me, I was never invited to visit them. On the contrary, when I asked a monk to show me the way to Father I. cell, he told me: "You are not allowed to enter the monks' aisle, I shall call him for you".

Monks and laity reside in different aisles in the monastery. On the basis of this remark, it is possible to argue that the secular and the divine are not supposed to interact. This assumption however, presupposes that divinity is exclusively represented by monastics. It also implies that there is no interaction between those two oppositions. Physical boundaries retain the dichotomy between monks and laity in the monastery thus preventing the regular interaction.

As M. Iossifides argues in her work concerning nuns, "private prayer, eating, and cooking are the key activities which must be shielded from those outside. These are times when the nuns feel themselves most vulnerable and open to

Temptation (peirasmos). It is therefore, not the dining rooms or cells as sacred rooms but the use made of them during particular times in the day which grant them their importance. They must assure that these spaces, both physically and spiritually, inhibit penetration from outside" (op.cit.:102).

To reach the point where one is permitted to visit a monk's cell means to pass the stage where he is no longer regarded as a "stranger" (**agnostos, ksenos**). In Greek ethnography the expression **dikos/ki mas** (the person/persons belonging to us; one of us) places members of the one group in opposition to another group. It is a contextual term for one who is a member of a group, as insider, in one instance, but in another context an outsider. (see Herzfeld 1983, Mandel 1983:175). The insider-outsider may be a neighbour or a relative, thus, somebody who is close to the household, yet, he shares partly its benefits.

Some regular pilgrims visit a specific monastery apparently because they have created close spiritual ties with some monks. The passage to this stage indicates a sort of familiarity and mutual trust leading to friendship, but more possibly to a relationship similar to that, of a lay believer and his spiritual guide or confessor. However, the acquisition of friendship of this kind does not abolish the dichotomy between the monks and the laity; on the contrary it stresses it. For, as I said, usually the pilgrims see the monks -especially when the latter happen to be priests- as

confessors.

On the other hand, ethnography concerning Greek society, provides, on another level, a range of proofs concerning how space is used to serve the creation of boundaries. For example, in village ideology it may be said that the house is in opposition to the square, reflecting the opposition between the domestic and public sphere (Beopoulou 1986, Herzfeld 1985:16, Papataxiarchis 1991, Hirschon 1983).

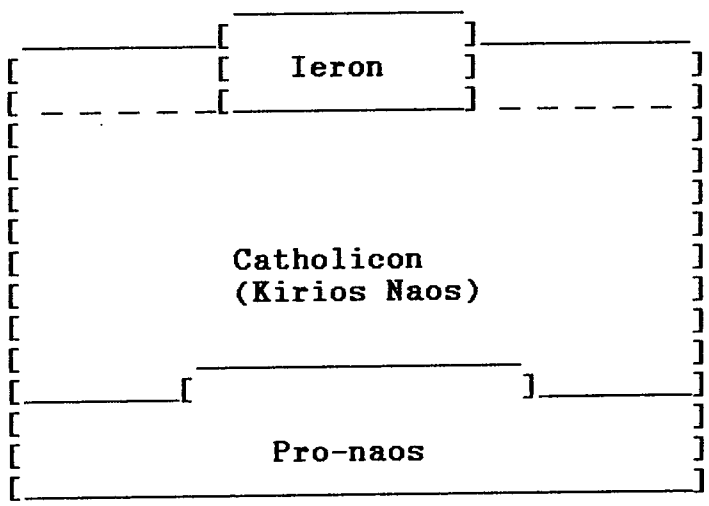
The dichotomy between the private and public sphere in the monks case may reflect the dichotomy between the secular and the divine. Yet, my use of private and public will follow another perspective. The spaces in the monastery where the monks are visible will be called public, whereas, those where monks cannot be seen will be considered as private.

All daily activities of a monk's life, except the hesychastic one, represent his public presence and action in the monastery. Attending the services and working, or as the monks say it, providing "**diakonima**" (voluntarily offered work), comprise the monks' public life.

The Church into the confines of the monastic community.

The Church as a building is divided into three main parts, each one representing a different level of spirituality and a different degree of contact with the divine. These parts are

the following: **a. Pro-naos or Narthex. b. Catholico or Kirios Naos. c. Ieron Vima (Sanctuary).** Before these three parts which can be found in all Churches there are two more parts which can only be found in monastic churches. These are the Liti and the Pre-narthex. My analysis concerning the Church and the parts in which it is divided will not take into consideration these two preliminary parts, basically because they do not seem to be of serious importance, that is to say, the reason of their existence nowadays seem to have been diminished especially in secular Churches.



Ground Plan of the Church.

The Church is located at the center of the monastic community in all hagiorite monasteries. The Church lies there as it symbolically lies at the center of the monks' hearts. The main Church entrance is always located at the West whereas the sanctuary lies in the East. Something which exists in all Christians Churches of all different dogmas.

The East symbolizes light and purity, whereas, the West darkness and sin.

One by one the monks enter the church dressed in their "official" habit. The official habit consists of a black cloak and the black head-gear. Both these two extra garments are symbols of celibacy and can only be used by monks who have been previously tonsured. (This habit is exactly the same with the one the celibate priest wears in the "worldly" Churches). The official habit is used only when in the Church and during dinners.

Pilgrims and monks enter from the West side of the Church, they bow in front of the hagiographies (icons), cross themselves and then they stand into the main part of the Church (Catholikon or Kirios Naos) looking toward the East side where the sanctuary (Ieron) lies. The main Church entrance is located at the West while the sanctuary lies at the opposite end facing East. As I have already mentioned East symbolizes light , goodness, truth whereas West symbolizes darkness and sin. In this way, one enters the Church through sin and progresses toward grace and light, toward God (Iossifides, op.cit.:103).

The most impressive and important partition in the Church is the <u>templo</u> (or iconostasi--image stand) which separates the sanctuary from the nave. The templo is decorated with icons or sacred images prohibiting one from observing the priest performing the sacraments within. The templo has three entrances. The central entrance is called

Royal or Holy Gate.

Monks and pilgrims do not interact within the Church, in fact, they are separated. As I have observed most of the monks sit nearby the places where the chorus sings. The worshipping attitude is also different. The monks often prostrate themselves during the services, moreover they do not enter the Catholikon once they have not purified themselves. Usually they do this in the Narthex.

According to the hagiorite monks the necessary procedure of purification involves a kind of prayer, called **metanoia** (repentance). Often some of the monks would stay in these two preliminary parts of the Church throughout the whole service, exactly for this reason. When asked they would answer that they had been advised to do so by their spiritual guide (pneumatikos).

To the monks this purifying procedure is a necessary psychological and spiritual preparation before attempting to enter the main part of the Church. Since a mystery is held in the Church, and by this we mean the interaction between the divine and the secular, if one is to be in the position of receiving the "goods" of this interaction, must "empty" his mind and heart from his "sinful" thoughts and "bad" feelings. It is for this reason that he remains in the first two parts of the Church doing what the monks call "repentance" (<u>kanei metanoia</u>).

The Church and the dining room are the two exceptional places where monks and laity meet, though, they do not

necessarily interact. The Church is not merely a place where people interact in a "social" way. In the Church people are supposed to interact personally with God through the priests' mediation. The division between the divine and the secular in the Church is represented by the priests and the church-goers.

There is also a discrimination between the monk-chanters and the rest of monks. The monk-chanters are called "chorus". There are two "chores" chanting in the Church, one at the left side and one at the right side. Laity are not allowed to come close to the chanting areas.

As we shall see further on, the Church does not only serve to restore the dis-continuity of life created by death, but it also implies the unity between the "one" and the "cholon", between the man and the community, between the members of the "cosmic" society or even the members of a family.

The Church as a public area of private prayer

My participation in the life of the church and the liturgies, became a daily task, and indeed a very difficult one. A full participation in the liturgical life demanded a daily attention of at least a total of eight hours. The difficulties one has to encounter in this daily attendance of the liturgies, especially when he is a regular church-goer, like me, are a lot. Yet, this task provided me the key of

understanding how a monk turns from an earthly individual to a member of the brotherhood of monks, a member of the Church and finally, a social human being charged with a monastic role of a divine significance.

The monks themselves believe that the more one participates in churchly life the more does he deny his secular self. As a result his attitude towards things appertains to divinity and tends to become abstract and rather symbolic. This symbolic attitude is clearly visible in the Church. The dialogue between the two chores (left and right chanters), the priest, and the monks is surprisingly evocative. But the story does not end there. The symbolism a monk is subjected to during the services is inevitably carried outside, for example, in his Diakonima (work) which I am going to present in the next chapter. Consequently the transportation of the divine symbolism out of the Church, has the effect of either terrestrializing the symbols of the divine or the "taking off" of the terrestrial ones.

Regarding this, the fateful meeting of the divine and the secular forms intermediate planes of theology. Planes of theology where sometimes a more secular attitude towards the divine dominates but some times it is the opposite. Theology however, will be faced as something more than ideology; As what we call belief (**pistis**), with the teleological meaning of the term. In contrast to this, the monks insist that "when we talk about patristic theology, we are talking about the testimony of the Fathers' lives; about the impression

made by the presence of a theologian, not simply about the outcome of his intellectual industry" (Archimandrite Vasileios, 1984:24).

Given this, monastic theology will be used to cover the gaps of interpretation, for, as I believe theology distinctively epitomizes the monastic ideology, especially when liturgical life is concerned. After all the Greek term describing the services is "Liturgia", this term is identical to the secular use of the word "liturgia", meaning a public service or duty. Greek social scientists have adopted this term as equivalent to the English word function.

It is expected however, that within the monastery the divine should always be in opposition to the secular. Yet, this is not so. Those two contrasting poles meet during the liturgies in the Church and they do interact -as the monks believe-in an invisible mysterious way to create the society in Christ. After all the term for community, **koinonia**, is the same word used when referring to Holy communion, Theia Koinonia (Iossifides, op.cit.:256).

The central role of the Church in the monks' life elaborates satisfactorily the difference between the laity and the monastics. It is true that lay men in villages are not regular church-goers. Although the Church belongs to the activities of the public sphere, a sphere strictly connected with male dominance, church-going is an activity linked with women. This observation is by itself enough to distinguish the lay male attitude from the monastic male one.

Church is the place where the private becomes public, not in a social way with the ordinary use of the word, implying some kind of interaction between the Church participants, but with the collective meaning of it. Church-going, in this regard, comprises the accepted monkish attitude toward the monastic brotherhood and the divine.

Elements of this accepted church-going attitude can also be paralleled with the secular women's attitude toward the Church. Women in villages, as I have already mentioned, are accepted to participate in the services taking place in the Church (du Boulay 1979, 1983).

In general women's public activity is in inverse proportion to the private (domestic) one. The more the woman is concerned with her household the less is she concerned with the public issues (politics). More specifically, women who are involved with child-bearing, consider all public activities as matters for men only. Nevertheless, although the Church is a public place, it is the women's "authority" to prepare the Church for the great celebrations. On the contrary men seem indifferent to the Church, although this is supposed to be included in their activities as a part of their public interests.

It is possible to argue that the Church and the church-going, for the monastics, substitutes the absence of the public life. Regarding this, I argue that participating in the services proves the monks' interests to be involved in public matters. Moreover, the monks who join all the

services are considered to have understood the essence of the monastic experience. Given this, church-going, as a public activity, serves a double objective. Firstly as a public activity, it shows an external accepted attitude and secondly as a private the deep understanding of divinity. It is also important to stress here the "obligatory" participation of all the novice monks.

Although the Church is considered as a place of personal prayer, actually it is the place where the monk accepts the divine grace in public. One thing that I know for sure is that the contact -if so- between God and man in the Church is always described as a personal experience. Never was it referred to me a collective "glimpse" of God's grace. In other words the Church is a place where the monks prove their relationship with the divine by acting publicly. In this sense the Church provides a perfect alibi of one's subjection to divinity. In the Church the monk is mortified in public by imputing his existence to his creator. The Church therefore becomes the real and the mental center around which the mass of the monks becomes a society: "the society in Christ".

Moreover, the monks confirm the formation of a holy society in the Church; The society of the baptized in the name of Holy Trinity. The unity of this society, which includes the dead and the alive, abrogates the conventional boundaries between the past, the present and the future, proclaiming a cosmological unity as an eschatological event.

For this reason, the Church lies symbolically in the centre of the monastery as, in the villages, it is thought to be the center of the community. The Church represents, as "the house of God", His private place which is open to anyone willing to become a Christian. Therefore the Church is potentially a meeting place thus, a public place; A place for everyone who believes in Christ.

Due to the divine significance of the Church the monks show a great deal of respect for it. For example, the Church is actually the second place where the monks wear the complete habit (the first is while eating).

Metaphors illuminating the meaning of the Church

To monastic ideology the Church is seen as a means to rehabilitate the discontinuity created by death. Dead and alive are somehow united into the confines of the Church. For example, the dead saints have their place in the Church, thus they exist together with the laity who, as pilgrims, visit the Church.

Regarding this, the notion of time takes another character in the Church; Past and present are suppose to be linked during all services. According to the monks the future and the infinitive are of great importance. The Church symbolizes the divine area of imperishability where everything and everyone should tend to. It is in this regard that "when an Orthodox (monk) is asked about unity, his mind

goes, not to something human or perhaps reserved, but to something infinite and divine. The unity of the Church is organized, lived and revealed following the death which leads to eternal life. The unity of the Church has the dimensions of freedom and the constitution of the new life (Kainis Viotis)." (Archimandrite Vasileios, op.cit.:12).

The Church is therefore a preliminary stage for the "new life" (Kaini Vioti). This "new life" is, however, a "death which defeats death and leads to eternal life to true unity and interpenetration (perichorisis) with the divine". (op.cit.:12). Life in the Church according to the daily's Liturgy book, Oktaekhos, means interpenetrating with the area where "death is taken captive by death" (op.cit.:12).

The Church symbolizes divinity, the area of immortality which represents the infinite (see Chapter 3). To reach the infinite means to gain salvation. The Church confers salvation by mediating between the divine and the secular. The monks say: "**den iparchei sotiria ekso apo tin ekklisia**", meaning, "there is no salvation out of the Church". Salvation however, means to enter the sphere of immortality. Father I. elucidates this point in his own way, by declaring: "The Church is Christ Himself, and all the saints. As you know Christ defeated death and it is for this reason that He created the Church to save people from death. Noah, also carried inside the ark all the saints, thus he saved the whole world. For, the whole world is potentially a saint and all the saints carry Christ inside them."

To elucidate Father's I. views concerning the Church it is necessary to go back to the hesychastic perceptions of visualizing the divine. The hesychastic tradition, following the evangelic one, uses the body as a metaphor to illuminate the relation of man with God, and the relation of the secular with the divine in the Church. The Son of God, Christ, not only did he appear in the world with His charismatic substance but, also he unified Himself with human substances and he became one body with us (Ef. c, 6). Therefore the human body became the temple of the divine substance (Col. b, 9), a temple of the Holy Ghost which resides in us (A Corinth. f, 19). Regarding these evangelic references the monks from the Palamite period believe that Christ "exists within us and he enlightens our souls from inside (G. Palamas, Triades, I, 3, Paragraph 38, p 138).

The liturgical life is life in mystery. The mystery of the interpenetration of the secular with the divine. Mystery however, takes place in the Church. And it is due to the significance of mystery that life into the Church gains such an importance in the monastic life. Because to the monks mystery represents a symbolic area of action where the divine and the secular meet and interact. Accordingly this interaction in the Church fulfils the aim of their departure from the word, which is the experience of "kainis Viotis" and the creation of the "society in Christ" (<u>en Christo koinonia</u>). Regardless of the interaction, or as the monks prefer to say, interpenetration between the secular and the

divine though these two poles exchange qualities during the services they remain un-touched in the same way water and olive oil separate after their mix.

The Church is the "house of God". In the house of God the interaction or even better the interpenetration between the divine and the secular takes place as a symbolic action. This symbolic action is the solemnity of mystery. For the monastic substance is defined in mystery (Campbell-Jones 1980:92; Eliade 1989:16-17). In other words the solemnity of mystery in the Church, consists of all those symbolic actions where the divine and the secular meet and interact.

As Father I. stated: "The liturgical life is life in mystery while the mystery in Liturgy is the acquaintance of man with God". This interaction in its symbolic expression takes two basic forms. Firstly, as a reproduction of the drama of "metamorphosis" (transfiguration) of man to God. With the creation of the Church we have "the dwelling of God...with men" (Rev. 21:3). Secondly as an exchange, "Bringing before Thee Thine of Thine own, in all and for all" (Archimandrite Vasileios op.cit.:12). The significance of this mysterious interaction between the divine and the secular explains why is the Church the central figure in monastic life.

Father I. told my that life in the Church represents the mystical (mistiriaki) part of their life. While talking about the "prayer of the heart" (see Hesychast controversy, Chapter 2), he stated: "**i ekklesia einai i kardia tis zois**

mas", meaning, "Church is the heart of our life", as he added: "If you reverse this sentence, you will understand".

The Church is the heart of our life.
The heart is the Church of our life.

The Church is the Kingdom of God which "is within us" (Luke 17:21). "It is heaven on earth. The Church's aim is to remain on earth, and not to leave the world until it can make the world heaven" (Archimandrite Vasileios, op.cit.:46).

The notion of cyclical time according to the liturgical life

The Church and the activities revolving around the Liturgy and the services (**akolouthies**) provide a distinct focus in this work for the very simple reason that the rhythm of daily life in the monastic community is canonized by the "obligatory" participation in the services held in the Church.

Having committed himself to God a monk retains his continual contact with the divine by taking part in the liturgies and in all services. This in monastic life equals to what in lay context is seen as a task or duty (**Kathikon**).

According to the laity the very purpose of human existence is marriage and procreation. The monks, by contrast, believe that the purpose of human existence is eternal unity with God through the denial of the material

world and above all procreation.

It is the necessity of satisfying the needs of the family (oikogeneias) that gives a married male's profession its conscience character. To face work as a task shows the degree of commitment to family life. Likewise, the monks' participation in the services proves the degree of their commitment to monastic life. Regarding this, it is reasonable to assume that church-going in co-ordination to all kinds of abstinence promises divine fertility, expressed either as immortality or as miraculous action. This divine fertility replaces, in the monks' point of view, the secular notion of procreation.

If however, the life of a monk in the Church can be paralleled to the life of a lay in his work, this is not done in order to prove that work in lay context equals to Church-going in monastic context. What I intended to do was to understand or at least provide a possible functional explanation of what keeps the monastic life going. I wanted to find the regulating cause of the monastic life and of course the equitable starting-point which organizes and puts in order the monastic time.

Everyday life within the confines of the monastery follows a completely different rhythm from that of the secular world. Time is estimated differently. Broadly speaking in modern Greece the day is divided into three eight-hours shares; one for working, one for leisure and one for sleeping. On the contrary, time into the monastery does

not correspond to any kind of these lay arrangements. Of course there is time dedicated to the fulfilling of all human needs, but daily life follows a different pace, for, it is constructed to serve the need of the ritualistic life, the life in the Church and the services.

It is therefore the Church that organizes the rhythm of time in the monastery, because time follows the formality of the services. For example, the attendance to the services obliges the monks, or at least some of them, to stop their work. Moreover, through participation in the services one can understand how the monastic notion of time takes its cyclical character. The Liturgy, like the daily, weekly, and yearly cycles, as we shall see further on, is structured on the life of Christ from His infancy to His resurrection.

According to the monks during the tonsuring ceremony Christ is present in time and in space as a Bridegroom. Christ is also present during the services as **Archiereas** (High-priest), for this He is often depicted on the Holy Gate (templo). The monks believe that His presence is a constant revelation of His grace that exists without relevance to the historical notion of time. His invisible presence represents eternity thus uniting the past the present and the future to a common entity. The monks believe that Christ as a God is an eternal creature that represents "truth". What is true is eternal. Eternity, as shown in chapter three, is the ultimate goal of monastic experience. Regarding this, the Church is the place where this notional unity of time and

space is accomplished (Eliade op.cit.:102-110, Archimandrite Vasileios op.cit.:48-52).

The life of a monk is a constant attendance at the services. Monks participate in the services at least eight hours a day. The life in the Church is a duty for monks only but for the pilgrims as well. A notice exhibited in the court-masters (Archodariki), a sitting room in the pilgrims' aisle reads: "We suggest you attend the services which are the center of the monastery's life. Normally Vespers begins 3 hours before sunset, Compline 15 min before sunset and the morning Service begins 3 or 4 Hours before sunrise."

Daily, weekly and yearly services comprise the base on which the notion of time in its cyclical form is measured. The daily cycle follows the daily services as described in the book called "Orologion to Mega". The weekly cycle follows the book "Oktaichos". The yearly cycle follows the book "Ta Dodeka Miniaia" and finally, the life cycle follows the book "Euchologio to Mega", including the eight sacraments.

Daily cycle____Daily services_____Orologion to Mega

Weekly cycle___Weekly services____Oktaichos

Yearly cycle___Yearly services____Ta Dodeka Miniaia

Life cycle_____Sacraments_____Euchologio to Mega

Daily Cycle

There is a variety of different ways of calculating time on Mount Athos. In most hagiorite monasteries (in fact seventeen) the day starts at sunrise (see further on time table: monastic time a.). Only in one monastery does the day start at sunset (monastic time b.). Two monasteries, nowadays, follow the civilian time (secular time). For a better understanding of the way time is divided in the monastery, I will refer to the monastic timing in accordance to civil (secular) time.

Monastic time does not follow the rhythm of the clock. If time in the monastery starts either at sunrise or at sunset and given that the position of earth in reference to the sun changes from season to season, the monks have to move the pointers of their watches, at least every week. Assuming now that sunrise is at 6 a.m. (secular time), this is thought to be for most of the monasteries time 0 a.m. (see monastic time a.), whereas, in one monastery, the one I stayed the most, time starts at sunset; so at 5 p.m. (secular time), time in this monastery is 0 a.m. (monastic time b.).

Ideally, the ritualized life of the monks is daily divided into twenty-four hour which in turn are divided into two distinct periods of twelve hours each. The day begins in the evening and is divided into four clocks: Evening, from 6 to 9 p.m.; Midnight, from 9 to 12 a.m.; Cocks-crow, from 12

to 3 a.m., and Morning, from 3 to 6 a.m. From 6 a.m. onwards the day is again divided into four three hour periods, as follows: 6 to 9 a.m.; 9 to 12 p.m.; 12 to 3 p.m. and 3 to 6 p.m.. This has resulted in respectively eight services: Vespers (Esperino), Compline (Apodipno), Nocturne (Mesoniktion), Matins (Orthros), for the night and First Hour (Proti Ora), Third Hour (Triti Ora), Sixth Hour (Ekti Ora) and Ninth Hour (Enati Ora) for the day. The Typika, the pro-liturgy service, is read every day and the Liturgy (Liturgia) is held after the Typika. This forms the daily ritual cycle in the hagiorite monasteries. However, the eight services and the liturgy, do not always take place during this twelve hour period.

It was in my initial intentions to put down all the services taking place in the Church. Yet, this task proved to be a very difficult one, due to the fact that each service is immediately succeeded by the next, and for someone, like me, who is not familiar with liturgical life, it was hard to come to a time-clock classification of all theses rituals. Therefore in the following time table, instead of referring to the kind of the service taking place, I write "Church". Under it, in brackets, I write the type of the service, only when I am sure of it. As I have aforementioned not all monasteries follow the same way of calculating time, therefore in this time table there are two different ways of calculating it. Monastic time a. in the second column and time b. in the third column. The first column is the

transformation of both monastic times to the secular way of calculating time.

	Secular Time.		Monastic Time a.		Monastic Time b.	
a.m.	[0-1	] Resting	6-7		7-8	
Cocks-	[1-2	] Praying	7-8		8-9	
crow	[2-3	] Church	8-9		9-10	
		] (Matins,				
	[3-4	] Hours)	9-10		10-11	
Morning	[4-5		10-11		11-12	
	[5-6	] Church	11-12		12-1	p.m.
		] (Liturgy,				
Sunrise	6-7	] Paraklisis)	0-1	a.m	1-2	
	7-8	] Working or	1-2		2-3	
	8-9	]resting	2-3		3-4	
		] Church				
	9-10	]	3-4		4-5	
	10-11	] Lunch	4-5		5-6	
	11-12	]	5-6		6-7	
		]				
p.m.	12-1	] Work, tasks,	6-7		7-8	
	1-2	] Diakonima	7-8		8-9	
	2-3	]	8-9		9-10	
	3-4	] Church	9-10		10-11	
	4-5	] (Vespers)	10-11		11-12	
Sunset	5-6	] Dinner	11-12		0-1	a.m.
	[6-7	] Church	12-1	p.m.	1-2	
Morning	[7-8	] (Complines)	1-2		2-3	
	[8-9		2-3		3-4	
		] Church				
	[9-10	] (Nocturnes)	3-4		4-5	
Mid-	[10-11	]	4-5		5-6	
night	[11-12	] Resting	5-6		6-7	

Table d.

The monks explained to me that though they keep all the services, they cannot afford to follow the order as described in the "books", for they are obliged to attend to numerous duties in the monastery. They were therefore forced to arrange life in the Church so as to provide a long free

period in the middle of the day to complete their tasks.

In both monasteries I visited the monks told me that they would wake up at about half past one or two a.m. and they pray privately in their cells. When asked Father I. told me that praying at this time is done for the benefit of all people who are asleep at this time of the day. At three a.m. the Talanto, a long wooden board, is knocked rhythmically to awake both monks and pilgrims. When entering the Church the monks cross themselves. After that they kneel three times before the thaumaturgical icon of Panagia before the icon of Christ and finally before the throne of the Despot (Bishop's Chair). After having taken their places in the Church, especially those who are chanters, while the reading has started, they light the candles on, and the Liturgy takes place.

However, it is Vespers that signals the beginning of the day, while the morning Liturgy is thought to be the end of the previous day. Liturgy is therefore the crown-moment of ritualistic life. The mystery of Eucharist (Thanksgiving) takes place.

The morning services, including the Liturgy, last from two to four o'clock depending on the Typikon (ritual) of the "book" Orologion to Mega. By the end of this service, between six and seven a.m., the monks have breakfast, usually a slice of bread with coffee, or they rest. Still others may have to attend to duties around the monastery.

Between ten and eleven a.m. the sound of the wooden

board signals announcing lunch time. By the end of the lunch most of the monks attend to their tasks (diakonima) around the monastery, but those who have nothing to do, at this time of the day, go to their cells. At approximately five p.m. the talando (wooden board) sounds again for Vespers, marking the beginning of the new day. By the end of the Vespers all the monks move to the chaplaincy for a special service dedicated to Panagia. After this service dinner is served.

Half an hour after the end of the dinner, in the darkness, the monks come out of their cells and walk toward the Church like shadows. It is Compline (Apodipno) time. This service does not seem to be "obligatory" for the pilgrims, for very few of them participate. Compline lasts almost one hour, but sometimes it is extended, for reasons unknown to me, for one or even two more hours. The difference between the night and the day services is that the former ones are rather more mysterious. The alternation of Chanting between the two chorus is really impressive. Most of the monks sit quietly in their seats holding their heads in their hands while murmuring. They all seem to be in deep prayer.

Weekly Cycle

Weekly cycle follows the book Oktaichos. Every day of the week is consecrated in the honour of an event or of a specific saint. The monks fast three days during the week:

Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Also once a week, the monks stay awake, inside the Church for a special service dedicated to an important event, called "Agripnia".

The weekly cycle has as follows:

Monday (**Deftera**): in honour of the Holy Angels. The first fasting day, yet, the use of oil in the food is permitted.

Tuesday (**Triti**): in honour of the Prophets and in particular of John the Precursor (Baptist).

Wednesday (**Tetarti**): consecrated to the Cross of Christ. It is thought to be a day of deep mourning, and therefore it is a fasting day.

Thursday (**Pempti**): in the honour of all sainted bishops and monks. "Agripnia" day.

Friday (**Paraskeui**): consecrated to Christ's crucifixion. It is a day of deep mourning and fasting. Some of the monks eat bread only and those who do eat are not permitted to use oil.

Saturday (**Savvato**): in honour of all the saints and in particular of the Panagia. It is also in memory of all those who have died in the hope of resurrection and eternal life, especially the martyrs.

Sunday (**Kiriaki**): the first or the eighth day stressing "its difference from and a certain opposition to Saturday which forever remains the seventh day" (Schmemann op.cit.:69).

I have already stressed the importance of the event of Christ's resurrection. Saturday signifies the day before the rising of Christ, therefore, it is a very ritualistic day, a day of celebration. At Saturday Liturgy all the ordained monks (those who are priests) perform the Liturgy together. Moreover, during lunch, the twelve older monks and the Hegoumenos sit at a distinct table representing thus the Last Supper. Saturday marks the end of God's creation of this world. Yet, it is also the day before the Lord's Day. Kiriaki (Sunday) originates from the word **Kirios**, meaning Lord. But, Sunday is principally the day of Christ's resurrection. It signifies the conquering of death and the beginning of the Kingdom of Heaven on the Earth. Thus, the week ends and begins with the glory of the Eucharist and the promise of the Kingdom of Heaven.

There are six weeks throughout the year during which the weekly fasts are suspended in honour of joyous events. These are: The two weeks after Christmas; The week of the Publican and the Pharisee preceding Lent; The week before the beginning of Lent; The Easter Week and the week preceding Pentecost. The rules of fasting and performing the Liturgy

therefore are not rigid; they accommodate to the fluctuating calendar of the yearly religious rituals (Iossifides op.cit.: 262).

Yearly Cycle

Before attempting to describe the yearly cycle I have to repeat once more that I did not have the opportunity to observe the monastery's life for a whole calendar year. Therefore data concerning the yearly cycle are limited. This cycle is, however, defined by the book called Dodeka Miniaia.

The yearly cycle is divided into the Feasts of Christ and God; the Feasts of Panagia, and the saints' Feasts, in honour of the Holy Angels and holy persons. The feasts are also either fixed or movable. Fixed feasts return periodically on the same dates on the same month every year. Movable feasts occur yearly on the same day in the week but may occur on a different date or even a different month each year. The movable feasts are closely linked with Easter which is celebrated every year on a different date, though always on Sunday and in Spring time. This due to the fact that time is calculated in accordance with the Julian calendar and not the Gregorian, which is used in secular society.

Up until the end of world war one all Eastern Orthodox used the Julian calendar (Paleo-imerologitiko), which falls thirteen days behind the Gregorian calendar. In 1923 the

Gregorian calendar was adopted by most Orthodox Churches. Yet, not all the Hagiorite monasteries have followed this change. Easter, however, is still reckoned by all Orthodox in accordance with the Julian calendar reaffirming the importance of the tradition in the Orthodox Church and the stress on the timelessness of sanctity (Iossifides, op.cit.:262, 295)

The twelve Feasts are as follows:

1. The Nativity of Christ (Christougena), on 25th of December. Fixed.
2. The Epiphany (Ton Theofanion), on the 6th of January.
3. The Presentation in the Temple of the Infant Jesus (Tis Ipapandis) on the 2nd of February. Fixed.
4. The Annunciation (Evangelismos tis Theotokou) on the 25th of March. Fixed.
5. The Entrance into Jerusalem (Ton Vaion) on the Sunday preceding Easter Sunday. Movable.
6. The ascension (Tis Analipseos) on the fortieth day after Easter. Movable.
7. The Pentecost (Tis Pentikostis) on the fiftieth day after Easter. Movable.
8. The Transfiguration (Tis Metamorfoseos) on the 6th of August. Fixed.
9. The Assumption (Tis Kimiseos tis Theotokou) on the 15th of August. Fixed.
10. The Nativity of the Panagia (Tis Geniseos tis Theotokou)

on the 8th of September. Fixed.

11. The Exaltation of the Holy Cross (Tou Stavrou), on the 14th of September. Fixed.

12. The Presentation of the Panagia in the Temple (Ta Isodia tis Theotokou) on the 21st of November. Fixed.

These Twelve Feasts are what the monks call the Dodeka miniaia. Apart from the Exaltation of the Cross all of them are directly connected to the major events in the lives of Christ and Panagia.

The greatest preparations conducted are of course those of Lent which precede Easter. All the movable feasts comprise the Paschal Feast, Easter (Pascha), which is thought to be the most important feast, for, it is connected with Christ's resurrection. The Paschal Feast is highly ritualistic involving the representation of all mortuary rituals. "Easter marks the grandest expression of the Eucharist for it is this event, the resurrection of Christ and the promised and created unity between the Divine and human, that is striven for throughout the year. The day, the week and the year endlessly repeat and commemorate the cycle of birth, death, and resurrection as witnessed in the Eucharist" (Iossifides op.cit.:264).

Life cycle

If the daily, weekly and yearly cycles as presented comprise the great events of Holy persons' lifes, what defines the

essence of Church is the solemnization of the Seven Sacraments (Ta Efta Mistiria). The life cycle, according to the monks, is defined by these seven Mistiria, which are the following:

1. Baptism (Vaptisis): in which the person dies to his/her former sinful life and receives the grace of the Holy Ghost entering thereby into a new and holy life. This sacrament takes place usually when the individual is an infant and it is the God-parent (nonos/nona) who speaks for him/her. In this ritual the infant receives his/her "Christian" name.
2. Confirmation (chrisma): a sacrament received upon baptism in which, through the unction of different parts of the body with the holy chrisma, the infant is confirmed in its new Christian life.
3. Penitence (Eksomologisis): a sacrament in which one confesses one's sins and is pardoned outwardly by the Father confessor and inwardly "freed" from sin by Christ. Since the confession is a remission of sins it is called a "second baptism".
4. Sacrament of Marriage (To Mistirion tou Gamou): is the blessing of the conjugal union between a man and a woman in the image of the union between Christ and the Church.
5. Sacrament of the Holy Communion (Theia Metalipsis): is a sacrament in which the Christian partakes of the actual body and blood of Christ in the form of bread and wine. In this manner, the Christian is united with Christ and with

everlasting life. "He that eateth my flesh, and drikenth my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him." (Jonh 6:56).

6. Sacrament of Unction with oil (Eucheleon): is administered to a sick person. He/she is anointed with holy oil and the grace of the Holy Ghost is invoked to heal the sick both bodily and spiritually.

7. Sacrament of Orders (Cheirotonia): it is the sacrament in which one who has been canonically selected and ordained by a Bishop receives the grace of the Holy Ghost and may then perform the sacraments and administer a Christian Church.

The seven sacraments represent all the important events of a monk's life. At sight it seems that the Sacrament of Marriage as well as the Sacrament of Orders, have nothing to do with monastic life, yet, this is not so. The tonsure for example, as we shall see in chapter six, summarizes both these two sacraments.

The Church as a three stage rationale: An interview

Having "completed" my fieldwork and having studied the recommended books, a number of questions emerged from either my notes or my memories. Father G. Dragas, lecturer of Patristic Theology of Durham University provided the necessary aid to answer all these questions. Of course Father Dragas is not a monk, however, he is a respected theologian thus he has a great knowledge on all issues concerning Orthodoxy and he is very familiar with the

historical interaction between monks and ecclesiastics. The interview held with Father Dragas follows:

Ethnographer: Father Dragas, on the one side we have the monks and on the other the ecclesiastics. What is the relation between the Church and the monastics?

F.Dragas: I guess what you namely want to know is how monasticism infiltrated into the Church.

E: Is that how it happened?

F.D.: Yes, monasticism was inserted in the Church at 691 during the fifth-sixth Synod (eighth in proper rank). At that period the official Church could not find charismatic laity for priests and thus it was forced to "borrow" them from the monasteries. Many hagiorite megaloschemoi (monks of the major order) had reached to theosis (deification), they were theomenoi (deificated). Those who have reached to deification are considered authedies (authorities). All high priests until then were allowed to get married, they were not celibate. Even the apostles, upon whose the creation of the Church was built were married, for example, apostle Peter. However, there is another reason to explain this interference of the monastic value of chastity in high priesthood. The fortune of the Church originating from lay donations, passed after the high priest´s death, into the hands of their relatives. The regime concerning the Church´s financial status had been arranged with the political authority so as to protect the former from any possible interference. The

counties' Bishops as the earthly representative of the divine were considered the heads of the local Churches, therefore anything given to the Church (donations, properties) actually belonged to them. In this way Church and Bishop became identical. During the fifth Synod in 553 and the sixth in 680-1, the ecclesiastic hierarchy wishing to keep this fortune into the frame of the institutional Church, took the decision that Bishops are not allowed to get married, thus it was not possible for them to have heirs. By this measure they attempted to control the fate of this fortune. They did that indirectly, for it was impossible to do otherwise. According to the dogma a Bishop is thought to be the head of the Church "**eis tipon kai topon Christou**", meaning, "as a type and as a place of Christ".

E: What is the kind of influence the official Church received from the monastics, what is deification?

F.D.: When monasticism entered the Church the three stages expressing the monastic experience entered the Church as well. These three stages are the following: a. Catharsis (purification), b. Fotisis (illumination), c. Theosis (deification). To see how monasticism influenced Church, the three basic stages of priesthood (Deacon, Priest, Bishop) correspond to these monastic origin stages. In other words, these three spiritual stages, through which a monk passes in order to become an authentic (authority), consisted the three stages upon which priesthood (Ierosini) stands even today. In this regard, catharsis is the stage of a Deacon, fotisis

is the stage of a priest and theosis is the stage of a Bishop. The authendy (authority) in the Church is represented thus, by those who have reached the stage of theosis (theomenos), the Bishops. As we have three stages of priesthood corresponding to the three stages of spiritual life (catharsis, fotisis, theosis), the same classification goes for the liturgical place of the Church. In other words, the construction of the Church has incorporated this three-stage rationale. The narthex of the Church represents the catharsis, the main part (catholikon) is fotisis and the sanctuary (ieron) is theosis. That is why laity and moreover monks stand and pray in the narthex before entering the main part of the Church. The same three-stage rationale is found during the sacrament of Baptism. As you may know the Orthodox priests, on the day of a baby's baptism, solemnize not just one sacrament but three: Baptism, Confirmation (Chrisma) and Holy Communion. The sacrament of Baptism used to take place in the narthex, Confirmation in the catholikon and Holy Communion in the main entrance of the sanctuary. Nowadays, only Katichisis (catechism) which proceeds Baptism takes place in the narthex, while the rest are held in the main part (catholikon).

E: Do you mean that these three sacraments represent or symbolize this three-stages rationale as well?

F.D.: Baptism is a symbolic catharsis (Purification), Confirmation is a symbolic fotisis (illumination) and Holy communion is a symbolic theosis (deification).

E: Father Dragas what is the Church apart from an organization?

F.D.: As we the Orthodox believe, the Church is "in the world but not from the world" (eis to kosmon alla ouchi ek tou kosmou). The Church, from a theological point of view, is thought to be the body of Christ. The three parts in which the Church is divided represent a part of his body. The pro-naos (narthex) symbolizes his legs, the Kirios naos (catholikon) is his body and the sanctuary is his head. There is interaction between the man and the God in the Church. This is a mystagogy and you can tell this mystagogical interaction during the sacrament of the Holy Communion where we "drink His blood and we eat His flesh". As Christ is everything the Church is everything as well. Regarding this the Church represents a cosmological unity, for it includes everything. The pro-naos (narthex) is for the neophytes, the Kirios naos (catholikon) is for those who are baptized and the sanctuary is for the clergy (kliros).

E: You said that the Church is the body of Christ, however, there is a strong opposition in Orthodoxy between the flesh (sarka) and the psyche (psichi).

F.D.: In terms of theology there is no opposition at all. The Orthodox aim at the ressurection of both the body and the psyche, for example, Christ was resurrected bodily as well, and the saints' relics -as far as I know- smell wonderfully; This is a shine that even the body can hallow (agiazei). Practically, however, the needs of the flesh are quardian to

the needs of the psyche, thus preventing the latter from communicating with the divine. In other words, the body functions to cover the abilities of the soul. This is why abstinence -any kind of abstinence- fasting, for example, is recommended for the catharsis of the soul.

E: What is the difference between the psyche, the nous (mind), the pneuma (spirit)? There are so many different, yet similar terms, I have to confess that I am terribly puzzled with the identical use of all these different terms.

F.D.: Look, human is consisted of body and psyche. The psyche is comprised of three different energies. The first is Zotiki or Pnoi and it is responsible for the living of human body. The second is Logiki or Logos and it is responsible to formulate the human thought. Finally, the third is Noera or Nous. Noera is actually the eye of the soul. With noera the human perceives the divine, with logiki he finds the word (logos). I said before, that the Church is the Body of Christ; the Church as a representation of His body unfolds all these energies. The sanctuary for example, is seen as the heart or as the nous. Nous is actually the eye of the heart. The nous has gnostic abilities, thus **apofatikotita** (the ability to decide). In the Kirios naos (catholikon) the priest transports to the people (Laos) this visualization of the divine taking place in the sanctuary in the form of **katafatikos logos** (affirmative word).

Conclusion: Metaphors and reality

Hesychasm, as a method of visualizing the divine grace, was considered, even by G. Palamas, as opposed to the liturgical life. Therefore life into the Church was thought to be an alternative way of "deification", especially for those who were incapable to follow the psycho-bodily method of the hesychastic prayer. Thus, the role of the Church became central to the monastic life, for, according to the monks, when in the Church the believer takes a taste of Lord's imminent kingdom.

The Liturgy, as shown in this chapter, symbolises the monks vertical location within the society of the saints, the monks and the people as well. In other words, participation in the Liturgies serves the currency of contact amongst the secular and the divine substance. "In the Church, in the divine liturgy, the faithful who are offered to Him "in all for all" do not simply ask for but actually enjoy the union of all." (Archimandrite Vasileios, op.cit.:46).

However, the word "unity" as represented through metaphors, concerning the Church in monastic ideology, has a double or triple-edged usage. The Church, according to the hagiorite monastics, is either an ark or a household. As an ark it contains all humanity, and as a household it invites.

The monks' view the Church as a symbol of the holistic World (Kosmos). "The Church is the Kosmos, the order and beauty of the world. In it the whole world finds meaning and

harmony." (Archimandrite Vasileios, op.cit.:46). As Father I. argues: "The Church is the body of Christ and the saints and the people (Laos). Life in the Church proves that a man may be seen as the whole world, and the whole world can be seen as a man."

The term "World" (Kosmos), however, is something that the monks are supposed to "despite" by definition. Even Archimandrite Vasileios who is very careful in his vocabulary writes: "If we love the world, following the Lord's example we have to turn towards the Church and not towards the world" (op.cit.:46). In this small quote of Father Vasileios the use of the word "world" implies "en-cosmia", that is to say worldly matters, or manners.

Living in a worldly way, however, apart from other things, means living out of the Church. And this is the central stand point where the monks' life is diametrically opposed to that of the laity. The opposition between the divine and the secular human attitude springs out from the monkish opposition: people in Church as opposed to people out of Church. People who believe in Christ and those who do not. People who are baptized Christians consist the body of the Church. The equalization has as follows:

In Christ = In the Church

Christ is the Church

However, the monastic community is also called the

Brotherhood of Monks (Monachiki adelfotita), a metaphor which is better illustrated on the monks' belief: "We are like a family here" (**eimaste san mia oikogenia**). The etymology of the Greek term "**adelfia**" (siblings), from which the term adelfotita origins means from the "same belly". To give emphasis on their unification with the body of Christ and thus with the Church the monks say: "**eimaste mikra psaria stin kilia tou megalou psariou, tou Christou**", meaning "we are small fishes in the belly of the great fish, that of Christ's."

As is witnessed in the Ethnography of Greece, siblings are supposed to have the same blood; The substance of blood. In sharing this substance, they also share, to some extend, a common identity. People say that looks and even personality can be transmitted through blood (see Campbell 1979, Cutileiro 1971).

Of course the metaphors and symbols the monks use to describe their relation with the divine comprise just one way of viewing reality. In the monks' point of view, the Church is likened to an arc, thus as a cosmological symbol, as a household; the "house of God", or sometimes as a "parliament". (Have in mind that the Greek word for the Church is "ecclesia", the same name the ancient Atheneans used for the parliament; **Ecclesia tou Demou** = Parliament of people).

However, the Church is not a place for everyone. In Cod's house not all the people nor all the Christians are

allowed to enter the main part (Catholikon) of the Church. There is a prohibition concerning this issue outside the reception place (Archodariki) which says: "During Services non-Orthodox stay in the back part of the church (Liti)." Thus, immediately the cosmological unity implied by metaphors, regarding the Church as an arc, is practically restricted only to those who are baptized Orthodox.

As I was told the monks' frequent Church-going aims at making them all kind of a priest in some sense. Most of the monks I would observe in the Church were in the position of knowing all the different services by heart, especially those who have great monastic experience.

According to the monks' beliefs the closer to the Church one (monk) stands, the most his image becomes nearest to the image of a transcended human being -possibly that of the saints- thus appertaining to the qualities of their creator.

As I have already mentioned, in the Church the very simple action of the monks become a standing point where they exercise the symbolism of the divine, thus making each bit of their beliefs and action mean something more than it really is. Respectively, by transporting this symbolism out of the Church via working, eating, talking, all monkish actions take an intrinsic character. this I intend to present in the next chapter by examining the monkish values and activities.

CHAPTER 5

Monastic values and activities, work and norms of exchange

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the recording of the thoughts and actions, thus with both the actual functioning and the values that govern life in a coenobitic (coenobium) monastery. This study is based, firstly, on literary account, written by monks principally, and secondly on descriptions directly taken from monk-informants.

The whole spectrum of monastic activities and values will be used to illuminate the intrinsic logic that makes the monks' experience unique. It also explicates how monastics become from non-social human beings very social ones indeed; Not by increasing their sociality but, by improving their norms of co-operation.

This is a necessary complementary approach in order to examine how monastic ideology is lived in practice. As I have previously mentioned the same symbolism concerning the activities taking place in the Church springs up in even the slightest detail of the monastery's life and therefore a most thorough symbolic analysis can be undertaken.

More specifically this study will stress on the role of **diakonima** (work) in the monastic integration. The monks' participation in diakonima as well as church-going, define their organic link with the monastic community as a whole.

Each of those two activities serve to turn the monastery into a communal entity.

Working is a compulsory activity of monastic life, therefore diakonima provides the pragmatic base upon which monastics practice their values. On the other hand the practice of these values reveal the monastic ideology and the structure of life into the monastery, for they comprise the norms and rules upon which monastic life stands. Given this the monastic community appears to be a well-oiled machine.

A second important reason for stressing the role of monastic activities, especially that of diakonima in monastic life, is the fact that the work in the monastery is immediately linked with the major issue of exchange between the monks and the pilgrims.

The monks consider diakonima not only a way toward satisfying the needs of the monks' brotherhood, but also as an offering to all those who just visit the monastery. One could claim that by offering their services to the pilgrims the monks compensate the apostolic character of the monastic experience, which is naturally restrained by their voluntarily solitude. However, diaconima, as I intent to show, has also a clear instructional role.

Attempting a "mild" functional approach, what proved to have an analytical validity was the minute examination of the monastic life into the confines of the monastery where the monks act as carriers of certain roles. Although the monks are seen as abandoning social life, I am in the position to

know, that even today, as well as in early Christian context, "the ritual of dissociation produced by asceticism and other things, has the effect of creating and maintaining a new social role rather than abandoning all such roles." (Peter Brown 1971:91).

Of course, the term social role refers to the term social structure. My perception of the term social structure identifies with that of Radcliffe Brown´s, thus, as "all social relations of person to person including the differentiation of individuals by their social roles" (1952:191). Radcliffe Brown has "described the social form that is the normal pattern of relationships which he abstracted for the flux he observed reality. The structural form of his corresponds to what today generally termed the social structure, but the structural form was a generalized description rather than a model" (Adam Kuper, 1988:53).

By trying to detect the social facts upon which the social structure is revealed, one comes in terms with the monastic values. These monastic values reveal the conscious, as well as the "unconscious activity of human mind that impels us to separate social relationships from social structures." (Levis Strauss, Savage Mind, Greek Ed, 1977:289).

The monastic values describe the necessary mentality under which monastic activities are transformed into to values and visa versa. In this paper the "values" part of monastic life will be regarded as accepted attitude and

belief, respectively, the "activities" part of their life, as an accepted action.

The parts of monks' daily life

My intention is to view the monastic values in reference to the activities running their daily life. Values and activities are here presented as witnessed and discussed in the monastery in a very pragmatic way. However, I will not only attempt to explain and interpret the meaning of the monastic activities and values but, I will also describe them as witnessed in action.

The final aim of this study is to make explicit the depiction of ritual (see chapter six). However, by doing this I found myself involved in an exercise which shows "theoretical discourse on ritual to be highly structured by the differentiation and subsequent re-integration of two particular categories of human experience, thought and action. An exploration of the internal logic of this differentiation and re-integration of thought and action in ritual theory suggests that the role of ritual, as an issue in the study of religion and culture, is inextricably linked to the construction of a specifically cultural methodology, a theoretical approach that defines and addresses cultural data" (C. Bell, Religion 17, 95-96).

The descriptions of monks' life have often forced me to generally regard their life as a range of activities. By

doing this, I would distinguish the monks' ritualistic life from the conceptual aspects of their religion, such as beliefs or myths. These descriptions assume "the usefulness of distinguishing what is thought from what it is done. Likewise, beliefs, creeds and myths emerge as forms of mental content or as conceptual blueprints: they detect, inspire or promote activity, but they are not activities themselves." (C. Bell, op.cit.:97)

During my discussions with Father I. on how monastic life is divided into parts, I was provided with interesting explanations of how monastic values and activities fit together to create a complete pattern of daily monastic life. According to the monks, everyday life in the monastery is divided into five basic parts. Each part can be explained as serving either a value or an activity.

Before entering the discourse concerning monastic activities and values, as presented to me by Father I., I have to apologize to the reader because I do not have the data to discuss in details all different values and activities. For example, though I was told that the monks pray privately, I was never invited to enter their cells nor was I invited to visit the monks' aisle. Another important reason, which contributes to the lack of data, is the limited fieldwork. Due to the huge range of issues that the field raises by itself, even today I am not in the position to elaborate them satisfactorily.

As Father I. told me, the first two parts of the

monastic life (a. ascetic life, b. moral life), reflect upon what the monks generally call "**values**". The other three parts of the monastic life (c. liturgical life, d. working life, e. hesychastic life) comprise the "**activities**".

a. Ascetic life	]		
b. Moral life	]	**Values**	
			] **Parts of**
c. Liturgical life	]		] **daily life in**
d. Working (diakoniki) life	]	**Activities**	] **the monastery**
e. Hesychactic life.	]		

Table e.

More specifically (always according to Father I.), the actual meaning of the "ascetic life" is fasting (**nisteia**), praying (**proseuchi**), and poverty (**ftocheia** or **actimosini**), meaning the lack of personal possessions. The "moral life", on the other hand, means chastity (**parhtenia**), simplicity (**aplotita**), love (**agapi**), humbleness (**tapenotita**).

```
                                          __fasting
                                         [
          __a. Ascetic life              [__praying
         [                               [
         [                 __chastity    [__poverty
VALUES___[                [
         [                [__simplicity
         [__b. Moral life__[
                           [__love
                           [
                           [__humbleness
```

Table f.

Liturgical life has been already discussed in chapter four, therefore I will not refer to it. Life in work (Diakoniki zoe) will be presented further on. As about

hesychastic life, it is an activity immediately linked to prayer, thus to the monks' privacy. Therefore any discourse on this issue lacks any observational validity. Literal accounts might put us in the danger of deviating from an anthropological discourse to a theological speculation about the essence of God (see chapter two).

All the parts of monastic life, though classified separately, comprise the undivided whole of monastic experience. According to Father I. the actions and the thoughts accompanying monastic life, the activities and their entailed values, aim at creating a pragmatic and ideological outline on the basis of which and in a slow process of incorporation it lifts up the monks' worldly manners toward the divine.

It is important to stress once more that there is no clear discrimination between "values" and "activities" in the monastic life. Values are presented as actions and the activities as values. For example, hesychastic life (part e. of monastic daily life) is more likely to be presented as an action though, as the monks told me, it may involve no action at all.

Unfortunately, when I was discussing each one of these activities and values, I was trapped in the illusory belief that I were in the position to understand insignificant details that, in the end, proved to be of a great significance. Thus, I am incompetent to give an explanation concerning the emotional implications of values, such as

aplotita (simplicity) and agapi (love).

The elementary values of hagiorite monasticism

Coenobitic monastic life in Mount Athos began in the tenth century with the initiatives of St Athanasios. From the very beginning the prerequisites for the monastic life were: celibacy (chastity), obedience and poverty. All these prerequisites are to be accomplished within the frame of the organized monastic community, the strict rules of which specify the details of the monk's daily life. The liturgical prayer, obedience to the Hegoumenos and the lack of personal belongings comprise the basic elements of hagiorite monasticism.

As I intent to show more thoroughly in chapter six the monastics' spiritual way (pneumatiki odos) leading to monkish completion is epitomized in three major steps of transcendence: a. Catharsis, b. Enlightment (fotisis), c. Theosis. These three stages of monastic completion have already been discussed in chapter four when analyzing the symbolism of the Church. Each one of these steps are synchronized with the different "rites de passage" taking place in a monk's life-time, indicating each time a passage to a deeper involvement with the divine.

However, regardless of the monastic stage, all the monks remain in the first cathartic stage (catharsis) which is defined by the triptych of the monastic values found in

all the Christian monasticism: "**parthenia**" (chastity or celibacy), "**Hepakoi**" (obedience), "**actimosini**" (poverty). These three virtues provide a method through which the monk emancipates himself from his "worldly" manners to transcend his "existence" towards the image of his God.

This process of "virtual" construction leads to the creation of a new identity, contradictory to that of a layman. What provides the necessary proof for this argument is the fact that during their tonsure (**Koura**), monks change their secular name. This second baptism, as the monks like to call it, indicates a consequent change in their identity.

The change of a monk's identity will be examined in relation to the acquisition of the basic monastic values. Because, as I believe, the values governing their life-style make the monks appear to us as inexplicable and "peculiar" human beings. It is clear to me that their beliefs comprise a distinct moral code, the use of which provides many interpretive advantages to the ethnographer.

Yet, to give a complete outline of the meaning of such values, one is obliged to view them not only in the perspective of the historical and cultural juncture, but as a current process. This approach contributes to a sufficient estimation of the present merit of these values, as well as, to the comprehension of monks allegation that they are the holders of a tradition. In other words, the knowledge of the past will be used to illuminate the continuities or even the dis-continuities of the Orthodox monastic culture.

In the next two subheadings I am concerned with the triptych of the monastic values, however, I choose not to stand on the value of celibacy\chastity, because I have already done this elsewhere. The monks declared to me that they direct their loving desire (**agapitiki diathesis**) only towards their God. Something which immediately reminds me one of Balzac's excessive statements: "a night full of love is a book less for a writer". However, it is reasonable to argue that the decisive abstinence from sexual intercourse alters all the symbolism of a person's masculinity. Perhaps, the only remaining characteristic of this abandoned lay maleness is its agonistic elements witnessed by ethnographers who studied Greek rural communities (Papataxiarchis 1991:172). Yet, in the monks case, even this heroic attitude has come to terms with the influence of the religious values and beliefs.

Aktimosini (poverty)

Organized monastic life comprises just one branch of the hagiorite monasticism. There are two or even three different forms of hermitism in Mount Athos (see chapter two). The hermit monks living in small settlements have replaced the authority of the Hegoumenos with the supervision of an experienced monk, called spiritual **(pneumaticos)**. Hermetic monasticism tried and eventually succeeded in escaping the material dependence of hermitism on the sovereign monastery

by rejecting all its material comforts.

All material goods were (are) under the authority of the monastic community, which was (is) in position to guarantee the monks an easy and somehow lazy life. Poverty in this regard, springs out from the hermitic monasticism in its efforts to accomplish a satisfactory balance between work, as an action of the body, and spirituality, as an action of mind and the soul (J. Meyendorff, 1983:98). Poverty as a prerequisite of monastic experience in the frame of the monastic community took the character of a personal value. In other wards although the monastery was (is) rich, due to the land and the cultivations it possessed, the monks themselves were poor. The personal poverty of the monks was considered necessary in order to avoid, as J. Meyendorff (op.cit.:99) argues, the difficulties resulting from the material comforts. Material comforts in accordance to an external type obedience (typical) and not a spiritual internal (essential) one, led to spiritual anarchism causing deviations from the monastic Orthodox dogma, and leaving space for excessive individualism to be expressed.

It is not the intention of this thesis to present the economic status of the monastery. Moreover, the monks affirmed me of their independence concerning their financial status. I do not have information on their agricultural goods, or the income they receive from lay donations. The refusal to discuss monetary matters had to do with the fact that the monks were conscious of the paradox between the

material goods they possess and the value of poverty. By refusing to discuss these issues the monks supported their image as religious virtuosi, totally uninterested in material affairs and independent from the mundane world. Given this, my references to the value of poverty will be approached rather as a spiritual characteristic of the monastic experience. Also diaconima, as we shall see further on, will be presented not as an economic activity but, as an spiritual activity aiming toward the construction of the "other-worldly" conception of monkish person-hood.

The ideal of self sufficiency corresponds to the value of "**actimosini**" (poverty). To be a monk means to be self-sufficient. Such a person is not only just an individual, but an independent and autonomous individual construed ideologically, by virtue of his dissociation and the various ideals of single-mindedness, inner unification and freedom, which make his life, of a different kind (Steven Collins, op.cit.:109).

In his book "Schizophrenia or Asceticism" I. Kornarakis endeavours to popularize monks' way of thinking by making use of existential philosophy. He writes: "to become conscious of my existential outline, (to a general image of myself, independent from an environment which constantly tries to identify ourselves with it), I have to subject myself to the conditions of the ascetic life". (Kornarakis op.cit.:17).

Weber argues that "concentration upon the actual pursuit of salvation may entail a formal withdrawal from the

"world": from social and psychological ties with the family, from the possession of worldly goods, and from political, economic, artistic and erotic activities" (Weber, Sociology of religion, 1965:166).

Also the American pastoral psychologist W. Oates in his book, "The religious care of the psychiatric patient", seeks to find the common points between the aspirations and the orientations of an ascetic and a schizophrenic personality. According to his experience a great number of clinical schizophrenic cases refuse to possess material goods, avoid marriage, take no care about their appearance, and finally shun society. This attitude resembles that of the monks, thereafter W. Oates compares it with the life of Great Antonios to conclude that "the schizophrenic life-style simply represents an attempt to solve the same problem; the difference between the **real** and the **illusory**" (op.cit. 1978:150-153).

Connected with the ideal of aktimosini (poverty) is the word "**autarkeia**". In the Greek dictionary (op.cit.:315) we see; Autarkis, autarkeia: to be satisfied with what you already have, contented with little, the frugal; frugality. This term has a long pre-Christian history in the Hellenistic thought. The general notion is that virtue is sufficient for happiness. This either means, that one is indifferent to material comforts and luxuries, or, that one needs no-one else. (Diogenes, and Aristoteles p 110-111, quote from S. Collins, op.cit.:110). St Basil, who in the 4th century was

the first great theorist of communal, coenobitic monastic life, warns in his Homilies: "keep watch over your self; not over what you possess not over what is around you, but over your self alone. For what we are is one thing, what we possess is another, and what is around us is another. Ourselves, soul and mind (phychi, nous), we have been made in the image of the Creator; we possess the body and the senses by which it operates; around us there are riches, children, all the necessities of life", (quote from S. Collins op.cit:111).

In St Basil's writings one can find the same elements of the "true self" as described in Aristoteles writings, yet there is a slight difference, for someone to be self-sufficient and isolated from God in the Christian doctrine is Anathema, both metaphysically and morally. We quote from his Second Letter: "Withdrawal from the world, (anachoresis tou kosmou) does not mean bodily removal from it, but the severance of the soul from sympathy with the body becoming without city (apolis), without home, personal possessions, love of friends, property,...social relations...", (see St Basil's writings, Vol 6, Patristic Editions: Gregory Palamas, Thessalonika, 1973).

The virtue of actimosini (poverty) prevents the monk from adhering to the material world. And in this regard even the body is perceived not as a bad, but rather as a false figure of man's real nature. It is for this reason that there are no mirrors in the monastery. For mirrors reflect

the "visible" and tend to emphasize on something which is of secondary importance.

According to the monks the essence of man's life appears to the believer when he will stop seeking for the truth in externalities. Looking inward, however, stresses the significance of human soul in comparison to the body.

Hepachoi (obedience)

What supplements the value of actimosini is that of "**Hepachoi**" (obedience). The virtue of hepachoi is rather seen by the monks as a mental and psychological attitude by which one banishes his worldly pride.

In the ethnography of Greece starting from Campbell (1964), "timi" and "dropi" (honour and shame), broadly speaking, are the key concepts determining the social attitude of the people living in villages. It seems to me that the acquisition of both the virtues of actimosini (poverty) and hepachoi (obedience) serve to abrogate this idiom. In this regard a monk may be seen as somebody who is possessed by an extreme dose of what we call "**filotimo**". Filotimo is a concept used in Greek culture to describe a person's goodness. The characteristics of male "filotimo" makes sense as opposed to the "archetype" of the "egoist" (selfish). It is in this regard that my doubts emerge against the notion of individuality as described by Dumont.

The latter writes: "When we speak of man as an

individual, we designate two concepts at once: an object out there, and a value. Comparison obliges us to distinguish analytically these two aspects: one, the empirical subject of speech, though and will, the individual sample of mankind, as found in all societies: and two, the independent autonomous, and thus essentially non-social moral being, who carries out paramount values and is found primarily in our modern ideology of man and society. From that point of view, there emerge two kind of societies. Where the individual is a paramount value I speak of individualism. In the opposite case, where the paramount value lies in society as a whole, I speak of holism (L. Dumont, 1985:94, quote from The category of Person, M. Carrithers, S. Collins, S. Lukes).

According to Dumont "holism" (in Indian culture) stands in society as it is structured in the caste system. Individualism arises from the moment the person withdraws from society, therefore "the renouncer is self-sufficient, concerned only with himself, and his thought is similar to that of the modern individual, but for one basic difference: we live in the social world, he lives outside it" (op.cit.: 95).

I am not in a position to delve satisfactory into this argument, concerning individualism, something which Steven Lukes does in various contexts in his book Individualism (1973), but it is hard for me to recognize the notion of "holism" with its religious meaning in the modern society of individuals. On the contrary it is the lack of

holism (or holiness) in society that leads the monks to "leave" society and create a community of the people where this selfish type of individualism will no longer be an obstacle to the unification of man with society and God. In Troeltsch's "Social Teaching of the Christian Churches" we read: "man is an individual in relation to God" (1931:96). Yet, the monks as individuals have abrogated most characteristics of lay individualistic behaviour.

Hepachoi demands the total resignation of a person's will. It is an external commitment leading to internal freedom. Actually, hepachoi is a prerequisite for self control (Kornarakis, op.cit.: 12). It also implies discipline indicating obedience to the commands of a superior. Yet, the notion of superiority runs counter to the value of modesty.

There is an obvious paradox here that obliges us to examine this monkish value in comparison to other sub-virtues like "**hepomoni**" (patience). The value of hepachoi is not structured by power but by modesty. In the vocabulary of the gospel hepachoi goes together with the word hepomoni meaning patience (Luke 21:29, and Matthew 10:22). The superiority of the eldest appears to exert humbleness, and respect. His excellence is expressed through an inferior attitude, for the attitude of the humble is that of the patient. The monks say: "**o tapenos kanei hepomoni**", meaning "the modest shows patience". The more modest the more humble, the more humble the more inferior, the more inferior the more patient, the

more patient the more superior.

If superiority runs counter to modesty then we may understand why hepachoi is structured on the power of experience, and therefore on time. The monks who have spent years in retreat are considered experienced and they are regarded as "palei" (old). This differentiation between the "old" and the "new" can also be found in other male incorporations, for example, in the army where the "veteran" soldiers used to say: "**o palios einai allios**", meaning the old is different. Under this consideration I view the value of hepachoi as immediately corresponding to order or to the distribution of the power and the roles in the monastery.

The most respectful monks are thought to be those called "**geron**". Literally the word geron means old man (eldest). The use of the word geron does not always refer to age. The monk-geron (the eldest), to whom a novice or a monk owes respect and obedience, is usually a person who has already submitted himself to the demands of the monastic life successfully, often an ordained monk, or even a priest. Each monk in the monastery is entrusted to an eldest who is thought to be his spiritual guide. Is not coincidental that the role of the geron often overlaps with the role of the Abbot in coenobitic monasteries. Usually the same term is used to distinguish the confessor from the rest of the monks who even if they have reached to a higher monastic status are not priests so they do not hold these "advisory" qualities.

Before doing anything a monk has to take the blessing

of the geron. He says, "**evlogimeno na eine**", meaning, "may be it blessed". I remember also H. Bormpoulis, a Greek social anthropologist studying the hagiorite monks, asking the blessing (**eulogia**) of the cook before taking from the kitchen a can of milk. The expression: "evlogimeno na eine" declares a fatal apprehension of life.

For the monks humankind's destiny is suffering, and the more one suffers, especially from other people actions, the closer might approach to the ideal suffering image of Christ. Although a novice-monk or even a monk subjects himself to the will of the Eldest, he will do that willingly. He is surrendered to the eldest's will, yet his surrender is not passive but active. By doing this he transcends his individuality, to something else, so his sociability improves.

A monk knows that the capacity to distinguish the real from the illusory is a slow process, that is to say-in that sense- a monk is aware of the fact that he has to wait patiently until reality will reveal to him the mystery of truth. Father O. told me: "**kano hepomoni giati ksero oti ta pragmata tha mou apokalipsoun tin alitheia tous siga siga**", meaning, "I do (show) patience because I know that things will reveal their truth slowly". This statement shows the "philosophy" of the monastic life. Therefore hepachoi means the total resignation of the will. And it is not a commitment but a way leading to an internal freedom, "the capacity of self-control." (Kornarakis, op.cit.:72).

The active meaning of the virtue of modesty is the denial of the morbid will. The resignation of the will of the individual; But the will of the person. This is in accordance with the monks' belief that a human being is not an "**atomo**" (individual), but a "**prosopo**" (a face) thus, implying a personality.

Actually the monks told me, "God created man free to chose, and the fact that he was fallen from paradise was due to his will and not due to some punishment. Man left paradise because he decided to become an individual (atomo). By doing this he lost his ties with the "whole" represented by God". In other words, individualism is a secular way to be. The individual becomes a category of kind not of gender, and the will of the individual forms a certain kind of attitude toward life; the attitude of the individualist.

The concept "individual" is ideologically overloaded. It is for this reason that I consider Weber's and Dumont's terminology "worldly", "out-worldly" or "other-worldly" as half-correct. The other half, the "individual", is, according to my perception relatively unsuccessful.

As K. Mouratidou argues "The denial of the morbid will leads not to the erasure of the personality but to its completion" (The monastic obedience in the ancient Church, p 40). "The Christian who cannot overcome a difficulty (in his life), will finally subordinate to that difficulty with the power of self-restriction" (Kornarakis, op.cit.:71), which is a cut of his resistance not of his personal belief but of his

thought as an individual, or as an "ego". In this regard the resignation of the morbid will, may prove from a different point the argument that monks tend to prepare themselves for the perfect society of people, the "society in Christ". That brings me back to Dumont's argument about holism (holiness). The monks look forward to create the holy society. An utopic society the functions of which revolve around the Church.

The value of hepachoi in co-ordination to hepomoni constructs a mental attitude. The monk is "nothing" in comparison to anything considered as Holy. This mental attitude of his, the belief, "**den eime tipota**" (I am nothing), is the ultimate goal of his modesty, expressed as "**eime o chiroteros apo olous**" meaning, "I am the worst of all". Moreover, being modest means having realized your insignificance in relation to the greatness of God.

Regarding this, his obedience to geron reflects his humbleness to God's will. The geron is potentially a saint, exactly because he has experienced the life of a saint (Archimandrite T. Tziavaras, The Eight Sacrament, 1977:66). Therefore the geron is the one who can mediate between God and Men.

The formation of the personality under the condition of solitude actually revises individuality. Thus, although the monk is considered an "out-worldly" person because of his singleness, what distinguishes him from the worldly individuals is not his singleness but his modesty. To be single is seen as a means to reach the ultimate goal which is

not to be an individual.

The acquisition of the values of both actimosini and hepachoi prepare the monks to undertake their roles into the general structure of monastic life. Those two virtues formulate the necessary attitude by which the monks' cooperation becomes as functional as possible; something which is better revealed in diakonima (work).

Work (diakonima) and its role in monastic life

Diakonima unites the monastics among themselves in a community, and the church-going, as discussed in the previous chapter, unites the monks, as earthly creatures, with the heavenly ones, thus with divinity. In other words diakonima, as an action, locates the monks in a horizontal connection with the monastic community, whereas, in the second (church-going) in a vertical one with the divine. Both activities, of course, imply a theological or sacred dimension.

For the hagiorite monks participating in the activities is quite essential, for, as the monks say "i orthi praxis proigite tis orthis skepseos", meaning, "the right action precedes the right thought".

To understand how the value of **diakoniki zoe** (life in diaconima) is presented in monastic experience I will rely on a small story found in the book Athonikon Gerondikon (1991:120). One day a spiritual monk (pneumatikos) visited another very famous and experienced spiritual monk, Father

Ioakim to ask him for an advice. The problem the former was facing had to do with one of his neophytes who, though he had not been burdened with any kind of diakonima, was in danger of falling into melancholy and therefore in a condition of psychological confusion. "Get him married !" (**Pandrepse ton**), was Father Ioakim's advice and he continued: "Put him down to work. Only with the yoke of regular work do the neophytes (young monks) manage to humble themselves and grow calm. Prayer without work for a monk equals to working without praying. Get him married with work."

Diaconima and Church are linked, as Father Ioakim said: "Prayer without work is equal to working without praying". Participating in the Church is also thought to be a diakonima. Diaconima epitomizes Martyrdom. For example the diakonima of Christ was that he had to sacrifice Himself for the benefit of all human beings (Luke 22:27 and Mark 10:45). His second diakonima is thought to be the creation of the Church, the means through which one remains wedded to the chariot of interaction between the divine and the secular substance. Therefore participation in the Church is thought to be the taking over of Christ's offerings (G. Tsananas, 1980:35-37).

The monks do not organize the work in the monastery rationally. Diaconima is not structured on an economical base in principal. Working for economic purposes is seen as opposed to the meaning of diakonima. Diakonima is a sacred activity and therefore is seen in opposition to Douleia.

Douleia, is the word generally used in lay context to correspond to the English word work or slavery. Yet, the word Douleia originates from the word Doulos, which literally means slave. Regardless of the fact that the monks often call themselves "Slaves of God" (Douloi toy Kiriou), they do not like to call work douleia but, diakonia. Diakonia rather means willingly offered work to the benefit of all. The literal meaning of the word diakonia is serving (hepireto), helping (voithao), and finally begging, like the Greek word diakoniaris which means beggar (zitianos).

The lay context of the word douleia (work) is defined as serving the needs of the family. People either in villages or in cities, connect their job with the necessities of the household and especially with the needs of their children. In contrast to this the monastics connect diaconima with the divine sphere. Diakonia and prayer comprise two alternative means to an association with God.

Diakonima is never called a "job" and of course it is not seen as a profession. What prevents diakonima from taking any worldly character is the fact that monks have to change their occupation yearly. Inevitably most of the monks during the first ten years of their life in the monastery do know a series of different kinds of diakonima.

Diakonima does not necessarily involves divinity, for, it deals rather with the monastic community itself. Diakonima stresses the role of the monk in a community of monks; although, it is refined with a sacrificial blend, for,

the word diakonima literally means dance attendance on someone (hepireto). Monastic's life in diakonima according to the monks "is a struggle among brothers: How one can offer to the other. How to weary oneself, for the purpose of resting his brother; him himself and finally his own God." (Archimandrite Vasileios, The holy Mountain and the culture of our nation, Sacred Community, 1990:10).

The participation in the work (diaconima)

Basically, diaconima is the work that must be carried out in the monastery. The monks define diaconima as follows: "The undertaken service of a monk in the monastic community. The diakonima is undertaken by a monk as defined in the Internal Rules and Regulation (Esoterikos Kanonismos) of each monastery (Article 91 of Katastatikos Chartis), and it lasts for one year." (Dorotheos Monachos, Vol II, 1986:22).

Living in the monastery, means participating in the diakonima. The third day of my stay in the community, I was kindly asked to take part too, by the monk who used to substitute the Hegoumenos during his absence. I was put down to the diakonima of preparing the dining room and the dish-washing. During my stay in this monastery I washed loads of them for, it was summer time. At summer pilgrims find the opportunity to visit Mount Athos, therefore it is a very busy period. Consequent to this, is the fact that diakonima is immediately connected to the proffering of

hospitality.

It is more likely that diakonima reflects a monk's role and position in the monastic hierarchy. For example, the novice monks undertake the more humble kinds of work, like cleaning the monastery or dish-washing. It must be stressed that all different kind of posts that different members of the community hold in the monastery, from the very "first" monk to the "last" are called diakonima. Thus, all the monks of a coenobium are called **diakonites**. Regarding all different kind of roles undertaken as diakonima the monks aim at presenting them as having the same value and the monastic community as the community of the equals. Of course, this is not absolutely true, because different kinds of diakonima indicate a different post into the frame of a hierarchically structured monastic community. It is true however, that some kinds of diakonima are more easy than others. Therefore often monks who have undertaken a diakonima demanding little occupation supplement the difference by helping partly in other kinds of diakonima.

Diakonima in a coenobitic monastery can be divided in two general categories. The first category consists of all different kinds of administrative diakonima, as well as those concerning the Church's activities. It must be said that the different types of diakonima of this category are undertaken by the most experienced and skilful monks. Actually most of the monks that undertake these more elevated type of diakonima are either priests or Megaloschemi monks (monks of

the major order). These are the following: Hegoumenos (Abbot), Epitropos (a monk who represents the monastery in the Sacred Committee), Secretary Representative (Gremmateas Andiprosopos), Dikaios (a monk who replaces the Abbot during his absence and is responsible for the decent keeping of the Church), Librarian, Treasurer, Archivist, Vicarage (Iereus Efimerios), Vicar Deacon (Diakonos Efimerios), Precentor (Ieropsaltis, Protopsaltis), Reader (Anagnostis), Kanonaris (a second type of chanter), Tipikaris (a monk who is responsible for the right order of all the services), Vimataris (a Hieromonk who is entrusted with the decent keeping of the Sanctuary and the saints' relics), Archodaris (a monk who is responsible for the attention of the pilgrims), Pilgrims-Guide (ksenagos), Warehouse-Keeper (Apothikarios).

The second category consists of all those types of diakonima which are considered as rather humble. These types of diakonima are undertaken by Microschemi monks (monks of the minor order), or by novice monks. These are the following: Trapezaris (a monk responsible for the preparation of the dining room), Cook, Night Watchman, Kimitiriaris (a monk who is responsible for the decent keeping of the cemetery, and the reading of the blessings for the dead monks), Bread-maker, Viniculturalist, Forester, Gardener.

Each diakonima is undertaken by one monk who is in charge called diakonitis and an assistant who is called **Ipotactikos** (submissive). The relationship between those two

retains the old tradition which wants the eldest monk to supervise the younger. It is true that most of the neophyte monks remain under the "command" of an older monk during their novice period.

In A. monastery there were three novices. The first one, novice S, a man of around twenty five years old acted as a cook's assistant. He had been in the monastery for less than nine months and he seemed to possess a quiet, serious and bright, not necessarily pleasant, but nevertheless an interesting personality. We had an excellent silent co-operation when doing dish-washing together, twice a day, after the end of the meals. Novice S. had a wonderful voice and a satisfactory religious background. For, he could chant during the liturgies and he was in a position to assist the Reading of the Holy Scriptures during all services. Given that most of these writings are written in a difficult puristic Greek language, I came to the conclusion that he was fairly educated. Due to this aptitude of his, novice S., participated as an assistant in two different kinds of diaconima. In a "humble" one and in another "spiritual", but quite skillful one.

The second novice, M, was about thirty. He was obviously less educated, seemingly less spiritual, more simple in manners, friendly and thus more easy to be approached. He was always willing to come and wake me up after midnight, to follow the early morning services although he sometimes forgot to do so. His time in the monastery was

less than a year but more than novice's S. Novice M, was Father's O. assistant in the diakonima of "**Trapezaris**" i.e. the monk who supervises the supplying and the keeping of the dining-room and is responsible for its decent appearance.

The third novice was a man over sixty. He also assisted the cook but he was concerned more in the preparation of the cooking part of this diaconima. The novice P, had been in the monastery for less time than the two others. He was a wise, white-haired, enigmatic personality; a man of good educational background and of noble manners. I remember him while I was sitting on one of the courtyard benches, with one leg crossed over the other so that I could write down my notes easily. He approached me and he corrected me gently, by saying: "**den aresei stous Pateres na kathestai stauropodi**", meaning the monks do not like to see people sitting with their legs crossed (**stauropodi**= crossed legs). According to his explanation, this way of sitting on a chair indicates -to the monks- a manly and even perhaps an irreverent behaviour. Novice P, was absolutely right in his remark. Monks when sitting, never cross their legs and they never lean back. (This deals with male identity transgression: modesty as opposed to manly behaviour).

Diakonima is supplementary to prayer, because as the monks see it, throughout the tasks undertaken one focuses upon God through silent prayer. One does this anticipating his desire to follow His bidding at every moment. Thereafter

diaconima is described as serving God, so it is seen as a continual repentance (metanoia). At the shame time the monks consider the diakonima as preventing them from the "sinful tendency of indolence" (amartitiki tasi tis rathimias).

Diakonima serves the evangelic requirements. According to the monks the bodily work is hallowed by the mental prayer, whereas, the outcome of it from its right use. Therefore the monks do not work just to secure their food, but to create the necessary surplus for exercising philanthropic tasks too. For example, providing hospitality (**Filoksenia**) is seen as an offer.

This distinction as M. Iossifides argues, underlies the different practices of hospitality within the monastery and the village. For, though on the surface, the offering of formal hospitality in the monastery closely follows the practices of the village household, in the end, it attempts to both deny material existence and interaction, and to maintain hierarchical order (op.cit.:268).

Hospitality in the monastery: Norms of exchange

The Greek equivalent of hospitality is the term "**filoksenia**". Literally translated filoksenia means befriending (filia) a stranger or foreigner. The monks offer their visitors food and accommodation just expecting from them to respect the monastery. Outside the reception room the "notice" for the pilgrims writes: "The time from sunset to sunrise is

dedicated to prayer and silence. During this time you are permitted to circulate only in the guestquarters properly dressed (not in singlets or shorts) and talk quietly in the sitting room or retire to your own rooms. Smoking is permitted only in the sitting room."

After the morning Liturgy all the pilgrims are gathered in a siting-room called "Archodariki" (reception room). They are served coffee, bread and olives. However, if a visitor asks for a tea or something sweet, for example, loukoumi a Turkish delight, the monks will satisfy his wish with pleasure.

Providing hospitality is thought as diakonima. This diaconima is undertaken by a monk called Archodaris. Usually during the busy months of the year, at summer time, there is also another monk assisting this work. The monks serve the pilgrims and after this they go to tide up the pilgrims' rooms and toilets. Seldom do the monks talk to the pilgrims during this time and even more, never do they join them while they eat.

At approximately half past ten the bell signal lunch. Plgrims and monks gather outside the dining-room (**Trapeza**), and wait until the gate is open. The pilgrims enter the dining-room first while the monks follow. Monks sit on the left side, whereas the pilgrims on the right one. The Hegoumenos (Abbot) sits at the top of the monks table. He gives his blessing by ringing a small bell in front of him, thus, signalling the commencement of the lunch. Both monks

and pilgrims silently eat. At the middle between the monks and the laity tables a monk stands reading a part of an eminent monk's life.

Reading at meal time is considered part of the service. The monks say: "To diavasma einai meros tis akolouthias", meaning, "reading is part of the service". Yet, reading while eating serves the purpose of expiation of this material human need. Reading provides protection against Temptation, caused by the delight of food. The notice outside the reception room writes: "During the -normally short-duration of meals you are requested to quietly listen to the reading."

When food is over, first the Hegoumenos followed by the monks and finally the pilgrims leave the dining room. The Hegoumenos stands on the left side of the door, and three monks: the cook, the reader, and the Trapezaris (the one who is responsible for the preparation of the dining-room) stand on the right. He blesses both monks and pilgrims, until even the last comes out. After that the three monks bow and kiss his hand, and the ritual of eating is completed. The time which is spend for eating is very short indeed. The monks do know that eating is a pleasure (merely for the laity) but in monastic life there is no time for worldly pleasures.

After lunch and for ten minutes, monks discuss with each other and with the pilgrims in the court-yard and then they disappear again. At two p.m. the new pilgrims arrive in the monasteries. The Archodaris monk awaits for them in the Archodariki. He welcomes them and without asking, he offers

them the traditional kerasma; a plate containing a **loukoumi** (Turkish delight), a glass of water and a second small glass of **raki** (a very strong alcoholic drink similar to ouzo). This welcome procedure is called "**tratarisma**", meaning "treatment".

After the end of the treatment all the visitors are kindly requested to sign up a big notebook. They are asked to write down their names, place of origin, date of birth, profession and, finally, their destination. I was told that this happens as a measure against robberies. Due to the fact that the hagiorite monasteries hold valuable items, they have often been theft targets in the past.

After the end of Tratarisma the monk asks the pilgrims if they are hungry. If some of the pilgrims answer affirmatively, although it may not be supper time yet, the Archodaris will lead them to the second dining room of the Archodariki to eat and afterwards to their rooms. In this second dining-room the pilgrims eat without the monks. The size of the second dining-room is much smaller than the first which is called "**Koini Trapeza**" (common dining room). The walls of both dining rooms are decorated with hagiographies of Panagia, Jesus, several saints and an old painting of the monastery's benefactor from the previous century.

The pilgrims' rooms are in a separate aisle of the monastery, far away from the monks' cells. The rooms are usually big containing from two to eight beds each. The Archodaris-monk -according to the space left- puts up three

or four pilgrims in each room and gives to each pilgrim his own towels, new sheets and slippers. Then he tells them the daily program and goes away.

After Vespers supper time comes. Dinner is conducted with the same solemnity as lunch, while the meal is more or less the same as well. Monks and pilgrims eat together during lunch and dinner time, but the latter eat alone, in the small dining room during the fasting days. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays which are the fasting days, most of the monks do not eat anything at all.

Usually pilgrims are permitted to stay in Mount Athos until the end of their permit which is seven days during autumn, winter and spring and four days during summer. However, it is mot permitted to stay more than one, or utmost two days in the same monastery. These prohibitions serve to protect the monks from a possible interaction with the laity. Outside the reception the same notice warns: "Due to the large number of guests and the limited space, stay in the monastery is for one day. Guests are asked to vacate their rooms by eight a.m. (secular time), so that they can be tidied up and be ready to accommodate new guests."

The first time I visited the monastery it was summer time, so it was pretty crowded. All the monks had to participate in the diakonima and the rhythm of the monastery followed the requirements of hospitality. During winter when I visited the monastery for a second time, there were just a few visitors and a large number of empty rooms, however, the

notice was still there.

Preparation for the Holy Communion: Fasting, Confession

According to the monks all the sinful desires of the body, for example gluttony and lust, can be controlled and finally defeated with fasting and sexual abstinence. In denying his personal will and by controlling the needs of his body a monk can reach to a spiritual state which un-distractedly focuses upon God. Diakonima, in this regard, has its share. It contributes to the attainment of this spiritual state because it is viewed as an attempt to deplete the body from the evil drives leading to sin.

In most anthropological analyses on religion it is argued that the distinction between the body and the soul in monastic ideology would represent the opposition between the secular and the divine worlds. Although this argument is real, the monks insist that it is not only the soul but, also the human body that must be saved as well. Therefore as the monks restrain their will to reach to gradual annihilation of themselves, seemingly they restrain their bodily needs. The body, in monastic ideology is seen as "**o naos tis psychis**" meaning, "the temple of psyche". Therefore the monks believe that it must be always kept clean. Moreover, according to the monks' belief hunger and weakness, is seen as a way to contemplate and participate in Christ's sacrifice.

The term fast (**nisteia**) is used to describe abstinence

not only from certain types of food but also from eating in general. The hagiorite monks abstain from all food and drink during the periods before receiving the Holly Communion.

The sacrament of Holy Communion takes place every Sunday and sometimes on other days in the week. Since the monks have to participate in Holy Communion they must prepare themselves bodily and spiritually for this sacrament. Therefore they do not use oil, dairy products and meat on Wednesdays and Fridays.

As mentioned in a previous chapter oil is an element that cannot be easily mixed with others, for example water. Therefore the monks consider the oil as a symbol of divinity. Regarding this the monks avoid the use of oil for their own needs, for, oil can reinforce the miraculous unification which takes place in the Holy Communion.

On the other hand abstaining from meat consuption has some relevance to the modern vegetarian reasoning (something like the animals have soul etc). According to the monks the consumption of meat gives strength to the human body and it is recommended against illness. As M. Iossifides argues in her work concerning nuns, "the prohibition on meat seems to arise from a type of identification with the animal" (op.cit.:271). People in villagers drink the milk produced by goats and they also make yoghurt and cheese. They also sell the young lambs directly for slaughter. However, when she asked a nun if she has ever eaten meat she answered: "we are made of flesh. And to eat flesh is disgusting. It is

horrible to eat flesh and blood when yourself are flesh and blood" (op.cit.:271).

"The eating of meat was regarded by the nun for it was likened to the eating of oneself, similar to the attitude the villagers assume for the eating of meat after a funeral. To eat together what is dead implies consuming death. To eat what materially strengthens you without producing life, in the form of Children, is to strengthen that aspect of you which you have sought to "kill" by becoming a nun. It is to share in a material strength attained through death and which in the end, according to the nuns, is death." (op.cit.:272).

The monks I discussed the issue with never gave me a clear answer why they abstain from the consumption of meat. Father P. said to me "we abstain from anything is made by blood". However, when I asked why don't they abstain from fish too which also has blood, he answered with vagueness. He did not seem to know the reason why. On the other hand Father E. explained all different kinds of abstinence by blending them with a sacrificial dimension.

As Schmemann (1974:49) argues there is a distinction between the total and the ascetical fast. Total fast refers to abstinence from food and drink; ascetical fast refers to abstinence from certain foods. "We may say then that the total fast is the last and ultimate preparation before receiving Holy Communion" (M. Iossifides op.cit.:302). As Schmemann (op.cit.:50, quote from Iossifides) notes: "in early Church this total fast had the name taken from the

military vocabulary; it was called statio, which meant a garrison in the state of alarm and mobilization. The Church keeps a "watch"-- she expects the Bridegroom and waits for Him in readiness and joy...[it is in] expectation of Christ who comes to her in the Eucharist."

M. Iossifides who investigates the importance of being prepared in terms of the coming of the bridegroom for his bride (op.cit.:159-198) compares this to the preparation of the nuns for the Holy Communion. She writes: "Here it is a metaphor of battle which is stressed. Whenever, upon first seeing them, I would ask how they were, they would inevitably answer: "ston ayona" (in battle)...thus, meaning exercising and testing themselves so that one day they would be crowned victorious...the total fast is a way of preparing oneself to accept the Eucharist, to accept Christ who is coming" (op.cit.:302). It is true however, that even laity make use of the battle metaphor. The secular use of it refers to their working life. Laity consider their life out of the house as a battle of survival against the brutality of the competitive society.

The ascetical fast, as Schmemamm argues (op.cit.:50) is different. It restores the primacy of the spirit over the flesh and it is essential that such a fast takes place over a long period of time.

Apart from the fast which has a clear physical cathartic effect, confession is a supplementary means which, according to the monks, restores the social harmony disturbed

by sin. As a procedure it is immediately connected to the Sacrament of Holy Communion which also serves the same purpose (Campbell 1974:158). Principally confession has a clear psychological cathartic effect and it is often presented by monks as a second baptism (Hieromonk Gregorios, Holy Baptism 1989), that precedes the Holy Communion.

Although it is not in my intentions to discuss the Holy Communion, from the limited data gathered from the field, I am in the position to know that the monks consider it as the crowning-moment of their interaction with the divine. This Sacrament takes the form of a material exchange between the secular and the divine. The monks consider this exchange as a gift that expresses God's tenderness and love towards people. It is also regarded as the eating of the flesh and the blood of Christ thus, it is an imitation of the Lord's Supper. During the Holy Communion both monks and pilgrims receive wine and a piece of bread called "**antidoro**" meaning gift in return.

According to the monks the undertaking of Holy Communion presupposes **eksomologisi**. Eksomologisi is the Greek equivalent of the Latin origin of the word confession. However, the word eksomologisi is a synthesis of two words, the word "**ekso**" which means out, and the word "**omologo**" which means confess, or even better admit and talk.

Etymologically the word eksomologisi means to take out of yourself all the committed sinful thoughts and actions. The declaration of one's sins in front of a priest has a

double effect. Firstly, it involves a kind of humiliation that indicates repentance, and secondly, it is the sharing of the "heavy burden of sin" (**vari fortio tis amartias**) which simultaneously proffers divine coverage. The confessor who is supposed to be a spiritual guide, as a representative of divinity, proffers to the "sinner" divine coverage (see also Herzfeld, 1985:242). For this reason he covers the head of the "sinner" with the "**petrachili**" (stole) thus, placing the person under the protection of God's forgiveness. The prayer of forgiveness signifies oneself's new start. It is in this regard that the monks consider confession as a continual baptism.

During the confession the sinner must confess all his sins in order to be dispensed from evil influence and start from scratch. For this reason the monks during confession take off all their thoughts while they must not feel ashamed to admit them. As Father O. told me: "**i dropi einai to teleutaio charti tou diavolou**", meaning "shame is devil's last card". On the other hand, the total admission of one's sins legitimates the monks' accepted attitude and behaviour and re-establishes the disturbed social order and harmony by enforcing the value of tapinotita (humbleness).

Conclusion: The three-stage rationale in monastic experience

The actions and thoughts that accompany monastic life, the activities and their entailed values, aim at creating a pragmatic and ideological outline on the base of which,

through a slow process of incorporation, it transcends towards the divine the worldly manners of a monk. The monks' spiritual transcendency however, is revealed in the three-stage rationale which is -as I see it-immediately connected with the different rites of passage.

To connect the three-stage rationale as presented for the Church in my discussion with Father Dragas (chapter four) with the life in work (diakoniki zoe) and the monastic values, I use two recorded interviews taken from two Hieromonks, Father T. of L. monastery, and Father I. of A. monastery. These interviews provide the necessary data for an integrated explanatory of monastic life and prepare the reader for the next chapter which is concerned with the rituals of initiation.

Ethnographer: What does it entail for you to be a monk in a monastic community?

Father T.: Monasticism is a path leading to salvation- it is a way.

E: Do all the monks follow the same way?

F.T.: Yes....more or less, they do.

E: Then why are there different kinds of monasticism in Mount Athos?

F.T.: The principles upon which monasticism stands are everywhere the same on Mount Athos. The difference lies on the fact that a hermit monk practices more the value of praying, whereas, a monastic the value of obedience.

E: Please, can you explain what a monk does in order to accomplish his unification with God?

F.T.: To reach this point one must firstly reach the absolute emptiness (kenosis), the absolute mortification (**nekrosis**) of all senses. He must purify himself...

E: ...Purify himself from what?

F.T.: From the earthly way he is used to face things. The monks pray daily asking mercy from Christ, in order to be exempted from their own sins.

E: Are you a sinner Father?

F.T.: I try not to, but...Yes I am.

E: Do all the monks succeed in reaching this level of mortification?

F.T.: Yes,...most of them...

E: Is there a difference in the way of perceiving mortification between a monk of the minor order (microschemo) and one of the major one (megaloschemo)?

(Father T. evades a straight answer out of modesty).

F.T.: The microschemos monk has not taken the vow of death.

E: However, if he is willing to undertake this vow, why doesn´t he do so?

F.T.: Probably because he is not ready yet.

E: Who is to judge this? I mean, are there any objective criteria?

F.T.: The Hegoumenos (Abbot) of the monastery is responsible for this, but he judges with the concurrent opinions of three other Fathers (monks of the major order). Although there are

no standard criteria, you can tell when someone is ready.

E: What do mean "ready" (**etimos**)?

F.T.: These are difficult things (pragmata) to comment on. Look, the stages of spiritual completion are three: a. Katharsis (Purification), b. Fotisis (Illumination), c. Theosis (Deification). To pass from the one stage to the other you have to climb up one hundred steps. If you try to climb them fast, instead of going up, you go down. Read the book of St. John of the climate.

E: So, the novices are in the first stage when compared to a monk of the major order?

F.T.: Yes, but we are all in the first stage, that is why we do exactly the same things, fasting, praying, church-going and working (diakonia).

E: Then why are monks classified in different orders?

F.T.: Because not all of them have the same ability or experience of visualizing (**theasis**) the divine. Not all the monks have equally purified their hearts for such an event.

E: Have all the monks of the major order accomplished this?

F.T.: Yes, most of them have. Of course in past it was harder to become a monk of the major order. Usually the monks used to undertake these vows before their death.

E: As a compliment?

F.T.: No they deserve it. Do not forget that they have spent all their life devoted to God, thus they served God by keeping a vow which they never took. It is not an easy task to live as monastic, haven't you heard of people saying "it

is too heavy to be a monk" (**eivai varia i kalogeriki**).

At this point Father T. started to ask questions about my life and my studies. He asked why I was so concerned with the hagiorite monks. Finally, before leaving he said: "**Pou ksereis isos mia mera gineis kai esi monachos**", meaning, "who knows, perhaps one day you might become a monk yourself".

The second time I visited Mount Athos I took an interview from Father I. What I intended in this second interview was to confirm and elucidate the data collected from the first one, that of Father T. The former proved very reluctant to answer the questions that had emerged meanwhile, from my discussion with Father T. He seemed to know and respect the views of the latter.

Ethnographer: Father T. told me that the itinerary to the monkish completion comprises from three stages: katharsis, fotisis, theosis. Can you explain where does each stage aim at?

Father I.: The whole monastic ideal is enclosed in the first stage. Katharsis, however, has both a spiritual and a bodily aspect. The spiritual katharsis is praying and Church-going. The bodily katharsis is fasting and generally abstinence. By doing these one prepares himself for the next two stages where the monk starts to see with the heart and the thought (nous), thus he communicates with the divine and he becomes

saintly (agiazei).

E: What is the difference between fotisis (Illumination) and theosis (Deification)?

F.I.: It is very hard to reach fotisis but theosis is even harder. Only few have reached this stage. To see the actisti (un-created) essence of God... have you read the Hesychastic Tradition of St Gregoire Palamas?

E: Yes I have, but I did not manage to make out a lot from this book. Is there any connection between these three stages and the stages through which a novice passes until his third and final tonsure?

F.I.: Yes, these three stages correspond to the three monastic stages. Yet, there is not an immediate relationship, but if somebody reaches Katharsis then he is ready to become a monk, and to be tonsured (**na karei**).

E: What about the priest-monks (hieromonachoi), to become a priest means that you have ascended to deification?

F.I.: No, not necessarily. Priest are to perform the liturgies. However, the main source of deification is the Church. It is in this regard that the Church and therefore priests are central to monastic life, standing in the middle of the monastery. All monks are in a way priests and that is why we all participate in its activities. Monasticism is the Church itself. In Orthodoxy most of the illuminated theologians where priests, as well as many of the saints.

E: Is there any connection between the monastic values that run the monastic ideal: virginity, obedience, poverty, and

these three stages: katharsis, fotisis, theosis?

F.I.: No, I do not think so. These are the vows which we undertake in order to accomplish control over our secular habits. These three values are the prerequisite of katharsis, and we all keep these values no matter which monastic order we belong to. Katharsis, fotisis and theosis are the three stages of a monks' spiritual completion.

E: Can you explain what a monk accomplishes in each one of these stages?

F.I.: When a lay-man comes to the monastery, wishing to become a monk he must conquer the "right praxis" (orthi praxis). He accomplishes this by being at the stage of katharsis. Regarding this and in accordance to the tryptich of the monastic values (chastity, obedience, poverty), he overcomes the difficulties and purifies himself. Afterwards he passes on to the second stage where he conquers the "right thought" (orthi skepsis). That is the stage of fotisis. According to hagiorite monasticism the right praxis proceeds the right thought, that is why obedience and diaconima (work) are so important aspects of the monastic life. Having completed these two stages successfully and having conquered the right praxis and the right thought, now the monk is ready to taste the grace of the third stage which is theosis. However, just a few reach this ultimate point; only the charismatic ones.

E: Do these charismatic monks become Hieromonachoi (Priest-monks)?

F.I.: Not necessarily, it depends on whether the monastery needs a priest or not. However, the charismatic monks remain charismatic. There are a lot of monks who have reached theosis though they have not been ordained priest.

In both these two interviews with Father T. and Father I. reaching the state of discussing either about illumination or deification, the conversation seemed to end. Obviously, only I was responsible for this discontinuity. Many discussions with the monks were spent on books. In other words the monks preferred referring to a book than expressing their opinions on a subject. Additionally, the most appropriate way of discussing these issues was in reference to miracles or the saints' lives (see Chapter 3).

To the extent that the relationship between the informant and the researcher is of a mutual emphatic understanding, I have to confess that I was not in the position of conducting a discussion without leaving the monks with the impression that "I was thinking a lot and was feeling less". My ignorance in combination with my thirst to understand was giving them the impression that I was not in position to follow their thoughts. My way of "seeing" was limited due to the fact that my thought was in a way very linear. The monks believe that concepts and conceptions concerning the divine are very hard for a lay person to handle, especially when he uses as a mean of comprehension his mind but not his belief.

Moreover the monks were much concerned (especially Father I.) that I could possibly mis-interpret their words. To their opinion popularizing concepts such as illumination and deification are matters only for those who have reached these stages. When I gave Father I. my initial writings to read he was "disturbed" by the fact that a novice-monk had expressed his views concerning the monastic ideal. Though it did not seem so, I am in position to know this because the young novice-monk confessed to me that he was very surprised to realize that I had written down almost everything he had told me. It was Father I. that had admonished him after he had read my writings. He commended negatively the novice-monk's initiative to talk with out permission. Finally, the latter, after this fact, became visibly reserved and slightly bothered at me. He was feeling as if I had betrayed him and thereafter he revised his attitude towards me.

CHAPTER 6

Initiation rituals: rites of passage

Introduction

In this chapter I will try to describe -although I have not personally witnessed them- the rituals of initiation of a monk. I shall therefore be discribing how monks talk about the process through which a layman "transforms" to a monk. In other words, I will try to trace the itinerary from a person's "worldly" individuality until his second (or possibly third) and final tonsure, where he enters the space of "other-worldly" individuality, meets with divinity and becomes a "renouncer".

This involves a series of related rituals culminating in the ritual of initiation; "Koura" (= tonsure). The rite of "**koura**", as well as, the rite of "**exodiastikos**" (interment, burial or funeral) are the two main rituals of a coenobium (coenobitic monastery). With the first ritual, that of koura, a monk enters the brotherhood of the monks on earth. With the second ritual, exodiastikos, he comes out of it, to join the eternal, heavenly one. Both these two rites are considered to be of great importance. Their significance lies in the fact that the whole brotherhood of the monks of the monastery participates in them.

The ritual of Koura, however, is not the only concern of this chapter. It is in my intention to enter the

discourse concerning the social need of ritual. I want moreover, to examine the initiands' subjection to catechism which precedes the initiation rituals leading to the monastic integration.

Four stages comprise a monk's integration in this process: **a**. The first stage is the stage of acquaintance, where the person lives his first novice period in the monastery. During that period he belongs to the Order of the novice (**Taxis ton Dokimon**), and he is not considered a monk, nor is he a member of the monastic community.

b. The second stage is actually the person's second novice period starting with the taking of the blessings (**Rassoeuchi**). After that the person is considered novice-monk and he is placed to the first monastic Order (**Taxis ton Rassoforon**).

c. The third stage begins with the ritual of the first tonsure (or possibly second), which involves the taking of the first "**Orkos**" (vows). The ritual of **Koura** signifies the acquisition of the monastic identity and it is seen as a symbolic burial of the secular self. During this first tonsure the person takes his monastic name and he is considered an "ordained" monk, thus he belongs to the second monastic order or the minor order (**Microschimos monk**).

d. The second tonsure, also called "**apo-koura**" signifies the complete embodiment of the monk in the divine sphere. The ritual of **apo-koura**, as a crowning moment of a long-lasting procedure, symbolizes the monks' entrance into

the world of sainthood, thus indicating the final public acknowledgement of their efforts (sufferings), to become a "**pneumatikos**" (spiritual person). This last stage followed by even more strict vows places the monks to the third monastic Order the major order (**Megaloschimos monk**).

The three-stage rationale in monastic initiation rituals

The classification of the monastic brotherhood into three monastic Orders raises a whole range of questions. For example, is there an immediate link between the three-stages ideal of monastic spiritual integration (see chapter 5) and the different "tonsuring" ceremonies (Rassoeuchi, Koura, Apokoura)? Does the tonsuring ceremony utilize the symbolism of the secular rites of passage such as that of baptism? Is it possible to drive parallels between the monastic integration and the social acknowledgement of a couple's relationship until marriage?

I intent to show that the three-stage rationale which pervades monastic ideology applies across the whole spectrum of monastic symbolism. For example, the different rites of passage and the classification of monastics into three orders (Rassoforos, Microschimos, Megaloschimos) encloses the three-stage rationale of the monastic spiritual integration. Each rite of passage as preceding the elevation to a higher monastic state signifies a spiritual elevation as well.

This also results from my discussion with F. Dragas

(chapter 4) and the interviews with the monks (chapter 5). The monastic spiritual integration is unfolded in the three-stage rationale itinerary (Catharsis, Fotisis, Theosis). It is shown that the construction of the Church (Narthex, Catholicon, Ieron) reflects this three-stage rationale thus, the Narthex represents catharsis, Catholikon fotisis and Ieron theosis. Moreover, the three stages of monastic spiritual completion have influenced the classification of priesthood (Deacon, Priest, Bishop).

Moreover, as Father Dragas argues, the secular rite of passage includes the same three-stage rationale. During the Sacrament of baptism the priest solemnizes, one after the other, three Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation (Chrisma) and Holy Communion. Each Sacrament is supposed to take place respectively in each one of the three parts of the Church thus, utilizing elements of the three-stage rationale of monastic completion.

Monastic completion will be examined in accordance with the variety of transition rites. However, the discourse concerning the monastic rites of passage presupposes an introductory discourse concerning the social determination of ritual. This is justified by the need of an elementary familiarization of the reader with the variety of the approaches explaining and analysing the process of ritual in the sensitive area of religion. The book of M. Bloch "From blessing to violence" (1986) provides a satisfactory summary of the most important anthropological approaches concerning

this topic.

The social determination of ritual in anthropology

The key assumption of social science originates from the radical idea that society and culture are natural, not God-given, phenomena and, therefore, are governed by general laws of an earthly character. All social science attempts to explain the way the mechanisms of production continuously produce social and cultural phenomena. It is true however that many social scientists would shy away from such a position. The main reason for this, as M. Bloch argues, is that "explaining other peoples' beliefs and feelings can look like a refusal to accept the personal value of the emotions of joy and sorrow, even of illumination, of the participants in the practice analysed, and this is especially so in the field of religion." (M. Bloch, 1986:1).

Any discource concerning the monks is a desperate attempt to compromize the continuity between "them" and "us"; the natives and the participant observant. Only a few anthropologists, like V, Turner (1962) have had the courage to make clear the continuity between his personal beliefs and those of the people he was studying. The recognition of this continuity between the monks and the laity, which I will attempt to present in this work by using a language that recalls my lay origin, proves that we cannot escape from this continuity and that we are unable to see religious phenomena

as though they concerned another species. After all, monks too are people like us. They were not born in the monastery and even if their life is religiously defined they were culturally pre-defined.

Perhaps the first writer to stress ritual in his analysis of society and to attribute a key role to it was the theologian W. R. Robertson-Smith. His theory of ritual offers us one of the clearest statements of the determination of ritual by other factors -in his case, for example, clan organization is held to be the organizing principle of ritual. He begins by insisting on the primacy of ritual over belief as the core of religion. Firstly, he argues that in a preliterate society there is simply no forum where beliefs can be expressed or discussed outside the context of ritual. Secondly, he maintains that what matters to the participants, is acting and participating rather than speculating. Therefore the proper participation in the ritual is more highly valued than the proper thought of it. Thirdly, he suggests that rituals are much more stable historically than beliefs (Robertson-Smith 1899:23-31).

Robertson-Smith turns to a consideration of the relationship between social groupings and ritual. For example, sacrifices are partly devices for restoring errant members of the community to the group, yet in principal they serve to reaffirm the solidarity of the group in a communal meal. Therefore the content of sacrifice is determined by the requirement of incorporation and re-incorporation. It is

partly because, according to Robertson-Smith, commensality has for all human beings the psychological meaning and effect of solidarity that sacrifices take the form of a meal, but also because, to him, this communal meal originally consisted of the eating of the totem of a clan.

Nowadays we know that Robertson-Smith was mistaken about the nature of clans and sacrifices, both among the ancient Semites and in other parts of the world, as E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1965:51-53) pointed out with emphatic contempt, but this kind of theory has been re-echoed again and again, often with much better evidence in the work of Radcliffe-Brown (1952).

As M. Bloch argues (1986:4) "this type of argument hinges on a set of correspondences that are taken to be causal relationships. In Robertson-Smith's theory, the elements seen as corresponding are clans, ritual congregation and the emotions of commensality. The clans cause the ritual for the purposes of solidarity, and this maintains the clans. The argument is therefore teleological in that the effect of the commensual ritual, solidarity, is made to be its cause, implying a conscious or unconscious motivation on the part of the originators of the ritual- a motivation that would have to have been based on the same kind of knowledge of determination as that of Robertson-Smith himself. That is to say, the purpose of the initiators would have to have been based on knowledge of the effects of commensality, and if those who continue the ritual do not state this any more, it

is because they have forgotten the wise intent of their ancestors, because they carry on the institution merely from habit, or because they conceal the real purpose of the ritual from others and perhaps from themselves as well by some strange process of the unconscious." This tautological type of explanation, which has often been labelled functionalist, is both un-demonstrated and totally unlikely. It has been incisively criticized again and again (Needham 1962; Jarvie 1965; Spiro 1965).

By merely asserting that ritual is determined by social organization (clans for Robertson-Smith or monastic community in the case of the hagiorite monks) we remain long away from understanding how they are formed. The question would arise whether the unity-maintaining function of the ritual accounted for all aspects of the ritual; otherwise the connection might be simply partial or even trivial. Robertson-Smith argues that ritual serves the need for solidarity therefore the sacrifice, the communal meal, the choice of sacrificial animal can be explained as fulfilling that particular need. By doing this, he leaves us with the problem that we are not even given the basic requirement for a theory of causation, a clear statement that one type of phenomenon accounts in part or in whole for another. We are left simply with congruence; causation is only imputed. (M. Bloch 1986:4).

An alternative would be to argue that those rituals which by change contribute to social solidarity, will be

perpetuated while those which undermine society will finally disappear. In effect Rappaport's argument (1967) is that the ritual should be seen as an adaptive mechanism of the human species in a given ecological balance. In another article of his (1977), he claims that a complex ritual of a New Guinea people is explained by its effect on the ecological balance, in particular by reducing the pig population when it reaches a critical threshold. Of course as M. Bloch argues (op.cit:5) this approach raises a whole range of further questions. In particular, why, if the deleterious effects of the rising pig population are clear to the people should the message have to be given in ritual form at all? Rappaport's answer is that ritual makes the message imperative and beyond discussion because of its sacred character and that it is the only way in which such important actions can be enforced in uncentralized societies. "Rappaport, like a number of other functionalists, does not imply an original founder for the ritual, rather he replaces this mythical figure with natural selection that explains the continuance of this particular ritual. The form of the argument is, therefore, that culture, like genetic mutations, produces a large number of random forms and that the useful ones persist while the harmful ones disappear." (op.cit:5).

Marxist writers have also attempted the determination of ritual by social phenomena. Generally they draw on the notion of ideology. Ideology for them is a device whereby a ruling class imposes its ideas, values and image of reality

on those whom it dominates. M. Godelier for example, (1973, Chapter 5), treats ritual as part of the ideology and as determined by this purpose, or more generally for maintaining order. The same difficulty applies here with regard to the problem of the origin of the ideology. "It would involve ideology's being created as a plot by cynical rulers who deliberately invent subtle and totally convincing mystifying devices for the domination of others, or invoking, as Rappaport does, a theory of natural selection that explains persistence. Above all it makes the significance and power of religion for participants quite beyond comprehension. Although these tend to ignore the rather absurd notion implicit in the theory of ideology, the implications are nevertheless there. Otherwise one would have to make the totally un-Marxist supposition that ideology was created by other than human agency. Also present is the old problem that the demonstration of the alleged fact that ideological apparatuses such as rituals perform the functions of ideology does not mean that these functions are the cause of their being as they are." (M. Bloch, op.cit:6).

Perhaps the weakness of such an approach can best be shown by pointing out that the opposite conclusions can be reached from similar data with equal plausibility. This is precisely the position of two other writers on ritual, N. Fustel de Coulange and Emile Durkheim, who were able to use Robertson-Smith's conclusions for their totally different theories. According to these two authors, it is the ritual,

the emotions and the concepts embodied in it, that creates the social units with which they are congruent.

Fustel de Coulange's argument is that the concept of ancestor worship was to shape all Roman history and create the notion of the ancient city and its laws on the model of the original patriarchal family or minimal lineage (Fustel de Coulange, 1868).

Many of the latter's views were taken over Durkheim, particularly in his book The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (1912). The theories of both Fustel de Coulange and Durkheim see ritual as the device by which the categories of understanding organizing our perception of nature and of society are created and given their categorical, hence inevitable, and compulsive nature. However, the connection between ritual and social organization does not by itself constitute a demonstration of causation.

"In spite of the apparent differences among these writers they all have one thing in common: Their treatment is highly reductionist. This is another familiar criticism of functionalist theories but it remains none of the less valid. The problem is that any theory that explains rituals in terms of their socially regulative functions pays attention to only a few aspects of very rich and complex phenomena." (M. Bloch, op.cit:7).

"The realization of the reductionism inherent in functionalist analysis led anthropology to a different

approach to the ritual. Basically most reductionist authors see religion as an explanation of the world and man in fairly traditional theological terms. They see religion as a speculation on nature and an intellectual accommodation of the beyond. They are critical of functionalism, as they recognize it as a device for ignoring the content of ritual. In order to avoid reductionism, the intellectualists have made of rituals something that they clearly are not: a discourse on the nature of man in the universe. Indeed, as it has been shown by G. Lewis (1980) this misrepresentation leads to totally unwarranted additions in that the intellectualists complement what they can observe with other deductions in order to produce the kind of scheme that in the anthropological literature is referred to as cosmology. The anti-functionalists therefore fall into another form of reductionism that may well be even more dangerous." (M. Bloch op.cit:8).

Intellectualist and symbolic approaches assume that rituals are as they are in order to fulfil a single function, that of explanation. In addition to this these theories imply a pseudo-history, an absolute beginning. Nowadays, we all know that the substitution of false history for real history leads clearly to reductionism. The study of ritual in anthropological thought is endlessly bouncing between two walls - "a functionalist wall, which implies a process of formation that is clearly wrong and that leads us to ignore most of what can be observed, and an intellectualist or

symbolist wall, which fails in any way to explain or place rituals in their social context, and as a result leads us to misrepresent our data by making us pretend that it is a different type of activity than it patently is, that is, by making it look a though it were a theological treatise." (op.cit:9).

V. Turner is one of the few anthropologists who has managed to combine the sociological with the symbolic approach. He proposes that we should note the symbolic side of ritual, together with its emotional and its sociological aspects.

In this thesis I have chosen to stand on V. Turner's theory in order to show the analogies between the cultures he has studied and the hagiorite culture. By doing this I will have the opportunity to put my data and the resulting interpretations next to Turner's, combined with the discussions and the statements I had with the monks of Mount Athos.

Catechism (Katichisis): The liminal process of incorporation

The change of monastic state thus, the passing from one stage to another, presupposes a purifying period called Katichisis (catechism). This equals to what V. Turner calls liminality. He writes: "Liminality is a term borrowed from Arnold van Gennep's formulation of "rites de passage" or transition rites which accompany every change of state or social

position, or certain points in age. These are marked by three phases: The first phase is Separation it comprises a symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or the group from either an earlier fixed point in the social structure or from an established set of cultural conditions (a state). During the intervening liminal period, the state of ritual subject (the passager or liminar) becomes ambiguous, neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification; he passes through a symbolic domain that has a few or none of the attributes of his past or coming state." (op.cit.:231-232).

In liminality, the symbolism almost everywhere indicates that the initiand (novice) is structurally, if not physically, invisible in terms of his culture's standard definitions and classifications. He has been divested of the out-ward attributes of structural position, set aside from the main arenas of social life -in seclusion- and reduced to an equality with his fellow initiands regardless of their pre-ritual status.

In hagiorite initiation the period of liminality is katichisis. During katichisis there are two processes taking place simultaneously. From the one hand the katichoumenos (the one who is under catechism, or the liminar) receives the teachings from "above", thus he loads himself with the attributes of the coming state, and on the other, he unloads the old one by rejecting it. Katichisis is an "exorcism" against the evil influences that governed the initiand's

previous state. However, it is also a blessing of the coming state. Both as an exorcism and as a blessing, katichisis is considered a necessary purifying procedure before the acquisition of the monastic identity similar to that taking place before baptism.

In secular rites of passage before the Sacrament of baptism, the priest stands in the first part of the Church (Narthex) and he reads for the neophyte (baby) the "**Euchi eis Katichoumenon**" meaning blessing for those who are under catechism (see Mega Euchologion p. 130).

Literally translated the Greek word katichisis means give sound (ichos) downwards (kato). In the monastery, as well as in the secular world, katichisis, is thought to be a process of preparation and purification of the neophyte. It is actually a training period where the initiand receives the necessary knowledge and education in order to familiarize himself with the attributes of the culture into which he wishes to be incorporated. Therefore katichisis is a process of initiation, concerning all those initiands who are in changing condition.

"The second phase Margin (or limen) signifies the great importance of real or symbolic thresholds of this middle period of the rites, "being in a tunnel", would better describe the quality of this phase in many cases, its hidden nature, its sometimes mysterious darkness" (op.cit.:231).

"In the third phase, reaggregation, the passage is consumated and the ritual subject, the neophyte or initiand

re-enters the social structure (order), often, but not always at a higher status level. The ritual degradation occurs as well as elevation (op.cit.:231). Of course, one may logically argue that people are not inserted in social structure. People are rather assigned to new positions in the social structure.

It is in liminality that communitas emerges, if not as a spontaneous expression of sociability, at least sociability in a cultural and normative form -stressing equality and comradeship as norms rather than generating spontaneous and existential communitas, though of course spontaneous communitas may and does arise in most cases of protracted initiation ritual (op.cit.). V. Turner opposes the concept of communitas to the concept of social structure. According to him there is a dialectical relationship over time between communitas and social structure. A process such as ritualization tends to occur frequently in the interstices or on the edges of something thus, in the edge between social structure and communitas.

Some regard structure primarily as a description of repeated patterns of action, that is, of an observable uniformity of action or operation, of something "out-there", capable of being empirically observed and hopefully measured. This viewpoint is represented most prominently in anthropology by Randcliff Brown and it has been severely criticized by G. Levis-Strauss, who holds that social structures "are entities independent of men´s consciousness

of them although they in fact govern men´s existence" (1963:121).

However, V. Turner sides with A. R. Radcliffe-Brown. He writes: "What I intend to convey by social structure here- and what is implicitly regarded as the frame of social order in most societies- is not a system of unconscious categories, but quite simply, in R, Merton´s terms, the patterned arrangements of role-sets, status sets, and status sequences consciously recognized and regularly operative in a given society. He defines the role sets as the actions and relationships that flow from the social status. The status sets refers to the probable congruence of various positions occupied by an individual. And finally the status sequences as the probable succession of positions occupied by an individual through time (op.cit.:235).

Nevertheless, G. Levis-Strauss´s concept of "unconscious social stucture" as a structure of cognitive relationships such as occur between the elements of myth and ritual must enter into our reckoning when we consider liminal ritual phenomena.

In order to make clear the difference between social structure and communitas V. Turner writes: "Implicitly or explicitly, in societies (at) all levels of complexity, a contrast is posited between the notion of society as a differentiated segmented system of structural position (which may or may not be arranged in a hierarchy), and society as a homogeneous, undifferentiated whole" (op.cit.:237). In the

first model, the notion of society as a differentiated system of structural position, approximates to the preliminary picture of social structure where the units are statuses and roles, not concrete human individuals. The individual is segmentalized into roles which he plays. Here the unit is what Radcliffe-Brown has called the persona the role mask, not the unique individual. The second model, communitas, often appear -culturally in the guise of an Edemic, paradisiacal, utopian, or millennial state of affairs, to the attainment of which religious or political action, personal or collective, should be directed. Society is pictured as a communitas of free and equal comrades of total persons. "Societas" or "society" as we all experience it, is a process involving both social structure and communitas, separately and united in varying proportions" (op.cit.).

Practically all rituals of any length and complexity represent a passage from one position, constellation, or domain of structure to another. In this regard they may be said to possess "temporal structure" and to be dominated by the notion of time. However, in passing from structure to structure many rituals pass through communitas. Communitas is almost always thought of or portrayed by actors as a timeless condition, an eternal now, as a moment in and out of time, or as a state to which the structural view of time is not applicable. As V. Turner argues (op.cit.:238-239) such is frequently the character of at least parts of the seclusion periods found in many protracted initiation

rituals.

Seclusion and liminality may contain what Eliade calls "a time of marvels". Figures representing gods, and chthonic powers, sometimes appearances of saints, mixed with myths and stories explaining the origin, attributes, and behaviour of these strange and sacred habitants of liminality (see chapter 3). Also, in myth and ritual an individual undergoing passage may learn the total pattern of social relations involved in his transition and how it changes. He may therefore, learn about social structure in communitas. In many societies it seems to be enough that neophytes learn to become aware of the multiple relationships existing between the sacra and other aspects of their culture, or learn from the positioning of sacred symbols in a structure of relationships which are everywhere (see chapter 4, 5). The neophytes may learn what Levis-Strauss calls the "sensory codes" underlying the details of myth and ritual and the homologues between events and objects described in different codes-visual, auditory, and tactile. The medium here is a message-and the medium is nonverbal though often meticulously structured (op.cit.:240).

In liminality resides the germ not only of religious askesis, discipline, and mysticism, but also of philosophy and pure science. Indeed, such Greek philosophers as Plato and Pythagoras are known to have had links with mystery cults. Also, liminality often draws on poverty, similarly as the voluntary outsiders of our own society, also draw upon

the symbolic vocabulary of poverty and indigence.

Liminality is a phase in social life in which the confrontation between activity which has no structure and its structured alternative results produces in men their highest pitch of self-consciousness. Syntax and logic are problematic and not axiomatic features of liminality. In long-established cultural systems we expect to find the growth of a symbolic and iconographic syntax and logic, whereas, in changing or newly established systems we expect to find in liminal situation daring and innovation both in the modes of relating symbolic and mythic elements and in the choice of elements to be related (op.cit.:255).

Regarding this I believe that liminality traces its itinerary as based on structure, or to pose it differently, structure comprises the lamp bracket supporting communitas.

In the monastery novice-monks have little time to devote to philosophical and theological speculations, but in protracted liminal periods through which everyone must pass, they become a privileged class (order), an order which knows what is good for all the society. Therefore, we have a fruitful alienation of the total individual from the partial persona, which must result of a total rather than a partial perspective on the life of society (op.cit.:259).

After this immersion in the depths of liminality - frequently symbolized in ritual (and myth) as a grave that is also a womb- after this profound experience of humiliation and humility, a man who at the end of the ritual becomes the

incumbent of a senior political (monastic) status or even merely of a higher position in some particularistic segment of the social structure can surely never again be quite so parochial. When the rites are completed they form an association with mutual rights and obligations which may last until death and which cut across cleavages on the basis of ascribed and achieved status.

After the end of the tonsuring ceremony, the hagiorite monks declare with an excessively apt statement that they are dead to the world (**eimai nekros gia to kosmo**). It is proved by the change of their secular names, as well as, their surnames, that the monks, after their tonsure, are no longer members of their secular family (oikogenia), they have now been married to Christ in order to gain spiritual unity with the divine. By doing this they declare themselves socially dead.

Their new monastic identity is an abandonment of their secular manners and everything that would possibly distract their concentration for the spiritual union with the divine. The family, as all social anthropologists working there have witnessed for Greece, comprises the strongest link with the "in-worldly" (**en-kosmia**) things. The family is everybody's primary involvement with society. Thus, the person's renouncement starts from this point. By undertaking the monastic vows the monk now belongs to the monastic "oikogenia" (family), and he is a member of the brotherhood of monks. Divinity substitutes for his secular identity and

the monastic community for his family and his social life.

The Classification of the monks of Mount Athos: The stages and the monastic orders.

The monks of Mount Athos are Greek Nationals. Even foreigners have to change their nationality if they wish to become monks in Mount Athos (Article 6). To be eccepted in Mount Athos one must have completed the eighteenth year of his life. The monastics are exempted from army duties (Article 93), although army service is compulsory in Greece.

A man who wishes to become a monk in a monastery of Mount Athos addresses the Hegoumenos (Father Superior or Abbot). If the monastery is Idiorythmic (a monastery in which, though it is like a coenobioum, each monk takes care of himself), he may address one of the Proistamenos (Heads) so as to become his novice. He may also address the monks of the other establishments of Mount Athos (skete, cell, hut or even hermitage) where he becomes a novice of the "Geron" (Old Man or Eldest) who resides in them.

Once the "new-comer" has been accepted by the Hegoumenos he resides in the monastery, in the novices' cells (rooms), near the aisle where the monks live. This first period in the monastery, which I call novice period, lasts - as I have already mentioned- three years and it is separated into two stages.

At the first stage of the novice period the newcomer

does not belong to any monastic order. The stage a. of the novice period deals with a preliminary involvement in the monastic activities. During this period the person is considered dokimos (novice) and he is placed in the order of the novices (**Taxis ton dokimon**).

Period A	**Stage a:**		**Taxis ton Dokimon. (order of the novice)**
	Stage b:	**Rassoeuchi (Blessing of the clergy)**	**Taxis ton Rasoforon. (Order of the clergy) First degree monk**

At this first stage (stage a) of the novice period, the novice wears an under-cassock and a leather belt. Yet, this is not a uniform. In A. monastery the novices wore their civil clothes. One could only distinguish them from the pilgrims by the black skullcap they had on. This stage is rather a stage of trial than of retreat ending with the novice's first tonsure (in some monasteries), or the taking of Clerical Blessing (euchi tou rassoforou).

The time of the first stage is not precise. Usually it lasts almost one year. After this first period, if the novice wishes to go deeper into the essence of the monkish life and given that he was found appropriate, he is asked to enter the Church where he undergoes the first hair-cutting (**trichokouria**).

A priest-monk, i.e. one of the ordained monks -usually the Hegoumenos (Father Superior)- blesses the novice and cuts his hair. The novice's participation is speechless and the

rite is rather unceremonious. Actually, this rite takes the character of an off-handed tonsure utilizing some elements of Kathichisis (catechism). In some monasteries the Hegoumenos gives to the novice only his "**evlogia**" (blessing). Similar to that given to Katichoumenous (those who are under catechism). In other words there is no hair-cutting.

I was told that the first tonsure which signals the passage from the stage a. to the stage b. has been replaced by a blessing, called "**euchi tou rasoforou**" (the blessing of the clergy), and it serves to encourage the novice to continue. By submitting to the blessing of the clergy the neophyte enters the so called Order of the Clergy (**Taxis ton Rasoforon**), and he is considered first degree monk. He is now dressed in a habit whose colour is sombre but not black. By wearing the **raso** (habit) the monk is now protected from all evil spirit and temptation. The raso embraces the novice and exactly because it has been blessed by the mediator priest it is thought as a physical shield. At this stage (stage b) the person's monastic state is considered as that of a novice-monk. In other words he has gained some of the elements of the monastic status, and therefore a different and rather more stable position in the arrangements of the monastic activities held in the monastery.

Nowadays, the novice period, including stage a. and stage b., has been reduced, in some monasteries, to one or two years (Christou, op.cit, 1987:344). In the decade of the sixties Mount Athos passed a juncture of its history. The

number of the monks was reducing and this contributed to the minimization of the first trial period. Yet, this does not apply to all monasteries. For example, in S. monastery there was a German monk, who had already been in the monastery as a novice for four years but, as I was told, the Hegoumenos was not willing to change his monastic status (stage) until he was finally convinced of the novice's capacities.

Although the "**rasoforos**" is posted as a first degree monk he is not yet considered fully monk, because he has not undertaken any vows at all. Regarding this he is free to still leave the monastery without any consequences.

To familiarise themselves with monastic life the novices participate in the "**diakonima**" (voluntarily offered work), and they follow all the services in the Church. They also undertake customarily all the humble work, such as cleaning and washing the dishes. All the novice eat with the other monks during lunch and supper, yet, they sit at the end of the table. This is in accordance with their monastic status which actually is the lowest possible.

At this initiatiory stage of the novice's life, one could make several comments concerning humility as a means of incorporating a novice into the life of a monastery. As V. Turner (1977:166-203) writes for another case (Ndembu), "symbols of liminality that indicate the structural invisibility of novices undergoing life-crisis ritual- how for example, they are secluded from the spheres of everyday life". Following Goffman's (1962:14) terminology, he

continues: "they are levelled and stripped of all secular distinctions of status and rights over property (see also chapter 5 of this thesis). Furthermore, they are subjected to trials to teach them humility".

Humility is also a basic characteristic of all strictly hierarchical organized societies. For example, military incorporations often formulate their hierarchical structure on the base of the newcomers' inability to communicate, something which makes the imposition of humiliation even easier. In this regard, time seems to reinforce and to canonize social order and hierarchy. The veteran soldiers axiomatically say: "O palios einai allios", meaning "the old is different".

The novice period officially ends by the undertaking of the first (possibly second) tonsure. This tonsure is actually the main monastic tonsure, called Koura. Koura is a ceremonial rite during which the novice takes his monastic name. The second (or first) tonsure signals the beginning of the second period of the person's progress into the monastery and it underlines the novice's accession into the minor order of monks (**Microschimos**). The person's monastic status is "**Microschimos monk**", thus the novice gains the monkish identity and of course the fatherly attributes of this monastic state (stage c). At this stage the person is considered as second degree monk, and he is no longer a novice.

Although, at this stage the person is thought to be a

real monk, due to the fact that his tonsure took place according to the rule of the minor schema (akolouthia microu schimatos "tou mandiou", see Hiero Evchologio, cod G. Dionysios 201) his is not yet considered a integrated one. His life in the monastery does not differ from that of the novice-monk. The Microschimos monk participates in the diaconima and in the liturgies as he previously used to. The only difference is that he undertakes more responsible work into the monastery. At this stage he belongs to the brotherhood of the monks (**Monachiki Adelfotita**), and he has the right to vote in the general meetings, but he has no right to be voted in. This second period of a monk's life is indefinite. The monk may remain at this stage until his death.

Period B Monk Minor	Stage c:	**Middle Tonsure. Cutting of hair. Taking first vows.**	**Microschimos (Minor order of monks) Second degree monk**

During the tonsure the monk undertakes the basic three vows concerning: a. **agamia**, **parthenia** (celibacy, chastity), b. **hypachoi** (obedience), c. **aktimosini** (poverty). Each one of these vows corresponds to each one of the triptich of the monkish values.

There is no great ritual differentiation between the tonsure of stage c. and the tonsure of stage d. The difference lies on the vows undertaken. The last monastic order, the order of the Major monk i.e. **"Megaloschimos monk"**

involves the vow of death. The monk swears that he will remain and preserve the monastic virtues even at the expense of his own life. The third and last tonsure, the **apo-koura** is the very crucial one. The monk is not just passing from one stage to another; he is not just promoted to another order; he is not just a third degree monk; according to the monks he is getting married.

Period C	**Stage d:**	**Major Tonsure.**	**Megaloschimos (Major order of monks)**
Monk Major		**Cutting of hair. Taking more strict vows.**	**Third degree monk**

The order of **Megaloschimos** is the last monastic order. After this the monk may become -if he is found appropriate and if the monastery needs one- a priest; thereafter he gains the identity of **Pneumatikos** or **Hieromonachos** and finally becomes a mediator of God´s grace through liturgy.

Although the monk-priests do not consist another monastic order (Christou, 1987:344), it was clear to me that only the very respected monks gain this office, for very few can carry out the demands of this post. The **Hegoumenos** (Father Superior or Abbot) of the monastery, who is a priest, provides the link between the Church ecclesiastics and the monastery. In Orthodoxy few monks were or are ordained. In A. monastery they were six out of thirty five. These men are needed in a monastery to perform the Eucharist and other sacraments and they hold the most important executive posts. Although they are not part of the Church´s ecclesiastic

hierarchy, monks were often recruited from monasteries and "forced" to act in the world. However, the monk-priests can be ordinated only by the Bishops of the official Church.

This immediately places them in the summit of the monastic hierarchy. The first fact proves Meyendorff's contention that the relation between the ecclesiastical and the monastic authority was kept balanced through the Eucharistic Sacrament (1982:197-215). And the second proves that the monks' hierarchy fits either into the frame of the monastery, or into the frame of the Athonite State that follows the trace of the Church hierarchy. Supportive to this assertion is the fact that the highest monastic body of Mount Athos consists of the Fathers' Superior of the twenty monasteries (see Aggelopoulos, op.cit.). All of them are priests, thus Hieromonachi and "Pneumatiki" (spiritual). Therefore although the priest monks do not compose a separate monastic order they obviously create the category of Pneumatikos monk. As discussed elsewhere the pneumatikos monk is also a confessor.

Nowadays, in the coenobitic monasteries the order of the clergy, which is nothing more but the extension of the novice period, tends to substitute the order of the novice. At the same time the order of the minor monks tend to substitute for the order of the clergy. In some other coenobitic monasteries the novices instead of passing to the very next order, the order of Microschimon, change over to the order of Megaloschimon. That is to say, the order of the

monk major tends to substitute for the order of the monk minor. Therefore into the frame of a coenobium there is a tendency the higher order to substitute for the lower one.

Although the order of the monk minor tends to vanish in coenobitic monasteries, by contrast in idiorythmic ones this phenomenon applies in the order of the monk major. Of course, this a great issue that this thesis cannot undertake.

Further on the reader will find a table in which I attempt to present the classification of the monastic orders. In table g. I share the monastic incorporation in three periods and the monastic completion in four stages. Next to each stage the reader finds the rite of passage that precedes the elevation to a monastic order, and finally next to this the monastic orders.

Time	**Stages**	**Ritual**	**Order**
Period A Novice	Stage a:	.....	Taxis ton Dokimon. (order of the novice)
	Stage b:	Minor Tonsure. Cutting of hair. or Rassoeuchi.	Taxis ton Rasoforon. (Order of the clergy) First degree monk
Period B Monk Minor	Stage c:	Middle Tonsure. Cutting of hair. Taking first vows.	Microschimos (Minor order of monks) Second degree monk
Period C Monk Major	Stage d:	Major Tonsure. Cutting of hair. Taking more strict vows.	Megaloschimos (Major order of monks) Third degree monk
	Stage e:	Ordination	[Priest, Pneumatikos] [(Spiritual)Hieromonk]

Table g.

In the same Table, I have posted the priest-monks separately for, although they constitute another category they do not comprise a different monastic order. I often insisted on this issue but, the monks seem to face the priest-monks similar to the way laity consider the priest of their parish: the confessors and performers of the ceremonies.

The ritual of Koura (tonsure)

Although the time before the ritual Koura is defined by the "katastatikos Chartis" (Constitution of Mount Athos, Article 93), as lasting from one to three years, this period can often be extended to four or even five years. The content of the Koura rite includes extremely "heavy" vows, that once undertaken cannot be violated. In this regard, it is in the Hegoumenos (Father Superior´s) domain to decide whether and when the rite of Koura will take place. As "**pneumatikos**" (spiritual guide), he tests the novices´ "**fronima**" (morale) and, as "**anadochos**" (God-Father), he approves and undertakes his Koura.

I have to repeat that I have not personally witnessed the Koura ritual therefore the presentation of the ceremony will be limited to my literary knowledge. However, I have discussed this issue with Father I. several times seaking to understand how the monks view its solemnity. As I have already mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, each

passage from one stage to the other, involves a relevant transition rite. It is true however, that the different rites of passage suffered from the consequences of the decline of recent years in monasticism. For example, although there are three tonsuring ceremonies originally, one for each monastic order, the first tonsure has been totally abolished in most hagiorite monasteries. The Holy scriptures on the other hand, refer to two tonsures: one for the minor monastic order (**Koura tou Microu Schimatos**) and one for the major order (**Koura tou Megalou Schimatos**).

As I was told the most important tonsuring ceremony is that of the major order. Father I. told me that the fatherly monastic identity is gained by the end of the tonsure of the minor order. However, the ceremony during which the novice monk gains his monastic identity consists of a mix of both tonsuring ceremonies: Mikrou Schimatos (minor) and Megalou Schimatos (major), (see Mega Euchologio, 190-220).

The account which I shall present further on, is based on literary study of these texts. Of course, I am not in a position to know the precise content of the dialogue taking place during the ritual, but as Father I. told me, Koura as the main transition rite signifies the end of the novice's katichisis (liminality) period and therefore his entrance and accession in the monastic brotherhood.

This second (actually first) tonsure not only does utilize elements and the symbolism of baptism as in the first one does, but actually it is a baptism itself. During the

rite the novice changes his secular name, as well as his surname. After his tonsure the monk uses as a surname the name of the monastery in which he was tonsured. For example, if he is tonsured in the monastery of Gregoriou he is called Grigoriatis. The changing of his name symbolises the death of his secular identity and the new name marks his new divine one. Something which is even more clear in the title of the Koura of the major order. The Koura of the major order (Megalou Schimatos) is called **Acolouthia Aggelikou Schimatos**, meaning Service of the Angelic Order.

The Hegoumenos of the monastery has the responsibility to propose to the Gerondia (an elected committee consisting a spiritual body), the elevation of a novice to the order of Megaloschimos (Major Order). The judgement of the Gerondia, also called Sinaxis of the Eldest, will be put down to the minute-book. The ritual of koura takes place as a rule on Saturday of Lent. The ceremony begins before daybreak after the end of the matins.

The tonsuring ceremony that I will attempt to describe and comment on at this point of my work, is rather ritualistic. After matins the choir starts to sing the "kanona" (canon), while the "tipikaris" (the man who is responsible for the keeping of the ritual, a very important diaconima which deals with the conduct of all liturgies) escorts the novice from the chaplaincy into the Catholic of the main Church. The novice wears a singlet and a long white gown (chiton) symbolizing the novice's purity. He enters the

Church only in his underclothing. Somehow he is without clothes. The reason for this is of course symbolic. The novice is considered as the "bride of Christ" (**nimphios**) and as a bride -regardless of his sex- he is dressed in white. The white gown however, is also reminiscent of the shroud (Alexiou 1983:27) in which all corpses are dressed before they are clothed in their best outfits for burial. Nowadays the white gown has been replaced with the black habit, marking the person's social death and his denial of the material world.

The novice is shepherded into the Church in front of the Father Superior. While the other monks pray and the choirs (chorus) on the right and the left side of the Church sing, the novice-monk starts his "stichomithia" (dialogue) with the Father Superior (or the monk who acts as priest). This dialogue takes the form of questions and answers. During the ceremony the prospective monk declares in public i.e. in front of the brotherhood of monks, that he is willing to "**aparnithei ta en-cosmia**" (renounce the world, **en-cosmia**= in the world), and become a real monk.

During this tonsure the monk takes the blessing of the cross wearer (**euchi tou stauroforou**). He now wears black habit and a small cross on his chest.

The cutting of hair and the change of the name prove the argument that the tonsuring ceremony utilizes elements of the Sacrament of baptism. The symbolism of hair has been discussed by other colleagues: Hallpike (1969) associates the

cutting of hair with social control, whereas Leach (1958) associates it with the symbolic subconscious. Lewis (1987) notes that hair cutting does not always mean placement within the social order nor is it always a sign of abstinence from sex. Hair whether cut or allowed to grow long must be understood in context, and the act of cutting must best be understood as a boundary marker. Also Alexiou (1983:87) notes that in folk-songs, particularly those concerning brides and their difficult fate, the cutting of hair is associated with mourning and the changes of social and sexual roles (often denial of sexual role). Also interesting in this regard is the work of Obeyesekere (1984), Firth (1973:Chapter 8), Camplell-Jones (1979), Carithers (1984). Finally, as Behm (op.cit.:27) notes the cutting of hair is linked to the material world and to earthly desires. It symbolizes the cutting or removal of those desires. The tripple hair-cutting during baptism is done to remove the child from the "old" life of Adam and the Original Sin, so as to welcome it into the new life of Christ. Also interesting is the story of Samson in the Old Testament who by losing his hair, lost all his muscular strength.

It must be noted here that two hundred years ago the cutting of hair was obligatory for all the monks and especially for those who even today are called "Zilotes". They are considered as radical anchorites and are strictly opposed to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, even that of the Patriarch.

The second time I visited the I. monastery, the novice M. had been tonsured and he was given the name "Efthimios", meaning "happy man". This new name of his was indeed very suitable to his character. Thus, I came to the conclusion that the new name reflects the monk's qualities of personality. The monk M. was very happy for having been tonsured. I asked him how he felt for being a monk. He answered "eimai charoumenos", meaning," I am happy" (about it), and he continued by referring to the other monks who have reached the higher levels of divine consciousness.

In all the monasteries I visited the monks told me that it is not by themselves who chose their monastic name, this must be done by the Hegoumenos of the monastery who also-in most cases-undertakes the role of God-father (**anadochos**). The monks accept their new names without dissent. It must be noted here that at a symbolic level the monk is not erased as a personality. Such an aim would be by "nature" in opposition to God's will, which requires, from the outset, the deliberate abandonment of one's own will. Although there is an accepted monkish attitude imposed either by the values that govern the monastic behaviour, or the activities that comprise the monks' daily life, each monk holds the basic principles that have been carved on his personality. However, the monks' external attitude is somehow a uniform. Only by a close internal relationship with different monks was the argument that each monk is a different personality verified.

The names given to monks are not the usual names given to laity. Usually laity are baptized by taking the names of their grandfathers. In other words, the names of laity tend to repeat themselves every second generation. On the contrary, monks' names follow the characteristics of Byzantine period saints, thus most of them describe an quality (like Eftichios, Efthimios), or they are amalgamations of two names describing the monks' relationship with the divine (like Theo-philos, meaning, God's friend or Theo-dosios, meaning, the one who gives to God).

The rite of koura is thought to be the "spiritual genesis" of the monk. And although as a ritual it resembles that of baptism -for example; the cutting of hair or the change of name- the monks themselves consider it as a symbolic "marriage" to Christ (see Dorotheos Monachos, The Holy Mount, Vol I, 1986:454). Wedding as a metaphor serves to show the deepening of their involvement with the divine. Yet, koura is not a single rite, in the sense that a monk may be subjected to more than one tonsures in a life time. Each tonsure represents, above all, throughout different types of vows, a different posting into the monastic order.

Marrying Christ, this "eternal" unity with the main representative of the divine, also signifies the person's secular death. As a rite of passage, koura signifies a change not only from the secular manners but also a vertical detachment from the person's family environment. In villages only death or marriage justifies the person's detachment from

the family.

It could be argued that during the main tonsuring ceremony three secular rites of passage are combined in one. Firstly, it is Wedding, the novice is getting married to Christ. Secondly, it is Baptism, for the novice takes his monastic name and finally, it is Burial for he abandons his secular, social identity.

It is reasonable to argue that monastics have reversed the process "dying socially" with the ritual of koura while their bodily death marks the completion of the process starting during the ritual. In this regard the vow of death is similar to the vow given in a wedding. The monk is called "nimphios" (Bridegroom) and he entrusts himself to eternity by undertaking the vow of eternal union with Christ. (see also Chapter 3).

Standing undressed in front of the sanctuary the novice declares his will to "put on Christ" (na foresei ton Christo). The tipikaris leads him to the middle of the Church and he makes repentance (vazei metanoia) in the four aisle of the Church. Afterwards he maunders the novice in front of the ikons, finally he entrusts him to the Father Superior after kissing his hand. The Father Superior as "anadochos" (God-Father) holds the novices' taper and takes him in front of the "main gate". The choir still sings, but after a while they stop. The dialogue between the novice and the Father Superior starts:

F.S: Why have you come here, Brother, with this Sacred suite, prostrating yourself before this Holy Altar, and this holy gathering?

N: I desire the life of ascesis, honoured Father.

F.S: Do you want to be worthy of the Angelic Schema and to join in the monastic dance (chorus)?

N: Yes, with the help of God, honoured Father.

F.S: Truly, it is the right act to elect you, but if you finish; (you have to take care) because there is no gains without pain for the nice things. Have you by your own free will chosen to come to God?

N: Yes, with the help of God, honoured Father.

F.S: Have you come perhaps through need or by force.

N: No, honoured Father.

F.S: Will you refuse (apotassi) the world and everything concerning it, according to God´s will?

N: Yes, with the help of God, honoured Father.

F.S: Do you intend to abide by the monastery and lead a life of mortification unto your last breath?

N: Yes, with the help of God, honoured father.

F.S: Will you keep yourself in virginity, wisdom and piety?

N: Yes, with the help of God, honoured Father.

F.S: Will you sacrifice your life in obedience to the Hegoumenos and to the brethren of God?

N: Yes, with the help of God, honoured Father

F.S: Will you endure all affliction and disappointments of the life of the single (moniris) for the Kingdom of Heaven?

N: Yes, with the help of God, honoured Father.

By paying particular attention to this dialogue we identify the triptych of the monkish values (Virginity, Obedience and Poverty). After the end of this dialogue, the **Katichisis** (catechism) is held and the choir starts singing. As we see katichisis is the necessary procedure before the initiands' hair-cutting. Katichisis in this regard is a symbolic for it appears, at a solemn level, a representation of the novice's liminal period. The same appears in baptism before the baby's hair-cutting, where there is also Katichisis. This observation leads me to the assumption that the tonsuring rituals embody the three-stage rationale: First Katichisis, secondly the tonsure, the hair-cutting and the change of name, and finally, as we shall see, Holy communion.

The singing takes the character of a dialogue between the priest and the two choirs. Before the hair-cutting, the priest recites three blessings to the novice. In the following text, I will confine myself to a selective presentation of the above, thus illuminating the points which I consider as revealing of the significance of the ritual. Throughout these paragraphs, I intend to show on the one hand, the symbolic meaning of the rite of koura and on the other, the metaphoric use of monks' speech and language.

At the time of catechism the Priest says: "<u>This is the second baptism that you receive today...</u>". After the end of that stage the Priest starts reading the three blessings

(**Euches**) and for the last time asks the novice by saying: "All this you confess with the hope and the help of God's power and all these promises you have to keep until the end of your life, with Christ's grace". This is actually the vow of death. After this the reading of the first blessing takes place. This is a **paraklisis** (request) to God to protect the novice from the difficulties he will have to face. The second blessing is a paraklisis to the Holy Trinity, at the end of which the novice takes his new name. In the last blessing, before the end, the Priest says: "See, here Christ invisibly participated. See, that no-one forces you to enter this schema. See, that you willingly asked for this **engagement** with the Angelic Schema".

The hair-cutting starts while the Priest offers the novice the scissors resting on the Gospel. The scissors pass three times from the hands of the novice, to the Godfather (Anadochos) and the Priest. This delay emphasises the importance of the undertaken vows. When the scissors reach the Priest's hands for the third time, he cuts the novice's hair in four places thus, symbolizing the figure of a Cross.

The ritual reaches its end when the novice receives the kisses of fellow monks. The final dialogue is as follows:

F.S: What are you called?

N: (he says his name)

F.S: Live and thank God and people.

After this a liturgy is held and the new monk holding in one hand the taper and in the other his **Komposkini** (rosary or literally "knot-string"), is the first to receive communion .

In the ritual of tonsure in a monastery, usually, the role of **anadochos** (God-Father) is undertaken by the Hegoumenos (Father Superior). As in the secular world, the God-Father is the spiritual guide of the baptized person. The anadochos is somebody who takes the responsibility to talk, or speak and therefore mediate on the initiand's behalf. In the secular content the anadochos is considered as the baby's spiritual father. In Crete for example, the anadochos is called **sintecnos**, literally meaning someone who has the child together with the natural parents.

In the coenobitic monasteries the Hegoumenos (Father Superior) usually -if not always- takes the role of anadochos. This is in accordance with his superior fatherly role in the monastery. The Hegoumenos is the top spiritual person, he is the Father of all Fathers.

Although the rite of tonsure is baptism and as such it symbolises the passing of the novice into the world of spirit, the attentive examination of it, provides us with the evidence which prove the utilization of marriage elements. Thus, Koura is both baptism and wedding. The marital vow made after koura is justified on another count. Any assets created after the novice's tonsure belong to the monastery after his death. This sort of commitment resembles that of the marriage in the secular world where all the assets

created after the marriage remain within the family.

The Parallels

In this section it would be interesting to try to examine how the celibate Priests view the premarital stages of a couple's life. Hopefully, I intend to track down the analogies between the stages of a candidate couple and the stages through which a monk passes until his final tonsure. Although, it seems bizarre to face the koura as a wedding this is justified either by the monks' consideration of marriage, or by the fact that both ceremonies are highly ritualistic and are -as the monks say- "mysteries".

It is true however, that the ritual of koura cannot be seen exactly as marriage or baptism, for the tonsuring ritual is not a Sacrament. Only few monks insist on this comparison, for example, Archimandrite Tziavaras who has written a book entitled "The eight Sacrament", perceives and considers the whole monastic experience as a long lasting Sacrament. However, the official Church and the majority of the monks I have talked with, consider this notion as a misrepresentation. As Behm (1986:28) notes, during the tonsuring ceremony there is no anointing with oil or water, usually associated with baptism nor is there a wedding ring to symbolize the monk's union with Christ. These habits according to the monks are "things of the flesh". On the contrary spiritual union demands prayer rather than any kind

of conduct through objects of this world.

Regardless of the opposite opinion of the official Church which stands on the dissimilarities of the secular rituals and that of tonsure, the ritual of koura is to be understood differently when viewed within the whole ritual system which runs Orthodoxy. In this regard one may find -as I did- quite a few similarities. For example, the black habit and the white robe (chiton), the cutting of the hair and the taking of a new name, practically create an emotional impact on the tonsuring ceremony by recalling scenes of different Sacraments and rituals of the secular origin. On the other hand, these similarities are reinforced by the use of secular metaphors. The monks are considered "children of Panagia", they are "nimphioi (male brides) of Christ", they are "dead for the world". The same way a married man or woman are seen as sexually "dead" to anyone else but their spouse, once married in Church.

The similarities between baptism, marriage and tonsure are witnessed in the Holy Scriptures (Mega Euchologio 199, 241). It was in my intentions to show these literal analogies but, finally due to the difficulty of their language and the lack of any theological knowledge I decided to restrain my analyses on the secular metaphors the monks use to describe their eternal unity with the divine.

When I asked the novice-monk O., who belongs to the first monastic order (Rassoforos monk) in I. Monastery, if he wants to become Megaloschimos, he answered with a

question, he said: "ama einai kanis arravoniasmenos tessera chronia me mia kopela, den thelei na tin pandreuftei?", meaning that, "if somebody is engaged to a girl for four years, doesn't he want to marry her?" I wanted to reply "not necessarily", but I chose to remain silent. Later on, by contemplating that the monks use the wedding as a metaphor to emphasize on the deepening of their involvement with the divine, and by delving into the monks' literature concerning their viewpoints about engagement and marriage, I came to realize what Father O. meant by his words. His statement, (doesn't he want to marry her?), implied; "doesn't he want to have a physical affair with her?" This interpretation appeared to me to be quite logical, taking into account two important elements. The first is that, according to the Church, a physical affair is justified only within the frame of marriage, thus, serving the purpose of procreation. The second is that, according to the monks' and the celibate Priests' perception, engagement is considered to be a non-sexual period of a couple's life (see Bishop Dionysios L. Psarianos, 1964, also Head-Priest K. Kallinikos, 1958). By taking into consideration those two points, I came to realize how monks use marital involvement to describe their spiritual commitment to God.

The point I wish to make here deals with the question of how the bodily aspect of marriage is used as a metaphor to ascribe the spiritual implication with the divine. What comes after wedding is fertility (procreation). The same

happens after apo-koura, in the sense that the monks enter into the sphere of the divine, and therefore in the timeless area where immortality and salvation promise fertility (see Chapter 3).

To pose it differently, while fertility in marriage means children, in the monastic context fertility, after the ritual of apo-koura, means "miracle". Inspired by this idea, I drew the parallels further on. My question is as follows: If marriage as a commitment corresponds to apo-koura, to what extent do the stages of the monastic status before the monk's last tonsure, correspond to the stages of the pre-marital status in a couples' life? I consider that one can find analogies between the stages of a monk's life from his first entrance into the monastery until his final tonsure, and the couple's life until their wedding.

According to Bishop Psarianos after the acquaintance of the two persons, what follows is "**mnisteia**" (betrothal). **Mnisteia** is a promise given by two young people that after a while they will get married (op.cit p 47). This premarital stage corresponds to the stage of the novice-monk (stage b). After that "**arravon**" (engagement) takes place. Engagement relates to the stage of the monk-minor (stage c). Yet, according to Bishop Psarianos this premarital stage involves, from the groom's side, the giving of gifts (op.cit.: 48). This period should last the least time possible, because the Priests find it dangerous for the purity of betrothal to remain at this stage for a long period (op.cit.: 60).

Obviously, there is a differentiation in comparison to stage c, which could last a life time. After this stage what follows is marriage.

The analogy could be presented in Table h.: There we see five columns: The first shows the monastic stages, the second the monks' monastic status, the third the symbolic monastic action taking place during the transition rites, the fourth the secular metaphors used to ascribe the monastic involvement with the divine and the fifth the symbolic secular action taking place during the different levels of a couple's involvement.

Stages	Monastic status	Symbolic monastic action	Metaphor	Symbolic secular action
stage a.	novice	.....	**gnorimia** (acquaintance)	.....
stage b.	novice monk	being blessed	**logodosimo** (word of honour)	"Mnisteia" parental approval. Betrothal.
stage c.	monk Minor	baptism First vows	**arravon** (engagement)	Blessing of the priest into the house The giving of gifts.
Stage d.	monk Major	baptism wedding vow of death	**Gamos** (marriage)	Gamos (wedding)

Table h.

The similarities are obvious yet, in the final stage there is a slight difference between apo-koura and marriage. The monks say: "**O Megaloschimos monachos pandrevetai ton Christo**" meaning that, "the **Megaloschimos** monk marries Christ". In the Gospel, marriage (in its secular context) is considered as the unification of the two persons in one single body (Matthew 18:5). In the monastic context the monk's marriage with Christ is by itself symbolic. That is to say, translated in secular discourse, it appears to be a figure of speech that by itself stands for the monks' incorporation into the body of the Church (see chapter 4).

Orthodox Christians believe that, in both secular and divine context, the bond of marriage is eternal. Given this, the violation of the vow of death is considered a crime to be avoided at all costs, for, it means breaking of this eternal relationship. The same constraint lies on secular marriage (K.Kallinikos, op.cit.:74-80). It is a disgrace to divorce and leave the household, especially for a female (Apostle Paul, A Korinth. Z. 10-11, 39-40). Yet, there is a differentiation between **apo-koura** as marriage with Christ, and the secular marriage. The couple during the wedding says: "**until death do us part**", whereas the monk during the **apo-koura** says: "**until death unite us for ever**".

This statement sends us back to the second important monastic ritual, the "**exodiastikos**". The exodiastikos is the ritual of death and it can be seen as the second action of a "mystical" play.

If I insist on treating the tonsure ceremony as the rite of the first burial (Tafi), it is because the monks have assured me that by the end of the ritual the monk starts his "new life" (**Nea Vioti**). It is in this regard that the monks do not mourn after a monk's passing, on the contrary they chant. The death of the social existence should be a time of quiet contemplation and of honouring God (Alexiou op.cit:34), something which contradicts to the secular ethics of burial.

In the villages the first burial marks a physical death, whereas the second, also called "**ektafi**" (disinterment), taking place when the flesh has melted leaving the bones of the dead, marks the end of all social interaction.

Of course, there is another way to explain this prohibition. The monk, by undertaking the "vow of death", enters the spiritual sphere of Godly eternity which is represented mainly by the heroic type of monk: the "martyr" monk. The monk Sacrifices himself. Sacrifice is the key to the world of Sainthood, thus the imitation of the martyrdom of Christ justifies the suffering undertaken by their decision to remain a monk in this earthly world. And although there is no longer place for martyrs in this world the monk becomes a martyr by being a monk.

"The young woman (man) though she\he has eloped to become eventually the "pride" of Christ is also at the moment of the elopement imitating Christ, being like Him in order to achieve unity with Him. Though she\he identifies with her

physical gender in her "social", outward, relationship with Christ i.e. lover, or bride, inwardly she is like Christ. She\he "becomes" Christ, a martyr, sacrificing her social relations in order to fulfil God's calling. In this manner, she\he is both male and female" (Iossifides op.cit:178).

Conclusion: Time and Hierarchy

The fact that the initiation rituals involve -in their slow unfolding -first as **trichokouria** then as **koura** and finally, as **apo-koura**, -a "way"- a continual resumption of rituals, is a profound proof that the passage from the secular to the divine and thus, the elevation to a higher monastic status, is a very slow process. The novice's incorporation in the monastic brotherhood, the conquest of eternal time, is an abrogation of the secular manners, a denial of the worldly perception of life.

According to the monks the truth lies on the fact of Christ's genesis and ressurection. Christ, as they say, is the **alpha** and the **omega**, the start and the end. Given this, reality can only be found in saintly actions thus, in the activity that reproduces the Christian drama. This sort of reality is permanent, always present but, lying outside the frame of historic time. Having this perception of time, the monks maintain the potential of achieving sanctity.

It is shown that the monastic notion of time is govern by cyclical norms (chapter 4). There is an obvious

distinction between the historic (linear), and the cyclical notion of time. The historic notion of time promotes change for it separates the past from the present. Cyclical time on the other hand, boosts repetition and thus the mixing of both past and present.

On the basis of this distinction it is logical to argue that it is the cyclical notion of time encouraging inequality and the institutional forms of hierarchy. And this, due to the fact that the past is always present, as an unchangeable entity; possibly as alpha and as omega.

The monks claim that their lives are based upon tradition. They insist that they have not changed the original aspects of the monastic life-style. The symbolism of their life or their insistence on a ritualistic life appears as means of challenging the historical notion of time and therefore of social change. To deny worldly life is to deny the reciprocity of human existence. In this regard death as implied in ritual is a denial of human reciprocity. The passage from one stage to another brings the monk closer to his God and therefore closer to the ideal of immortality.

Under this consideration it is easy to understand why the life of the monks is a continual resumption of ritual, and it is easy to comprehend how the variety of different rites of passage establish social order and hierarchical relationships.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion: Oppositions and Continuities

This thesis is an attempt to create a small monograph on an Orthodox monastic community. I tried to do this by examining aspects of monastic life and by exploring the distinct way by which monasticism transcends human thought and experience in order to transform the adults' personality towards the divine.

To stress the type of subjection to divinity is to explain how the seemingly "irrational" attributes of monastic life compose, through a coherence of values and activities, a rational experience. The aspects of monastic life-style and its symbolism provided the necessary means for this goal. However, to convey the monastic symbolism, is to unfold the way by which the secular and the divine utilize one another to create a unique mixture of perceptions and beliefs.

In order to explore how in the frame of the monastic community the monks maintain their relationship with the divine, I have examined the kind of speculations concerning divinity through miracles and the worshipping attitude of both monks and pilgrims (chapter 3), the participation in the services and the meaning of the Church (chapter 4), the proffering of diakonima and of hospitality, as well as, the fast, the prayer, the confession (chapter 5), thus, all the regularities of monastic daily life. Regularities by which the monks emancipate themselves from their earthly manners.

I have also studied the monastic values like hepachoi (obedience), hepomoni (patience), tapinotita (humbleness), actimosini (poverty) (chapter 5), parthenia (celibacy or chastity), as well as the differences between male and female sainthood (chapters 2, 3), thus, all the ideological elements upon which the monastic thought and experience stands.

Having completed this ambitious outline of the monastic life-style, I tried to display the rites of passage, thus the tonsuring ceremony that the monks undertake in order to acquire the monastic identity (chapter 6). In this regard, I attempted to draw parallels between the monkish initiation and a couple's relationship until marriage and thus, to show the analogies between the monastic rites and that of baptism and marriage.

Although the hagiorite monks have abandoned the secular world to live in a closed mono-gender community, their interaction with the secular world is inescapable. The whole cluster of Mount Athos monasteries is dependent upon the secular world. Every year (especially during summer time) thousands of pilgrims visit the monasteries and pay money for their permit to stay. Of course, it is not only them who carry secular outlooks and beliefs inside the monasteries. The continual exchange with the "outside" world is also witnessed by the fact that the monks are allowed, from time to time, to visit their relatives and leave the monastery, if they wish, for educational reasons (Article 96). Moreover, the interaction with the secular world is proved by the fact

that the monks were born in lay environments. They grew up like usual kids and they were not raised to assume the monastic habit.

As shown in previous chapters monastics use images from the secular world in order to portray their relation with the divine convincingly. Much of the way they view their relationships and interactions in the monastery comprise lay aspects of reality borrowed to be used as symbols and metaphors, in such a way as, to make their "mysterious" exchange with the divine seem concrete and comprehensible.

Divinity as presented in icons, myths, and saints comprise an ideal; the ideal of eternity which the monks seek to emulate. It is in this regard that the past, present and the future join together pointing at an idealized society: that of the exemplars. However, the monks' descriptions of divinity through secular metaphors aim at depicting the divine as an abstraction of reality, just as an icon is the depicted abstraction of a monk. Likewise, metaphors comprise abstractions of reality but never the reality itself. To pose it differently, as Orthodox hagiographic technique use only two dimensions (there is no depth) in order to avoid demoting the saints' depictions to a photograph, metaphors are similarly used to portray monastic experience without necessarily identifying it with its lay context. Naturalism is something that the monks must necessarily avoid when attempting to depict divinity. In other words, although metaphors have a very lay legacy, they are used to describe

the analogies between the monastic and the lay experience but, never to identify those two opposed poles with each other.

Secular metaphors are drawn principally from rural aspects of life and thus, retain its relevant conservatism. Partly due to their solitude, the monks are not in a position to follow the rhythm of social changes taking place in modern Greece. Regarding this the monastic lifestyle displays similarities to that of the people living in villages but it is diametrically contradictory to that of the people living in cities.

The monastics often find themselves betwixt and between the human and the divine world, for they are humans too, though they, unlike the laity, seek to attain deification and draw their true nature to God (Turner 1985:52). It is this precarious and irreconcilable double standard which the monkish experience has to maintain in order to uphold spiritual authority towards either the ecclesiastics and the laity.

I do not wish to enter a discourse concerning the similarities between a monastery and a village, but I suggest that if someone wishes to do so, he would be obliged to start by comparing the preliminary cultural units of both societies. The man-monk in comparison to the man-villager etc. I confine myself to citing the following: The monk who have reached completion is called "Father". His tonsuring ceremony is seen as a marriage to Christ. The maintenance of

this "marriage" is daily renewed in the Church and it promises divine fertility. Divine fertility as expressed by miracles replaces procreation, revealing the ideal of eternity. By contrast, the man's completion reaches to an end after marriage and of course after procreation where he acquires the fatherly identity and he is considered a real adult. Religion is just an aspect in villagers' lives, politics and economy seem to monopolize the interest of male lay action and social interaction. On the contrary, to the monastics, religion is the fundamental aspect pervading the ideological content of all the others aspects of their life. Monkish person-hood differs from that of the lay-hood. The machismo of a layman is not inherent in the monastic virtues, regardless of the similarities in the agonistic perception of life. The lay life style is governed by the axioms of "timi" (honour) and "dropi" (shame) (see Campbell 1964,1974). Although the monks have not totally abrogated this idioms of lay life-style, due to their personal poverty (actimosini) there is no material base upon which these axioms could possibly be reproduced. The social behaviour of a layman also differs from that of a hagiorite monk. The monks are timid personalities, modest and reticent in their expression, something which is clearly visible in their kind manners, as well as in the way they dress. The black habit is a symbolic restriction to the human body, marking the primacy of the spirit over the flesh, symbolizing **penthos** (mourning) and death, resembling the appearance of female widows in the

village. A layman on the other hand, is very much concerned with the safeguarding of his Timi (family, property etc). The competitive character of this Mediterranean axiom fosters a rough rather than gentle behaviour.

In the monastery each monk has a movable, however, settled place in the final disposition of social facts, roles and human relations. The monastic community is a well organized community, therefore it can be compared to a military community (campus). One may find similarities in the arrangements of the hierarchical order. However, the ideological content of those two social incorporations are so different that the comparison risks revealing only morphological similarities. The rhythm of life, the style, as well as the goals are different. Regarding this, I am deeply convinced that there is a relation between the ideology and the social behaviour. The ideology canonizes the behaviour and in turn the behaviour reaffirms the ideology.

The distinction between the divine and the secular in the frame of this research, stands on the opposition between spiritual and secular life **(pneumatiki zoe, laiki zoe)**. As I have mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, it is more precise to say that the distinction between man and monk-man corresponds to the opposition between the lay-man (Laikos) and the spiritual-man (Pneumatikos). To portray this difference in an ingenious way and to include my personal experience as a lay, I find it interesting to expand on the

speculation as an opposition between the modern and the traditional.

For this reason I juxtapose to the monkish ideology an advertisement of the male fashion stores "New Man". The insertion is supposed to advertise clothes, however, the text projects an outline of the type of men who wear this kind of clothes rather than the clothes. The advertisement says: "I like money, not in its physical shape, but as a means to freedom. I consider it a success to be occupied with what I like and to be rewarded for this. Future is something familiar to me, I am already there. Humour is sexy, love passes through intellect. Femininity is expressed from a hint rather than from apocalypse. The unexpected gives a gleam to my life. I use logic to gain what I want. I leave myself in imagination when it is to luxuriate them (the material things)."

I argue that the image of the man exhibited here is diametrically opposed to that presented by the monks. They say: "There is abundant time. As time passes, the monk listens to its silence, so full of love. Tasting this love the monk goes beyond time. Losing all self-assurance in this sweetness of love, time is no longer for him the enemy" (Symeon Grigoriatis op.cit.:13). "In order to receive the Truth, the One Who is and Who is not, Who exists beyond existence, we need to have nothing-nothing in order to receive. This is the privilege of our time, living in abundance we have nothing, having nothing we are closer to

the Truth. A long light shakes across the ruins, and no hand can lay hold of it; it escapes, but in our sadness it may be seen in the palm of our hand" (op.cit.:16). "From a worldly point of view, a man who aspires to become a monk may be regarded as weakly and defective" (op.cit.:17).

As shown in this thesis (chapter 5) the monks are not so much concerned with externalites. They are not attached to items nor do they care about beauty. To them reality is always something more or something less than what it seems. It is more because behind all things the "miracle" of creation and therefore God´s grace is hidden, and it is less because its external sheath stands as an obstacle between us and its internal substance. The external beauty of the matter tends to attribute in itself all its virtues and this, according to the monks, misleads the human intellect towards the evil. The matter creates temptation and therefore it represents the symbolic area upon which the devil exercises his power.

There is nothing that could possibly reflect reality in the monastery; there are no photographs, statues, or mirrors. The question raised in a modern lay society, "How do I look?", could provoke answers like, "You look gorgeous". By contrast the equivalent question that the traditional monkish society raises is, "Who am I", and the most probable answer is, "I am nothing". "The true monk, realizing his weakness as a creature, becomes thereby aware of another reality behind phenomena and thus cannot accept an exaltation of

appearance as the only and as true reality. He transcends phenomena by spiritual contemplation and goes farther; that is why he chooses the way of death, uncompromisingly" (Symeon Grigoriatis, op.cit.:16).

My approach to the monastic life stands on the measurement of the degree of identification of the monkish conviction and experience. The monks themselves claim -and I do not have any particular reason to dissent- that their dogma is a living one. According to the monks, talking about theology is "talking about the testimony of the Fathers' lives; about the impression made by the presence of a theologian, not simply about the outcome of his intellectual industry." (Archimandrite Vasileios, 1984:24). Experience and beliefs in Orthodox monasticism fit together, creating and re-creating one another.

Today's hagiorite monasticism carries the "stigma" of Patristic theology. In other words, the values of the monastic life derive from the evangelic tradition. Therefore attempting an approach which makes tradition a point of a distinct focus, is justified by the fact that tradition explains the initial meaning of the values and the activities upon which the monastic life is based. However, there are two kinds of theology in Mount Athos. The first is what Geertz calls "clear religion" (1966) expressed by the theologian monks thus, the very educated monks and the second is that of Tambiah (1968:44), which is the theology that reproduces the "preliminary religious categories" at the

level of speech. This is expressed principally by the majority of the monks who have a limited theological education.

What finally arises from the mixture of those two not necessarily opposed poles is a balance. This balance formulates alternative planes of theology utilizing secular and divine images in various proportions. By doing this the monks keep a foot in both camps. The challenge, as Bloch and Parry (1982) argue, when discussing the same issue concerning priesthood, "is one of achieving a workable balance between the ideological construction and the reality of death, duration, exchange and power" (op.cit.:41).

The inherent dependance upon an input of manpower, makes hagiorite monasticism vulnerable to the changes of the broader society. Regarding this, it is more effective to explore to what extend hagiorite monasticism remains tied to the tradition. So the continuities and the discontinuities of the Orthodox monastic culture can be tested.

For this reason the article of the hagiorite monk T. Dionisiatis, Modern Mount Athos and its problems (To sichrono Agion Oros kai ta problimata tou), published in the literary magazine Paratiritis (March 1991), provides the necessary material for a discourse concerning the contrast between the new and the old, the modern and the traditional.

After the liberation, the decline of monasticism appeared as a result of both the age-long speechlessness of the Orthodox Church, and the urban pull which followed the

creation the Greek state. The rapid growth changed the standards and of course the priorities of the social life. The distance between the center and the periphery became greater. The monastic ideal was no longer attractive to the youth.

While the void between the laity and the official Church was increasing due, basically, to the unsuccessful involvement of the latter in politics, the officialization of the Church made the problem even worse. Mount Athos underwent the consequences of the crisis, despite the fact that it was under the authority of the Patriarchate and not the Greek Church. The charismatic monks hardly managed to keep alive the glimpse of the exciting myth (paramythia) that surrounded Orthodox monasticism. The legendary tradition of hagiorite monastics, however, remained alive.

In 1975 the manning of Mount Athos begins (Paratiritis 1991:60). Small groups of monks from other Greek monasteries ask permission to recite in the abundant monastic settlements. The very old monks share with the new monks the administration of the idiorythmic monasteries under the only condition that they would make the monasteries coenobitic.

However, the new monks have a high level of education in comparison to old monks. Most of them actually hold degrees in different sciences. Resulting from this, the established relationship between the Eldest and the novice-monk loses its traditional character (Geron, Hepotactikos). Moreover, the young monks take administrative positions in

the monastery disproportionate to their monastic experience. This creates annoyance to the older monks, for according to them, it overturns the traditional value of hepachoi (obedience), thus causing the archetype of the modest attitude to vanish (op.cit.:67). Theoclitos says: "**Mi zitei pro kairou ta tou kairou, ina mi zimiotheis ta tou kairou en kairo**", meaning "do not ask before time comes the time, so that you will not lose the time in time" (op.cit.:66).

It is also true that by the initiatives of the new reciter monks and the contribution of several lay writers and intellectuals (I.G. Pentsikis, S. Ramphos, K. Moskov, C. Giannaras, K. Zouraris), as well as that of several theologians, High-priests and monks (like Father G. Metallinos, C. Agouridis, F. Pharos, Archimandrite Vasileios, S. Grigoriatis), a range of publications (Agra, Pournaras), concerning Orthodoxy created several discourses regarding the identity of modern Eastern Christianity and Orthodoxy. These discourses renewed the interests of young laity in the monastic ideal.

The manning of Mount Athos through the initiatives of several monks, and especially the publications of their views, often provoked a furious reaction from some of the elder monks, such as Theoklitos Dionisiatis. The latter often attacks the initiatives of the so called "new-Orthodox" views with anger, accusing their views as novelties with anti-orthodox content. In his book "...Kimata agria thalassis epafrizonta tas eauton aischinas..." (1990),

Theoklitos uses several quotes from the patristic and evangelic scriptures, in order to prove the initiatives' deviation from the Orthodox tradition. He writes: "In the end it is not only the monk or the Hegoumenos who is damaged, but it damages because it scandalizes. Having not completed his training he (the new monk) takes off towards intermixed experiences, from un-integrated knowledge, from adventurism and vanity; and it exposes the monastic brother-hood to the eyes of the world" (Paratiritis, op.cit.:67).

The moral of Orthodox monasticism is substantially defined by its theology. In other words the Christian Orthodox Dogma functions as a barrier against all kinds of theological novelties. Moreover, the concentration upon the Greek Patristic theological tradition (that of the ecumenical Synods from the fourth until the eighth century) gives to the Athonite theology a strict dogmatic interpretation and blends Orthodoxy with an imperceptible chauvinism. As a result many theologians, priests and monks claim that to be a Greek means to be an Orthodox, and visa versa, to be an Orthodox is to be a Greek (See C. Paraskeuaidis, Ellino-orthodoxi Autosinidisia, Ed Chrisopigi, also G. Metallinos, Politiki kai Theologia, 1991).

According to the opinion of Theoklitos and other monks' included in the article, the greater danger that nowadays threatens hagiorite monasticism is the arrogance resulting from the youngish belief that knowledge can replace obedience and intellectuality, modesty (op.cit.:61). Quotations of G.

Palamas from the hesychastic tradition (see chapter 2) are drawn out to support their views. Finally, Theoklitos suggests that the regime, that is the constitution of the Athonic State, must alter toward a more conservative direction (op.cit.:64). Traditional values must be imposed on, so as keep the Athonite tradition unadulterated by modern tendencies and trends.

However, the obvious contrast between the new and the old is not as it looks from literal accounts. It emerges from my discussions with pilgrims whose link with Orthodox Christianity remains due to their affection to an old charismatic monk (geronda). Many pilgrims have developed a private relationship with an old monk (geronda), similar to that between the master and the student (pneumatikos, hepotactikos).

According to my perception hagiorite monasticism continues its slow course in between and betwixt the secular and the divine, the real and the illusory, the possible and the impossible.

The last impression

The monk is a person dressed in black habit. He is not at all concerned with his appearance, because he does not wish to bewitch. Yet, he exerts a certain fascination because of this attitude. Usually his habit is ragged, his body is thin, his hands are strong and his fingers thickened from

hard work. He has a beard and long hair in a bun. His image resembles that of the hagiographies of Jesus and of the saints.

A hagiorite monk is not an invalid, although he does not seem to take good care of himself. He is quiet, gentle and friendly in his manners, yet not easily approachable. He does not like talking much, he prefers to listen instead, but when he does talk he fascinates you with his simplicity, his goodness and his peaceful straightforwardness.

He likes "paramythia", the recounting of stories about the grace and the miracles of Godbirth, which he considers as his own mother. He is willing to say his opinion only when he is sure he is able to do so, but he will not hesitate to stop a conversation when he gets the impression that you fail to understand him.

A monk does not pretend to be somebody, because he is "aware" of his insignificance in relation to his God. Thus he aims at being "nothing", and he practices daily for that, exactly because he "believes in the fertility of zero" (Symeon Grigoriatis 1983:10). That belief makes him "of another world", a world which appears to our eyes as a mystery, and yet, the more mysterious it looks the more human it proves to be.

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