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MOUNT ATHOS
THE GARDEN OF THE PANAGHIA

by
EMMANUEL AMAND DE MENDIETA

Translated from the French by
MICHAEL R. BRUCE

With 1 Map

A K A D E M I E - V E R L A G · B E R L I N
in Arbeitsgemeinschaft mit
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UXORI GINETTAE CARISSIMAE,
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SACRUM

More blest the life of godly eremite,
Such as on lonely Athos may be seen,
Watching at eve upon the giant height,
Which looks o'vr waves so blue, skies so serene,
That he who there at such an hour hath been
Will wistful linger on that hallow'd spot.

(Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*,
canto II, xxvii)

O thou great Passover and hallowed above all,
O Christ! O thou the Wisdom and the Word
and Power of God! Grant that we may partake
of thee more truly, in that day of thy King-
dom which shall have no night.

(The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom; the
last of the secret prayers of thanksgiving said by
the Deacon, after the communion to the Holy
Gifts)

FOREWORD

After my first visit to Mount Athos in 1949, I wrote a book, later published under the title 'La Presqu'île des Caloyers. Le Mont-Athos' (Desclée De Brouwer, Paris—Brussels and Bruges 1955) which was favourably received and reviewed by several periodicals. Even so, this book did not really satisfy me, for it was a mixture of two styles of writing. Chapters IV—IX consisted of a description of the Holy Mountain as I had seen it in 1949, written in a somewhat journalistic style, while the remainder was composed in a less subjective and more systematic manner, especially Ch. I (The history of Mount Athos) and Ch. X (A study of the mystical and ascetic ideal of the monks).

In this present volume, I have tried to present the facts and the phenomenon of Mount Athos in a manner which is throughout sympathetic and honest, scientific and critical. In 1957, when Mr. M. R. Bruce suggested to me that I should rewrite 'La Presqu'île des Caloyers', with a view to its publication in English, I planned a full-scale account of some 500 pages, but it is clearly impossible to produce so large a book at an economic price. So I sacrificed the selected and critical bibliography that I had compiled — though I cut it off with less regret, because meanwhile Dom I. Doens had published a very extensive bibliography of Athos in Vol. II of 'Le Millénaire du Mont Athos'. I omitted almost the whole of the third section, devoted to art on Athos. Five of its six chapters, dealing with architecture, wall-paintings or frescoes, ikons, illuminated manuscripts and the lesser arts, have gone completely; I have, however, retained an abridged version of its first chapter, in which I developed my argument that the works of art,

which were produced on Mount Athos, for and at the direction of the monks, are an invaluable illustration of their 'monastic philosophy'. I hope to publish at a later date a book already written and intirely devoted to his subject of 'Art on Mount Athos', which is a complete re-writing and development of these six chapters. But happily I was able to retain, almost unchanged, the historical and legal sections. The last part of this present work also is substantially what was originally written, though I have been obliged to abridge drastically many pages and passages in chapters IX and X.

Finally it is my pleasant duty to express my gratitude to everyone who has helped me with the writing, the translation and the technical preparation of this book.

My friend, Michael R. Bruce, first suggested to me that 'La Presqu'île des Caloyers' should be translated and published in English; he accompanied me to Mount Athos in 1959, and has given up so much time, in the last thirteen years, to this outstanding translation into English, to the careful revision of the text and to the correction of the two sets of proofs. His industry and devotion to his self-appointed task are beyond praise. He has been to Mount Athos four times, and has been able to point out certain mistakes and to make valuable suggestions from his own experience.

Next, I am extremely grateful to the 'Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin' and in particular to its 'Zentralinstitut für Alte Geschichte und Archäologie', which kindly agreed to include this work in its series of Byzantine studies, the 'Berliner Byzantinistische Arbeiten'. I must thank specially the director of the former 'Institut für griechisch-römische Altertumskunde' Professor Dr. J. Irmischer, who originally accepted in 1961 this book on behalf of the 'Akademie' and the 'Institut', and with whom I was in constant and friendly correspondance. I wish also to express my thanks to Dr. F. Winkelmann, and to Dr. J. Dummer, who have done everything in their power to press on with the printing of this book. As 'Redaktor', Dr. Dummer has had to make the English text conformable to the regulations and conventions of the Berlin series of Byzantine studies; in addition, he has completed and carefully corrected the Bibliographical List, and compiled the index.

I must also express my thanks to Canon John Brown of Dublin and to the Reverend Hugh Palmer of King's Worthy, Winchester, who have assisted in reading parts of the second proofs.

'The Garden of the Panaghia' is dedicated to my dear wife, Ginette. She was, of course, prevented from accompanying me on my second visit to the Holy Mountain, but she has become more and more interested in the monks of Athos and their life. She has copied the entire text of this work many times, in French and English, and has combined this tedious work of typing with helpful and constructive criticism and suggestions.

Winchester, May 1971.

Emmanuel Amand de Mendieta

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Bibliographical List of Books and Articles mentioned in this Book	15
Abbreviations	30

Introduction

The Landscape of Mount Athos; its Population and the "Great Ban"	31
1. The Landscape of Mount Athos	31
2. Statistics of the Number of Monks on Athos	40
3. The Ban on the Female Sex, and Some Other Prohibitions	45
a) The Great Ban: "No woman or female creature"	46
aa) The prohibition	46
bb) The ban on women	47
cc) The ban on female animals	49
dd) The ban on eunuchs and 'the beardless'	50
b) Other prohibitions	51

Part One

A History of the Monastic Confederation of Athos

Preliminary Remarks	53
Chapter I. Athos, from the Beginning until St. Athanasios the Athonite	55
1. Stage one. Hermitages and Peter the Athonite	56
2. Stage two. Lauras and Euthymios the Younger	57
3. Stage three. The Increase of Lauras	58
Chapter II. Athos, from the Foundation of Lavra till the Turkish Conquest (963—1430)	62
1. Athanasios the Athonite, the Founder of Lavra, and the First Typikon of John Tzimiskes	63
2. The Eleventh Century	73
a) The increase in the number of cenobitic monasteries	73
b) The second Typikon (1045-46)	76
3. The Twelfth Century	78
a) The Vlach scandal and its consequences	79
b) The first Slav monasteries	82
c) Relaxation of the standards in the twelfth century	85

4. The Thirteenth Century	86
a) The fall of the Byzantine Empire and Latin Rule	86
b) Restoration of the Byzantine Empire	88
5. Mount Athos under the Paleologi (1261—1430)	90
a) Restoration and prosperity	90
b) The Holy Mountain and the Ecumenical Patriarch	93
c) The third Typikon (c. 1400)	94
d) The hesychast dispute.	96
e) The introduction of idiorrhythmy and the fourth Typikon	100
 Chapter III. Mount Athos under Turkish Rule (1430—1912)	 106
1. The Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries.	107
a) Idiorrhythmy	107
b) The fifth Typikon	108
c) The reaction of the ascetics	110
d) Relations with other countries	111
2. The Seventeenth Century	113
a) Poverty and financial distress	113
b) Constitutional changes	114
c) Intellectual torpor	115
3. The Eighteenth Century	116
a) Literary and religious revival	116
b) The Anthonite Academy and Evgenios Voulgaris	117
c) Two theological disputes	121
aa) The kolyves dispute	121
bb) The dispute about frequent communion	124
d) Gabriel IV's reforms	125
e) The sixth Typikon (1783)	126
4. The Nineteenth Century and the Beginning of the Twentieth Century (1900—1912)	128
a) The return to cenobiticism	128
b) The Greek War of Independence	129
c) The loss of the Roumanian and other endowments	131
d) Disputes regarding the kelliots	132
e) National and racial conflicts: Greeks against Slavs	134
 Chapter IV. The Holy Mountain under Greek Sovereignty (1912—1970...)	 142
Appendix to Part One. The Archives of Athos and the Byzantine Records therein	154
a) Byzantine documents at Athos	154
b) Published collections from the archives of Athos	156
c) Some forged documents at Athos	157

Part Two

The Present Legal Position of Mount Athos	159
 Chapter V. The Constitutional Charter of Mount Athos and the Central Government of the Holy Mountain	 160

1. The Constitutional Charter. Its Preparation and Ratification	160
2. The Constitution of Greece and Mount Athos	162
3. The Charter, Articles 1—13	163
4. An Examination of the Present Legal Position	165
a) The Governor of Athos	165
b) The monastic federation and the extent of its authority	167
c) The authority of the ruling monasteries	167
d) The jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch over Athos	168
e) Basic differences in outlook of the monks and the Governor	170
5. The Central Government of the Holy Mountain	170
a) The Holy Community	170
b) The Holy Epistasia	172
c) The two Extraordinary Assemblies of Athos	175
 Chapter VI. The Twenty Ruling Monasteries	 177
1. The Legal Position of Ruling Monasteries, whether Cenobitic or Idiorrhythmic	177
General remarks	177
a) The autonomy of the ruling monasteries	179
b) The monastic Assembly	181
c) Monks, priest and spiritual fathers	182
d) Duties and offices within the monastery	183
2. Cenobiticism and the Legal Position within a Cenobitic Monastery	184
a) Cenobiticism	184
b) The cenobitic tradition on Athos	185
c) The organisation of a cenobitic monastery: the Higoumenos, the Epitropia and the Gerontia	186
d) The spiritual authority of the Higoumenos	188
e) Duties and offices within a cenobitic monastery	189
3. Idiorrhythmy and the Idiorrhythmic Monasteries	190
a) The idiorrhythmic system	190
b) The organisation of an idiorrhythmic monastery: the Proistameni and the Epitropes	192
c) The 'Rulers' and the 'Ruled'	193
d) The 'spiritual family' in theory and in practice	194
e) An appreciation of the idiorrhythmic system	196
f) Duties and offices at Lavra, in 1957	197
 Chapter VII. The Dependencies of the Ruling Monasteries: Skites, Kellia, Kalyves and Hermitages	 199
1. Features Common to All Types of Dependency	199
2. The Skites	202
a) The idiorrhythmic skites	203
b) The cenobitic skites	206
3. Kalyves and Hermitages	207

4. The Kellia	208
a) The 'kellia' on Mount Athos	208
b) The complaints of the kelliois	209
5. The Kathismata and the Kaviots	211
6. Some Miscellaneous Legal Matters	212

Part Three

The Life of the Monks of Athos

Chapter VIII. Monastic Life on Athos	214
1. The Orthodox Monastic Ideal	214
2. Some Reasons for Entering Monastic Life	217
3. The Stages in Monastic Life	220
a) The novice	220
b) The monk and his profession: rasophori, mikroskhimi and megaloskhimi	221
4. Monastic Dress and Routine	225
a) Dress	225
b) Athonite chronology	226
c) Monastic routine; two timetables	227
5. Fasting, Abstinence and Diet	228
6. The Age-old Force of the Cenobitic Tradition	231
a) Its survival and influence	231
b) Spiritual, social and material planes of reality	232
aa) Adjustment on the spiritual plane	232
bb) Adjustment to the realities of human life	234
c) How the typical 'good monk' is formed	236
d) The 'Zealots' of today	238
7. The Ecclesiastical School of Athos	239
Chapter IX. The Libraries of Athos	241
1. The Attitude of the Athonite Monks towards Learning	241
2. Manuscripts in the Libraries of Athos	242
a) Their number and value	242
b) Catalogues of Greek manuscripts	243
c) Profane manuscripts at Athos	246
d) 'Sacred' manuscripts at Athos	247
e) The loss of many manuscripts	248
3. Printed Books	250
Chapter X. The Intellectual Interests of Certain Monks	252
1. The Official Attitude of Athonite Monasticism to Intellectual Activity, and especially to 'Profane Studies'	252
a) The general principle of Athonite philosophy	252

h) Some consequences of this principle	253
aa) All 'profane studies' are forbidden to monks	253
bb) Only religious and monastic studies are allowed on Athos	255
c) Some books written in the 'monastic spirit'	257
d) Other consequences of the 'Athonite philosophy'	260
2. An Orthodox Opinion on the Intellectual Achievements of Athos: Sophronios Eustratiades	261
3. Some Athonite Authors	264
(a) Gregory Palamas)	264
(b) Nikodimos the Hagiorite)	265
(c) Other writers)	266
Chapter XI. Art on Athos: A Reflection of Monastic Piety	268
1. Special Conditions for the Development of Art on Athos	268
2. Athonite Art is entirely Religious and Monastic	270
3. The Veneration of Ikons on Athos	273
4. The Frescoes of the Refectory of the Great Lavra	278
a) The Last Judgement	278
b) Moral and monastic allegories	279
c) The Akathistos Hymn and Martyrdoms	280
d) The Procession of Ascetics and the 'Last Supper'	281
Chapter XII. Communal Worship and the Divine Liturgy	283
1. Ecclesiastical Discipline, Officials and Music	283
2. The Akolouthias, or Services for the Day and the Night	286
a) Vespers or 'Εσπερινός	286
b) Compline or 'Απόδειπνον	289
c) The midnight service or Μεσονυκτικόν	292
d) Matins or "Ορθρος	293
e) The Hours: Prime, Terce, Sext and None	296
f) The Agrypnias or all-night Vigils	297
g) 'Rosaries', metanias and the obligations of a 'megaloskhimos'	301
3. The Holy and Divine Liturgy	302
a) The three forms of the Byzantine Liturgy	303
b) The Liturgy in the life of the Orthodox Church.	304
4. Communal Meals and the 'Offices of the Trapeza'	307
5. Relics and the Ritual of their Veneration.	308
Chapter XIII. The Ascetic and Mystical Ideal of the Hagiorites	311
General remarks	311
1. Postulates of this Ideal	313
2. The Ascetic Ideal of the Hagiorites	316
a) Christian asceticism and its development in Orthodox monasticism	317

b) A monks's penitential and 'self-crucified' life	321
aa) from Fr. Θεόκλητος, <i>Μεταξὺ οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς</i>	321
bb) from Διονύσιος ἐκ Φουρνᾶ, <i>Ἑρμηνεία τῆς ζωγραφικῆς τέχνης</i>	323
cc) from the 'Great Euchologion'	326
α) The Profession of the Lesser Habit	326
β) The Profession of the Great (or Angelic) Habit	329
c) Certain aspects of the 'invisible war'	332
aa) Self-denial and virginity	332
bb) Renouncement of the world	333
cc) Renouncement of self and self-will	333
dd) Observance of all the commandments of God and of Christ	334
ee) The practice of all the virtues	334
ff) 'Spiritual sobriety' and 'the guarding of the heart'	337
d) 'The Ladder of the salvation'	339
3. The Mystical Ideal of the Hagiorites	340
a) The mystical ideal, from the 'Great Euchologion'	340
b) Silence, the way from asceticism to contemplation	341
c) Divinisation, the goal of mystical life	342
d) The peace and silence of the spirit. Spiritual prayer and 'the prayer of Jesus'	345
aa) <i>Hisychia</i>	345
bb) Continual prayer and 'the prayer of Jesus'	346
e) The mystical experience, or the 'Royal Road'	349
Epilogue	351
Index	

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL LIST
OF BOOKS AND ARTICLES MENTIONED IN THIS BOOK

Instead of the Selected and Critical Bibliography of Mount Athos that I have compiled, I restrict myself to insert here a short Bibliographical List of Books and Articles Mentioned in this Book.

1) The main reason for this drastic reduction is obvious. In the meantime a wonderful and very detailed 'Bibliographie de la Sainte Montagne de l'Athos', drawn up by Dom Irénée Doens, was published in the second volume of 'Le Millénaire du Mont Athos, 963—1963', Chevetogne 1965, 337—495. This monumental bibliography comprises an extensive introduction (pp. 337—343), a list of abbreviations (pp. 344—349), the bibliography of the Greek publications (pp. 351—394; 774 items with many multiple nos.), the bibliography of the non-Greek publications (pp. 395—483; 1860 items with many multiple nos.), and finally an index (pp. 484—495). In particular, the bibliography of the books and articles published in Russian, in other Slav languages and in Roumanian, is very carefully compiled, as nearly complete as possible, and truly indispensable.

I am therefore happy to express my congratulations to the untiring and competent compiler of such an useful Athos bibliography, and I refer the readers of this book to this precious *instrumentum Athonensium studiorum*.

2) For the sake of brevity, I omit here all the short appreciations concerning the historical or critical value of some important books or articles, which I had prepared for my Selected and Critical Bibliography of Mount Athos. The reader may find many of these concise judgments in my book, 'La Presqu'île des Caloyers. Le Mont-Athos', Paris-Bruges 1955, 361—379 ('Bibliographie spéciale du Mont Athos'), or in the course of this present book.

3) The rule I have followed while compiling this bibliographical list is that, as a matter of principle, I restrict myself to the titles of books and articles which are explicitly mentioned in this present work, and which are exclusively or mainly devoted to Mount Athos¹. Accordingly I omit from this list all the books of more general interest, which may be included in a auxiliary Athonite bibliography, for instance the books devoted to the political, social and cultural history of the Byzantine Empire, to the history and character of the Orthodox Church, to the Byzantine liturgy and worship, to Byzantine art, to Byzantine monasticism and mysticism in general, etc.².

There are very few exceptions to this rule, for instance the title of the huge literary repertory of H.-G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich*, München 1959. I have also inserted into this list a very short selection of some editions of Greek liturgical books, either in the original Greek or in modern translations, because they are very often quoted and used in this book.

¹ There are, however, some few exceptions to the rule.

² See, in my book 'La Presqu'île des Caloyers', on pp. 379—385, a selection of books: "Bibliographie générale auxiliaire" (de l'Athos).

Finally, as a consequence of the above mentioned removal of the six chapters devoted to the art on Mount Athos, the bibliography on this particular and interesting subject does not appear in this Bibliographical List.

I have transcribed, fully and in the original language, the titles and subtitles of the books and articles herein listed. On the other hand, in the course of the present work, I have frequently only given an abridged title. The reader is asked to consult this bibliographical list to know the full title and other bibliographical details.

The journal *Irénikon*, published quarterly by the Benedictine Monastery of Chevetogne, Belgium, includes reliable reports of current events on Mount Athos in its regular 'Chronique religieuse: Mont Athos'. See I. Doens, *Bibliographie de l'Athos*, II, in: *Millénaire du Mont Athos* II, p. 430, no. 737.

The following selected bibliographical list may be usefully completed by the general bibliography about Mount Athos in H. De Greeve, *Athos. Een Inleiding*, Amsterdam 1967, 66—68 and also by a systematic bibliography, *ibid.*, 69—78.

Acta, praesertim Graeca, Rossici in Monte Athos monasterii see АКТЫ Русскаго на святом Аѳоне монастыря.

**Η Ἀγκυρα τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας. Ἱδρυσις καὶ καταστατικὸν Ἱεροῦ Συνδέσμου Ζηλωτῶν Ἀγιορειτῶν Μοναχῶν*, Ἐν Ἀθήναις 1926.

**Ἀδαμαντίου, Ἀδαμάντιος, Ἱστορία τοῦ Ἁθω καὶ τοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μοναχικοῦ βίου — Ἡ μοναχικὴ κοινωνία — Τὰ μνημεῖα καὶ ἡ τέχνη*, in: *Μεγάλῃ Ἑλληνικῇ Ἐγκυκλοπαιδείᾳ* II, Ἐν Ἀθήναις 1927, 341—356.

АКТЫ Русскаго на святом Аѳоне монастыря святого великомученика и цѣлителя Пантелеимона — Acta, praesertim Graeca, Rossici in Monte Athos monasterii, Кіевъ 1873. [86 acts collected by Fr. Azarija and published with Russian transl. by F. A. Ternovskij]

**Ἀλέξανδρος [Λαζαρίδης], Ὁδηγὸς Ἁγίου Ὁρους Ἁθω*, Ἐν Ἀθήναις 1957.

(= Ἀλέξανδρος, Ὁδηγός)

**Ἀλέξανδρος [Λαζαρίδης], Ἁθῶς. Ἀγῶνες καὶ θυσίαι 1850—1855. Ἐγγράφα Μακεδονικῆς ἐπαναστάσεως*, Ἐν Ἀθήναις 1962.

**Ἀλέξανδρος [Λαζαρίδης], Τὸ Ἁγιον Ὄρος μετὰ τὴν Ὀθωμανικὴν κατάκτησιν*, *ΕΕΒΣ* 32, 1963, 113—261. Reprint: Ἐν Ἀθήναις 1963.

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[Cf. Kallistos II Xanthopoulos]

Anastasijević, Dragutin N., *La date du typikon de Tzimiscès pour le Mont-Athos*, *Byzantion* 4, 1927/28, 7—11.

**Ἀναστασίου, Ἰωάννης, Ὁ θρυλούμενος διαγμὸς τῶν Ἀγιορειτῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ Μιχαὴλ Η' Παλαιολόγου καὶ τοῦ Ἰωάννου Βέκκου*, in: *Ἀθωνικὴ Πολιτεία*, Ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ 1963, 207—257.

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- Arcadios [monk and deacon of Vatopedi] cf. Eustratiades, Sophronios.
- [Athanasios the Athonite] *La Vie de saint Athanase l'Athonite*. Introduction par Olivier Rousseau, Chevetogne 1963.
- *Αθανάσιος, Προσκνητάριον καὶ ὁδηγὸς Ἱερᾶς Μονῆς Μεγίστης Λαύρας τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους, Ἐν Ἀθήναις — ἐν Ὄρει Ἄθω 1936.
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- Βλάχος, Κοσμᾶς, Ἡ χερσόνησος τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους Ἄθω, καὶ αἱ ἐν αὐτῇ Μοναὶ καὶ οἱ Μοναχοὶ πάλαι τε καὶ νῦν. *Μελέτη ἱστορικὴ καὶ κριτικὴ*, Ἐν Βόλῳ 1903. (= Βλάχος, Ἡ χερσόνησος)
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ABBREVIATIONS

BZ	Byzantinische Zeitschrift
DHGE	Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastiques
DThC	Dictionnaire de Théologie catholique
EEBS	<i>Ἐπετηρίς Ἐταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν</i>
OrChrP	Orientalia Christiana Periodica
PG	Migne, Patrologia Graeca
PL	Migne, Patrologia Latina
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
ZKG	Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte

INTRODUCTION

THE LANDSCAPE OF MOUNT ATHOS; ITS POPULATION AND THE "GREAT BAN"

There are at the present time some twelve hundred monks, Greek and Slav, living on Mount Athos. Their daily routine, their religious observances and their outlook on the world have lasted almost unchanged from the medieval Byzantine Empire, and are without parallel anywhere else on the world. But nobody can start to study their history or their mentality, unless he first knows where to find Mount Athos on the map, and is aware of the physical background — so beautiful and so wild — to their unique form of corporate life. He must know the names and the situation of the principal monasteries, and must keep in mind the 'Great Ban' which for ever excludes the whole female sex from Mount Athos, the greatest single difference between it and the rest of the world. This introduction will deal briefly with these matters, and will include some recent statistics of the number of monks.

1. THE LANDSCAPE OF MOUNT ATHOS¹

The geographical position

On the map, Chalcidice is seen at the north-west corner of the Aegean Sea. From it, three long peninsulas or fingers of land jut out in a south-easterly direction. The most westerly is Kassandra, in classical times called Phlegra or Palene; the central one Longos or Sithonia, and the most easterly Mount Athos or the Holy Mountain (the classical Akte). Mount Athos is now part of the kingdom of Greece, and is some thirty-five miles in length (48 kms) and from four to six miles wide. Its total area is about 124 square miles (321 kms²).

At its north-western end, where it joins the mainland near the village of Hierissos, the peninsula of Mount Athos is little more than a mile wide, and only rises

¹ Throughout this work, the term 'Mount Athos' or 'Athos' is used to refer to the peninsula of Mount Athos, which the Greeks call *Τὸ Ἅγιον Ὄρος*, the Holy Mountain; it may also be used to refer more particularly to the rocky mountain-peak at the south-eastern end of the peninsula. Beside its geographical connotation, it is also used to denote the monastic confederation. — For further details on the geography and geology of the peninsula, see R. Busch-Zantner, *Anthropogeographie und Kulturmorphologie des Athos*, *Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher* 9, 1930/32, 231—255, and *Π. Ντάβος, Γεωγραφικά*, in the article *Ἄθως*, in: *Θρησκευτικὴ καὶ Ἱθική Ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια Ι* (*Ἐν Ἀθήραις* 1962), coll. 850—855.

a few feet above sea-level¹. But immediately south of the isthmus, the ground rises steeply. A ridge of rock, from 1500 to 4000 feet high (500 to 1200 metres)², runs the whole length of the peninsula, like the backbone of a fish, and terminates in the sheer white pinnacle of Mount Athos itself (6348 ft. = 1935 metres³). On both sides of the ridge, valleys and ravines run down from the crest to the sea. The greater part of the peninsula is covered with forests or is cultivated; in the north are barren heathlands, and the summit of Mount Athos is bare rock.

A cruise round the peninsula is not only a delightful experience, but the best way of getting a general impression of Athos. On the south-western side, the cliffs, sometimes red and in other places grey, fall sheer into the blue Mediterranean Sea, the rocks either bare or dotted with stunted trees. At intervals can be seen the larger monastic buildings, some built along the shore and separated from their neighbours by woods and ridges of rock, others perched on pinnacles or, with their cypresses and orchards, set back from the sea at the edge of ravines, down which the streams run under the great trees. From a distance these large buildings look like fortresses; all have a single gate with iron bars and high walls, still often battlemented. They were all built to serve the same purpose, for the monks have frequently needed to defend themselves against pirates and other enemies.

Altogether, there are twenty large ruling monasteries, which, between them, own the entire surface of the peninsula. Their names are given in the following list, starting with the monasteries on the south-west side nearest the isthmus, and proceeding down the coast. Koutloumousiou, which lies inland, near Karyes, comes last. I also give the nationality of each monastery and the derivation of its name, though often this is uncertain.

1. Zographou (Bulgarian), the monastery of the painter.

2. Kastamonitou or Konstamonitou (Greek), the monastery of the man of Kastamoni, a province in Asia Minor. The name now officially used is Konstamonitou, meaning the monastery which was (according to legend)

¹ There may still be seen at this point traces of a ditch, which (according to Herodotus) was dug by the orders of Xerxes in the years 481—480 B.C. In the year 491, in the course of his first expedition against Athens, Xerxes' fleet had to sail round the southern tip of Athos, and 3000 ships and 20000 men, including the admiral Mardonios, were lost by shipwreck. The canal was dug so that the second expedition of 481—80 might avoid a similar disaster. See A. Struck, *Der Xerxeskanal am Athos*, *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Alterum, Geschichte und deutsche Literatur* 10, 1907, 114—130, and R. M. Dawkins, *The Monks of Athos*, London 1936, 29—30.

² Typical heights above sea-level of the ridge are:

at Megali Vigla	1600 ft.,
due west of Stavronikita	1700 ft.,
due west of Koutloumousiou	2200 ft.,
due east of Grigoriou	3250 ft.

³ This (6348 ft.) is the height given by Busch-Zantner 237. Many other writers state it to be 6619 feet (2033 metres).

founded by Constant, one of the sons of the Emperor Constantine the Great.

3. Dochiariou (Greek), the monastery of the dochiaris, the cellarer or monk responsible for storing and issuing provisions.

4. Xenophontos or Xenophon (Greek), the monastery of Xenophon (a name often found on Athos) or perhaps of St. Xenophon, a saint of the sixth century.

5. Rossikon or St. Panteleimon (Russian), the Russian monastery, called after the name of its patron saint.

6. Xiropotamou or Xeropotamou (Greek), the monastery of the dry torrent.

7. Simonos Petras or Simopetra (Greek), the monastery called 'the Rock of Simon', and founded by an ascetic of that name.

8. Grigoriou or Gregoriou (Greek), the monastery of Gregory, the name of its founder.

9. Dionysiou (Greek), the monastery of Dionysios, the name of its founder.

10. Haghion Pavlou or St. Paul (Greek), the monastery of St. Paul, probably Paul of Xiropotamou, the opponent of Athanasios the Athonite.

11. Lavra or the Great Laura (Greek); the word 'lavra' probably originally meant 'a row of cells', and was used to describe the semi-eremitic colonies of ascetics of Egypt, in very early times.

12. Karakallou or Karakala (Greek), the monastery founded by Karakallos, a person of whom nothing is known. An unfounded legend states that it was founded by the pagan Roman Emperor Caracalla.

13. Philotheou (Greek), the monastery founded by a tenth-century hermit named Philotheos, of whom nothing else is known.

14. Iviron (Greek), originally the monastery of the Iberians or Georgians, but now Greek.

15. Stavronikita (Greek), the monastery founded by Stavronikitas, or Nikitas of the Cross. In the twelfth century, it was called Stravonikita, or the monastery founded by Nikitas the Squint-eyed.

16. Pantokratoros or Pantokrator (Greek), dedicated to Christ the All-Powerful or Pantokrator.

17. Vatopedi or Vatopediou (Greek), the monastery of the field of bushes. An unfounded legend states that the name refers to the child Arcadios, son of the Emperor Theodosios I, who was found under a bush at this spot.

18. Esphigmenou (Greek), the monastery in the narrow opening. R. M. Dawkins prefers the meaning of 'the monastery of the hermit wearing a tight iron belt'.

19. Chilandari, Chilandariou or Chilandar (Serbian), the monastery founded by an unknown person called Chilandarios, a pilot or ship's captain.

20. Koutloumousiou, Koutloumoussi or Kutlumus (Greek), the monastery of Kutlumuş, a Turkish prince who was converted to Christianity and is said to be its founder.

Not all the inhabitants of Athos live in these great ruling monasteries. From the sea there can be seen small groups of white houses, set between the grey rocks or in clearings in the trees. Usually these are monastic villages or skites, clustered round a church and marked by the shape of the cypress trees which have been planted nearby. Single houses also are seen; these, called kellia, are occupied by one or more ascetics who support themselves by gardening or other manual work. In other places may be seen little chapels, roofed with a green cupola and half-hidden in the trees, and huts perched like eagles' nests on some almost inaccessible rock. Rounding the cape, where the wind blows and the seas meet, the visitor reaches that part of Athos called 'the Desert', the home of a few hermits and ascetics. He looks up at the huge rocks which fall sheer to the sea, and feels dizzy when he sees, several hundred feet above him, poor huts clinging like limpets to the rock-face, and caves and holes dug out of the cliff. In such places a handful of hermits pass their lives in repentance and contemplation, alone but always with God.

Behind and above every monastery, skite and hut, the hills rise. The lower slopes are either barren and grey, or covered with big pines and firs, which contrast with the rough stone. Farther off is the bare pyramid, marble-white, of Mount Athos itself, often hidden in the clouds or in mist.

Halfway down the south-western side, a little harbour has been built at Daphni, for there are no natural harbours on Athos. In classical times, there were no settlements of any importance, and sailors dreaded the sudden storms which so often blow up round the south-east end of the peninsula. A territory so rugged and wild can have few attractions for a civilised community, but it has great natural beauty. The landscape is entrancing, in spite of its savage character. The climate¹ is particularly mild and equable, and, in summer, a wind off the sea keeps the air fresh. Further, the peninsula is largely covered with magnificent trees and dense undergrowth.

Mount Athos has been for ten centuries a refuge for men who seek solitude and discomfort, for ascetics whose only desire is to get away from the world. There is as yet no complete network of roads fit to take wheeled traffic of any kind, or to link the ruling monasteries and other settlements², but in general there are only

¹ Busch-Zantner, *Byz.-neugr. Jahrbücher* 9, 1930/32, 239—241. During the winter, the latent warmth of the sea prevents the air from becoming too cold. On the other hand, the heights of Athos have the reverse effect; the monastery of St. Paul is often out off for several weeks by snow, while torrents are frozen up. The rainfall differs greatly from place to place, but the average is fairly low, between 20 and 28 inches (500 to 700mm.) a year. The temperature varies from 25 to 100 degrees F. (from - 5 to + 40 degrees centigr.). On the prevailing winds and the rainfall, see Busch-Zantner.

² Until recent years, the Holy Community (the central monastic governing body of Athos) has been opposed to the construction of any network of roads connecting Daphni, Karyes and the principal monasteries. But, since 1952, three monasteries (Chilandari, Xiropotamou and St. Paul) have built roads from their arsenades (harbours) to the monasteries, and the two latter have been continued into the forestlands in the hills, so as to enable

mule-tracks and footpaths, undoubtedly picturesque but in bad repair. The traveller — whether monk, pilgrim, tourist or scholar — will quickly wear out his stoutest footwear on these stony paths. Alternatively he can ride, slowly and reliably but with many jolts, on the back of a patient mule. In good weather only, journeys from one monastery to the next can be made by rowing boat, and, in recent years, by motor-boat — a service which has made such journeys quicker, more reliable and more comfortable¹.

The Landscape

This book is not intended to be a series of pen-pictures, describing in detail the various impressions which the traveller will gather in the course of a journey round Mount Athos. Some scenes are magnificent, others have romantic charm; but all are of an unspoiled country, not made ugly by man's works or scarred by modern industry.

Many books have been written containing long and picturesque descriptions of the landscape. One of the first and best is that by J. Ph. Fallmerayer, *Fragmente aus dem Orient*, II², which contains the most delightful, fresh and sensitive descriptions of the peninsula. Other works with detailed descriptions, exact or extatic, practical or romantic, include A. Riley, *Athos or the Mountain of the Monks* (London 1887), F. Perilla, *Le Mont-Athos* (Paris 1927), R. Byron, *The Station, Athos* (London 1928) and R. M. Dawkins, *The Monks of Athos* (London 1936); there is also the romantic work of the Austrian poet, F. Spunda, *Der Heilige Berg Athos* (Leipzig 1928). Besides these, many volumes of photographs have appeared in recent years.

The most pleasant way to reach Athos is to come by sea. Though there is now no regular service, small coasting-vessels, carrying wood and other goods, as well as a few passengers, go between Thessalonika and Daphni and the other ports of the Macedonian coast; travellers on these boats have their first view of Mount Athos as they round the peninsula of Longos. There are occasional boats from Piraeus to the islands of the North Aegean and the ports of Macedonia, which include a call at Daphni; from afar off the passengers see the Mountain towering

the timber to be cut, and brought down for export more easily and economically. These roads are very rough, and only jeeps and lorries can use them.

Starting in 1960, special efforts were made to construct further roads suitable for lorries, to facilitate the exploitation of the forests, and for the visitors to the millenary celebrations of 1963. The road which started at the arsenas of St. Paul was continued over the mountain to Lavra and its arsenas, and a road was built from Daphni, past Xiropotamou and over the ridge to Karyes; this road has since been continued to Iviron.

¹ For details of the services, as they were in 1957, with tariff, etc., see 'Αλέξανδρος of Lavra, *Ὁδηγὸς Ἁγίου Ὄρους Ἀθῶν, Ἐν Ἀθήναις* 1957, esp. pp. 27, 34 and 35.

² J. Ph. Fallmerayer, *Fragmente aus dem Orient II*, Stuttgart-Tübingen 1845, chs. 9 and 10, pp. 1—40. These two chapters have been reprinted with an introduction by F. Dölger, under the title *Hagion Oros oder der Heilige Berg Athos*, Wien 1949. See esp. pp. 8—14.

over the Aegean Sea, its majestic marble peak often covered with cloud. The description given by Strabo is still very exact: "Like a woman's breast, very pointed, very high." Then they see the south-western coast, rugged and barren, and get some impression of the country to which they are coming. As they get nearer, the whole length of the peninsula comes into view, and the ridge and the summit of the mountain rise higher above them. The outline becomes clearer and the details appear. The summit is seen to be brilliant white, bare rock; at a lower level the hills, rising row behind row, are covered with trees and cut up with ravines. Soon rocks and cliffs can be distinguished among the woods, then the large monasteries, and finally cottages with red or green roofs. There seem to be buildings scattered everywhere, in the trees and between the rocks, on the shore, up the slopes and on the hill-tops. It is now possible to identify different places on this rocky west coast. Looking from right to left, the first group of buildings is the skite of St. Anne, a cluster of houses built against the side of a ravine; next the monastery of St. Paul partly hidden behind an enormous cliff; then the monasteries of Dionysiou and Grigoriou at the edge of the rocks, and Simonos Petras on a pinnacle like an eagle's nest. The tiny port of Daphni lies straight ahead, and halfway up the mountain behind it is Xiropotamou. Over to the left are the vast buildings of the Russian monastery of St. Panteleimon, and, farther away, Xenophontos and the mighty group of Dochiariou.

The traveller who does not come by sea takes the motorbus from Thessalonika over the hills of Chalcidice. As far as Arnea and further, the road is good; but (in 1962) the last few miles to Hierissos had not yet been brought up to the same standard. The road ends at Tripiti, at the head of the Gulf of Mount Athos. From the jetty here, motor-boats go regularly down the south-west coast, calling at Daphni and the monasteries. After a stop at the tower of Prosfiori, where the last women passengers must disembark, the boat follows the barren coast of the north end of the peninsula. Then it stops at the arsenas which serves the inland monasteries of Zographou and Kastamonitou and at Dochiariou, Xenophontos and Rossikon, before reaching Daphni after a trip of some three hours.

The whole length of this western coast of the peninsula is barren, uncultivated, hard and overpowering in its majesty. It is all rock, schist, limestone and marble. Torrents, dry except in winter and spring, gash the sides of the hills. Their beds are marked with loose white stones and uprooted trees. Apart from Daphni, there is no harbour on this coast where a boat can lie at anchor. The monasteries have their jetties, but boats must always be pulled up to protect them from sudden storms. South from Daphni, the rocks become steeper, the ridges more barren and the vegetation more sparse, until, at the tip of the peninsula, the cliffs below Mount Athos drop straight into the sea, where the water, always of the deepest blue, is often rough and the waves white-crested.

Many writers have described the summit of Mount Athos and its ascent, and I do not propose to devote many pages to it. The sight of the peak has filled people with religious awe and dread. Its beauty is especially remarkable at sunset, when the white cone glows blood-red, and the gullies are like great wounds trickling

down among the hills, which, in their turn, drop to the sea. Crimson, deep green and ink-blue, what a picture of contrasting colours! And I have noticed how the colour of the marble peak, shining white in summer and snow-capped in winter, varies from hour to hour. During the day, it seems to be tinted with emerald-green, and this turns to a dull blue at evening. Then at sunset, Athos is not always crimson; sometimes it burns like a huge firework. The pinnacle glows red, then passes through purple, orange-ochre and mauve, and slowly disappears from sight into the grey of the firmament, as though a veil had been drawn over the sea and sky at the oncoming of night.

At the top of the mountain, the monks have built a tiny chapel dedicated to the Transfiguration of Christ. The chapel, thus set on the apex of the peninsula, symbolises that the experience of the Transfiguration is the highest point to which monastic piety can rise. On the night before the Feast of the *Metamorphosis* (the Transfiguration; 6 August), many monks and pilgrims join in an all-night service (agrypnia), which culminates in the Eucharistic Liturgy celebrated shortly before dawn on the day of the feast.

The ascent of Athos is long and arduous, but it cannot be called difficult or dangerous in summer. All those travellers who have made this effort have recorded their religious and aesthetic impressions, and described in particular the manner in which, just before sunset and just after sunrise, the shadow of the mountain can be seen lying far out over the Aegean Sea, to the east and to the west. The monks state that, on a clear day, a man standing on the summit can see the Dardanelles, and even the towers of Constantinople. They are also convinced — as are several western travellers of times past — that Mount Athos is that 'exceeding high mountain', which was the scene of the second temptation of Jesus Christ, when the devil showed him 'all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them' (Matthew 4, 8)¹. For myself, I have not made the climb, and can only refer my readers to other writers who have described the ascent of the summit².

Sailing round the peninsula, we leave Mount Athos behind us and turn the point of Cape Lavra, at the south-east corner. The east coast differs from the west³. The landscape is less rugged and more gentle; the valleys which come down from the ridge are not so steep, and the torrents do not run so fast toward the sea. Thick forests and cultivated lands stretch up the valleys and over the sides of the hills, which are patterned with every shade of green. Kellia, single white cottages, are seen among these fields and woods, built usually of dressed or undressed stone, and marked by a group of tall cypress-trees. There are also skites, monastic villages, composed of a number of kalyves or houses clustered round their church or kyriakon. It was not by chance that the three oldest and most

¹ Dawkins, *The Monks of Athos* 32.

² E.g. Riley, *Athos or the Mountain of the Monks*, 208—215; Byron, *The Station*, ch. VI, pp. 90—130; Dawkins, *The Monks of Athos* 30—35; J. Decarreaux, *Une république de moines*, Paris 1956, 110—113.

³ Busch-Zantner, *Byz.-neogr. Jahrbücher* 9, 1930/32, 243—244.