

## CHAPTER 7

# The meaning of Meteora as an Orthodox monastic site

### 7.1. From the 11<sup>th</sup> century to approximately 1940: the original *Tradition* at Meteora

From the 11<sup>th</sup> century to approximately 1940, the original *Tradition* has been applied to the site of Meteora. The *Tradition* of the Orthodox Church relates to a series of beliefs.<sup>1</sup> Through the presentation of these beliefs, an attempt is made to draw the link between God as believed and worshipped in the Orthodox Church and the specific monastic space and practices at Meteora. Emphasis is on the definition of the concept of authenticity in the context of the Orthodox Church.

#### *God*

At the core of the Orthodox Church is the belief in the inextricable relationship between the Persons of the Holy Trinity (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) in a communion of Love (Vasileios 1974, 75–77). The substance of God is love (John 4. 8, translated by Bible 1966). The entire creation, comprising the angels, the universe and man, is the ‘natural’ [‘by nature’] expression of the Love of God.

God is always present in, and defines, the history of humanity through the creation of man by the Father (the beginning of history), the Incarnation of Christ/the Son (the centre of history) and the Second Coming of Christ (the end of history). Thus, the history of humanity is viewed in the Orthodox Church as a linear process, centred on the Incarnation of Christ.

God created man ‘in his own image and likeness’. In this way

...it is this unity that in substance connects the three persons of the Holy Trinity that God gave by the grace to his creature. This constitutes the ontological basis of the ‘in his own image’ and the capacity of achieving the ‘in his own likeness’. This is the harmony and balance of our nature as beings and of our relationship with our creator. (Vasileios 1974, 75–77)

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<sup>1</sup> This section makes an extensive use of quotations (from Greek literature) in an attempt not to alter the meanings in terms of belief and doctrine. The translations are the author’s.

Through his fall, however, man destroyed the harmony and balance of his nature and his relationship with God, and consequently experienced death (Iosif 1996, 38). It was God Himself (Christ, 'the Word': John 1. 1–16, translated by Bible 1966) who restored this harmony through His personal intervention in history, i.e. through His Incarnation, Death and Resurrection.

The relationship between man and the environment is placed within the relationship between God and man. God created the environment as a tool for man to glorify and serve Him. Thus, the environment does not have value in its own right but only through its service to man. The ultimate aim of God is the salvation of man and not the salvation of the environment (Nikodimi 2002, 4–5). The fall of man, and consequently the destruction of the relationship between man and God, unavoidably affected the relationship between man and the environment. And it was only through the personal intervention of Christ in history that the environment was restored to its original essence (Nikodimi 2002, 5–6; Zizioulas 1992, 17–37).

Therefore, Christ, the Incarnated Son of God, is the exclusive cause of salvation of man and of the entire creation, and thus the exclusive source of true life.

### *Church*

The Church exists through its permanent relationship with God: 'The living God continues to reveal Himself in and through the Church' (Nellas 1987, 148–154). The Church was founded by Christ and with the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Church operates as a unified communion modelled upon the relationship within the Holy Trinity. The members of the Church are linked to each other through their individual linking with Christ.

God created man, as noted above, 'in His own image and likeness'. His image is given through the creation to everybody regardless of religion and doctrine. However, His likeness was offered through the Incarnation of Christ, and can be achieved only within the Church, through the Grace of God/the Holy Spirit and with the co-operation of man (Iosif 1996, 40–41).

### *The Tradition of the Church*

The concept of authenticity in the context of the Orthodox Church is linked to that of *Tradition*. *Tradition* means any teaching or practice that has been transmitted from generation to generation throughout the life of the Church; it is 'the very life of the Holy Trinity as it has been revealed by Christ Himself and testified by the Holy Spirit' (Bebis 2014).<sup>2</sup> To be more specific: *Tradition* is the continuous presence and revelation of God/the Holy Spirit in the Church throughout time and space (Vlachos 1937, 32; Nellas 1987, 148–154; Damianos 1987, 161–166).

Tradition in Church is not simply the continuation of human memory or the continuation of the ritual activities and habits. It is, above all, the continuation of the guidance and illumination from God, it is the maintaining, living presence of the Holy Spirit. Church is not attached to the letter [of the law], but is steadily driven by the Holy Spirit. (Florovsky 1960, 241)

*Tradition* defines the Church as a whole, including the Holy Scripture, the writings of the Holy Fathers, the decisions of Ecumenical and local Councils, the administration, the liturgical life, and

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<sup>2</sup> *Tradition* comes from the Latin *traditio*. The Greek term is *paradosis*, and means giving, offering, delivering.

the art of the Church. The *Tradition* is unified, rooted in the unity of the Holy Trinity (Vasileios 1986, 16–17; Damianos 1987, 161–166). As it was noted,

everything in Church emerges from the same font of the liturgical experience. Everything co-operates in a triadic [i.e. associated to the Holy Trinity] way... Everything emerges from the knowledge of the Holy Trinity. (Vasileios 1974, 7–10)

*Tradition* as an entity is experienced by the entire Body of the Church: As nothing is done within the Holy Trinity without the cooperation of the three Persons, similarly ‘nothing is achieved in the Church without the participation of its entire Body, without the consent of the ecclesiastical, triadic consciousness of the Church’ (Vasileios 1974, 75–77). In the first place, however, *Tradition* is revealed by God/Christ only to the Saints, who in turn pass it to the entire Body of the Church through their writings, their decisions and their art. Saints are the authentic, the real Christians, ‘the living examples of authenticity’, they ‘become Tradition themselves’ and are ‘sons of God by the grace’ (Damianos 1987, 161–166; Vlachos 1987, 167). In this way,

...the authentic man does not simply constitute a model of moral completion, but is actually transformed in a vessel of revelation of the dogmatic truths [of the Church]. He experiences and reveals the Economy [*Oikonomia*] of God [i.e. all the actions of God for the salvation of man] in its entity. (Nikolaos 2005, 158–159)

The real Christian is compatible with the doctrine of the Church, but also brings something new and original of his/her own:

The image of the authentic person is not something that exists and everyone should imitate, but something that does not exist and everyone is asked to create. It is the expression of the one for which man is chosen. Authenticity is what demonstrates the holiness and the uniqueness of the person. (Nikolaos 2005, 133–134)

The real Christian is contemporary at any time:

...not ... worldly ‘contemporary’; but ... ‘contemporary’ in the sense of bearing/incarnating the eternal message of God in the present [of each times]. He bears/incarnates the Tradition of the Church and also the image of the ultimate... The Christian life is authentic... when we experience the kingdom of God as more real than the historic events. (Nikolaos 2005, 157–158 and 132)

The real Christian ‘constantly acts in the boundaries between God and man’, but remains ‘truly humane’ (Nikolaos 2005, 154). As it was characteristically noted:

Authenticity helps a Christian to constantly act in the boundaries between God and man, between rationale and mystery, between the love of God and the pain of man, between freedom and obedience. This [authenticity] inspires him to move also in the beyond of personal space, of humane measure, of secular time, of ego. It is in these boundaries that God is hiding. It is in this beyond that one meets his brother, eternity, grace, truth, God Himself... The authentic/real Christian is truly humane. He does not find salvation on his own, he shares salvation. He can be devoid of his pride, and thus unify with God and with his brothers. (Nikolaos 2005, 154)

Therefore, Church is not seen as a group of people operating on the basis of majority, but as a community of saints operating on the basis of the *Tradition* of the Church.

### *Worship (The Holy Liturgy)*

The Holy Liturgy is the most significant aspect, the *sine qua non*, the core of the *Tradition* of the Church since it unifies the faithful with Christ. Holy Liturgy is 'a ritual, ...the transition from the empirical world to the symbolic one, ...communion with God and with society' (Papadopoulos 1991a, 44–45). Given that Christ is the reason for the salvation of the entire creation (see above), it is basically the Holy Liturgy that gives salvation as well as essence to the entire creation:

The Holy Liturgy makes the organism of creation as a whole operate in the triadic way. The one who participates in the Holy Liturgy has an esoteric view of the world. Time and space become new. (Vasileios 1974, 123)

The Church cannot exist without the Holy Liturgy:

There is no Church or Orthodoxy without the Holy Liturgy, and there is no Holy Liturgy and Orthodoxy outside the Church. Holy Liturgy is the constant centre of our life. (Vlachos 1987, 169–170)

The Holy Liturgy gives meaning to all the other elements of the *Tradition* of the Church. The other elements of the *Tradition* do not have meaning and existence in their own right but are created as an entity, through the Holy Liturgy. Thus, the *Tradition* as a whole is purely functional, acquiring its existence and meaning serving the worship of God (Vlachos 1987, 168).

Therefore, the aim of the existence of man is the ultimate unification with Christ, which is actually achieved through the Holy Liturgy. In this context, the concept of authenticity in the Orthodox Church is centred on the Holy Liturgy, and the real Christian, the Saint, is the one who is absolutely dedicated to the worship of God.

### *The art of the Church*

The art of the Church, in all its expressions (such as architecture, sculpture, painting, poetry, and music), acquires its existence and meaning exclusively within the *Tradition*. The art of the Church is a purely functional one, created and operating as an entity serving the worship, and is guided and defined, in terms of its boundaries, by the *Tradition* of the Church, i.e. by the Holy Spirit. The aim of the art of the Church is to lead to the knowledge of God and subsequently to the unification with Him and the salvation through Him (Vasileios 1986, 16–20; Vasileios 1974, 127–130; Paliouras 1997, 18–19). In this context, the art of the Church (for instance, an icon) is clearly differentiated from art that depicts a religious topic (for instance, a religious painting). The art of the Church is not simply seen as the outcome of the artistic capacity of an individual, but as the expression of the liturgical life of the Church: 'It is not a man-created image, but the incarnated grace of God' (Vasileios 1974, 137–138). It is an eternal and ever-lasting reality that transcends the physical reality of time and space of a particular era and beyond history, and expresses the ultimate/the Great Beyond, which is the time and space of Paradise. In this way, it is 'not a representation of past events, but participation in a new, transformed history and materiality, the outcome of the merging of the created and the uncreated'. Thus, it is not an item of the past, but 'a presence within the continuous life of the Church that is living, bears life and gives life' (Vasileios 1974, 123–130 and 136–140; also Vasileios 1986, 15). Therefore, the entire *Tradition* of the Church, including art, is created and operates as an entity, stemming from the one Church and from one God, and serving the one Holy Liturgy.



### *The monastic Tradition of the Church*

Monastic life is considered the most absolute path in the Orthodox Church for the devotion to, and unification with, Christ (Iosif 1996, 40; Vasileios 1974, 173; Ioannou 2003, 124–129), the quintessence of Christianity, the most dynamic, complete and consistent expression of it, thus serving as the ideal model for the Church as a whole (Yannaras 1973, 68; Meteora Monasteries 1994a, 16–17). Monasticism as a way of life developed and still operates within the *Tradition* of the Church: the constitutional form and regulation of monasticism were revealed by God to the Fathers of the Church, who were considered real Christians, Saints (see above; Iosif 1996, 40).

A monastic community is a community of people absolutely dedicated to Christ, and aiming at unifying with Him. The unification with Christ is achieved through the Holy Liturgy and with the support of the Abbot/Head monk of the monastic community. The Abbot is the most prominent person in a monastic community, the one who gives the character and the essence to it (Aimilianos 1991, 119). The Abbot is considered the person who receives the *Tradition* directly from God and transfers it to the monks. Thus, he is considered the real Christian, the Saint, the living *Tradition* for his monks (Aimilianos 1991, 120). The relationship between the monk and his Abbot is a personal and a closest one, modelled upon the relationship within the Holy Trinity (Iosif 1996, 38), while the relationships between the members of a monastic community are indirect ones, passing through the Abbot. This spiritual role of the Abbot is also reflected in the administration of a monastery: The Abbot is the Head of the ‘Holy Assembly’ [the ultimate administrative body of a monastic community consisting of the Abbot and of two supervisors], is elected but is irremovable. The Abbot is the primary reason for the monks to move in their monasteries in the first place – a view that is shared by the Meteora monks as well (pers. comm. Ioasaph; pers. comm. Maximi).

The Holy Liturgy, what unifies man with God (see above), is the essence of monasticism. Monastic life ‘imitates the eternal worship, in accordance with the example of the eternal glorifying of angels to God’ (Aimilianos 1991, 120). Thus, ‘worship is not an interval of schedule in a worldly life, but a permanent state of living’ (Fountoulis 1991, 136). Monastic life as a whole could be seen as a way of continuous exercise and preparation for the Holy Liturgy (Vasileios 1974, 173; Metallinos 2003, 231–238). In this way, in the everyday monastic schedule a major part of the day is devoted to the conduct of the Holy Liturgy. The rest of the day is devoted to the sleep and prayer of monks in their cells, the communal monastic activities [*diakonimata*] and the communal meals, which have a practical purpose, aiming at the physical survival of the monks, but also a spiritual character, in the context of the preparation for the Holy Liturgy (Zias 1999, 11–12). Furthermore, the Holy Liturgy conducted in a monastery is not attended exclusively by the members of the monastic community but also by laity, who thus become an organic part of the life of the monastery (Aimilianos 1991, 120). Hence, thanks to the conduct of the Holy Liturgy, the ‘inside’ world (the monastic community) is connected with the ‘outside’ one (the laity).

The Holy Liturgy also defines space and time in a monastery, transforming the monastery into a world of its own, different to the outside world. The core of the monastery is the *katholicon* [the main church in a monastery], where the Holy Liturgy is conducted, and the cells and the other monastic buildings are centred around the *katholicon* (Papadopoulos 1991b, 64; see below in detail). In terms of the everyday monastic schedule, the communal as well as the private activities of the monks are regulated on the basis of the Holy Liturgy, which is conducted according to Byzantine time, based on the cycle of nature (Papadopoulos 1991, 32–44). Furthermore, the Holy Liturgy conducted in a monastery defines space and time in the surrounding area of the monastery as well. A monastery is most of the time located on a high position, easily noticeable, with the crosses of its *katholicon* dominating the skyline (Papadopoulos 1991b, 64). It also sets the sound for the surrounding area through the ringing of the bells of its *katholicon* for worship (Papadopoulos 1991b, 64).

The continual conduct of the Holy Liturgy renders a monastery 'a symbolically structured and ritually experienced view of the world'. A monastery is a symbolic world, in which, in the views of the monks, the actual scale of space is heaven and the actual scale of time is eternity (Papadopoulos 1991b, 64–73). The monastery is considered to connect earth and heaven, being in fact 'heaven on earth' (Iosif 1996, 40–41). Above the monastery there is a different world, that of true and eternal life: Paradise. The monastery is considered the ideal community, and the *katholicon* the symbol of the world, 'a living image of the Kingdom of God' (Papadopoulos 1991b, 75–77; Papadopoulos 1991a, 44). Also, between the monastery and Paradise, i.e. between earth and heaven, there is a world with transitory space and time, in expectation of the Second Coming, which (world) is represented by the cemetery. That is why the cemetery of a monastery is constructed as a completely different unit, outside the walls of the monastery and surrounded by a wall (Papadopoulos 1991a, 45).

Through the continual conduct of the Holy Liturgy, a monastery is also considered to transform, in terms of meaning, its surrounding landscape into a new, monastic landscape formed and operating within the constant service and worship of God, setting a model for the establishment of balance and harmony in the entire creation (Nikodimi 2002, 9–10; Theoxeni 1999, 84–86; Keselopoulos 2003, 322–236).

Therefore, the actual essence and power of a monastic community is inextricably and exclusively associated with the *Tradition* of the Church and particularly with the Holy Liturgy. If the Holy Liturgy stops in a monastery, as a result of the departure of the monastic community from the site, then the Grace of God/the Holy Spirit (which is believed to be continuously present everywhere and cover everything) remains inactive in the site, and, as a consequence, the life in the monastery stops, and the monastery loses its symbolic meaning as a new world (pers. comm. Ioasaph).

In this context, an Orthodox monastery is a centre of spiritual activity, and not a centre of social philanthropy or scientific research. In this respect, an Orthodox monastery could be differentiated from a Catholic one (Zias 1999, 11–12; Ioannou 2003, 130–132; Feidas 1996, 39–40). In Orthodox monasticism, the salvation of the wider society is achieved through the salvation of the monk himself, and any reward to the monk is given only from God and not from the people (Moisis 1997, 29–32). The ultimate and exclusive aim of a monastery is the making of saints: monastery is 'an arc of saints, a community of blessed' (Aimilianos 1991, 131). Any other social activities (such as the operation of schools, hospitals, homes for the elderly, and workshops for the making of icons and crosses, and the organising of missions to non-Orthodox people or for the benefit of the nation) are not an essential part of monastic life and, if undertaken, should be clearly fit into, and not undermine let alone replace, this ultimate aim of the monastery. As the Meteora monastic communities state, 'the making of saints from the Monastic Community is the most significant social contribution of Monasticism' (Meteora Monasteries 1994a, 16).

This section demonstrated that monasticism, as the most absolute path for unification with Christ, is centred on the Holy Liturgy. In this context, a monastic community is an introverted community devoted to the worship of God. The most significant contribution as well as responsibility of the monastic community towards the wider world is to keep their site 'living', to keep alive the *Tradition* of the Church by leading their monastic life and conducting the Holy Liturgy (Moisis 1997, 32–33).

### *The operation and administration of a monastery*

The operation and administration of an Orthodox monastery, and particularly its liturgical life, are defined by a text called *typicon* (Apostolakis 2002d, 19–20). The *typica* of all Orthodox monasteries stem from the same *typicon*, that of St Sabbas Monastery at Jerusalem, something that



**Figure 10:** The Great Meteoron monastery: ossuary (source: author's photo). The present monastic community pays respect to its predecessors, as evidenced by an oil-lamp, incensories, candles and icons, which show reverence for the departed.

reveals the unity and the continuity of the monastic *Tradition* and worship (Fountoulis 1991, 133). At the same time, each monastery has its own distinctive *typicon*. The *typicon* of a monastery is recognised as part of the *Tradition* of the Church, as followed by the specific monastic community, and defines the boundaries of the *Tradition* for the specific monastic community (Fountoulis 1991, 133–134; Ephraim 1996, 26).

The *typicon* of each monastery is composed by the founder of the monastery. The founder of the monastery is considered to receive the *typicon* (as part of the *Tradition* of the Church: see above) directly from God and transfer it to the monks; he is considered a real Christian, a Saint (see above), officially canonised by the Church or considered to have shown signs of sanctity and treated as a holy person. The *typicon* is inherited by the current monastic community from its predecessors, who are also treated as holy persons (**figure 10**). Thus, the *typicon* of a monastery is an indication of the continuity of worship and operation in the specific monastery, traced back to its holy founder. The Meteora monastic communities, for instance, follow the *typicon* of the Great Meteoron Monastery, composed by St Athanasios of Meteora, the founder of organised monasticism at Meteora (Tsiatas 2003, 161–162; Apostolakis 2002d, 20–24).

The *typicon* (as part of the *Tradition* of the Church) is not a static document that is taught or transferred from one generation to the other but is learnt in practice with the conduct of worship on an everyday basis, and is thus evolving in accordance with the changing needs of the specific monastic community over the course of time (Fountoulis 1991, 133–134).

Therefore, the greatest contribution of a monastic community to the wider world, in order to keep their site living, is to continue to conduct the worship by following the *typicon* of their monastery (Fountoulis 1991, 135).

### *Monastic space*

Given that a monastic community is a community of people devoted to the worship of God through the Holy Liturgy (see above), a monastery has a two-fold function: as a place of worship of God and as a place that sustains the monastic community. This two-fold function of the monastery defines monastic space. Specifically:

#### *Forms of monastic space*

There are basically four patterns of monastic life, defined mainly by the individual or common life and worship. These patterns of monastic life create the following forms of space (Nikodimi 2002, 9–10; Paliouras 1997, 17–18): First, the *hermetic* pattern, based on individual monastic life and worship, creates an incoherent and rather badly organised form of space, with small isolated cells scattered in a larger area. Second, the *skiti* [house of groups of monks], based on individual monastic life but common worship, creates a not well-organised form of space, with cells centred around a single church [*kyriakon*] where the common worship takes place. Third, the *koinobion* [organised monastery], based on common worship and life, creates a well- and strictly- organised arrangement of space, with a single large monastery. Fourth, a monastic complex, based on the parallel operation of several monasteries in the same area which operate individually but with links to each other and often under a unified administrative and management scheme, consists of several monasteries scattered in a larger area.

Meteora is a monastic complex, in which all the patterns of monastic life exist (Tetsios 2003, 340–342; Nikodimi 2002, 19–20): The *hermitic* cells, no longer in use, are simple structures, mostly made of wood or bricks and stones, supported by wooden balconies (**figure 11**). The *kyriaka* of the *skites* that are still in use are those of Doupiani and St Antonios (**figure 12**). The *koinobia* [organised monasteries] are monumental structures built on the top of the rocks. Six of them are still in use: the Great Meteoron, the Varlaam, the St Stephen, Roussanou, the Holy Trinity and the St Nikolaos Anapafsas monasteries (**figure 13**). At Meteora there is also a special type of *skites* which are enclosed in the rocks by a wall, which (type) marks the transition between the *skites* and the *koinobia*. Only two examples of this special type of *skites* are still in use: St Nikolaos Badovas and the Meeting of Christ (**figure 14**).

#### *The external space of a monastery (The monastery and its landscape)*

A monastery is in absolute harmony with its surrounding landscape, with a limited and discreet effect on it, and makes a most sensitive use of the available physical resources (Theocharidis 1991, 87–88). The way monastic communities treat the natural environment is in accordance with the importance of materiality as defined by the *Tradition* of the Church: to the extent that the natural materials are essential for the survival of their bodies and the maintenance of their monastery (Nikodimi 2002, 6–10).

The Meteora monasteries give the impression of being the physical continuation of the rocks on which they are built; or rather the rocks look like the physical foundations of the monasteries. The monasteries have left the surrounding landscape largely intact. Only the absolutely essential buildings have been built, and in a way that makes the best possible use of the available space. The external outline of the monasteries follows the furthest edges of the surface on the top of the





**Figure 11:** Hermetic cells (source: photo of Kostas Liolios).



**Figure 12:** *Skites*, with *kyriaca*: Panagia Doupiani at Kastraki (source: photo of Kostas Liolios).





**Figure 13:** A *koinobion* [organised monastery]: the Roussanou monastery: external view, detail (source: author's photo).



**Figure 14:** *Skites* built within rocks (as an intermediate stage between *skites* and *koinobia*: figures 12 and 13): St Nikolaos Badovas (source: photo of Kostas Liolios).

rocks, which gives an irregular shape to the monasteries. There has also been a further attempt to increase the available space on the top of the rocks by filling the edges of the surfaces with rubble (Nikodimi 2002, 23; Tetsios 2003, 339–340) (**figure 15**). Hence, it seems that the Meteora monasteries complemented, as well as completed, the landscape. As the Meteora monastic communities state with reference to their monasteries:

The human presence did not abuse its privileged position within the creation of God, did not upset or violate the natural ecosystem and did not distort the beauty of the landscape, but placed its creations (i.e. the holy monasteries) in the landscape, with significant sensitivity and care towards it, with the aim of emphasizing the holiness and spirituality of the space and not disrupting the balances. (Meteora Monasteries 1994a, 56)

*The positioning of a monastery in relation to its landscape*

The positioning of a monastery in relation to its landscape is defined by the monastery's two-fold function: as a place of worship and as a place that sustains the life of the monastic community. Specifically:

In accordance with the introverted character of the life of the monastic community, dedicated to the worship of God, a monastery is an independent and closed unit, isolated from the outside world, with specific, clear boundaries. That is why a monastery is in most of the cases founded in remote areas, and is surrounded by wall enclosures with a monumental gate (Paliouras 1997, 18–19; Theocharidis 1991, 87; Papadopoulos 1991b, 58–64). However, a monastery maintains at the same time a link with the outside world (through the Holy Liturgy: see above). That is why



**Figure 15:** The Varlaam monastery: an external view (source: photo of Kostas Liolios).



the entrance of a monastery faces towards the road (Papadopoulos 1991b, 58–64). The Meteora monasteries (apart from the St Stephen monastery) are an exception to this rule: because of the inaccessibility of their location, they are not surrounded by wall enclosures, and are not in communication with the outside world.

Given the central role of worship, the *katholicon* is located in the centre / at the core of the monastery, and is also orientated towards the east (this orientation has a strong symbolic meaning: east is the symbolic point of the First and the Second Coming of Christ). This location and orientation of the *katholicon* defines the arrangement and the orientation of the monastery as a whole in relation to its surrounding landscape (Papaioannou 1977, 13–17).

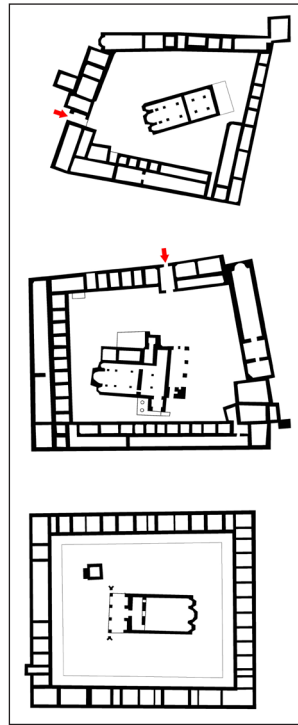
### *The internal space of a monastery*

The arrangement of the internal space of a monastery may be summarised as follows (see Zias 1999, 13–14; Paliouras 1997, 19–23). The central part of the monastery is occupied by the yard, with the *katholicon* in the centre of the yard, and the refectory in most of the cases close to the *katholicon*. The periphery of the monastery, around the yard, includes the cells and the other, secondary buildings, such as the storerooms, the hospital and the bell tower (figures 16 and 17).

This arrangement of the internal space of a monastery is defined by the monastery's two-fold function: as a place of worship and as a place that sustains the life of the monastic community. Specifically, the most prominent elements in a monastery are the *katholicon* and the yard. The *katholicon* is the core of the monastery as the place of worship of God, while the yard is the centre of the life of the monastic community and the visitors (Zias 1999, 13–14; Paliouras 1997, 19–21; Papaioannou 1977, 33–35). The location of the *katholicon* in the centre of the yard and of the cells has a strong symbolic meaning: Christ is the consistent point of reference as well as the ultimate and exclusive aim of the monks, and thus the everyday life of a monastic community is centred on Him and His church (Zias 1999, 13–14; Fountoulis 1991, 136–362; see also above). The location of the refectory close to the *katholicon* also has a strong symbolic meaning, reflecting the view of the Church that food and materiality in general are not exclusively linked to the survival of the body but also have a spiritual character as well, linked to the conduct of the Holy Liturgy (Zias 1999, 13–14; Vasileios 1986, 27–28; pers. comm. Theophanis). The location of the refectory close to the *katholicon* covers practical needs as well, given that the monks go to the refectory for their meal immediately after their vigils in the *katholicon* (Vasileios 1986, 27–28).

The *katholicon* and the yard are inter-connected, indivisible, and the one cannot exist without the other (i.e. the yard has the *katholicon* as its most prominent building, and the *katholicon* cannot be accessed from the entrance of the monastery without the existence of the yard), which demonstrates the inextricable connection between the two functions of the monastery (Papaioannou 1977, 33–35). The fact that both the monastic community and the visitors share the yard reveals that in an Orthodox monastery there is direct communication between the monastic community and the visitors and that, consequently, the visitors are embraced within monastic life. Hence, though being closed and separate from the outside world, the monastery actually has an open, social character embracing the outside world (Papaioannou 1977, 18–19). This connection between the monastic community and the visitors differentiates an Orthodox monastery from a Catholic one, where the church and the yard are separated: the church can be accessed directly from the entrance of the monastery, without the existence of the yard, which means that the monastic community and the visitors are kept separated from each other, and the visitors are thus not embraced within monastic life (Papaioannou 1977, 18–19 and 71) (figure 18).

Papaioannou (1977) studied the dynamics of the internal space of an Orthodox monastery by examining the route of the viewer in it [the 'viewer' of a monastery refers to both a visitor and a member of the monastic community] (figure 19). The starting point of the route of the viewer was

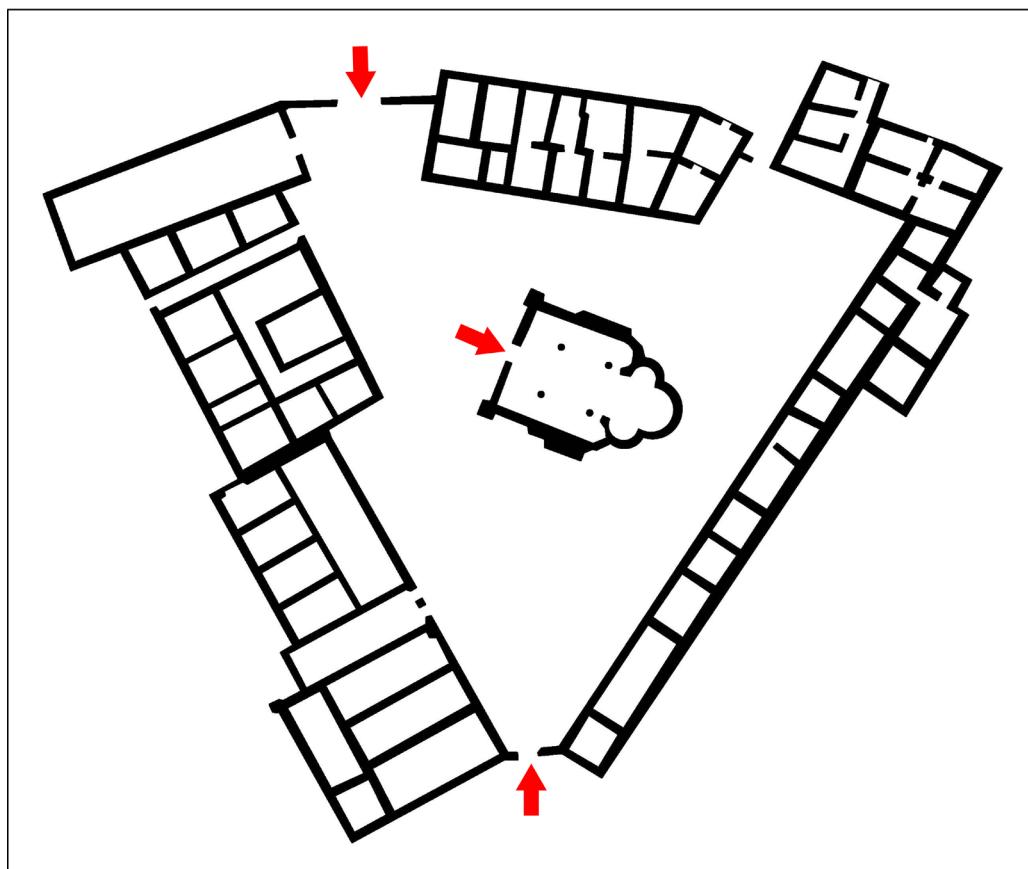


**Figure 16:** Orthodox monasteries: examples of ground plans A (see Papaioannou 1977, 25a, b, c, d). This figure depicts a more normal arrangement of space in the Orthodox monasteries. [The *katholicon* is depicted at the centre].

marked by the entrance of the monastery, given that the entrance defines the relation of the monastery with the outside world (see above), while the ultimate end of the route was marked by the *katholicon*, given its primary symbolic significance and its central position in the monastery (see above). Two axes in the route of the viewer in the monastery may be identified. The first axis starts from the entrance of the monastery and continues and ends into the yard, and is associated with the function of the monastery as a place for the life of the monastic community (and the visitors). The second axis passes through the *katholicon*, and is projected, through the opening of the façade of the *katholicon*, in the yard of the monastery, exercising influence upon the part of the yard that is immediately in front of the façade of the *katholicon*. This second axis is associated with the function of the monastery as a place for the worship of God (Papaioannou 1977, 33 and 67–69).

The analysis of Papaioannou demonstrates that, though the ultimate end of the route is the same in all monasteries (i.e. the *katholicon*), what actually defines the character of each monastery is the route towards the end (i.e. through the yard). In this context, despite the differentiations of the route in each monastery based on the intersection of the two axes, in an Orthodox monastery, as a general principle, emphasis tends to be placed on the entrance-yard axis and subsequently on monastery's function as a place for the life of the monastic community and the visitors.

Though the *katholicon* always remains a window towards the symbolic world/ the great beyond, nonetheless the free inside space of the monastery [the yard] becomes the centre of the real, the actual world of the monastery and constitutes the basic core around which the so plain but always multiform monastery is arranged. The yard becomes the carrier of

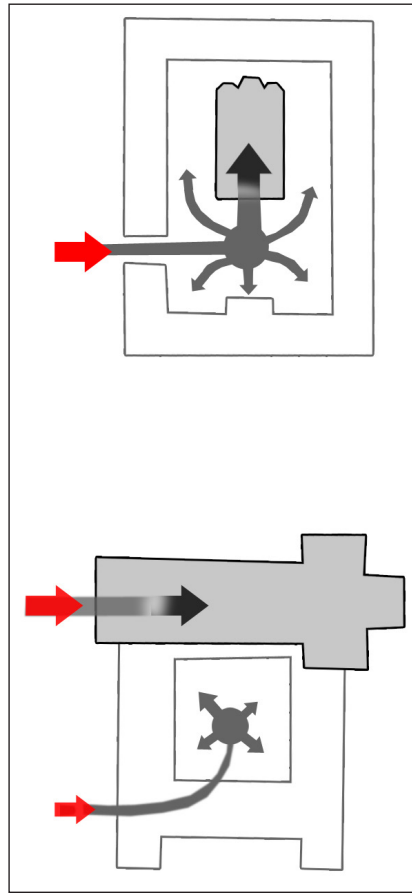


**Figure 17:** Orthodox monasteries: examples of ground plans B (see Papaioannou 1977, 26). This figure depicts a less normal arrangement of space in the Orthodox monasteries. [The *katholikon* is depicted at the centre].

the true content [of the monastery], which, despite its high, symbolic roots, remains simply and truly human. (Papaioannou 1977, 123)

The basically ‘truly human’ character of the monastic space despite its symbolic roots could be paralleled by the definition of authenticity in the *Tradition* of the Orthodox Church and to the character of the real Christian, that, though ‘acting in the boundaries between God and man’, remain ‘truly human’ (see above).

The Meteora monasteries generally tend to follow the aforementioned rules governing the arrangement of the internal space of Orthodox monasteries. Yet, the monasteries are developed in various ways and axes in an attempt to adjust to the limited and irregular rock surfaces. Specifically, some monasteries, particularly those built on very limited rock surfaces such as Roussanou and St Nikolaos Anapafsas monasteries, are structured on a vertical axis and laid out in several storeys in an attempt to make the maximum use of the available space (**figure 20**). These monasteries externally acquire increased height, while internally each storey is of very limited height, and occasionally each storey (and even the same room) has ceilings of different height adjusted to the surrounding rock, as in the case of the Roussanou monastery. Other monasteries, such as the Holy Trinity and St Stephen monasteries, are structured on a horizontal axis, on the



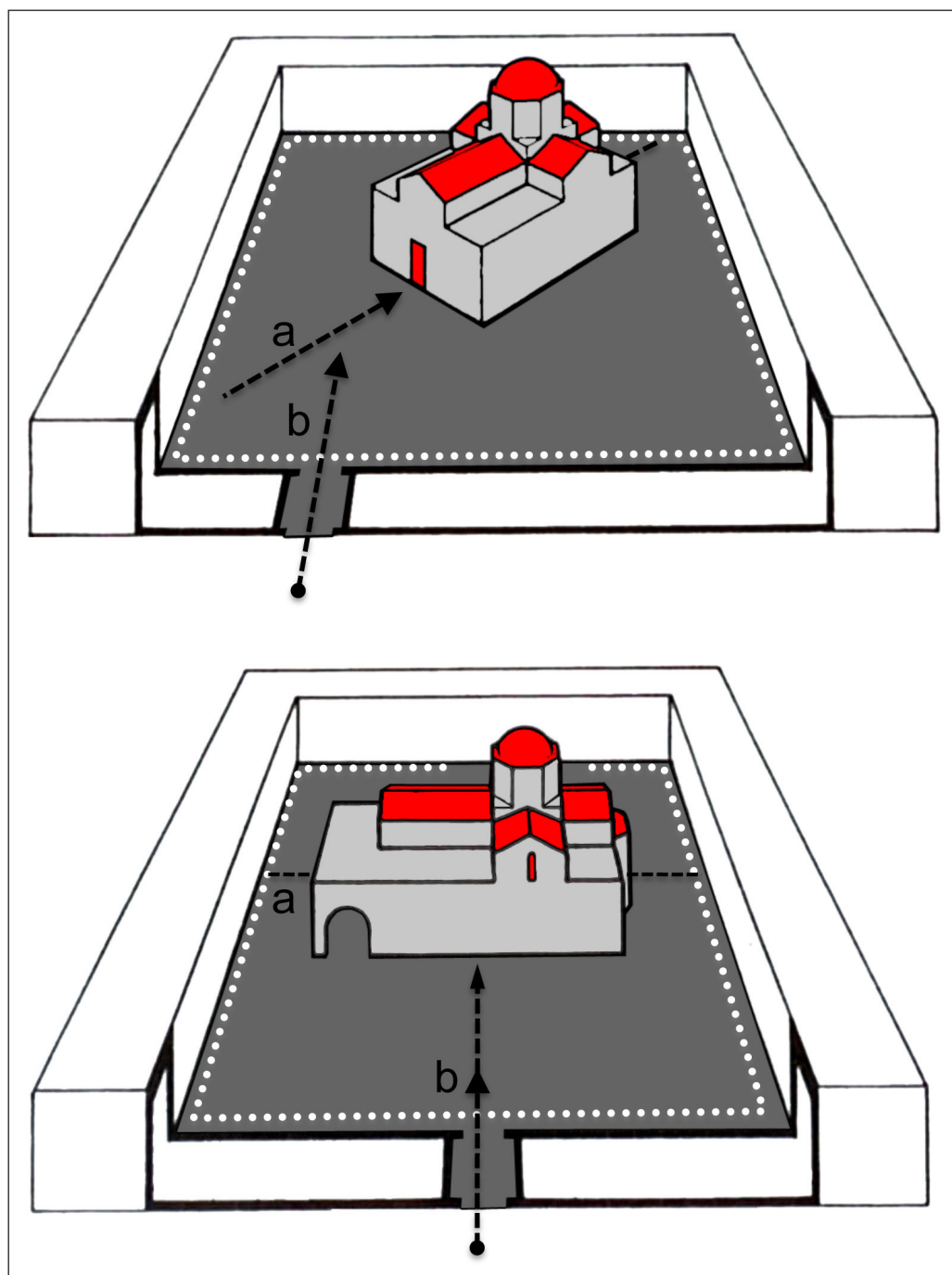
**Figure 18:** Orthodox and Catholic monasteries: schematic representations of ground plans (see Papaioannou 1977, 18).

same storey (**figure 21**). Other monasteries, such as the Great Meteoron and Varlaam monasteries, are laid out on different and irregular levels within the same storey (**figure 22**).

The Meteora monasteries present a freer and more complicated arrangement of space compared with the standards for the Orthodox monasteries (**figures 23, 24 and 25**). The *katholikon* is in some cases not situated in the centre of the yard, as in the cases of the Varlaam, the Great Meteoron and the Holy Trinity monasteries (figures 24 and 25). The cells are in some cases not centred around the *katholikon*, as in the Holy Trinity and the St Nikolaos Anapafsas monasteries (figure 25). Unlike most Orthodox monasteries, at Meteora the cemeteries are not separated from, but incorporated within, the monasteries.

The application of the approach of Papaioannou in the Meteora monasteries leads to the following conclusions (**figure 26**). Due to the irregular surfaces, the axis of the *katholikon* is hardly (or not at all) projected towards the yard, and consequently the two axes do not intersect each other. Thus, in the Meteora monasteries, emphasis is clearly placed on the entrance-yard axis and subsequently on monastery's function as a place for the life of the monastic community and the visitors.

Therefore, the analysis of the arrangement of the internal space of an Orthodox monastery demonstrated the following. First, the two-fold function of the monastery (as a place of worship of God and a place that sustains a monastic community) is clearly reflected in the inextricable



**Figure 19:** Orthodox monasteries: schematic representations of routes within the monasteries (see Papaioannou 1977, 70, with author's additions). The beginning of the route is the entrance of the monastery, while the end of the route is the *katholikon*. 'B' is the axis of the entrance-yard, associated with the function of monastery as a place for the life of the monastic community (and the visitors), while 'A' is the axis of the *katholikon*, associated with the function of monastery as a place for the worship of God.





**Figure 20:** The Roussanou monastery: external view (source: author's photo).



**Figure 21:** The St Stephen monastery: external view (source: photo of Vasso Chantzis).



**Figure 22:** The Varlaam monastery: external view (source: author's photo).

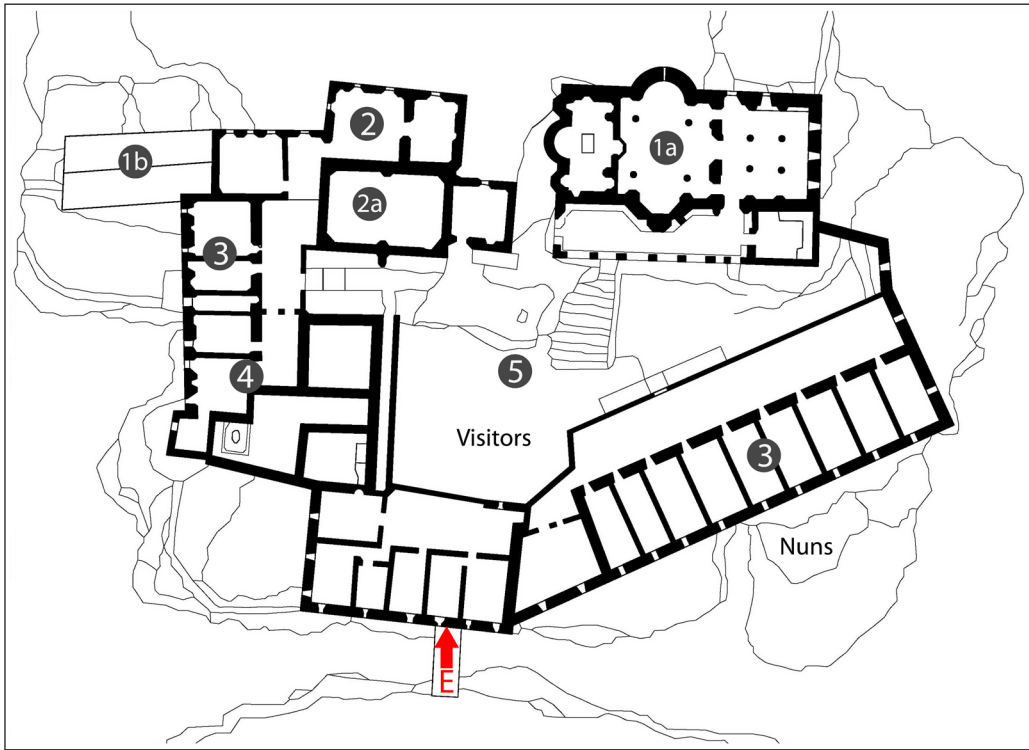
connection between the *katholicon* and the yard. Second, the incorporation of the visitors (and the outside world) within the life of the monastic community is clearly reflected in the fact that the yard of the monastery is shared both by the monastic community and the visitors. Third, the concept of authenticity in the Orthodox Church, as defined by the *Tradition*, is reflected in the fact that, although the arrangement of space in each of the monasteries is unique, dependent upon the synthesis of the two functions, emphasis is actually placed on the 'human' rather than the religious function of the monastery. It is worth noting that these elements differentiate an Orthodox monastery from a Catholic one.

#### *The architectural form and the fabric of a monastery*

The architectural form of a monastery has been basically the same since Byzantine times. The continuity of the architectural form could be put down mostly to the *typica* of the monasteries and the common strict needs of worship, which rendered the architectural form part of the monastic *Tradition* (Papaioannou 1977, 11–13).

The fabric of a monastery is being continually changed over the course of time. A monastery is an institution of particularly long life, whose life exceeded, in principle, the physical endurance of its individual architectural parts, which means that the renewal of these parts is essential for the physical survival of the whole. Thus a monastery never actually reaches completion, but is being continually created towards a never-reached end (Papaioannou 1977, 11–13). As the Meteora monastic communities noted with reference to their monasteries:





**Figure 23:** The St Stephen monastery: ground plan (see Papaioannou 1977, 30, with author's additions; for an external view of the monastery, see above, figure 21). The St Stephen monastery presents a rather regular, compared to the standards of the Orthodox monasteries, arrangement of space. The yard (indicated by number 5) is in the centre of the monastery, the main *katholicon* (1a) is close to the centre of the yard, the refectory (2) is close to the *katholicon*, and the cells (3) as well as the secondary buildings of the monastery (4) tend to be centred around the *katholicon*. [The other buildings of the monastery: 1b: The older *katholicon*. E: Entrance.]

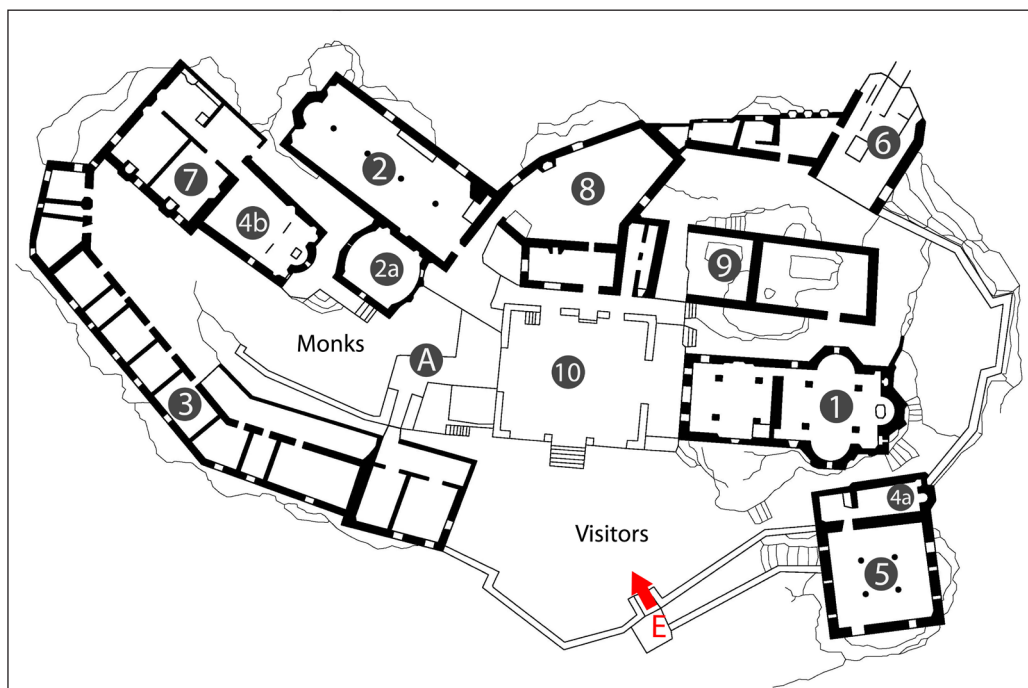
...in a living monument and a carrier of cultural value, such as the [Meteora] monasteries, the protection from the physical damage and the covering of the functional needs are never achieved in a static way but in an every time contemporary creation. (Tetsios 2003, 343)

The continual renewal of the individual architectural parts does not affect, but is incorporated in harmony within, the architectural type of a monastery. Hence, a monastery is an expression of a free organic growth, while maintaining its architectural homogeneity and entity over the course of time (Papaioannou 1977, 11–13).

### *Conclusion: the monk and the monastery*

A monk, being absolutely dedicated to Christ through the Holy Liturgy, considers his monastery the centre of his life.

Monastery as a community, as a structure and space, as a place of worship by its founder and a way of worship according to his own example, as miracle and as history, is the basic

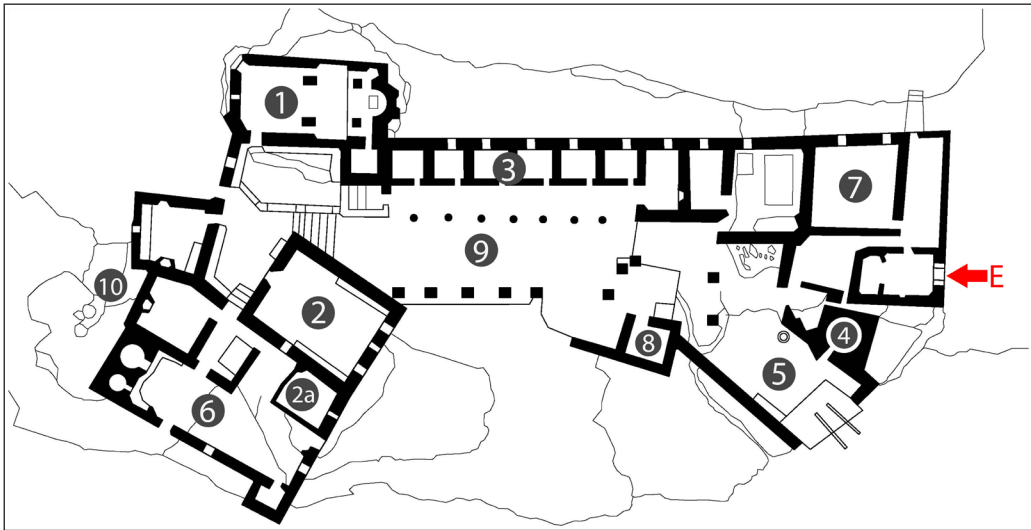


**Figure 24:** The Varlaam monastery: ground plan (see Papaioannou 1977, 30, with author's additions; for an external view of the monastery, see above, figure 22). The Varlaam monastery presents a less regular arrangement of space. The yard (number 10) is in the centre of the monastery, the *katholicon* (1) is close to the centre of the yard, the refectory (2) is quite far from the *katholicon*, the cells (3) as well as the secondary buildings of the monastery (5, 7, 8 and 9) are not centred around the *katholicon*. [The other buildings of the monastery: 4a: Church. 4b: Chapel. E: The current entrance.]

element of the identity of the monk, his personality and his uniqueness. It is the primary point of reference for him and the axis of his life. The only way that [the monk] can experience heaven on earth. (Papadopoulos 1991b, 64)

A monk has renounced his home in the world in order to create a new home in a remote place (his monastery) in which to gain the true life (Paradise), through the unification with Christ. A monk does not consider himself the owner of his new home (his monastery) but a temporary resident of it; for him the only actual home, and the constant point of reference and ultimate intention is Paradise. As a human, however, he is attached to his monastery as his only home on earth: as the place for the worship of his God and the place of his spiritual father / his Abbot, who is the link between him and his God (see above). These views are shared by the members of the monastic communities at Meteora (Meteora Monasteries 1994a, 38; Anastasiou 1994a, 208; pers. comm. Ioannis).

As a human, a monk may become attached to his monastery for a variety of further reasons related to the worship of God, which (reasons) are different for each site. In the case of Meteora, for example, the members of the monastic communities are particularly attached to their site because of the following elements. Thanks to its distant location Meteora is a peaceful and quiet place (outside the opening hours of the monasteries), ideal for praying (pers. comm. Maximi; pers. comm. Ioannis). The most impressive character of the landscape, radically changing according to

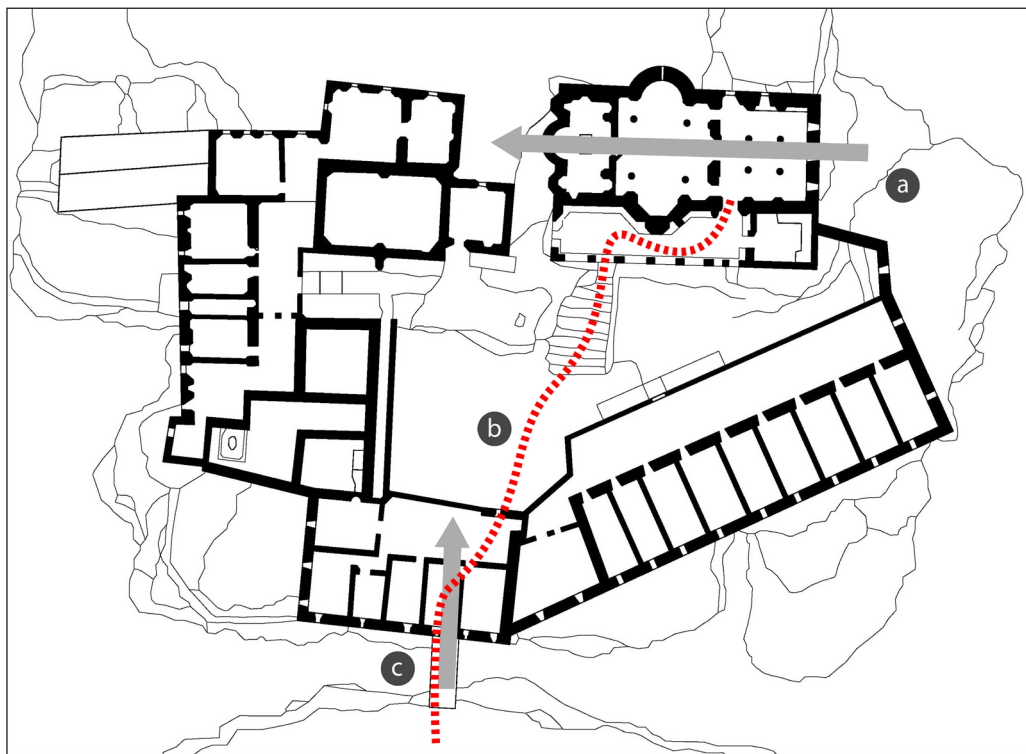


**Figure 25:** The Holy Trinity monastery: ground plan (see Papaioannou 1977, 30, with author's additions; for an external view of the monastery, see above, figure 1). The Holy Trinity monastery presents a clearly irregular arrangement of space. The yard is in the centre of the monastery (number 9), but the *katholicon* (1) is clearly in a corner of the monastery, and is thus separated from the yard, the cells (3), the reception hall (7) and the secondary buildings of the monastery (8). Only the refectory (2) is close to the *katholicon*. [The other buildings of the monastery: 2a: Kitchen. 4: Chapel of St John. 9: An inside corridor, used as an inside yard. 5: The *vrizoni* tower (i.e. the original way of access to the monastery). E: The current entrance.]

the weather conditions (such as rain, snow, and fog), helps the monks and nuns sense the presence of God through the landscape (pers. comm. Maximi). The absence of wall enclosures surrounding the monasteries makes the monks and nuns feel not 'imprisoned' but free, as if they were part of the entire landscape worshipping God (pers. comm. Maximi; pers. comm. Ioannis). The presence of other monastic communities in the same area gives, along with the help and support in practical and administrative issues, also a sense of shared spiritual life, and creates a sense of spiritual 'rivalry' among them (pers. comm. Maximi).

A monk considers his monastery and the surrounding area as well as the elements he uses in his everyday life (such as the icons, and the liturgical vessels) holy, through their participation in the continual worship of God, constituting thus parts of the *Tradition* as followed by the specific monastic community (see above). The monastery, the area and the monastic items, inherited by the current monastic community from its predecessors, are also signs of the monastic community's temporal continuity. These views are shared by the Meteora monks (Great Meteoron Monastery 1997, 3; Anastasiou 1994a, 186; pers. comm. Nikodimi; pers. comm. Maximi; pers. comm. Ioasaph).

A monk considers his permanent presence in the monastery and the constant conduct of the Holy Liturgy in it the core of the operation and protection of the monastery. On this basis, a monk is not willing, for instance, to abandon his monastery or restrict his ritual activities firmly considering such possibilities a kind of sacrilege, regardless of the reasons these possibilities might possibly serve, such as the preservation of the fabric or the satisfying of the visitors' needs (pers. comm. Nikodimi; pers. comm. Maximi; pers. comm. Ioasaph). A monk feels that his monastic needs, such as increases in the size of the monastic communities or the development of their style of life over time, are paramount and come before any need for the maintenance of the fabric and



**Figure 26:** The St Stephen monastery: schematic representation of the route within the monastery (see Papaioannou 1977, 30, with author's additions).

space of the monasteries. These views are shared by the Meteora monks (pers. comm. Tetsios; pers. comm. Maximi; pers. comm. Nikodimi; Meteora Monasteries 1994a, 36).

## 7.2. 1960s to present: contemporary influences to the *Tradition* at Meteora (the philanthropic-missionary approach to monasticism)

### *The philanthropic-missionary approach to monasticism: presentation*

The so-called 'ecclesiastical organisations' are religious organisations that bore the ideology of Western Christian non-Orthodox brotherhoods and operated as 'societies under civil law' [*astika somateia*] within the cities, independent from the existing ecclesiastical structures (the local Bishoprics). They appeared in Greece in the early twentieth century and reached their peak in the period following World War II and the Civil War as an organised attempt to help the Greek population recover from the sufferings of this period and also, more importantly, to achieve the modernisation and reformation of the official Church and thus 'save' the Church and give it a dominant position in Greek society (Yannaras 1992, 348–365; Yannaras 1987). In order to achieve this modernisation of the Church, the 'ecclesiastical organisations' attempted to impose upon the life of the Church of Greece a so-called 'modern', 'innovative' Western Christian ideology of 'good morals' and extensive philanthropic activity [*ofelimo ergo*]. The 'ecclesiastical organisations' themselves served as a substitute for monastic communities, discouraging particularly young people from becoming monks by promoting other, more 'efficient' ways to follow these 'good morals' and

produce this philanthropic activity, with a negative effect upon monastic life in Greece (Yannaras 1992, 364–368 and 391–405; Yannaras 1987). This attitude of the ‘ecclesiastical organisations’ had a negative effect on Meteora as well, as noted by Bishop Dionysios of Meteora (i.e. the person who brought the first organised monastic communities back to the site in the 1960s: see above), with specific reference to the St Stephen monastery:

[Numerous] disasters hit the monastery: the [German] Occupation,... the Civil War... Then the anti-monastic wind blew strong. Even the religious people, though arguing that they respected and loved the monasteries, in fact systematically discouraged young people from becoming monks. Their recipe was the following: Little spirituality, participation in some [religious] gatherings and more turnout’. (Dionysios 1976, 66)

The 1960s and 1970s are a most crucial period in the life of the Church of Greece. It is the period of the beginning of the rapid decline in the influence of the ‘ecclesiastical organisations’ and at the same time the beginning of a strong emphasis on the principles of Orthodox *Tradition* with the rebirth of organised monasticism (on Mount Athos, for instance, organised monasticism was reborn at that time after a long period of monastic decline, to a significant extent thanks to the moving of monastic communities from the Great Meteoron Monastery to the Simonopetra and Xenofontos Monasteries at Mount Athos: Anastasiou 1990, 391; Anastasiou 1994a, 204). This emphasis on the *Tradition* was, however, not always devoid of the remains of the influence of the ‘ecclesiastical organisations’. Thus, in some cases there was a conscious or underlying attempt to give a more social, open, ‘beneficiary’ and ‘productive’ character to organised monasticism, in the context of a modern organisational and managerial approach based on a strict schedule of monastic life and aiming at specific tangible benefits-targets visible to the wider world – a philanthropic-missionary approach to monasticism. This new philosophy was crystallised in the new concept of ‘missionary monasticism’ [*monachoi erapostoli*] adopted at that time by the official Church (Yannaras 1992, 385).

### *The philanthropic-missionary approach to monasticism: review*

This philanthropic-missionary approach towards monasticism is not, strictly, in accordance with the Orthodox *Tradition*. This approach is not simply an attempt to achieve philanthropic and social goals in the context of the Orthodox monastic principles (see above), but to move away from the Orthodox monastic principles towards a more social philosophy and way of monastic life. Specifically, in this philanthropic-missionary context, Christ is viewed as the ideal moral model to imitate, in order to save the wider world, rather than as the ultimate and exclusive cause for the existence and salvation of each person – as the personal God. Orthodox Christianity is identified and experienced as an ideology of social benefit rather than as the exclusive way of true life through the unification with God mainly through the Holy Liturgy. Orthodox monasticism is seen as a way to save the wider society rather than as the ultimate expression of the existential need of an individual for unification with God. A monastic community is seen as a mainly extroverted community taking care of the needs of the wider society rather than as an introverted community dedicated to the worship of God. A monastery is considered to be an extroverted unit attempting to respond to the needs of the visitors rather than an introverted unit for the worship of God attempting to incorporate the visitors and the wider society into its ritual life (Moisis 2003, 351–358).

Therefore, the *Tradition* of the Church, through its mixture with the ideology of the ‘ecclesiastical organisations’, tended to be transformed from the living presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church beyond any time and space into a historic past to be preserved at a specific space and time. As it was characteristically noted, the *Tradition*

became absolute as a value in its own terms... in a desperate attempt to preserve historically –in other words, as a museum- a past that was bright and glorious ... detached from the present/living experience of the Church –hence dead. (Yannaras 1988, 74–75)

### *Introduction of the philanthropic-missionary approach to Meteora*

It has been argued that this philanthropic-missionary approach of the ‘ecclesiastical organisations’ has affected monastic life at Meteora (Xydias and Totsikas and Braoudakis 1994, 4/3–5 and 4/24–26; Xydias and Totsikas and Braoudakis 1997, 248–252 and 320–330; Moisis 2003, 352 and 355–356). The re-establishment of the monastic communities on the site (in the 1960s) in the first place may be seen in the context of the complexities in the broader life of the Church of Greece at that period, with the influence of the ‘ecclesiastical organisations’ on the one hand and the tendency to return to the principles of the Orthodox *Tradition* on the other (see above). Specifically, this philanthropic-missionary approach, first introduced by the Varlaam monastic community which was very influential at that time, led to the formation of a new programme for the operation of the Meteora monasteries that would be centred on the active promotion of the Orthodox faith to the wider society at a local, national and international level (Xydias and Totsikas and Braoudakis 1994, 4/3–5 and 4/25; Xydias and Totsikas and Braoudakis 1997, 250–252 and 328–330). In the context of this new programme, the Meteora monks and nuns have three main objectives: First, with regards to monasticism, Meteora should become an important monastic site with monastic communities that are flourishing and increasing in size and influence, and have a significant contribution through the conduct of sermons and philanthropic activity to the wider society (Meteora Monasteries 1994a, 37–43; Meteora Monasteries 1995, 10; Anastasiou 1994a, 204–206; Anastasiou 1990, 391–392). This objective is reflected in the words of Bishop Dionysios of Meteora:

With the return to the magnificent and holy ideals of Orthodox monasticism and their careful development on the part of the Brotherhood and also with the parallel development of missionary activity, the monastery will become again a spiritual centre and a bright lighthouse. (Dionysios 1964, 37)

Second, with regards to tourism development, Meteora should become a popular site that would promote the Orthodox faith to the largest possible number of visitors (Xydias and Totsikas and Braoudakis 1997, 320–330). This is reflected in the words of one of the Abbots of Meteora Monasteries:

The monk of Meteora, because of the large number of visitors, Greeks [who are] Orthodox and foreigners who belong to other Christian denominations or other religions, has today a large field of exercise and promotion of the Orthodox faith in practice. This monk does not come [to Meteora] for a mission. He comes [to Meteora] for the obedience and isolation from the outside world... But Meteora is in fact ‘a city built on the hill’ [Matthew, 5, 14–16], and he in practice either demonstrates or spoils the Orthodox faith internationally. (Anastasiou 1990, 391)

Third, with regards to heritage protection, Meteora should be a well-maintained complex with the potential of being further developed. The monastery buildings should reflect a sense of strength and glory, in an attempt to attract the largest possible number of visitors and portray the power of the Orthodox faith to them (Xydias and Totsikas and Braoudakis 1997, 248–252 and 320–330; Meteora Monasteries 1994a, 45–47). As noted by one of the Abbots of the Meteora Monasteries:



We [the Meteora monastic communities], of course, with the grace of God and the blessings of our Saints, will never stop fighting for these high and pleasing to God/pious aims [the welcoming and hospitality offered to the visitors], for the benefit of our city and the residents of our area... The Holy Monasteries [of Meteora] have shown in the last years a special interest and a huge and very expensive activity for the formation of areas for receiving and guiding their numerous visitors. Key expression of this activity is the operation of storerooms for the past monastic 'treasures' [*skeuofilakeia*] and of museums in most of the monasteries. Thus, buildings of significant architectural value have been chosen, restored and formed, so that their visitor appreciates, in parallel to their significance as treasures, also the value/wealth of their architecture. Especially in our monastery [the Great Meteoron monastery] six such buildings have been arranged and operate... The formation of all these buildings, which have been formed, operate and preserved with the effort, expenses and interest of the monks themselves, significantly extend the stay of the visitors in the Holy Monasteries and subsequently in the area as well- which is our city's agonising and primary demand. (Anastasiou 2004, 21)

The Meteora monastic communities, though all broadly sharing this philanthropic-missionary approach, have differing responses to it:

The monastic communities seem to form two different groups, on the basis of their degree of commitment to this approach. The first group of monastic communities, namely the Great Meteoron and St Stephen, seems to be more committed to this approach. These monastic communities tend to see the philanthropic-missionary activity as an inseparable part of their monastic life and among the basic reasons for their establishment on the site in the first place (pers. comm. Great Meteoron Monastery; pers. comm. St Stephen Monastery; Anastasiou 2004, 21: see immediately above). The second group of monastic communities, especially the Holy Trinity and Roussanou, appears to be less committed to this approach and more attached to the traditional monastic principles (pers. comm. Holy Trinity Monastery; pers. comm. Roussanou Monastery).

The first group of monastic communities, with regards to monasticism, tends to show an increased care for the safeguarding of the monastic and holy character of the site considering themselves to be the exclusive guardians of this holiness. In this context, they tend to associate the protection of the site with their own exclusive and ultimate power in the operation of the site against those attempts identified as threats to it. On this basis, they see any attempt of other groups of people, such as the local community, to take a role in the operation of the site, even a clearly secondary or minor one, as potentially threatening the holy character of the site. With regards to tourism development, they are highly concerned about conveying and promoting the Orthodox faith (and possibly the Greek national identity as well, often seen as inextricably linked to the Orthodox faith) to the largest possible number of visitors as a kind of obligation towards them. To this end, they are actively involved in the tourism industry and focus on increasing the visitor figures of their monasteries. Thus, they also develop close contacts with key people involved in tourism at local and state level. They also develop publications for the promotion of tourism at Meteora, and become involved in the promotion of the site in tourist campaigns abroad particularly within states with large Orthodox populations such as Serbia and Russia (pers. comm. Great Meteoron Monastery; Anastasiou 1990, 390–391; Anastasiou 2004). With regards to heritage protection, they show a high level of concern about the condition and development of their monasteries through an extensive maintenance and construction activity, which increasingly serves the covering of the visitors' needs (pers. comm. Great Meteoron Monastery; pers. comm. St Stephen Monastery). These monastic communities also appear very confident concerning their 'expertise' on heritage issues, sometimes even making use of their monastic identity in order to establish this 'expertise'.



Outside the site of Meteora, these monastic communities express their high level of concern about the wider society at local, national and international level in a variety of ways. At a local level, they are highly concerned about the conduct of a most extensive philanthropic activity, the promotion of the Greek identity and history (for example, through the organisation of festivals dedicated to local heroes of the Greek revolution against the Ottomans, such as *Vlachaveia*) and the promotion of the ideals of Meteora monasticism in the broader local community (for example, through the construction of churches dedicated to Saints of Meteora as the case of the Church of St Athanasios of Meteora in Ypati, Lamia) (Great Meteoron 1995; Anastasiou 1994b, 282–285; Anastasiou 1994a, 201). At a national level, these monastic communities are more likely to take actions for the protection of the Orthodox faith against those seen as attempting to do harm to it (Great Meteoron 1995). For example, they organised campaigns and made publications against the movie *The Last Temptation*, which they considered a harsh insult to the Church and Christ Himself (pers. comm. Great Meteoron Monastery). They often intervene in issues regarding the relationship between the state, the Church and the monastic communities. A most characteristic example for this was the successful struggle of the Great Meteoron monastic community against the Greek state's attempt to expropriate part of monastic estate on a national basis (Apostolakis 2002b, 24; Papadakou and Fotopoulou 1995). At an international level, these communities conduct extensive philanthropic and missionary activity in foreign countries with Orthodox populations (Paradosi 1994, 293 and 297). They are also consistently against the dialogue between the Orthodox and the Catholic Church, a dialogue which is encouraged by the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople (pers. comm. Great Meteoron Monastery).

The second group of the Meteora monastic communities tends to place more emphasis on the principles of monastic isolation. With regards to monasticism, they do not show a high level of concern for the defense of the holiness of the site, do not demand the exclusive power in the operation of the site, and are more open to other groups of people using the site. With regards to tourism development, they accept and take care of the visitors, but concentrate on their monastic life, without any special concern for promoting the Orthodox faith to them. With regards to heritage protection, they conduct the necessary maintenance and construction works, almost exclusively for their monastic needs, and without any intense sense of developing their monasteries. They appear much less confident about their own 'expertise' on heritage issues, and are therefore more open to collaboration with the Ministry of Culture officials. For example, the Holy Trinity monastic community admitted its mistakes regarding its post-wars maintenance and development works in the monastery, and collaborated with the Ministry of Culture officials towards the replacement of these mistakes (pers. comm. Tetsios). Outside the site, they conduct philanthropic activities, but mainly in a narrower, local context and in a less intense way (pers. comm. Holy Trinity Monastery; pers. comm. Roussanou Monastery).

The response of each of the Meteora monastic communities to the philanthropic-missionary approach is mostly a matter of the Abbot of each monastic community given the Abbot's spiritual and administrative power in each monastic community (see above).

### Conclusion

The Orthodox *Tradition*, as applied at the site of Meteora, is based on the continual conduct of the Holy Liturgy: Meteora is a place of worship of God. The worship of God is the most significant contribution as well as responsibility of the monastic communities towards the wider society, and the entire operation and management of the site (including the visiting of the site and the maintenance and development of the monasteries) should be incorporated within it.

At the same time, however, contemporary influences, namely the philanthropic-missionary approach to monasticism, which are not strictly within the Orthodox *Tradition*, affect the way the

monastic communities see their site and their relationship with the outside world. Meteora is not seen simply as a place of worship of God; it is mainly seen as a place for the conduct of philanthropic-missionary activity to the wider society. The conduct of philanthropic-missionary activity is considered the most significant contribution as well as responsibility of the monastic community towards the wider society, and the entire operation and management of the site (including the visiting of the site and the maintenance and development of the monasteries) should be incorporated within it.

In the context of the 'philanthropic-missionary' approach, the monastic communities' attitude towards tourism changes. The monastic communities tend to accept visitors as a much broader 'audience' for their philanthropic-missionary activity, and use tourism as a most effective means to promote the Orthodox faith on a large scale and at an international level. Furthermore, the monastic communities seem to accept the development of tourism as a means of acquiring more power in order to further develop their philanthropic-missionary activity for the benefit of the wider society. Tourism is thus seen as an essential part of monastic life.

Therefore, the application of the 'philanthropic-missionary' approach in the site of Meteora means much more than an increasing emphasis on the conduct of philanthropic activity; it alters the essence as well as the practicing of monasticism itself. There is a shifting in the focus from the monks and their personal salvation towards tourism and the salvation of the wider society. In fact, the salvation of the monk is believed to pass through the salvation of the wider society.