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THE BYZANTINE MONASTERY:
ITS SPATIAL ICONOGRAPHY
AND THE QUESTION OF SACREDNESS

The Byzantine sacred space in the making — *hierotopy* — was a long, multifaceted process applied in both rural and urban environments. Its religious, symbolic and social aspects often overlapped, resulting either in a dynamic (procession) or static (built) spatial structures.

The Byzantine perception of the heavenly realm, in terms of its “built” environment, mirrored the image of a city. More precisely, it was Jerusalem and Constantinople that had an extraordinary position within the Christian celestial and earthly hierarchy: earthly Jerusalem was juxtaposed with the heavenly Jerusalem, and the Empire’s capital, Constantinople, was proclaimed the New Jerusalem upon the transfer of the relics of the True Cross to the city¹. Within the Christian sacred topography, however, the celebrity and importance of the Holy Land and its ‘unique city’ remained unchallenged, and thus Constantinople admired its ‘secondary’ role as the earthly successor but never reached the heavenly realms. That is the case of ‘*the city*’ in the context of celestial topography.

If we recall the image of the heavenly court within Byzantium, however, we become aware that the Emperor’s palace in Constantinople was understood and visualized as a reflection of the heavenly court where the Lord resides². Thus ‘*the palace*’ was closely connected to the ideological prerogatives of the Byzantine idea of kingship as God’s investiture.

¹ About the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem in general see: *Kühnel B.* From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem. Freiburg, 1987. On the True Cross: *Frolow A.* La relique de la vraie Croix. Recherches sur le développement d’un culte. Paris, 1961; *Grumel V.* La reposition de la vraie croix à Jérusalem par Héraclius: le jour et l’année // *ByzF* 1 (1966), p. 139–149. On Constantinople as the New Jerusalem: *Mango C.* Byzantium the Empire of the New Rome. London, 1994, p. 207–217.

² *Maguire H.* The Heavenly Court // *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204* / Ed. H. Maguire. Washington D.C., 1997, p. 247–258. About the Heaven and Earth in Byzantine Art in general

Where was the place of ‘*the monastery*’ within the celestial topography? What was its purpose and meaning within the terrestrial world of the Christians? What was the procedure of physical shaping a monastery settlement? And how were the religious connotations reflected on its built environment. These are the general questions I intend to discuss in this paper.

One can start within the realm of ideas — what was the purpose and meaning of the monastery in Byzantium. According to the historical sources, a primary meaning of the words monastery (*monasterion*), and monk (*monachos*) were ‘dwelling of a solitary’ and ‘solitary’ itself³. It is known, also, in later developments, that ‘monastery’ designated a specific settlement for a group of religious men or women living in a community, under the prescribed regulations, and was usually enclosed by an outer wall. In this context a ‘monk’ represents an individual of the specific community. Obviously, the character of the ‘monastery’ as an institution, and of the ‘monk’ as an individual changed in the course of time. The search for the right answer leads us to the beginnings of monasticism, to its roots in the desert monasticism of Egypt, Palestine, and elsewhere in early Byzantium.

MONASTERY SETTLEMENT AND HEAVENLY REALM ACCORDING TO LITERARY SOURCES

The Holy father Antony, who lived in the second half of the third century (251?–356) in Egypt, was one of the prominent ascetics whose *Vita* illuminates the life and habits of the earliest hermits in general⁴. We learn from his *Life* that in the beginning “there were not yet many monasteries in Egypt, and no monk knew at all the great desert, but each of those wishing to give attention to his life disciplined himself in isolation, not far from his own village”⁵. That was true for Antony too, who inhabited, as his first abode, one of the ancient tombs, situated at some distance from the village, where he remained in isolation, and began his solitary life. He prayed constantly, fasted and mortified his body in a search for salvation, professing that “though we have been contestants on earth, we do not receive our inheritance on earth, but we possess the promises in heaven”⁶. His voice echoed, a great number of followers appeared, and “from then on there were many

see: Heaven on Earth. Art and the Church in Byzantium / Ed. L. Safran. University Park, PA, 1998; Lidov A. Heavenly Jerusalem: The Byzantine Approach // The Real and Ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Art / Ed. B. Kuchnel. Jerusalem, 1999, p. 340–353.

³ Morard F. E. Monachos, Moine: Histoire du terme grec jusqu’ au 4e siècle // Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie 20 (1973), p. 332–411.

⁴ Gregg R. C., trans., and Clebsch W. A., preface. *Athanasius: The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*. New York, Ramsey, Toronto, 1980.

⁵ Ibid., p. 32.

⁶ Ibid., p. 44.

monasteries in the mountains and the desert was made a city by monks, who... registered themselves for the citizenship in the heavens”⁷. Increasing number of the ‘wandering’ monks, in the course of the fourth century, became articulated through the appearance and ‘leadership’ of holy men, who acted as focal figures and gathered great number of followers around their solitary abodes. The *Lives* of these prominent anchorites reveal that they lived in isolation in a cave, hut, or built-cell, soon followed by a flock of devotees who surrounded their secret abodes, forming a loose community of monks⁸. Their life was understood as angelic, “as they advanced steadily in the imitation of our divine Savior” and “dwelling on earth in this manner they live as true citizens of heaven”⁹. Although they were, as individuals, deeply devoted to a rigorous life of isolation, fasting, self-denial, and mortification of their bodies to achieve an ultimate goal — salvation — they had yet another role within society, serving as intermediaries between ordinary believers and their God¹⁰. We can often read in their *Lives* that “the people depend on the prayers of these monks as if on God himself”, and that the “Savior performs through them what he performed through the prophets and apostles”¹¹. Their social function, also, could be recognized through their healing capacities, unexpected miracles which always helped to believers, or their visions which guaranteed fulfillment of the divine will on earth. And while anchorites of Antonian type lived either a solitary life, or in a loose community of ascetics, at the same time there appeared another type of monastic organization that favored communal — cenobitic — life under strict rules, known as Pachomian *Koinonia*¹². The Monk Pachomius (c. 290–346), and his disciples Theodore and Horsiesios are believed to have been the founders of cenobitic life “according to the precept of God and of the angel who was sent by God for this very purpose”¹³. Each monastery consisted of thirty to forty houses of brothers who lived there under the master, and three or four houses were federated into a tribe¹⁴. They fought for salvation through prayers and manual work, and often were grouped into separate houses in accordance with the labor and craft performed there (tailors, mats weavers, carriage makers, shoemakers etc.).

⁷ Ibid., p. 42–43.

⁸ The Lives of the Desert Fathers. The Historia Monachorum in Aegypto / Transl. N. Russell, Intro. B. Ward. London, Oxford, 1981.

⁹ Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁰ Brown P. The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity // JRS 61 (1971), p. 80–101.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 50–51.

¹² Pachomian Koinonia. Pachomian Chronicles and Rules. Vol. I–III / Transl. A. Veilleux. Kalamazoo, 1980–1982.

¹³ Ibid., p. 141.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 142.

The monastic movement in Palestine appeared, according to tradition, in 275 when Chariton, a confessor, arrived there from Iconium. But real development reached its peak between 450 and 600¹⁵. Two major monastic institutions: *laurae* and *cenobiae* existed there. The first represented a loose community of anchorites who led a severe life in the solitude of their own cells, while the second provided communal life for a group of monks (or nuns) living together, according to rules, and seeking salvation through prayers, manual work and fasting. The monastic civilization in Palestine, probably more than elsewhere, was distinguished by a pronounced hierarchy in terms of chosen monastic practices. Not everybody, but only approved *asketes*, could practice a solitary life within *laura*. The others were directed to find abodes within cenobitic communities. *Laurites*, more than *cenobites*, performed miracles, developed healing capabilities, and acquired specific holiness, even becoming saints. Celebrated ascetics could take part in both instances, having their cells in *laura* and acting as the leaders of *cenobium*¹⁶. Their role as intermediaries between ordinary believers and God, seems to be lesser than elsewhere — they were focused on their chosen way of life and on their chosen community¹⁷. From their *Lives* we can learn that prominent ascetics were called citizens of heaven, reaching this high qualification in accordance with their posthumous performed miracles, and their endeavors in organizing monasteries as cities in the desert for godly purposes¹⁸. Great Euthymius who was a doctor of souls and citizen of heaven, taught that “the weapons of the monk are meditation, discernment, self-control, and godly obedience”. They must always “await and ponder the hour of death and... fear the threat of eternal fire and desire the glory of the kingdom of heaven”¹⁹. Indeed, the monastic culture of Palestine created numerous holy fathers and saints, and their monasteries and anchoritic abodes acquired an unprecedented position in Christian topography.

In Syrian monasticism of the early fourth and later centuries, probably more than elsewhere in the Christian world, monks were understood as the mediators between ordinary believers and God²⁰. Their lives were envisaged as *mimesis* of the heavenly life of the angels. For one Father Agrippa it was said that “one hundred and fifty men were shepherd by his hand... imitating the life in heaven”²¹. For Syrian ascetics, monasteries were “ascetic wres-

¹⁵ *Cyril of Scythopolis: The Lives of the Monks of Palestine* / Transl. R. M. Price. Annotated by J. Binns. Kalamazoo, 1991.

¹⁶ For example St. Sabas, St. Euthymius, Theodosius, etc.

¹⁷ *Cyril of Scythopolis. The Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, XXXV.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 8, 20; 84, 24; and 235, 27.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 17, 15; 18, 10.

²⁰ *Theodoret of Cyrrhus. A History of the Monks of Syria* / Transl. R. M. Price. Kalamazoo, 1985.

²¹ *Ibid.*, IV, 9.

ting-schools”, and “philosophic retreats” where “athletes of virtue” were assembled to practice, under the guidance of the holy men, great labors of the soul: “in a body the life without body”, and to achieve spiritual perfection as a tool of salvation²². Yet another aspect of their monastic practice was to assure God’s protection, through their prayers, for the people in neighboring villages and in the countryside.

In the fourth century, for Basil of Caesarea (329–379), the great Cappadocian father and supporter of cenobitic monasticism, the monastery became a place where, through conscientious work, self-denial, meekness, prayers, and Christian love, the community could achieve the ultimate cause — salvation²³. A pronounced accent in his teaching was related to caring for the sick and poor. According to Basil there are no self-sufficient people and we all rely on mutual help and understanding. Thus the communal life is more appropriate than one in isolation.

Later, in the sixth and seventh centuries, the celebrated St. John Klimax (c. 579–650) — Abbot of the Mount Sinai monastery — in his “Ladder of Divine Ascent”, (in which he explains the achievement of the ideal of Christian perfection, by climbing 30 steps), writes that “the whole monastic state consists of three specific kinds of establishment: either the retirement and solitude of a spiritual athlete, or living in silence with one or two others, or settling patiently in a community”²⁴. Although for him the second choice (group of ascetics) is suitable for many people, he does not exclude the other possibilities, including the communal life. He believed that heaven on earth is a path to achieving a *dispassion* that he designates as “the interior heaven of the mind”, and visualizes as “the celestial palace of the Heavenly King; and the many mansions as the abode within this city, and the wall of this celestial Jerusalem as the forgiveness of sins”. The monk’s ultimate goal is “to enter the bridal hall of this palace”²⁵.

In the ninth and tenth centuries isolated hermitages remained important stations on the route to heavens. They received the additional celestial attributes that were often related to their physical characteristics. For example, one of the ascetic abodes of the celebrated Byzantine saint Loukas the Younger (c. 896–953), situated high in the mountains, had a small garden, a *paradeisos*, for “it was planted with all plants and every variety of greens and vegetables”²⁶. Both symbolic and practical aspects characterized ancho-

²² Ibid., II, 9; IV, 2; XXI, 3.

²³ Wagner M. M. Saint Basil: Ascetical Works. New York, 1950.

²⁴ St. John Climacus. The Ladder of Divine Ascent / Transl. Archimandrite Lazarus Moore. Introduction M. Heppell. London, 1959, step I, 26.

²⁵ Ibid., Step 29, 14.

²⁶ The Life and Miracles of Saint Luke of Steiris / Text, Translation and Commentary by C. L. Connor and W. R. Connor. Brookline, 1994, ch. 19.1 and ch. 41.7.

ritic gardens. From St. Loukas' *Vita* we learn that his garden "was not for his own profit or benefit, but for the needs and help of those nearby, for he never sold any of this produce but eagerly gave it away whenever he encountered anyone"²⁷. The celestial connotations included his angelic life and also his garden, an anticipation of Paradise. The case of Lukas is not isolated, and monks and nuns elsewhere, attempted to recreate the divine paradise. Thus the monastery itself was, in numerous examples, metaphorically designated as a *paradeisos*, or garden²⁸. Finally, Loukas and his disciples settled in the "wilderness" on the remote mountainside near the ancient city of Steris, on the site that was eventually turned into the celebrated monastery of Hosios Loukas. The church of St. Barbara, mentioned in his *Vita*, may be the oldest foundation on the site²⁹. The monastery became, after his posthumous miracles, the center of a healing cult and a pilgrimage destination.

The *Life* of Saint Nikon *Metanoieite* (c. 930–1000) confirms that in the tenth century the monastery remained a path to salvation³⁰. Dedicating his life to God through fasting, repentance, mortification of the body, and permanent prayers, Nikon wanted "to keep himself completely from concern for the body and to imitate the angelic life beyond the body"³¹. He spent twelve years in the "holy hermitage" and prepared himself to act as a mediator between ordinary believers and God³². After years of traveling he arrived in Lacedaemonia and the city of Sparta (c. 970). There "a divine vision from heaven had revealed to him (to) raise a divine church from the very foundations to the Savior and Master of all", and the monastery was built according to God's plan that "has been revealed to me in my lowliness"³³. During the building process a confirmation of divinity and relationship to the heavens was revealed as "the fiery pillar seen by night at the building site. This stretched from earth up to heaven, and the local inhabitants could see it from afar and were confirming it with very great conviction"³⁴. According to the *Vita*, the holy man also prepared his isolated anchoritic abode, most probably within or near the monastery that was known as "the holy hermitage" and together with the divine church designated as "the Holy Inn, truly a home on

²⁷ Ibid., 19.5.

²⁸ On the garden as metaphor for monastery cf. *Talbot A-M. Byzantine Monastic Horticulture: The Textual Evidence // Byzantine Garden Culture /* Eds. A. Littlewood, H. Maguire, J. Wolschke-Bulmahn. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection. Washington, D.C., 2002, p. 37–67, and esp. 64–67.

²⁹ The Life and Miracles of Saint Luke of Steiris. Ch. 59.55–58.

³⁰ The Life of Saint Nikon / Text, translation and Commentary by D. F. Sullivan. Brookline, Mass., 1987.

³¹ Ibid., 7.5–9.

³² Ibid., 11.5–40.

³³ Ibid., 35. ff.

³⁴ Ibid., 37.25–30.

earth above the earth and heavenly”³⁵. After his death, the monastery became famous for Nikon’s posthumous miracles, and pilgrims visited his “divine and holy precinct”.

Athanasios of Athos (c. 925/30–1001), founder of the Great Lavra on Mount Athos, designated the monks as “athletes and martyrs” and the monastic life as an “angelic profession”, with the final goal of reaching the kingdom of heaven where they “will enjoy the eternal blessing in Christ Jesus our Lord”³⁶. The Lavra was established, “by God’s permission”, in the remote location which is called *Melana*, on the site where Athanasios began his eremitic life on the holy mountain³⁷. From his *Life* we learn that in his monastery he gave the most prominent — central — location to the church which acted as the sleepless eye of the entirety, and was enclosed by the cells and other buildings³⁸. His monastic community combined cenobitic and solitary life, both leading to the ultimate goal — salvation. Athanasios’ original place of seclusion — his hermitage at *Melana* — achieved a double isolation from the secular world: being located on the remote, mountainous Athos peninsula, and on a site extremely difficult of access. There is yet another important aspect of this location — Athos was considered as the *holy mountain*, a specific space where solitaires, chosen by God’s will, shared their solitude and individual struggles to achieve the heavenly kingdom. Although holy mountains, as the abodes of ascetics, are known in Byzantium since the fifth century, their role became even more significant in the tenth century³⁹. Holy mountains (Auxentios, Olympos, Kyminas, Latros, Athos, etc.), as specific monastic centers, flourished in the tenth and eleventh centuries, providing the physical and spiritual environment for monastic colonies that combined both, the cenobitic and the eremitic life⁴⁰. The monks residing there, on their path to becoming the true ‘citizens of heavens’, separated physically from the *outer world* by choosing both an isolated and elevated location in an attempt to create the *inner world* that would lead to eternal salvation. Eventually, some of those holy mountains, for example Athos,

³⁵ Ibid., 38.1–4.

³⁶ Meyer P. H. Die Haupturkunden für die Geschichte der Athosklöster. Leipzig, 1894, p. 102–122; *Typikon* of Athanasios the Athonite for the Lavra Monastery / Trans. G. Dennis // Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents / Ed. J. Thomas and A. Constantini-Hero. Washington, D.C., 2000, p. 265 (hereafter: Documents).

³⁷ Vitae duae antiquae Sancti Athanasii Athonitae / Ed. J. Noret. Turnhout, 1982. Vita A, chaps. 57–59; vita B, chap. 21 (hereafter: V. Athn. Ath.).

³⁸ V. Athn. Ath., B, chap. 25.

³⁹ Talbot A-M. Les saintes montagnes à Byzance // La sacré et son inscription dans l’espace à Byzance et en Occident / Ed. M. Kaplan. Paris, 2001, p. 263–275.

⁴⁰ Cf. Morris R. Monks and laymen in Byzantium, 843–1118. Cambridge, 1995, p. 34–35; Papachryssanthou D. O Athonikos monachismos. Athens, 1992; *Idem*, Atonsko Monastvo / Revised Serbian ed. Belgrade, 2003, p. 27–48.

acquired a very important position within the earthly hierarchy of the Byzantine monastic world.

A Byzantine monk, Symeon, a mystic and saint known as the “New Theologian” (c. 949–1022), and a cenobite himself, believed that a path to salvation is open equally to hermits and cenobites, advocating the individualistic approach to reaching the Heavenly Kingdom⁴¹. At first as a monk of the celebrated Stoudious monastery, and later as a monk and *hegoumenos* of St. Mamas monastic community, Symeon believed that the true monk is “the one who is one with God” and thereby “is not longer alone, even if he lives alone or inhabits the desert or even a cave”⁴². He visualized a monastery as an isolated island that provides to the insiders (monks), separation from the outer world, and to the outsiders (ordinary people) an inaccessible realm⁴³. There in their cells they have to try to achieve, in prayer, the union with God that will fill them with divine light and “their cell is like heaven and they are the sun. And the light is in them, the never-fading divine that enlightens everyone coming into the world”⁴⁴. Thus, for Symeon a monastery represents a specific place, most suitable for individual spiritual exercise that leads to final salvation. One can, also, learn from his teaching that a certain hierarchy exists within the monastic space, and that the church, which he compares to the body of Christ born of the Virgin Mother, represents the most important element of the entirety⁴⁵. Theoleptos of Philadelphia (c. 1250–1322), was born in Nicea and began his monastic life in the neighboring monasteries, where he retired to a hermitage and devoted his life to prayer and God⁴⁶. During his monastic life he spent some time on Mount Athos, where his spiritualism intensified in teaching on the Divine Light — later to become the most known doctrine of hesychasm. As a prominent monk he became the metropolitan of Philadelphia c. 1283, and remained on that position until his death. According to his teaching, “the monastery is the chosen portion of Christ, a band of elect, a multitude dedicated to God, a company of fellow travelers in the following of Christ”. For him, the monastic community “constitutes a divine army, a sacred battle line, a battalion of the Spirit to fight off the spirits of wickedness”. He further designates the monastery as “an abode

⁴¹ Un grand mystique byzantin. Vie de Syméon le Nouveau Théologien (949 — 1022) par Nicéas Stéthatos / Edited and translated by I. Hausherr and G. Horn // OCA 12. Rome, 1928.

⁴² Hymnes II / Ed. J. Koder, J. Paramelle and L. Neyrand / SC 174. Paris, 1971, 27.18–27; *Krivocheine B. In the Light of Christ. Saint Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022)*. Crestwood, 1986, p. 150–151.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 152.

⁴⁴ Hymnes II, 27.64–67 and *Krivocheine B. In the Light of Christ*, p. 151.

⁴⁵ *Krivocheine B. In the Light of Christ*, 323 ff.

⁴⁶ Theoleptos of Philadelphia: The Monastic Discourses / Ed. and translation by Robert E. Sinkewicz. Toronto, 1992 (hereafter Mon. Disc.).

of the common life... because a varied group of monks has come together into one and the same abode to form a common habitation, life, will and purpose”⁴⁷. The physical structure of the monastic settlement had been envisaged as “a single enclosure for the cells, the same chapel for the sacred hymns, the same table for meals”⁴⁸. Like many of his predecessors, Theoleptos believed that the monks are imitating the life of Christ, and that the disciple must follow the footsteps of the master. The ultimate goal of the ascetic struggle, he believed, will reveal the original beauty of the Image and Likeness of God⁴⁹.

Gregory Palamas, theologian, hesychast, and saint (c. 1296–1359), was one of the Byzantine theologians who provided an eschatological foundation for the monastic life⁵⁰. In accordance with his teaching that a monastic contemplation will lead to the vision of the uncreated light of God — the main doctrine of hesychasm — he favored a life of contemplation whether in the monasteries or in the hermitages. He lived the monastic life in isolation on Mount Athos, at first in the *koinobion* (Great Lavra), and later in the hermitage (Glossia). The monastic life for him was a ‘prophetic ministry’, and monastic society “is better suited than any other Orthodox community to the divine nature”⁵¹. Likewise, for Palamas a monastery, as the physical abode, remained a station of the utmost importance on the route to salvation.

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Through this limited excursus into ideas about the monastery and monastic life in the Christian East, we can learn that the life of monks and nuns was understood as angelic, and that the monastic community was viewed as a heavenly population whose terrestrial life of self-denial, fasting, mortification of the body, and concentration on prayers would lead to final salvation through the open gates of heaven. The broad perception of the heavenly realm by ordinary monks, most often through unexpected visions, revealed the ‘celestial world’ as a built environment of palaces and mansions where the divinity resides. However, only a few of the most learned theologians and mystics understood the road to eternity in its metaphysical manifestation, as the ‘divine light’ that is immanent, unchanged and eternal — “God is Light” (John 1:5). According to the Byzantine texts, a ‘built’ environment was applied to both: Paradise and Hell. While the celestial court mirrored its

⁴⁷ Mon. Disc., 9. 2.

⁴⁸ Mon. Disc., 9. 5.

⁴⁹ Mon. Disc., 3. 18.

⁵⁰ Meyendorff J. A Study of Gregory Palamas. London, 1964.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 199, and note 50.

terrestrial counterpart — the imperial court — so the otherworld, very often, envisaged an image of the actual prison filled with iron bars — cells housing the souls of various sinners⁵². In this light the monastery represented a specific, terrestrially located, station for those who tried to achieve the perfection of angelic life and undertook rigorous exercise in bringing their souls to salvation. Although the monastery provided a specific environment, it seems that it did not receive in its entirety the prerogatives of the sacred space. In the collections of texts related to Byzantine church ritual and rite in general, there are no references to the foundation, dedication, consecration or some relevant rites related to the monastery space in its entirety — to the monastery settlement. However, certain buildings and structures within this settlement were identified, to a greater or lesser degree, with the celestial sphere. The most important enterprise within the monastery that received the status of the sacred spot is the monastery church, and its foundation and dedication rituals bear witness to its significance⁵³. The church was the house of God on earth. The available textual evidence does not define the status of a monastery settlement. To discover whether or not the analysis of its physical structure will prove more informative is our next step.

MONASTERY SETTLEMENT AND HEAVENLY REALM
ACCORDING TO ITS BUILT ENVIRONMENT:
EARLY DEVELOPMENTS

The spatial image of the Byzantine monastery was subject to change during its long history. The planning process was determined by various elements that neither emerged at the outset nor were equally applied within the vast monastic built environment. Whether or not a monastery was considered a sacred space from its beginning, and whether at all and in its entirety it gained this status during its long history is the question to be examined. The main monastic church was often viewed as the Christian microcosm. The holiness of the site was not inherent; it was gained through the physical imprint of God materialized in form — the church. Thus the church always had the highest status in the sacred hierarchy. Challenging the church, the saint's tomb eventually emerged as the holy spot and was incorporated into the sacred topography as the physical "witness of divinity" whose sanctity had been divinely approved (St. Euthymios, St. Theodosios, St. Sabas, St. Neophytos, etc.). Thus the church and the venerated tomb shared the status, but hierarchical primacy remained with the church. In the

⁵² Cf. *Baun J.* Middle Byzantine 'Tours of Hell': Outsider Theodicy? // *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider* / Ed. D. C. Smythe. Aldershot, 2000, p. 47–60.

⁵³ Cf. *Conybeare F. C.* *Rituale Armenorum*. Oxford, 1905, p. 1–25; *Ruggieri V.* *Consacrazione e dedicazione di chiesa, secondo il Barberianus graecus 336* // *OCP* 54 (1988), p. 79–118; *L'Eucologio Barberini gr. 336* / Ed. S. Parenti and E. Velkovska. Rome, 1995.

course of time a new feature distinguished the monastery space when the venerated saint's tomb was included within the church proper, either as an adjacent chapel (St. Athanasios' tomb is located in the northern chapel of the *katholikon* of the Great Lavra monastery at Athos), or as a specific compartment (crypt). This symbiosis of saint's tomb and House of the Lord, with a specific connotation of materialized and nonmaterial sanctity, received a very high status, justified through a proliferation of the holy relics that were housed within the church proper. They became not only significant but, also, an obligatory feature of the altar space, and the major *modus operandi* of the pilgrimage⁵⁴. At the early stage of the monastery space development, only these two elements — the church and the saint's tomb — were considered as a sacred realm, while the rest of the space with necessary buildings remained, hierarchically, an unarticulated part of the complex.

According to the revealed physical remains, the early monasteries in Egypt, dated to the fourth and fifth centuries, did not have a firm spatial organization. Although some communities lived in cenobitic monasteries of Pahomian type and others in dwellings that provided more isolation — for example the monastic settlement at Mount Nitria, the agglomeration of Kellia, and the monastic center of Scetis in Lower Egypt — the spatial concepts reflected very loose organization and did not provide the coherent planning features that articulated the entirety and have been related to celestial symbolism. It seems that in this early period both — individual *askesis* and communal life — were relevant to achieving an angelic life. The personal exercise — mortification of the flesh in imitation of the suffering of Jesus — was possible to perform in the isolation of one's cell, in a cave, and even outdoors in the wilderness of the desert or mountains.

If we look at the cenobitic Pahomian monasteries, of which the site at Deir el-Bala'izah in Upper Egypt represents an interesting example (fig. 1), we become aware that the community lived according to strict rules in various houses, organized according to the manual work that was performed in each of them, and does not reflect recognizable symbolic planning features⁵⁵. The monastery was founded by one Apa Apollo probably in the sixth or seventh century⁵⁶. On the slope of the mountainous environment a vast monastery settlement, surrounded with an enclosure wall, was built. The main

⁵⁴ Cf. *Walter C.* Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church. London, 1982, p. 158–160; *Kaplan M.* De la dépouille à la relique: formation du culte des saints à Byzance du Ve au XIIe siècle // *Les reliques: objets, cultes, symboles* / Ed. A. Bozoky, A.-M. Helvétius. Louvain, 1999, p. 19–38.

⁵⁵ On Pachomian Rules see note 12 above. On Deir el-Bala'izah monastery *Grossmann P.* Ruinen des Klosters Dair Al-Balaiza in Oberägypten // *JbAC* 36 (1993), 171–205.

⁵⁶ Rich archive of the monastery was discovered at the beginning of the 20th century. Cf. *Kahle P. E.* Bala'izah. Coptic texts from Deir el-Bala'izah in Upper Egypt, I–II. London, 1954.

monastery church was situated on the southeastern side of the complex, close to the main entrance located in the eastern enclosure. It was a three-aisled basilica with the altar space oriented towards the east and with the later added narthex situated on its western side. The plan of the settlement follows the natural characteristics of the site, slightly sloping, and evolving into a roughly trapezoidal form on its northern, eastern, and southern sides, while the irregularity of the western enclosure included natural rocks. Although the site is not archaeologically defined in its entirety, numerous buildings survived, some of them even multistoried. The vast refectory complex, composed of two elongated rectangular halls, was distant from the main church and located centrally, to the northwest of the church proper. The western mountainous hillside of the complex housed a rock-cut oratory and additional living compounds. Outside the monastery, close to the eastern gate, was a spacious guesthouse.

The above described physical structure mirrored the adopted way of life in the cenobitic monastery. Thus as a rule, every cenobitic monastery had an outer enclosure wall⁵⁷. As the Pachomian Rules did not allow individual cell dwellers within the community, the possibility of individual sanctity — the status of a saint — was reduced and controlled. The monastery settlement, as an entirety, was considered a special place where an assembly of devotees, through manual work, self-denial and permanent prayers, wanted to achieve salvation and everlasting life in Christ in the kingdom of heaven. In this light the monastery space, as a specific station on the route to heaven, was demarcated with the enclosure wall. Thus the wall designated and hierarchically elevated *the space* from *other space*, creating the first and lowest degree in the spatial hierarchy.

The cell — place of habitation, individual prayer, and spiritual exercise — represented the second degree in this hierarchy. Each cell housed at the beginning one monk, and later with the increased number of monks up to three⁵⁸. This was the ultimate place where one could achieve the highest spiritual perfection and purity on the way to salvation. The Pachomian Rules explicitly say that monks “have nothing in their cells except a mat” and their monastic clothing, shoes and “staff to go on journeys”. Further, the Rules prescribed that “no one shall eat anything in his cell”, and that “no one shall enter the cell of his neighbor without first knocking”, because the cells re-

⁵⁷ Cf. *Torp M. H.* Murs d'enceinte des monastères coptes primitifs et couvents-fortresses // *Mémoires de l'Institut de l'Égypte* 76 (1964), p. 173–200; *Popović S.* The Cross in the Circle. Monastery Architecture in Medieval Serbia. Belgrade, 1994, p. 51–82 (in Serbian); *Idem*, The Architectural Iconography of the Late Byzantine Monastery // *Canadian Institute of Balkan Studies*. Toronto, 1997, p. 4–5, and 7–10.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Pachomian Koinonia* I, 133, n. 3.

mained unlocked⁵⁹. While the rules are very determined about the austerity of the cell, they do not provide information about the wall paintings and images that possibly could visualize the path to the heavenly realm that was the ultimate goal of every monk. While Deir el-Bala'izah is not very informative in this matter, other archaeological sites provide physical evidence of the wall imagery within a cell. However, these complexes did not belong to the cenobitic Pachomian communities but anchoritic communities of the followers of St. Antony, and will be examined later. Although the Pachomian rules did not favor isolated cell-dwellers, it seems that some prominent monks received permission to retreat to cells, and even to perform a special diet there, eating only bread and salt⁶⁰. Thus 'the cell' within the Pachomian community was of crucial importance in the process of attaining salvation. According to its nature, the cell provides the physical abode and does not acquire the attribute of sacredness *per se* — as no inherent holiness existed. But if a distinguished bearer of sanctity — for example Pachomius himself or one of his prominent disciples or followers — undertook his rigorous askesis there, a certain cell could transform, after his death, into a venerated sacred space. Some of the Pachomian monks have been considered even as neo-martyrs, like one Apa Hamay from the fifth century. In his very vivid vision Apa Hamay climbed the heavens where his great predecessor Apa Pachomius and his monks reside in two celestial buildings, especially reserved for holy monks, filed with pleasant fragrances and perfume as an additional sign of the heavenly sphere⁶¹. In this light a cell represented the second important element of the cenobitic community, the enclosure wall being the first, which designated a specific space.

The third, and in this hierarchy the highest place in the cenobium, was reserved for the monastery church. Its status — the house of the Lord — remained supreme within the monastery settlement. The church always represented the sacred realm. In Deir el-Bala'izah the main monastery church is located on the isolated platform on the southeastern side of the complex, facing the main monastery entrance, and thus unequivocally represented the most important building of the entirety. In sum, a cenobitic community established three major elements in the creation of the sacred space. Each of these elements had a different role and status within the spatial hierarchy. The enclosure wall demarcated the specific space, the cell provided the path to salvation, and finally the church, where *Eucharist* was performed, represented a heaven on earth.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Pachomian Koinonia*, II, 142 (4), 161 (89), 162 (107), 163 (114).

⁶⁰ *Pachomian Koinonia*, II, 159 (79).

⁶¹ Coquin R-E. Apa Hamay martyr pachômien au Ve siècle // *Hommages à la mémoire de Serge Sauneron — 1927–1976*, II. Cairo, 1979, p. 145–163.

The numerous colonies of cell dwellers (Nitria, Sketis, Kellia, etc.), in many ways similar to the laurae of Palestine, were another type of retreat from the world practiced in Egypt. The question of 'the cell' as an anchoritic abode, was crucial to the formation of the colonies of monks who practiced the hermitic life to achieve the *bios angelikos*. Some of these communities, as in the Kellia agglomeration, even did not have a church in their vicinity and were directed to the nearest church proper in the neighborhood once or twice a week for *Eucharist*. The archaeological remains of Kellia (fig. 2), revealed more than a thousand scattered individual cell-complexes, including a few churches⁶². Thus colonies of cell dwellers, in the formative period, were apparently released from any formal planning symbolism that related their abodes to the sacred realm. In these settlements, where thousands of monks found their isolated abodes, only distinguished individuals (St. Antony, St. Epiphanius, etc.), were bearers of sanctity and only their abodes — cells — could receive the imprint of sacredness.

The cell, as a physical structure, included a broad diversity of dwellings. From a natural cave, an individual room in a larger complex, a group of related compartments surrounded with a wall, as in Kellia, a group of subterranean chambers around an open yard, reachable by stairs as in hermitages near Esna (fig. 3), to a freestanding single or even multi-storeyed building. Some of the cells established at Scetis in the Wadi en-Natrun area (founded by Macarius the Great in the fourth century, who is said to have hewn out for himself a two-chambered cell) were barrel-vaulted rooms divided into two chambers, used for prayers, sleeping and other daily activities⁶³. Other examples revealed a cell as a two-floor structure with an exterior staircase and with the oratory on the ground floor level while the anchoritic dwelling was situated on the first floor (Bawit). This type of cell resembled the Coptic tomb architecture, emphasizing the funerary character of the space⁶⁴. A real tomb-cell was discovered in a hermitage at Nag' el-Schema in Nubia. Archaeology revealed there a group of four elevated cells without a door, in which the hermit had been walled up to lead a life in complete isolation. The cell had a small hole at the ground level for necessary communication, and the hermit remains there until his death. Several layers of human humus

⁶² Kasser R. Kellia 1965: Topographie générale, mensurations et fouilles aux Qoucoûr Isâ et aux Qoucoûr el-Abîd; Mensurations aux Qoucoûr el-Izeila // Recherches Suisses d'archéologie copte 1. Geneva, 1967; *Idem*, Kellia: Topographie // Recherches Suisse d'archéologie copte 2. Geneva, 1972; *Idem et al.*, Le Site monastique des Kellia. Recherches des années 1981–83. Louvain, 1984.

⁶³ Cf. Evelyn-White H. G. The Monasteries of the Wadi 'n Natrun: Part III, The Architecture and Archaeology. New York, 1933, p. 26.

⁶⁴ Cf. Torp H. Le monastère copte de Baouît. Quelques notes d'introduction // Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia 9. Rome, 1981, p. 4–5.

were discovered in each cell⁶⁵. The function and meaning of the cell were to provide the isolated space in which a hermit could achieve the highest degree of spiritual training leading to the ultimate goal of salvation and everlasting life in the heavens. Thus the monk's death released him of the terrestrial life and symbolically represented a transition to eternity.

The interiors of some cells were painted. The earliest surviving images date to the fourth century (Kellia), and include simple crosses and various graffiti. By the sixth century decoration had become more elaborate with additional abstract designs⁶⁶. In numerous monasteries throughout Egypt, in the cells that had oratories or prayer rooms, more elaborate painted programs survived. Images of Christ, the Virgin Mary, saints and other celestial beings (for example female angels as personifications of virtues), were preferred visual subject matter⁶⁷. The goal of these images, although didactic, was to provide visual confirmation that a path to the heavens is approachable.

An interesting type of ascetic abode that appeared in Egypt was the tower-cell. As early as the fifth century numerous Egyptian monasteries included large towers that contained chapels and other rooms including cells⁶⁸. Although some of these towers were multipurpose buildings used as secure places in case of danger, others served a different purpose. An interesting example of the anchoritic settlement — a colony of cell dwellers — that developed around an ascetic tower is known as the Monastery of Epiphanius in western Thebes (fig. 4). This anchoritic settlement flourished around the late sixth century⁶⁹. The first of two ascetic towers was built over an older pagan tomb that was reused by the anchorites, including Epiphanius, and incorporated within the body of the tower. Epigraphic evidence confirmed that one of the principal features of the monastery was a "tower that was built by our fathers Apa Epiphanius and Apa Psan, and whereat I also (Jacob) labored until we finished it"⁷⁰. Archaeology did not reveal a monastic church on the site, and it is believed that hermits celebrated the *Eucharist* in the village

⁶⁵ Cf. *Lease G.* Traces of Early Egyptian Monasticism: the Faw Qibli Excavations // Occasional Papers of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 22 (1991), p. 1–12, and esp. 2–3.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Rassart-Debergh M.* La décoration peinte // Le Site monastique des Kellia. Recherches des années 1981–83. Louvain, 1984, p. 28–38; *Idem.* Les peintures // Les Kellia: Ermitages coptes en Basse-Egypte. Geneve, 1989, p. 57–77.

⁶⁷ Cf. *E. S. Bolman.* Mimesis // Metamorphosis and Representation in Coptic Monastic Cells. Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists 35 (1998), p. 65–77; *Idem.* Joining the Community of Saints: Monastic Paintings and Ascetic Practice in Early Christian Egypt // Shaping Community: The Art and Archaeology of Monasticism / Ed. S. McNally. BAR International Series 941 (2001), p. 41–56.

⁶⁸ Cf. *Walters C. C.* Monastic Archaeology in Egypt. Warminster, 1974, 86 ff.

⁶⁹ *Winlock H. E., Crum W. E.* The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes. Part I. New York, 1926.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

church in nearby Jeme⁷¹. The anchoritic tower-abode, as an elevated structure, symbolically represented a path to heaven⁷².

All the examples of various types of cells mentioned thus far confirm that diversity in building types did not reflect the purpose and meaning of this space. Each cell provided an abode for ascetic(s) who wanted to achieve, through permanent spiritual exercises, final salvation in the Kingdom of Heaven. Thousands of these cells remained the anonymous stations to eternity of their anonymous beneficiaries. Only distinguished individuals — the bearers of sanctity — the holy men of Christianity, designated their 'holy abodes' as sacred.

The establishment of monachism in the Holy Land is dated to the beginning of the fourth century. The spatial iconography of the cenobitic monasteries and *lauras* of Palestine, despite regional differences, in general reveal certain similarities to the above analyzed patterns. The cenobitic settlements there were enclosed with an outer wall, housing in its enclosure a church, burial place, refectory, cells, and various necessary buildings of secular function; while *lauras* were loose colonies of cell dwellers with a communal church located at the core of *laura* where monks gathered on Saturdays and Sundays for *Eucharistic* services⁷³. One of the distinguishing planning features of these monasteries was the location of the founder's tomb — a saint's tomb — within the monastery settlement, most often situated in a central position⁷⁴. Thus the church and the founder's tomb represented the sacred realm of the entirety. The example of Euthymius (founder of the *laura* in Mishor Adumim) is the most telling in this matter: he was buried in his cave-cell located close to the church. Later, after transformation of the *laura* into a cenobium, the cave was remodeled into a spacious crypt in the center of the monastery⁷⁵. That the case of Euthymius is not isolated is proved by the examples from the monasteries of Choziba, Theodosius, and especially the tomb of Sabas — founder of the Great *Laura*. All these tombs received the status of sacredness and similar location within the monastery settlements.

Two planning patterns of cenobitic monasteries existed in this region: (1) on elevated, steep and rocky locations (Khirbet ed-Deir; fig. 5); and more often (2) on relatively flat locations (Martyrius; fig. 6). The characteristic of

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 128–129.

⁷² Cf. Popović S. Elevated Chapels. The Monastery Tower and Its Meaning // 19th Annual Byzantine Studies Conference, Abstract of Papers. Princeton, 1993, p. 7–8.

⁷³ Cf. Hirschfeld Y. The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period. New Haven and London, 1992; Patrich J. Sabas, Leader of Palestinian Monasticism. Washington D.C., 1995.

⁷⁴ Hirschfeld Y. The Judean Desert Monasteries, p. 130–143; *Idem*. The early Byzantine Monastery at Khirbet ed-Deir in the Judean Desert: The Excavations in 1981–1987 // Quedem 38. Jerusalem, 1999, p. 164–166.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 164.

the first type is irregularity in planning, conditioned by the steep location, and an obligatory cave-church accompanied by a burial cave, as specific sacred spots of the entirety. The second, more popular type, was an orthogonal enclosure with necessary buildings located along the enclosure wall and with the church and founder's tomb as the most important sacred spaces. Although the church and the founder's tomb represented the sacred realm, they did not occupy a freestanding position and were incorporated within the buildings along the enclosure wall. The vast central space was reserved for the interior courtyard.

The cave had a prominent role in the formation of the sacred space, whether in the cenobitic monastery or in *laura* in Palestine. It could serve as a church, a burial place or as a hermit's cell. The importance of the cave in the ritual of the church of Palestine and in Eastern Christianity was significant⁷⁶. The crucial moments of Christian history — the Nativity and Resurrection of Christ — were related to the cave. However, in Palestine the cave had a significance and long tradition that antedated Christianity. Great numbers of natural caves were used for Jewish burial, like the Cave of Macpelah⁷⁷. Thus the cave became the ultimate place for hermitic life in Palestine.

The first *laura* in the Judean Desert (the *laura* of Pharan) emerged around the cave of St. Chariton which was considered as the "Church of God", and was consecrated by Bishop Macarius of Jerusalem (314–333)⁷⁸. According to the hagiographic sources, the first cenobitic monastery, founded by Euthymius and Theoctistus in 411, was also organized, around the cave that they had discovered and sanctified by their prayers. The cave was eventually turned into a church and around the church the monastery of Theoctistus was established⁷⁹. A great number of caves used as anchoritic cells have been discovered in all the *lauras* of the Judean Dessert. As we have seen, some of the caves received their sanctity through contact with the holy men who dwelt there, while others received sacredness by the act of consecration, when they were turned into churches. Likewise, there were caves that were divinely designated as sacred places. The foundation of the

⁷⁶ Cf. Benz E. Die heilige Höhle in der alten Christenheit und in der östlich-Orthodoxen Kirche // *Eranos Jahrbuch* 22 (1953), p. 365–432; Walker P. W. L. Holy City, holy places? // Christian attitudes to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the fourth century. Oxford, 1990; Ćurčić S. // Cave and Church. An Eastern Christian hierotopical synthesis, in this volume.

⁷⁷ Cf. Wilkinson J. Visits to Jewish Tombs by Early Christians // *Akten des XII Internationalen Kongresses für christliche Archäologie*, vol. 1. Münster, 1995, p. 452–465.

⁷⁸ Cf. Di Segni L. The Life of Chariton // *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity* / Ed. V. Wimbush. Minneapolis, 1990, p. 393–421; Hirschfeld Y. Life of Chariton in the Light of Archaeological Research // *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity* / Ed. V. Wimbush. Minneapolis, 1990, p. 425–447, esp. 426–436.

⁷⁹ Cyril of Scythopolis. Life of Our Father Saint Euthymius. The Lives of the Monks of Palestine / Transl. R.M. Price, Annotated by J. Binns. Kalamazoo, 1991, p. 11.

cave-church by Sabas in his celebrated Great Laura (fig. 7), is the great example. According to his *Vita*, during the night Sabas had left his cave and suddenly “he saw resting on the earth a pillar of fire whose head reached into heaven”. Remaining in prayer on this spot until daybreak, Sabas “found a large and marvelous cave that had the shape of a church of God. On the eastern side there is an apse made by God, while he found on the north side a large chamber with the layout of a sacristy and to the south a wide entrance that admitted sufficient illumination from the rays of the sun. After setting this cave in order with divine assistance, he gave instructions for the office to take place here on Saturdays and Sundays”⁸⁰.

As the physical remains confirm, the monastic world of Palestine accepted and certainly transformed some of the previously established spatial models of the cenobitic and anchoritic communities. Both cenobitic monasteries and lauras became much smaller architectural entities than their Egyptian counterparts. While the physical size of cenobium changed, symbolic features remained constant: an outer wall as demarcation line of the specific space, a church and the saint’s tomb as the sacred realm, and finally ‘the cell’ as the place for individual *askesis* and seclusion, of which only a few that belonged to the holy men received the status of sacred. The monastic culture of Palestine gave a prominent role to ‘the cave’, which emerged as the ultimate place for worship, seclusion, and burial.

Fourth-century Syrian sources confirm the existence of both cenobitic and anchoritic communities⁸¹. It seems that anchoritic practice preceded coenobitism, and was characterized by extreme forms of mortification, self-destruction and individual isolation. Some forms of *askesis* included a withdrawal into the wilderness of the mountains where, either alone or in small groups, ascetics lived under the open sky in woods or in caves⁸². One of the extreme regional ascetic practices — standing atop tall columns — associated with Syrian stylites, designated a very important aspect of Syrian asceticism — the elevation. These elevated abodes could be columns, but also towers. From the late fifth and sixth centuries onwards, ascetic-towers became very popular abodes for seclusion. They were established as isolated structures in the vicinity of villages, or later even within cenobitic monasteries⁸³. In terms of their spatial organization, Syrian cenobitic monasteries followed the major features of communal monastic settlements elsewhere⁸⁴.

⁸⁰ Cyril of Scythopolis, (18), p. 110–111.

⁸¹ *Theodoret of Cyrrhus*. A History of the Monks of Syria / Trans. R. M. Price. Kalamazoo, Mich., 1985.

⁸² Cf. *Vööbus A.* History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient II // CSCO 196. Louvain, 1960, p. 19–35.

⁸³ Cf. *Pena I., Castellana P., Fernandez R.* Les reclus syriens. Milan, 1980.

⁸⁴ Cf. *Pena I., Castellana P., Fernandez R.* Les cénobites syriens. Milan, 1983.

The enclosure wall delimited the space while the sacred realm was marked by the main monastic church. Other structures, for example, cells and communal buildings, were concentrated around or even attached to the church proper. Each monastery had a refectory, hostel, burial crypt and chapel, and very often a tower-cell for prominent monks. A tower for seclusion was a widespread regional characteristic in Syrian monastic practice. A great number of these tower-cells, some of them isolated and others with an attached chapel, have been revealed in the region of Antioch and Apamea, a few of them dated, according to inscriptions, to the sixth century⁸⁵. These towers were rectangular in plan and multi-storeyed. The cell and the private chapel were located in the upper stories, while very often the burial space was on the ground floor, thus introducing the funerary function into a part of tower. Some towers, however, provided an additional cell on the ground floor level that housed one or more disciples. Certain towers were encircled by the enclosure wall which designated the interior courtyard. It is interesting that most of these towers were located in agricultural regions, even in the vicinity of villages, rather than in isolated deserted locations. This raises another, well established fact — that some of the Syrian anchorites communicated with nearby villagers and acted as the intermediaries between ordinary believers and their God⁸⁶.

Elevated ascetic abodes, or tower-cells were established within some monasteries. These acted as semi-cenobitic institutions that allowed the individual *askesis* within the monastery. Among numerous examples, the most interesting is Qal'at el Touffah (fig. 8)⁸⁷. The core of that monastery consisted of a three-aisled basilica with adjacent buildings, of which a multipurpose monastic hall that served also as a monastic refectory, enjoyed a prominent size and position north of the church proper. A small internal court was formed in front of the hall, separated by a wall from the rest of the monastery space. The core of the complex was surrounded by the enclosure wall, trapezoidal in plan, which formed a spacious monastery settlement. The most interesting feature was seventeen individual monastic tower-cells, distributed along the enclosure, resembling a "fortification", albeit none of these represented a military compound.

⁸⁵ Cf. *Pena I., Castellana P., Fernandez R.* Les reclus syriens, p. 47–92, 165–280.

⁸⁶ Cf. *Brown P.* Town, Village and Holy Man: the Case of Syria // *Assimilation et résistance à la culture gréco-romaine dans le monde ancien. Travaux du VIe congrès international des Études classiques.* Paris, 1976, p. 213–226; *Kaplan M.* Le saint, le village et la cité // *Les saints et leur sanctuaire à Byzance.* Paris, 1993, p. 81–94; *Kaplan M.* Les sanctuaires de Théodore de Sykéôn // *Les saints et leur sanctuaire à Byzance.* Paris, 1993, p. 65–79; *Brown P.* A Saint and His Countryside. Village, monastery and mountain in the Life of Saint Theodore of Sykeon (530–613), in this volume.

⁸⁷ Cf. *Pena I., Castellana P., Fernandez R.* Les cénobites syriens, p. 220, fig. 35.

The spatial iconography of the Syrian cenobitic monastery settlements repeats the established model in which the enclosure wall designated the specific space, while the sacred realm was reserved for the church and for the abode — often a tower-cell — of the prominent monk — holy man. Outside the monastery, on elevated spots in the dramatic wilderness of the mountains in a cave, on an isolated rock, atop a column or in a tower-cell, anchorites exercised self-denial and extreme mortification with the ultimate goal of achieving salvation and reaching the heavenly realm. Nonetheless, only a few received the divine message on their path to salvation and became holy men. Their abodes of seclusion, frequently chosen by God's will, received the status of sacredness and often became the core around which a monastery grew⁸⁸.

Yet on the whole, over the vast territory of eastern Christendom, the physical image of cenobitic monasteries and of anchoritic abodes from the fourth to the seventh centuries confirms that, although their inhabitants practiced an angelic life, the settlement itself established limited participation in the celestial realm. Only 'the church' and 'the cell' of the holy monk were considered sacred places. The remaining built structures within these settlements or situated outside in the wilderness, reflected the adopted way of life and demonstrated a great variety of regional architectural styles and functional solutions, all of them practical in nature (kitchen, bakery, workshops, storages, infirmary, cistern, hostel, etc.), but none related to heavenly realm.

THE MONASTERIES OF THE SAINTS: LATER DEVELOPMENTS

In the late ninth and the tenth century, the monastery settlement emerged as symbiosis of cenobitic and lauritic practices. Naturally, the physical structure followed the new tendencies in the Byzantine monastic world after Iconoclasm (843)⁸⁹. The ecclesiastical hierarchy, although predominantly recruited from monastic circles, was increasingly interested in controlling monastic life and monasteries. It seems that the intention of the official Church, from the end of the tenth century, was to consider the list of

⁸⁸ Cf. *Kaplan M.* Le choix du lieu saint d'après certaines sources hagiographiques byzantines // Le sacré et son inscription dans l'espace à Byzance et en Occident. Paris, 2001, p. 183–198.

⁸⁹ Cf. *Papachryssanthou D.* La vie monastique dans les campagnes byzantines du VIIIe au XIe siècle // *Byzantion* 43 (1973), p. 158–180; *Morris R.* Monks and laymen in Byzantium 843–1118. Cambridge, 1995, esp. p. 37–39; *Popović S.* The Architectural Transformation of Laura in Middle and Late Byzantium // 26 Annual Byzantine Studies Conference, Abstract of Papers. Harvard, 2000, p. 61–62; *Idem.* Koinobia or Laurai: A Question of Architectural Transformation of the Late Byzantine Monastery in the Balkans // XXe Congrès international des études byzantines. III- Communications libres. Paris, 2001, p. 339–340.

saints as a separate issue⁹⁰. Hence the proliferation of holy men, as possible candidates for the saint-list, came under surveillance. In spite of this limitation, the founders of several celebrated tenth- and eleventh-century Byzantine monasteries were considered holy men: Hosios Loukas of Steiris (896–953), St. Paul of Latros (died 955/6), St. Athanasios of Athos (c. 925/30–1001), Hosios Christodoulos of Patmos (died 1093), and Hosios Meletios (c. 1035–1105), to mention only most important. All of them founded monasteries and these monasteries could be considered as ‘the saint’s monasteries’, sharing their importance with the significance that their founders achieved in Byzantine Christendom. A common physical feature of these monasteries was that they were established around or in the vicinity of the ascetic abodes of their founders as combined settlements of cenobites and laurites. Since these cells were located in places suitable for seclusion, the eventual monasteries were established in remote rural locations, albeit not very far from main roads⁹¹. However, these rural monasteries were not the only type of monastic foundations in Byzantium. The proliferation of private monasteries, primarily located in the urban environment of the Empire, characterized middle- and late-Byzantine developments⁹².

The transformation of the Byzantine monastery into a combined cenobium-laura model in the tenth century was a gradual process⁹³. One of the prominent monastic centers that provides an interesting example of this transformation was Mt. Latros, located northeast of Miletos. The celebrated St. Paul of Latros established in the tenth century a combined monastic community of cenobites and laurites in the monastery of Stylos⁹⁴. According to his *Vita* the monastery gradually emerged around the anchoritic abode of Paul. He inhabited a cave at the rock pinnacle — Stylos — soon followed by the great number of disciples who assembled there living in their own cells⁹⁵. The physical remains revealed a large monastery complex (fig. 9). It con-

⁹⁰ Cf. *Magdalino P.* The Byzantine Holy Man in the Twelfth Century // *The Byzantine Saint*, 2 ed. New York, 2001, p. 51–66, and esp. 61; *Mango C.* Saints // *The Byzantines* / Ed. G. Cavallo. Chicago and London, 1997, p. 255–280.

⁹¹ On monastery location cf. *Popović S.* The Cross in the Circle, p. 67–71; *Talbot A.-M.* Founder’s choices: monastery site selection in Byzantium (forthcoming).

⁹² Cf. *Thomas J. P.* Private Religious Foundations in the Byzantine Empire. Washington D.C., 1987.

⁹³ See note 89 above.

⁹⁴ About Mt. Latros cf. *Wiegand T.* Der Latmos. Berlin, 1913; *Vokotopoulos P. A.* Latros // *EEBS* 35 (1966–1967), p. 69–106; *Kirby A. and Mercangöz Z.* The monasteries of Mt. Latros and their architectural development // *Work and worship at the Theotokos Evergetis* / Eds. M. Mullett and A. Kirby, Belfast Byzantine texts and translations, 6.2. Belfast, 1997, p. 51–77.

⁹⁵ *Delehaye H.* Vita S. Pauli Iunioris in Monte Latro // *AB* 11 (1892), p. 5–74, 136–182, esp. 115; and in *Wiegand T.* Milet, 3.1. Berlin, 1913, p. 105–157.

sisted of an enclosed area which had at its west side a group of buildings — church, vast refectory, storage chambers, and probably residential buildings — while the individual cells were scattered within the laura enclosure. It is possible to recognize two spatial entities within the complex. The first larger space, situated in the western part of the complex, is designated by a continuous encircling wall occasionally interrupted by rocky peaks, which are also included as a part of the enclosure. The second, smaller, predominantly rocky space on the eastern side served as a separate unit. The internal division between these spaces was marked by a masonry wall combined with a steep rocky environment. The western part, which in general features resembles a monastery enclosure, acted as the cenobitic core of the laura. The freestanding, main monastic church, was situated there and the vast ‘T’ — shaped refectory was located on the southeastern side. Additional chapels were built on the northern and southeastern sides of the church. The residential and storage buildings, few of which were freestanding were probably built along the encircling walls. Some remnants survive on the western and southwestern sides of the main monastic church. The smaller eastern enclosure housed individual monastic cells, including the cave-abode of the founder on the southeastern side⁹⁶. Given the division of the relevant space into two entities different in size, we may also assume that the cenobitic core, being larger and better organized, had a very prominent, if not the major, role in this community. On the other hand, cell-dwellers or anchorites, though fewer in number, were highly respected, even exclusive, inhabitants of this community. The question remains as to whether additional cells existed outside this walled complex. If they did, then the explanation may lie within the hierarchical division among cell-dwellers. According to the adopted way of life, the laura of Stylos represented a semi-cenobitic institution in which anchoritic practice became highly controlled.

A certain hierarchy can be distinguished in the formation of the sacred realm in the above described spatial model. The cave-cell and chapel — the abode of St. Paul — became the venerated spot and achieved sanctity through its beneficiary. The church, established within the cenobitic core of the complex, represented the sacred realm according to its nature — the house of the Lord. Which of these two spots acquired the higher degree of sanctity is not questionable — the church — being understood as the Body of Christ according to St. Symeon the New Theologian⁹⁷. Paradoxically, the saint’s abode — the cave of St. Paul and his chapel — acquired the highest importance within the monastery settlement. The basic reason for such status lies in the fact that a

⁹⁶ See note 94 above.

⁹⁷ *Krivocheine B.* In the Light of Christ. Saint Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022), p. 323–335.

saint's personality unequivocally presented a more secure guidance on the route to heaven, and therefore around his cave — the *locus sanctus* — the cells of distinguished anchorites of the community were established.

After Paul's death one Symeon, who succeeded him as *hegoumenos*, enlarged the church dedicated to St. Paul and placed the saint's relics within the church proper. Thus the church with the saint's relics represented the ultimate sacred realm of the entirety. One can ask whether some other monastery buildings, and to what extent, participated in this sacred topography. As we have seen from the earliest examples, the monastery space was delineated from the other space by its enclosure, therefore the *inner* world, according to its nature, was different from the *outer* world. By the tenth century a monastery refectory had emerged as an important element of the entirety. It served as the communal dining-hall but also as a place where commemorative meals were held⁹⁸. The celebration of the Christian martyrs and saints, through a ritual meal, was a practice known from the early days of Christianity. In the course of time a monastery refectory became an important building of specific design, with an elongated hall, very often with the apse on one side, elaborately decorated with holy images among which the saints had a prominent place. In this light the monastery refectory gradually evolved into a sacred realm of the entirety, often located in the vicinity of the church as the most prominent building after the church. In the *laura* of Stylos a monumental refectory was situated to the southeastern side of the church.

The spatial model of the Stylos monastery settlement, although not yet entirely articulated and coherent in the design and planning of the buildings, represented new tendencies in shaping the monastery space in Byzantium. Crystallization of this "new" planning concept was finally realized in the late tenth and through the eleventh century. A paradigmatic example of this development is represented by another saint's monastery — the Great Laura of Athanasios of Athos.

It seems that anchoritic life on Mount Athos began in the eighth century⁹⁹. At the end of the tenth century (963), St. Athanasios of Athos founded the Great Laura as a combined cenobium-laura community with the number of anchoritic cells limited to five¹⁰⁰. These cells were located outside the cenobitic enclosure, but completely dependent on the monastery¹⁰¹. Athanasios further prescribed that each cell-dweller could house only one disciple within the *kellia*, and that the total number of cells could not be changed

⁹⁸ Cf. Popović S. The Trapeza in Cenobitic Monasteries: Architectural and Spiritual Contexts // DOP 52 (1998), p. 281–303.

⁹⁹ Papachryssanthou D. Atonsko Monastvo, p. 22–25.

¹⁰⁰ As in note 36 above and: Documents, (37), p. 260.

¹⁰¹ Zivojinovic M. Svetogorske kelije i pirogovci u srednjem veku. Belgrade, 1972.

without his permission. If a cell-dweller died, his cell would remain uninhabited until Athanasios' decision about a replacement. Some of these original independent cells remained, as individual institutions, after the foundation of the Great Laura and were confirmed by the tenth-century *typikon* for the confederation of Athonite monasteries issued by John I Tzimiskes¹⁰². From the tenth century onwards, the newly formed monasteries on Mount Athos followed the regulations and the life prescribed by Athanasios and later confirmed by the *typikon* of Tzimiskes.

The planning pattern of the Great Laura complex (fig. 10), included a rectangular walled cenobitic core established on the site where, as mentioned earlier, Athanasios' original cell had been located¹⁰³. Both the main monastic church — *katholikon* — and the communal refectory — *trapeza* — were centrally located as freestanding buildings positioned along the same axial line oriented east-west. Various monastery buildings were attached along the enclosure wall, leaving the dominant position to the church and the refectory in the middle. The main entrance to the monastery was located within the enclosure on its western side. This model was generally accepted on Mount Athos, and beyond. The oldest monastic foundations of Athos, those of Vatopedi, Iveron and others, followed the same planning pattern. In addition to the above described model, one of the distinguishing features of the Athonite built environment were the monastic towers. Whether located within the enclosure wall or erected as isolated structures in the vicinity of the respective monasteries, their presence goes back to the beginnings of Athonite monasticism. Recent analysis of the function and meaning of the monastic towers — *pyrgoi* — revealed that in addition to their practical function as secure places in case of danger, they also served as the seclusion towers of prominent monks, often founders of the monasteries.¹⁰⁴ The anchoritic cell and the chapel were usually located in the top storey, metaphorically representing a path to heaven.

The planning pattern and architectural design of the Athonite monasteries opens another question — the codification of the monastery layout. By the eleventh century the Byzantine monastery had become codified in terms of its spatial disposition¹⁰⁵. Whether the Mount Athos monastery plan was a

¹⁰² Documents 1, p. 235–242.

¹⁰³ About the original plan of the Great Laura and location of the Athanasios's cell see: *Theocharides P.* Oi Byzantinoi periboloi ton monon Vatopediou kai Megistes Lavras // To Agion Oros chthes, semera, avrio. Thessalonike, 1996, p. 105–118.

¹⁰⁴ As in note 72 above and *Popović S.* Pyrgos in the Late Byzantine Monastic Context // Le Monastere de Zica. Recueil des Travaux / Ed. G. Subotic. Kraljevo, 2000, p. 95–107.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *Popović S.* Are typika sources for architecture? The case of the monasteries of the Theotokos Evergatis, Chilandari and Studenica // Work and worship at the Theotokos Evergetis / Eds. M. Mullett and A. Kirby // Belfast Byzantine texts and translations, 6.2. Belfast, 1997, p. 266–284.

turning point or not is difficult to say, because of the significant archaeological lacuna in investigation of the eight-tenth-century monastic foundations in Asia Minor. Be that as it may, the monastery planning pattern became standardized after the tenth century. Its main features included an enclosure wall that designated the prevailingly orthogonal plan of the settlement; the main monastery entrance which was located prevailingly within the western enclosure — ideally facing the main church portal; the main monastery church that was centrally situated as a freestanding building oriented towards the east, leaving the vast empty space around it for ritual processions; the refectory which was positioned in the immediate vicinity of the church, either as a freestanding building or attached to the enclosure wall; the kitchen that was situated close to the refectory; and monastic cells that were usually located on the upper stories of the continual line of buildings attached along the encircling wall, while storages and workshops were located on the ground floor¹⁰⁶. Virtually, this model could be applied on any of the cenobitic monasteries of Byzantine provenance after the eleventh century. However, another question of major interest remains: how these standardized planning objectives were related to the creation of the sacred realm and Christian symbolism of the monastery.

The designation of the specific place, as pointed out earlier, was achieved by the encircling wall. The question remains whether the interior space was considered, in its entirety, as a part of the sacred realm. One can assume that a monastery settlement represented a *special entirety*, aiming to provide the appropriate environment for achieving the *bios angelikos*, although there is no evidence of the existence of any foundation ritual related to the entirety. For understanding the nature of the monastery enclosure, it is important to acknowledge that the outer wall was not originally built to provide a military defense (although in certain circumstances it received a fortification character), but to designate the *other* space¹⁰⁷. In that light, a monastery settlement achieved the status of *otherness*, albeit not of sacredness.

The main monastery entrance — the spot of transition — was strictly controlled. Numerous monastic rules, hagiographic sources and *typika*, mentioned the gate keeper¹⁰⁸. The symbolic nature of the monastery gate developed in the course of time. The holy image, the visual fact of dedication, was placed in the lunette above the main entrance. Although the architectural

¹⁰⁶ Popović S. The Architectural Iconography of the Late Byzantine Monastery, *passim*; *Idem*. Shaping a Monastery Settlement in the Late Byzantine Balkans // *Shaping Community: The Art and Archaeology of Monasticism* / Ed. S. McNally. BAR International Series 941 (2001), p. 129–146.

¹⁰⁷ Popović S. The Architectural Iconography, p. 6–10.

¹⁰⁸ For example: Pachomian Koinonia II, (Pr. 1), p. 145; Rule of Athanasios the Athonite for the Lavra Monastery // *Documents* 1, (36), p. 228.

design of the gate varied (arched passage, single tower, twin tower, etc.), its prophylactic meaning was emphasized by the placement of crosses over the gate and on the walls of the passage chamber leading into the monastery¹⁰⁹. Some monasteries provided one or even more chapels within the entrance tower, often dedicated to the Holy Archangels, as heavenly guardians¹¹⁰. The ideal position of the main monastery entrance, although not strictly applied, was to the west of the main monastery church, thus to provide symbolic and visual communication with the sacred building. Therefore the gate represents the passage to the *other* realm, occasionally becoming a location of consecrated space(s) if provided with chapel(s).

The main monastery church was the ultimate sacred place within the monastery. Whether situated centrally as a freestanding building (characteristic of the later developments), positioned on the side, or located on an elevated plateau (characteristic of the earlier developments), the church always had the highest position within the sacred hierarchy. Her role and ultimate status in the sacred topography were constantly confirmed through multiplication of adjacent annexes: saints' tombs, chapels dedicated to the saints, or later founders' tombs located in the narthexes.

The cell for seclusion, whether as a room, an isolated building, located in a cave, or situated in a tower, could become the recipient of sanctity through its beneficiary. Many examples confirmed that seclusion abodes of holy men, later saints, became venerated places — *locus sanctus* — around which monasteries were established, some of them even became prominent pilgrimage centers. However, great number of anonymous seclusion cells, whether decorated with the holy images or not, remained only intimate places for individual spiritual exercise and never obtained the status of sanctity.

A limited status within the sacred realm was reserved for the monastery refectory. As mentioned earlier, it served for communal commemorative meals in remembrance of Christian saints and martyrs and to celebrate the annual great feasts. The interrelation of the rituals performed in the church and continued in the refectory remain decisive in understanding the participation of this space within sacred realm.

As one can see, the physical, codified, model of the monastery was established by combination of the elements, some of them borrowed from Early Christian prototypes, and grounded in the belief that through rigorous behavior, fasting, self-denial, mortification of the flesh, and constant prayers

¹⁰⁹ About the monastery entrance see: *Orlandos A. K.* Monastiriake architektonike. Athens, 1958, p. 17–26; (*Mojsilovic*)-*Popović S.* Monastery Entrances Around the Year 1200 // *Studenica et l'art byzantin autour de l'année 1200* / Ed. V. Djuric. Belgrade, 1988, p. 153–180.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *Popović S.* The Cross in the Circle, p. 80–82.

salvation and everlasting life in Christ is possible. Further elaboration of the adopted type remained less an historical and more a regional question. An interesting, regional example of the twelfth-century monastery model, of Byzantine provenance is Studenica monastery (fig. 11). Founded (1183–1186) as the memorial foundation of the Serbian Grand Zupan Stefan Nemanja (St. Symeon), the monastery of Studenica followed the adopted model, and was established as a combined cenobium-laura settlement¹¹¹. The final shaping of the monastery took place at the beginning of the thirteenth century by Nemanja's son, the monk Sava, later canonized as St. Sava, who brought some architectural "*topoi*" from his intensive trips to the Holy Land, and applied them in Studenica¹¹². The monastery included a circular enclosure with protruding triangular spurs; the main western entrance through two semicircular towers — remodeled in the early thirteenth century into a rectangular belfry-tower with a chapel, decorated with frescoes; a single-nave church — Romanesque on the exterior and entirely Byzantine in its fresco setting — located centrally; a vast rectangular refectory built to the west of the church; and various residential and storage buildings located along the enclosure wall. Outside the cenobitic core, in the mountainous environment, the anchoritic cells were situated. As one can see, the general model was set, though regional peculiarities included a circular, instead of orthogonal enclosure, and naturally some individual architectural stylistic features related to the church and other monastery buildings. As for the symbolism of the entirety the circular stone enclosure with twelve protruding reinforcements and centrally placed church, visually mirrored the representation of the ideal abode in the heavenly realm (fig. 12).

* * *

The Byzantine monastery, from its roots in Eastern Christendom to more elaborate spatial structure in later developments, emerged into a significant and well-organized entirety with the ultimate goal to provide an appropriate environment where communal or individual spiritual exercise — *askesis* — would lead to eternal salvation. The literary and physical evidence confirms that monastic life — *bios angelikos* — offered the possibility of achieving even higher individual perfection, acknowledged by the divine imprint, of becoming a saint. But only a few were permitted to achieve sainthood — the highest rank that terrestrial beings could gain within the

¹¹¹ On the monastery settlement of Studenica: Popović S. The Cross in the Circle, p. 131–149.

¹¹² Cf. Popović S. Sabaite Influences on the Church of Medieval Serbia // The Sabaite Heritage in the Orthodox Church from the Fifth Century to the Present / Ed. J. Patrich. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 98. Leuven, 2001, p. 387–407.

celestial hierarchy. Holy men — saints — during their terrestrial life acted as intermediaries between ordinary believers and God. They also served as a source of righteousness and provided a divine inspiration for other monks on their route to achieving Christian perfection. Images of the saints were in the church, and the church was the house of the Lord — the heaven on earth, the ultimate sacred space within a monastery. But the church itself had a hierarchy, visualized through a disposition of the holy images on her walls. The saints were represented in the lower portion of the divine house, and never reached the ultimate Heaven, the most elevated spot — the dome — from where only the Savior permanently reminded of judgment and salvation. While the church always represented a sacred realm, a monastery settlement never reached this status. It provided an *otherness* for those who lived there, and symbolically represented an intermediate zone between heaven and earth. Thus a monastery in Byzantium participated, on a limited scale, in the celestial hierarchy between heaven and earth.

In conclusion, formation of the spatial iconography of the Byzantine monastery — in hierotopical context — was a creative process that developed over a protracted historical period. Although the spatial image of the monastery changed over time, determined by the development of the theological issues, some aspects of the spatial planning remained archetypal. Those included: demarcation of the specific space by the introduction of an *enclosure wall*; recognition of the *cell* as an abode for individual spiritual exercise and contemplation, often for the creation of one's vision of the heavenly realm; and finally designation of the *church-building* as the ultimate sacred spot of the entirety. These features remained as a constant (static) element of the spatial setting. A dynamic aspect of this process may be recognized in the functional and symbolic correlation of the additional elements within the built environment, and in their articulation to act as part of the designated space. For example, the *monastery entrance* — the spot of transition from ordinary to *other* space — emerged as a symbolic entity with innumerable architectural solutions. The *monastery refectory*, the place for communal meals, became a distinguished commemorative space and acted in liaison with the church-narthex. The ultimate sacred spot — *the church* — was designated in a great number of different architectural styles, and finally acquired a central, free-standing spatial position in the monastery, with the connotations of being the heaven on earth. The Byzantines did not aim to create a model of the 'ideal monastery', as do some examples from the Western medieval world. They created a symbolic and changing spatial structure — with a pronounced hierarchy of spatial sacredness — in which they wanted to achieve the ideal of Christian perfection, and to reach the kingdom of heaven.

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ВИЗАНТИЙСКИЙ МОНАСТЫРЬ:
ЕГО ПРОСТРАНСТВЕННАЯ ИКОНОГРАФИЯ
И ПРОБЛЕМА САКРАЛЬНОГО СТАТУСА

Византийское восприятие небесного мира в категориях мира «тварного» выражалось в образе города. Если говорить более точно, в христианской небесной и земной иерархии особое место занимали Иерусалим и Константинополь: земной Иерусалим сопоставлялся с Иерусалимом небесным, а Константинополь был объявлен Новым Иерусалимом после перемещения в него реликвий Истинного креста. Но в христианской сакральной топографии значение и важность Святой земли и ее «уникального города» оставались недостижимыми, и поэтому Константинополь довольствовался своей «второстепенной» ролью земного подражателя, но никогда не достигал статуса «небесного». Такова роль «*города*» в контексте небесной топографии.

Но если вспомнить образ небесного двора в Византии, станет ясно, что императорский дворец в Константинополе понимался и представлялся как отражение двора небесного, места пребывания Господа. Поэтому «*дворец*» был тесно связан с византийской идеей императорской власти как установленной от Бога.

Каким было в сакральной иерархии место «*монастыря*»? Насколько нам известно, монастырь, как это ни удивительно, никогда не помещался в сферу божественного и всегда понимался как место перехода, путь в рай. С другой стороны, главная монастырская церковь часто понималась как христианский микрокосм. Святость места не наследовалась, а достигалась посредством реального присутствия Божия, запечатленного в форме церкви. Таким образом, в сакральной иерархии церковь всегда занимала высшую ступень. Вскоре, однако, на такую же позицию стала претендовать гробница святого: святое место, включенное в сакральную топографию как реальный «свидетель божественного», чья святость была чудесно подтверждена (святых Саввы, Евфимия, Неофита и т. п.). Так, церковь и почитаемая могила обладали одинаковым статусом, но в иерархии первенство оставалось за церковью. С течением времени новая черта стала определять монастырское пространство, когда могила почитаемого святого была включена в зону церкви, либо как рядом стоящая часовня, либо как специальное сооружение (склеп). Этот симбиоз могилы святого и Дома Бога, с его особой связью материального и нематериального аспектов святости, получил очень высокий статус, подтвержденный быстрым ростом числа святых реликвий, хранившихся в собственно церкви. Они стали не только важными, но и необходимыми частями алтарного пространства, а также основ-

ным *modus operandi* паломничества. На ранних стадиях создания пространства монастыря только эти два элемента — церковь и могила святого — считались относящимися к миру сакрального, а пространство всех прочих построек оставалось неопределенным.

Постепенно, к средневизантийскому периоду, сложилась система пространственной иконографии монастыря. В пространственной иерархии церковь и находящиеся рядом часовни были определены как область максимальной святости, лучше всего воплощаемая в виде отдельно стоящего здания, центр полноты и единства, отражающий небесные сферы. Часто святое место отделялось от второстепенных построек, которым в сакральной топографии отводилось менее значимое пространство.

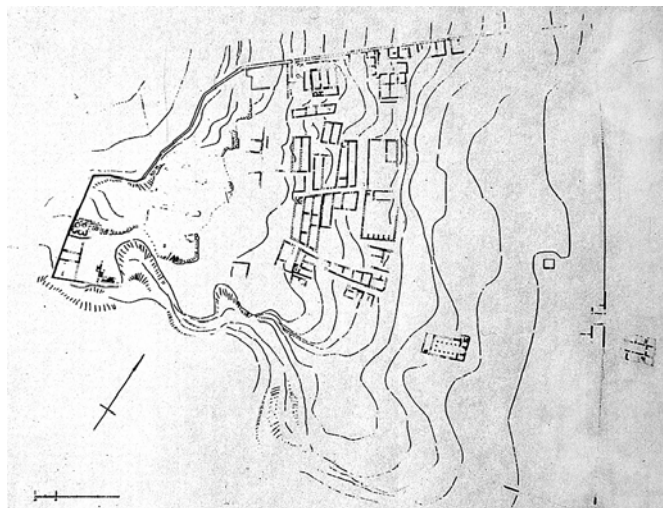
Несмотря на то, что жилые помещения для монахов в целом имели более низкий статус, чем здание церкви, некоторые их черты могут быть соотнесены с миром божественного. Ограда монастыря и вход в него (оформленный как отдельная башня, проходное помещение или даже расположенный между башнями) играли важную роль и обладали в пространственной иконографии комплекса особой значимостью. Это была не просто материальная защита общины, а «святая роща» для современников и граница между мирским и сакральным пространствами для монахов. На ее особую значимость указывал образ святого-покровителя, всегда изображавшегося над главными воротами или в надвратном храме, часто помещавшемся над проходом.

Монастырская трапезная, в идеале располагавшаяся напротив главного входа в церковь, хоть и находилась на более низкой ступени в пространственной иерархии, выполняла важную функцию — была местом ежедневных трапез в память о христианских святых и мучениках и, в первую очередь, в память «Господа нашего, сделавшего это спасение возможным».

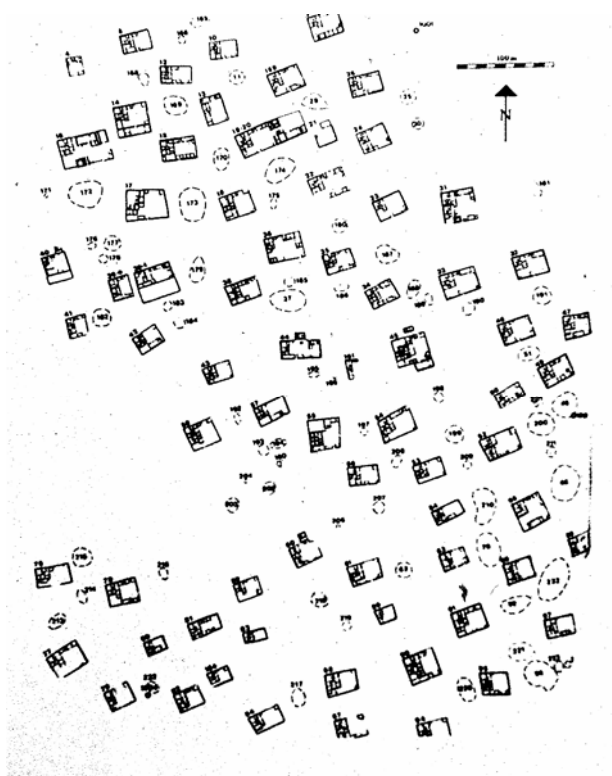
Еще одним зданием, особо связанным с монастырским сообществом, была башня. Помимо практических функций, у нее было еще одно назначение — она часто служила убежищем монахам-подвижникам и воспринималась как место уединения с кельей и часовней на последнем этаже. Башня была путем к спасению, ступенью Небесной лестницы.

Важная особенность планировки средневизантийского монастыря — отдельно стоящая главная церковь в центре прямоугольного пространства — оставалась одной из основных и в более поздних структурах. В X веке Афанасий Афонский понимал ее как «недреманное око». В сербском монастыре XII в. Студенице круглая каменная ограда с 12 выступающими контрфорсами и помещенной в центр церковью образно отражала представление об идеальном оке, обращенном в небесное пространство.

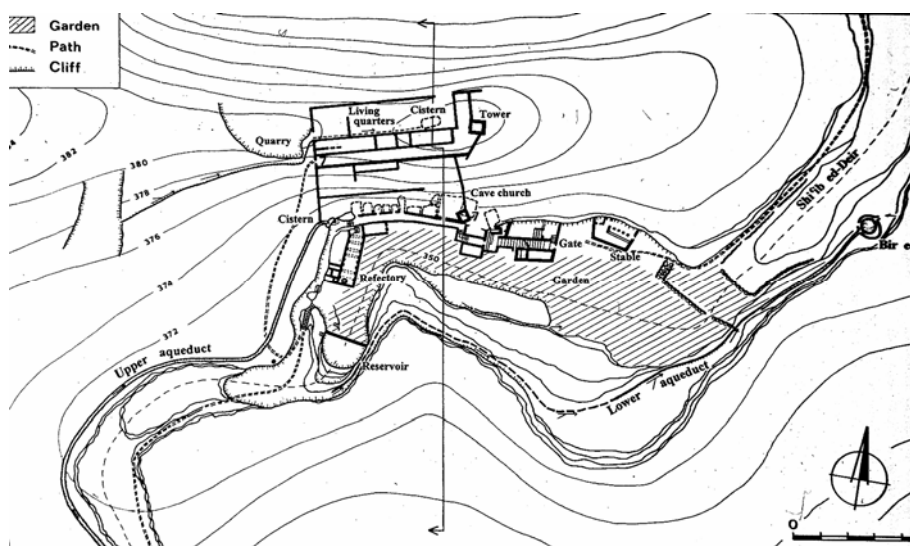
Таким образом, монастырь в Византии занимал в священной иерархии промежуточное место между небесами и землей.



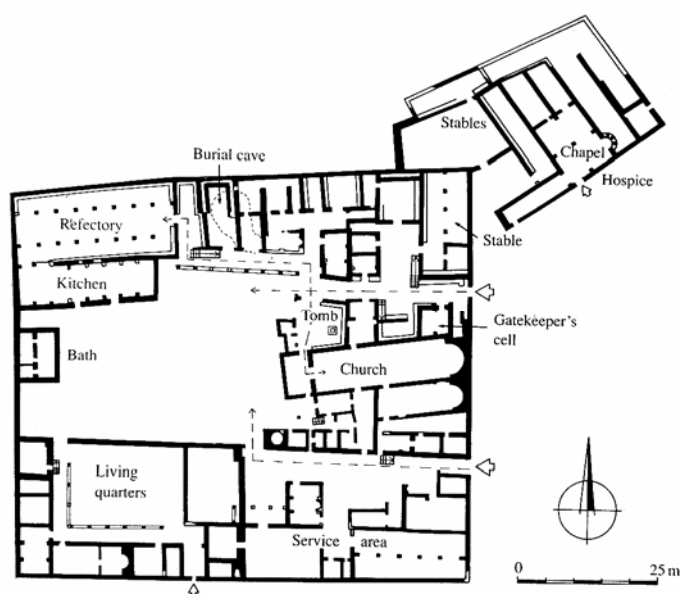
1. Deir el-Bala' izah Monastery, Egypt (after P. Grossmann)



2. Kellia Agglomeration of Qusur el — 'Izeila, Egypt (after R. Kasser et al.)



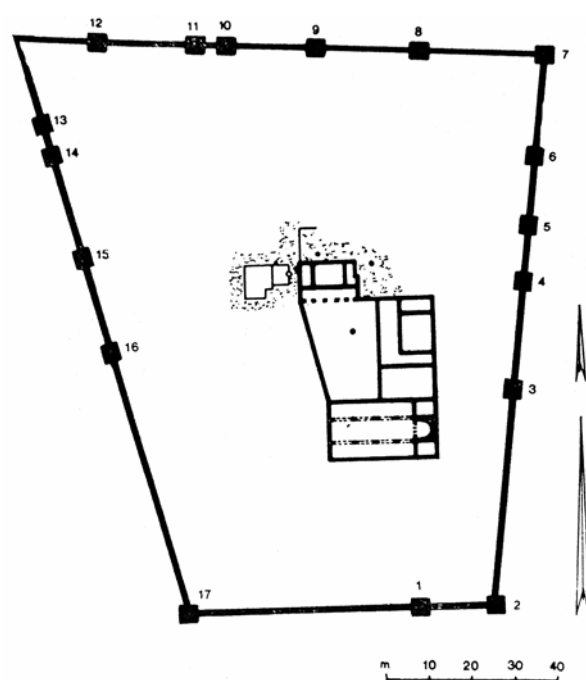
5. Khirbet ed-Deir Monastery, The Judean Desert (after Y. Hirschfeld)



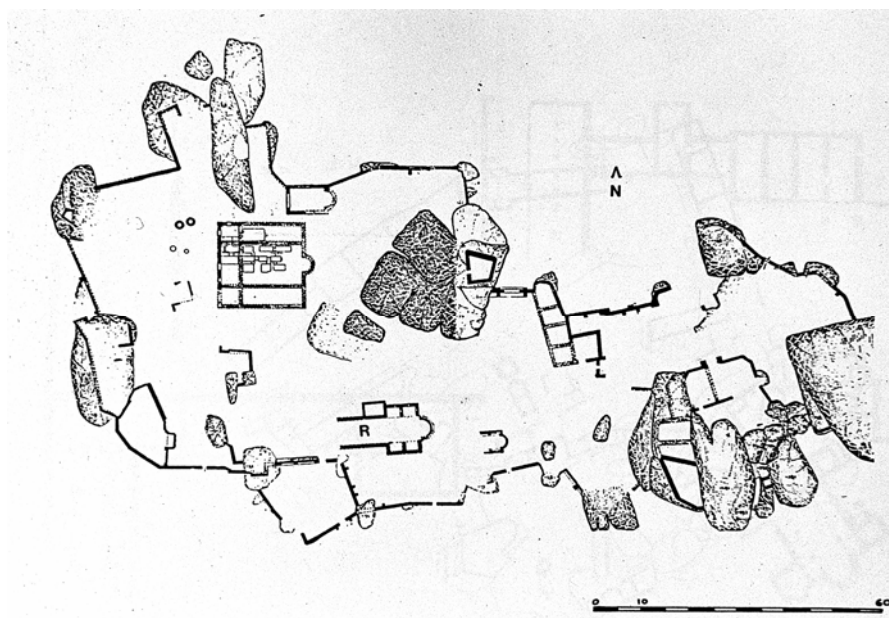
6. The Monastery of Martyrius, The Judean Desert (after Y. Hirschfeld)



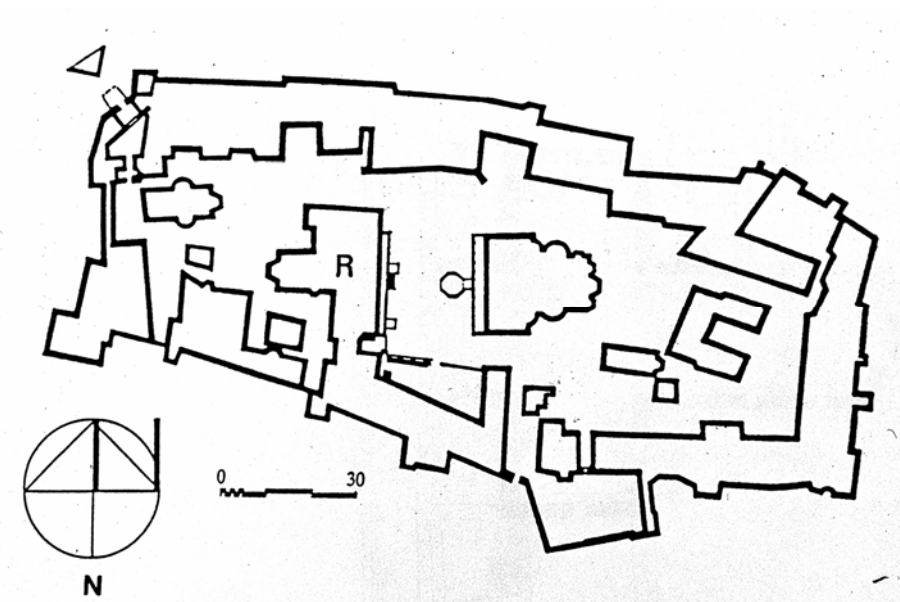
7. Great Laura (St. Sabas monastery), The Judean Desert (photo S. Popović)



8. Qal' at el Touffah Monastery, Syria (after I. Pena et al.)



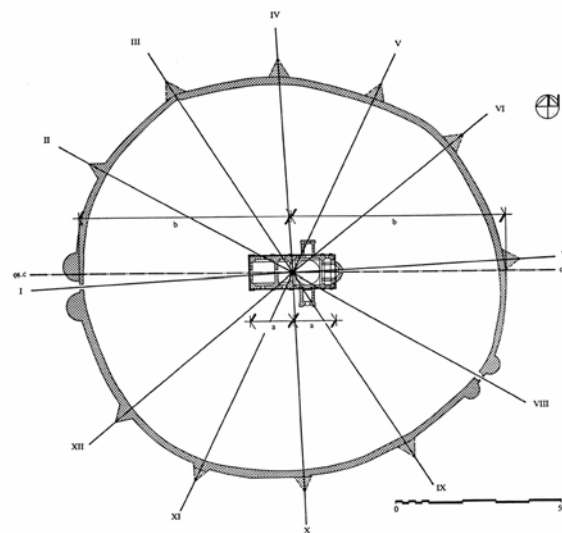
9. The Monastery of Stylos, Mt. Latros (after T. Wiegand)



10. Great Laura, Mt. Athos (after P. Mylonas)



11. Studenica Monastery, Serbia (courtesy of The Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia, Belgrade)



12. Studenica Monastery — spatial symbolism (after S. Popović)