

Pure Soul in Unclean body: Some Remarks on Christian-Islamic Divergences

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Abstract

In this paper we analyse, on a transcendental and material basis, religious admonitions and priorities pertaining to the soul's purity and the body's (un)cleanness as constituents of dominant or challenging world views and behavioural systems. They are approached as a complex and historically determined social topic rather than as a simply cultural one. Explanations are also attempted regarding the differing Christian and Islamic soul-body perceptions and the syncretistic practices in the late-medieval Balkans, when Christian (Hesychasm) and Islamic mystic versions were widely diffused. Finally, we trace the religious imprint of relevant corporeal stances in today societies.

Keywords

Hesychasm – Islam – soul – body – religious corporeality – baths – Byzantium – Bulgaria – Serbia

As the title implies, our investigation emphasizes two religious seemingly divergent dimensions of the human being, the transcendental and the material. This structural ideological division, underlying the platonic idea of *mimesis*, adjusted to the neoplatonic Christian context, defines norms and commands, social and gender behavioural practices (everyday work and feasts, earthly/after-death life worldviews) which, manifested corporeally, acquire an uncontested materiality, while at the same time the social choices are naturalized according to the sophisticated analysis by Pierre Bourdieu. Actually, while exploring traditional societies, he views body as a “living-memory vademecum”, a “storehouse where the most precious values are preserved”, thus, showing the dialectic relationship of the “natural-social space”. As he aptly writes,

"A knowledge corporeally acquired is not something that one gets [...] but something that one is".¹

The 'body-storehouse' idea illustrated by the monotheistic worldview and wording was variously elaborated: the 'embodiment', for example, of moral traditions is depicted in Christian representations in a remarkable manner, as has been pointed out by the art historian Henry Maguire. By focusing on "the role that society had in the design of icons", he convincingly attempted to decipher the post-iconoclastic "logic of the saints' image in Byzantium". Especially, by indicating a twofold representation of the saints' "corporality" or "immateriality" according to the case, he highlighted the church's control over the flock by "monitoring lay access to supernatural power more effectively, both through the theology of the icon and through the forms of the icons themselves".² Thus, Maguire's approach illustrated how icons, during the tenth-century reconstruction of the state and church, sought to portray the Christian doctrine's moral/transcendental dimensions, that is, the emotional/spiritual 'knowledge acquired bodily' by their coeval beholders.

Departing from such an assumption, one can understand the dominance of the transcendental thought-pattern in medieval religion and politics as well as the long endurance of fundamental body-soul attitudes. Our remarks – tentative as they are – derive from a comparative research of Christian-Islamic stances towards body and soul, based on evidence from the Balkans. Comparison is indicated rather as a methodological imperative, since Oriental orthodoxy is viewed as a system of dogmas and practices formulated through incessant interior struggles and escalating antagonism between Byzantium, western Christianity (Rome and western states), the neighbouring Serbian and Bulgarian states established in the late twelfth century, and Arab/Ottoman Islam. Especially, body care was debated in association with the soul's purity, i.e. in transcendental rather than hygienic terms. Henceforth, the issue of how often Christians are allowed to bathe and whether to enjoy it like their Roman predecessors, grew into a complex moral matter. It was argued that priority

¹ "Ce qui est appris par corps n'est pas quelque chose que l'on a, comme un savoir que l'on peut tenir devant soi, mais quelque chose que l'on est. Cela se voit particulièrement dans les sociétés sans écriture où le savoir hérité ne peut survivre qu'à l'état incorporé. Jamais détaché du corps qui le porte, il ne peut être restitué qu'au prix d'une sorte de gymnastique destinée à l'évoquer, *mimesis* qui, Platon le notait déjà, implique un investissement total et une profonde identification émotionnelle: comme l'observe E.A. Havelock à qui cette analyse est empruntée", Bourdieu, Pierre, *Le sens pratique* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1980), p. 123 n. 12, pp. 120 ff.

² Maguire, Henry, *The Icons of their Bodies: Saints and their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 145.

should be given to the soul's purity over the body's care – thus, uncleanness/carelessness (ἀλousία/ἀκηδία) was laid down as a principle of Christian life.

By way of introduction, it is not without value to mention the major religious postulates linked to relative perceptions and stances, for example the position of man and his relation with God-creator, the burden of original sin and the pristine existence of Evil and finally man's consequent moral deficiency and free will. Briefly, our topic highlights the core of the theocratic worldview and of the social function of church, a state mechanism working to impose order through moral discipline. So, what is aimed at here is to comprehend the positive Islamic stances towards body care/cleanness in comparison with Christianity's two-pole discourse on the culmination of the soul's purity and the body's disdain, a perception excusing – if not pushing towards – uncleanness. Anyhow, *corporeal* practices, originating from whatever kind of religiosity, become a complex issue mainly when they are imposed as dominant patterns. Here, it is intended to trace such attitudes/perceptions as expressions of a historical background formulated accordingly by both states and churches as constituent of political ideologies or as inter-state argumentation. Thus, a search for clear-cut differences/norms (through a positivist approach) or a uni-dimensional representation from a cultural viewpoint (according to the post-Cold war approach) will be avoided.³ Conversely, it will be suggested that such patterns can be better understood as naturalized stances impregnated with multiple meanings resulting from osmosis processes or discriminative policies whose effects are visible until the nineteenth-century capitalist development. Lastly, as for the availability of evidence, a rich literature on factual material – medieval baths (λουτρά/βαλανεία), stances towards cleanness/bathing (λούτρισμα), aroma preferences, and so on – in the frame either of the post-seventh-century Oriental Christian states' lack of public care for baths/sanitation or the prime concern of the Arabic states for public baths, springs and gardens is of large benefit to us.⁴ Yet, instead of a

3 The post-Cold War relativist approach seems incompatible with the comparative one: Dakhli, Jocelyne, "La culture nébuleuse' ou l'Islam à l'épreuve de la comparaison", *Annales HSS*, 56 (2001), p. 198.

4 Karpozilos, Apostolos, "Περὶ αποπάτων, βόθρων και υπονόμων στο Βυζάντιο" [On privies, ditches and sewers in Byzantium], in *Η Καθημερινή ζωή στο Βυζάντιο* [Everyday life in Byzantium] (Athens: Center for Byzantine Studies, 1989), pp. 335–52. Cf. Sezgin, Fuat, Carl Ehrig-Eggert, Eckhard Neubauer and Fariid Ibn Faghul, *Water-Lifting Devices in the Islamic World: Texts and Studies* (Frankfurt am Main: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, 2001), Koukoules, Phaidon, "Τα λουτρά κατά τους βυζαντινούς χρόνους" [Baths during the Byzantine period], *Επετηρίς Εταιρείας Βυζαντινών Σπουδών*, 11(1935), 192–238.

mere accumulation of such huge evidence, a combinational analysis of debated theological issues on body care/disdain and of political ideologies variously dominating in time and societies will be attempted.

A Historical Background

To form a general idea of the Ancient and the Roman Oriental background underlying both religions' stances towards body and soul, one has to take into consideration the deep changes occurring during the so-called Late Antiquity period, extending from the *stoic* Marcus Aurelius' reign (161–180) to the end of that of Justinian (527–565). The most significant changes regarding the matter at hand coincide with the transformation of the empire into democracy; Peter Brown, who conceived this period's peculiarity shows in which way, during “the slow evolution of a public community form to another, of the ancient city towards the Christian Ecclesia”, the perception of body and of self changed within the mutating social frames.⁵ Additionally, contrary to the established dichotomy between Pagans and Christians, modern historiography made clear that both did share the same moral set of values – albeit with a considerable difference regarding the belief in after-death-life reward/ punishment. The rise of a religious consciousness and of a moral rather than humanitarian stance, including anchorite-piety types, is worth pointing out here along with communal-life forms and family-coherence model.⁶ Since Constantine the Great embraced Christianity as the empire's political ideology (313), the church as state mechanism through its spiritual instruction and charity institutions exercised an increasing control on the formation of thought patterns – especially, regarding the soul's purity and the body's demise.⁷ In the wake of the

5 Brown, Peter, “Antiquité tardive”, in *Histoire de la vie privée*, vol. I. *De l'empire romain à l'an mil*, ed. Veyne, Paul (Paris: Seuil, 1985), p. 226.

6 Veyne, Paul, “L'empire romain”, in *Histoire de la vie privée*, I, p. 59, on the progressive humanisation of the slavery due to the influence of stoicism: “cette humanisation prétendue fut en réalité une moralisation, due non pas à quelque tendance ‘naturelle’ de l'humanité civilisée”. Cf. Axtell, Harold L., *The Deification of Abstract Ideas in Roman Literature and Inscriptions* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1987). Such a process of pagan consciousness formation is also traceable in Late Antiquity novels, for example, Heliodori *Aethiopica*.

7 Initially, morality was identified with prudery rather than humanitarian behaviour, Veyne, “L'empire romain”, p. 77. On the role of St Augustine (354–430) in transforming the church into a control mechanism through the “invention of lust” linked with original sin, see Brown, “Antiquité tardive”, p. 298.

division of the Roman empire (395), complex historical evolutions led both parts towards the same line, albeit with increasing divergences.

Later on, the turbulent icon-worship strife (726–787, 815–843) widened further the gap between Byzantium and Rome; on the other side, the politically antagonistic Oriental Arab-Persian-Byzantine worlds, by drawing arguments from the gnostic, neoplatonic and monophysite background, formulated a discourse leading to increasing osmosis. Even though Islam insisted “on the humanity of God’s last messenger” and despite the fact that “the ‘dualists’ were subjected at all times in the Islamic and the Christian areas and the irresistible attraction which their ideology continued to exert throughout the Middle Ages”, beliefs and stances significantly linked with the matter under discussion.⁸ Not accidentally, after Iconophile Orthodoxy settled, the dominance of the state-church “consonance” model paved the path for the elaboration and dominance of the divine-image painting and hagiography,⁹ not irrelevant to the tenth-century overall political-ideological re-arrangement of the Byzantine state – a phenomenon noticed also in the Islamic world for different reasons.¹⁰

In the meantime, the eastern-Mediterranean balance changed drastically by the mid-seventh century, i.e. after the Arab conquests of the eastern Byzantine provinces and the Mediterranean regions and islands lasting until the tenth century. Similarly, significant demographic changes occurred from the seventh century in the Balkan peninsula too. In its north-eastern corner, the nomads (proto)Bulgarians under Asparuh and a military elite crossed the Danube delta and succeeded in penetrating and settling up to the Haemos/Balkan mountains; there, soon the dispersed “sclaviniai” of cultivator Slavs were integrated into the (proto)Bulgarian state. Searching to play a major role in the area and to homogenize the traditional aristocracy and the linguistically and culturally different Slav subjects, Boris (852–889/90) imposed Christianity, with the aim of structuring his state in accordance with the Prince-Patriarch

8 von Grunebaum, Gustave E., “Byzantine Iconoclasm and the influence of the Islamic environment”, in von Grunebaum, Gustave E. *Islam and Medieval Hellenism: Social and Cultural Perspectives* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1976), pp. 8–9.

9 Patlagean, Évelyne, “Les États d’Europe centrale et Byzance ou l’oscillation des confins”, *Revue historique*, 616 (2000), p. 831. Høgel, Christian, *Symeon Metaphrastes: Rewriting and Canonization* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2002). See also n. 2.

10 Lemerle, Paul, *Le premier humanisme byzantin. Notes et remarques sur enseignement et culture à Byzance des origines au Xe siècle* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1971); von Grunebaum, Gustave E., “Parallelism, convergence, and influence in the relations of Arab and Byzantine philosophy, literature, and piety”, in *Islam and Medieval Hellenism*, p. 100, “rassemblement of spiritual forces”.

Byzantine model already referred to. His significant decision transformed Bulgaria into the apple of discord between Constantinople and Rome and changed the region's geopolitical balance by stirring up broader antagonism, since the Frankish church was also involved in the Bulgarian evangelization process. Finally, Boris's adherence to Constantinople and his acceptance to be baptized by the emperor Michael in 865, consolidated his power but did not bring about his desired ecclesiastical independence. So, the following year he turned to Rome to elucidate the matter, inquiring also into admonitions on various matters. In fact, in contrast to the patriarch Photios's reply, a reply full of theological syllogisms, the pope informed Boris about various matters of everyday life – the practices of body care/cleanness included.

Major historical changes in the Balkans, from the sixth to the ninth centuries, the so-called Dark-age period (Avar-Slav invasions, decimation, famine and extended demographic displacements – not to mention the lack of favourable conditions for body's care/cleanness) required, no less urgently, a similar demand for evangelization. The Christian message, diffused initially through the cities visited by the apostle Paul himself on his road to Rome, had been wiped out throughout the Peninsula – as evidenced by the term "Scythian desert" – and Christianity faded after the decline, damage and decimation of many ancient cities. Similarly, the nexus of bishoprics, founded in the largest Adriatic and Black Sea ports and in the cities and castles across the Danube, fell apart after the flight of numerous bishops with their flocks seeking shelter on islands or inside walled cities. Moreover, the establishment for military reasons of the pagan nomad Serbs and Croats in the 620s, on Herakleios's instigation according to Constantine Porphyrogenitus,¹¹ and of Asia Minor and Syriac Monophysite, Nestorian groups, changed the Peninsula's demographic and cultural background. When landholder agriculture was increasingly combined with cattle-breeding economy and transhumance, a wider space was left for the survival of pagan cults/feasts (prohibited constantly by the church even after the eleventh century) and, after their merging with local custom and beliefs, for the emergence of particular religious practices, such as Bogomilism, a Balkan version of mitigated dualist.¹² However, this demographic

11 *Constantine Porphyrogenitus De Administrando Imperio*, Greek text Gy. Moravcsik, English translation R. J. H. Jenkins (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1967) New Revised Edition, §31–32 and *Constantine Porphyrogenitus De Administrando Imperio Commentary*, F. Dvornik et al., vol. II (London: University of London, 1962), pp. 129 ff.

12 On the rise of a "common Mediterranean agricultural civilization" of "in-field" agriculture/"out-field" stock-farming, Toubert, Pierre, "Βυζάντιο και μεσογειακός γεωργικός πολιτισμός"

mosaic should not be viewed as a flock deficient of faith and discipline, that is, in the way the twin centres of power – state and church – regarded it, but as a mixture organized in patriarchal families or in clans rather preserving old seasonal customs than formal religious feasts and struggling against natural phenomena, malnutrition, child mortality and so on. Its presence in late medieval cities and plains increasingly took on at least two forms: either plundering and begging or being involved in public affairs. The consensus-relations nexus, mainly with the church and often in rivalry with the state which developed, created an open space either for the exploitation and manipulation of these groups by ever-powerful elites or for leading a life of deviance.

The available evidence highlighting the obedience to the early-Christian body-soul postulates, which varied according to time and social status, or emphasising the divergence between discourse and practice,¹³ will not be analysed here. Instead, our comparative investigation, based on evidence dated after the westerners' and Ottomans' involvement in the Levant, will focus on an integrative process coeval with the landholder system organization¹⁴ and with the church's interference in the lay sphere and control over the flock's bodies and souls.

Eastern and Western Christendom (Trinitarian Monotheism)

During the late Antiquity period, the organization of the Christian city centre, the public baths and the *agora* lost their significant and public position, while private ones were being constructed instead. Hence, not only did the number of the former decrease but public baths, included in the *basilicas* and constructed by the Eastern and the Western churches, were confined to charitable institutions or were aimed at the treatment of diseases and less at the body's cleanness.¹⁵ According to the decision of the church, women had no access to

[Byzantium and Mediterranean agricultural world], in *Οικονομική Ιστορία του Βυζαντίου από τον 7^ο έως τον 15^ο αιώνα* [Economic History of Byzantium from the Seventh to the Fifteenth Centuries], ed. Angeliki Laiou, vol. I (Athens: Cultural Foundation of the National Bank, 2006), pp. 579–80 and 583.

13 See, for example, Patlagean, Évelyne, "Byzance Xe-XIe siècle", in *Histoire de la vie privée*, I, p. 562, mentions that twelfth-century satirical poems, composed in the capital, represented abbots enjoying a luxurious life – weekly bath included – contrary to monks living in poverty and misery.

14 Patlagean, Évelyne, *Un Moyen Âge grec Byzance IVe-XIe siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2007), pp. 8 ff., 54 ff.

15 Orlandos, Anastasios, *Μοναστηριακή αρχιτεκτονική* [Monastery Architecture] (Athens: Archaeological Society, 1958, 2nd ed.), pp. 95–9; Squatriti, Paolo, *Water and Society in Early*

the higher grades of the priesthood, while their entrance into sanctuary during menses was prohibited as being unclean – at least in the Orient.¹⁶ It is therefore not accidental that instructions for water's hygienic/sanitary use decreased, whilst springs providing believers with "hagiasma" abounded and prayers against disease were composed,¹⁷ attributed to water's transcendental and moral dimensions. This was not a novelty; the starting point is indicated in the apostle Paul's teaching laying the foundation stone of Christianity. Among the main Christian tenets body care is referred to in his epistles exclusively from this viewpoint.

In particular, addressing the Romans, Paul perceives the believers as "one body in Christ". Recalling a well-known metaphor for the human-body clothing, namely Jesus's representation as "light", he exhorts them to wear "the weapons of light" attire, even "to wear Jesus Christ himself", emphasizing, in the same phrase, the flesh-satisfaction abstinence: "Do not care for the flesh to fulfil its desires". In an epistle addressed to the Ephesians, he wrote "No one has ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes it and cherishes it, like the Senior does the church, because we are members of his own body from his flesh and bones".¹⁸ Further, the Christian flock is represented as a temple (ναός) and collective body (ἐκκλησία, ancient political term), resembling Jesus who feeds and treats his community and, in turn, the community's members derive from his own members (flesh and bones). These two assumptions show clearly that the body's materiality (creature of Creation's seventh day) is irreconcilable with transcendence, at least before the eleventh century.

Medieval Italy, AD 400–1000 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 44–65; Ruche, Michel, "Haut Moyen Age occidental", in *Histoire de la vie privée*, I, p. 506.

¹⁶ Veyne, "L'empire romain", pp. 37–8, 48.

¹⁷ See, for instance, Jacob, André, "Note sur la prière *Κτίστα τῶν ὑδάτων* de l'Euchologe Barberini", *Byzantion*, 56 (1986), 139–47; Loukatos, Demetris, "Η θρακική λατρεία των αγιασμάτων" [The Thracian cult of hagiasmata], in *Πρακτικά Β' Συμποσίου Λαογραφίας του Βορειοελλαδικού χώρου* [Proceedings of the II Symposium of the Northern-Greek-Space Folklore] (Thessaloniki, 1976), pp. 229–41. Zachariadou, Elizabeth, *Δέκα Τουρκικά έγγραφα για την Μεγάλη Εκκλησία (1483–1567)* [Ten Turkish Documents Concerning the Great Church (1483–1567)] (Athens: National Institute of Research, 1996), p. 105, n. 31. Cf. Balivet, Michel, "Eglise et clercs byzantins dans l'épopée turque", in Balivet, Michel, *Mélanges byzantins, seldjoukides et ottomans* (Istanbul: Isis, 2005), p. 84, "Ayazma".

¹⁸ *Πρός Ρωμαίους* [To the Romans] 12.5. *Πρός Εφεσίους* [To the Ephesians], 5.29. Christianity adopted the Old Testament's moral constraints, for example, shame for the naked body, *Genesis* 3.21; 9.23; Magoulas, Harry J., "Andronikos I Komnenos: a Greek tragedy", *Βυζαντινά Σύμμεικτα*, 21 (2011), p. 108; Veyne, "L'empire romain", p. 59: departing from *stoic* stances, Christians and Pagans in a certain period both said "do not make love unless for

In reality, Paul's message initiating transcendence as the prevailing constituent of the world view could not be taken for granted, centuries afterwards, at least in the north Balkan hinterland, a region out of Constantinopolitan control for a long time. How, then, was the Christian perception or stance towards body to be transmitted by Rome and Constantinople to the Bulgarian neophyte Prince Boris?¹⁹ As for the pope Nicholas's instructions (866) on body cleanness, a precious piece of evidence illustrates both the Roman moral perception debated in the late sixth century, as well as the divergent influences exercised in ninth-century Balkan politics. As far as the *Responsae* allow us to understand, Boris had already submitted the same questions to both centres, since Nicholas emphatically distances himself from the Greeks' admonitions. In particular, he expresses his objection to the prescription of Wednesday and Friday as improper days for bathing. By referring to the past, he informs Boris that the cleanness issue was long ago faultily interpreted by "perverse individuals", i.e. Irish missionaries in England²⁰ – a patent disapproval of the Greeks. Thus, he presents himself as the defender of an old and solid Roman tradition on bathing all seven days a week, applied also in England by the missionary Benedictine monk Augustine (the future archbishop of Canterbury, d. 604) according to Pope Gregory's preaching. Nicholas's reply to Boris goes as follows:

You also mention something which the Greeks assert, namely that you should by no means bathe on Wednesday or Friday of the week. In contrast, as our response on this matter we offer you who have asked for our counsel, something from a certain Sunday sermon which the blessed Pope Gregory and the apostle of the English nation is read to have preached to the Romans. He says: It has come to my attention that certain perverse individuals have preached to you that no one should wash on Sunday. And indeed, if someone wishes to bathe out of a desire for luxury or pleasure, we do not grant that this should occur on any day: but if it is

acquiring children", a philosophical teaching which was to be imposed as a rule by an all-mighty church.

- 19 Oikonomou, Eleni, "Η κουλτούρα του λουτρού στους μεσαιωνικούς Σλάβους" [Bath-culture in medieval Slavs], *Synthesis Electronic Review of Theology Department, Aristotle University of Thessalonica*, 3 (2014), forthcoming; Albena, M. and S. Gorianova, "Bit i comfort na *Homo byzantinus*: Želana i realna žiznena sreda v bălgarskite zemi (IX–XIV v.)", in *Homo byzantinus?*, ed. Albena Milanova, Veselina Vachkova and Tsvetlin Stepanov (Sofia: Voенno izdatelstvo, 2009), pp. 152–76.
- 20 Irish missionaries, who went to England prior to 597, were substituted by Pope Gregory [*Register* XIII.3] with missionaries acting under his own auspices, Oikonomou, "Η κουλτούρα".

done out of bodily necessity, we do not forbid this even on Sunday. For truly it is written: "No one has ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes it and cherishes it" [Paul's epistle to the Ephesians 5,29] and again: "Do not care for the flesh to fulfil its desires" [epistle to the Romans 13,14]. Hence the one who forbids care for the flesh [motivated by] desires, in fact grants it in cases of necessity. For, if it is a sin to wash on Sundays, the face should not be washed on this day either. But if washing is conceded on this part of the body, why is it denied to the whole body, if necessity demands it? Thus, what this most excellent bishop and most gentle teacher granted on Sunday – a day more venerable than the other days – we do not deny on Wednesday or Friday, though we preserve this distinction, that, if someone wishes to bath out of a desire for luxury or pleasure, we do not allow this to occur on any day, but if it is done because of bodily necessity, we prohibit this on neither Wednesday nor Friday (§ VI).²¹

Unlike the Byzantines, Nicholas, by allowing bathing every day, conveys a less formalist practice regarding body cleanness. Yet, although both centres' positions do not completely coincide, they share a common principle prevailing in Christian life generally: bathing should not aim at the "soul's luxury and body's satisfaction".

Let us turn now to the Islamic assumptions and postulates regarding the issue under consideration.

Islam (Abrahamitic Monotheism)

Generally speaking, within the Islamic monotheism, one creator God (not Trinitarian) revelation, prophesy and everything relative to stances on life, gender, sex, and therefore the body's care and cleanness, is initially perceived mainly in a historical – non anagogical – manner while belief is uttered through "action".²² In classical Islam it is of great significance that God

21 *Responsa Nicolai ad consulta Bulgarorum*, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 119, 982, English translation: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsalls/basis/866nicholas-bulgar.html>; Obolensky, Dimitri, *The Byzantine Commonwealth Eastern Europe 500–1453* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), pp. 83 ff.; Smedovski, T., "The Latin Mission in Bulgaria in 866–70", *Palaeobulgarica*, 2 (1978), 39–51. On Sunday prescription of the function of baths, see Koukoules, "Τὰ λουτρά", p. 216.

22 Rodinson, Maxime, *Μωάμεθ* [Muhammad] (Herakleio: University editions of Crete, 2006), p. 149.

does not “lower Adam’s rank”,²³ while the absence of the burden of original sin²⁴ alleviates Muslims from the pristine-sinfulness stigma; that is why they need no sacraments (baptism and unction, either for purification and salvation or for belief confirmation respectively). Circumcision – a term not mentioned in the Qu’ran – is a kind of Islamic *passage* and, the very practice included in “the whole idea of ablution and cleanliness”.²⁵ Although drawn from the same Oriental background, paradise is conceived differently. From the Islamic viewpoint it is a place where believers can find further enjoyment after death,²⁶ while from the Christian one it is a place for awaiting Christ’s advent – the eschatological end. Also, the abyss extends between Islamic belief and unbelief – the sin *par excellence* equating ignorance and rebellion – while in Christianity it is to be found between God and the Christian subject who wilfully rejects God’s orders.²⁷ Evil – created by God jointly with Good – is perceived as “pollution”, property attributed also to any unbeliever. Thus both, the Evil and the unbeliever, equate to pollution/“impurity” implying “separation from God” – hence the aversion to wine, pig, and excrement. More generally, overall emphasis is laid on the very idea of purity, a property characterizing body and mind inextricably, according to a saying “purity of body is a prerequisite for

23 von Grunebaum, Gustave E., “Observations on the Muslim concept of evil”, in *Islam and Medieval Hellenism*, pp. 117–34; Soltes, Ori Z., *Our Sacred Signs. How Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Art Draw from the Same Source* (Cambridge, MA.: Westview Press, 2005), pp. 67–8.

24 von Grunebaum, Gustave E., “The sources of Islamic civilization”, in *Islam and Medieval Hellenism*, p. 11: “the Muslim was a man without original sin, in need of guidance but not on reparation. He also was used from time immemorial to see and value himself in the context of a collective, his clan and his tribe”. By contrast, the hesychast version of orthodoxy overemphasized the sin-burden by representing it as burden of the “grosser and mortal flesh” (“παχυτέρα καὶ θνητὴ σὰρξ”), resulting in man-God distance/oblivion and in immorality (“[...] οὐκ ἔχοντας τὴν πρέπουσαν μνήμην τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ εἰς ἀσελγείας ἐμπεσόντας [...]”), John Kantakouzenos, *Contra sectam Mahometicam*, *Patrologia Graeca* [hereafter *P.G.*] vol. CI, IV, col. 548.

25 Sahas, Daniel J., *John of Damascus on Islam: The “Heresy of the Ismaelites”* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), pp. 93–4, 64. On the syncretistic practice baptism before circumcision, see n. 56.

26 This idea was challenged by Christian intellectuals, see, for example, Kantakouzenos, *Contra sectam*, col. 545 (see n. 30), 549 “ὁ δὲ Μωάμεθ διδάσκει ἀναφανδὸν ὅτι ἡ παρὰ Θεοῦ τοῖς δικαίοις ἀνταπόδοσις λουτρὰ καὶ γυναῖκες πολλαὶ [...]”, 621.

27 von Grunebaum, Gustave E., “Islam: experience of the Holy and concept of man”, in *Islam and Medieval Hellenism*, p. 9: “[...] the transfer to the human universe transposed the choice between the good and the bad as such to one between obedience and disobedience. Sin became rebellion. [...], the Koran does not suggest a structural vision of evil. Unbelief [...] is the unpardonable sin”; idem, “Parallelism”, pp. 101 f.; von Grunebaum, “The sources of Islamic civilization”, pp. 9 f., n. 42.

purity of mind".²⁸ Lastly, unbelief-ignorance-pollution crime, even though ensuing from an individual action, in reality has a collective effect since the community's (*umma*) relationship with the supernatural was considered as disturbed.²⁹ Thus, the Arabic argument concerning Christians' filthiness has to be explained according to the Islamic code's pollution-unbeliever correlation while its structural significance should not be viewed outside the mounting Christian-Islamic antagonism. In any case, since Christians' filthiness resulted, more or less, from the embodiment of the aforementioned practices professed by both churches (i.e. soul's enhancement/body's depreciation and inculcation of pleasure), its articulation as a fundamental point of the Islamic argumentation cannot be regarded as an historically arbitrary prejudice.

Particular extracts from the Qur'an illustrate the practice of bathing and water's significance in after-death life:

4 The Women "43. O you who believe, do not perform your service of prayer when you are intoxicated until you are sure of what you are saying, nor when in a state of seminal pollution, until you have taken a bath, except when you are travelling. But in case you are ill or are travelling, or you have relieved yourself of nature's call, or cohabited with a woman, and cannot find water, then take wholesome dust and pass it over your face and hands: God is benign and forgiving.[...] 49. Have you not seen the people who call themselves pure? Yet God purifies whom he pleases, and none shall be wronged even the breadth of a thread.[...] 55. Then some of them believed in it, and some turned away from it; yet sufficient is Hell, the flaming Fire! 56. And those who disbelieve Our revelations shall be cast into Hell; and when their skin is burnt up and singed, We shall give them a new coat that they may go on tasting the agony of punishment, for God is all-mighty and all-wise. 57. But those who believe and do good deeds We shall admit into gardens with streams of running water, where they will abide for ever, with fairest of companions and coolest of shades".

28 Hillenbrand, Carole, *The Crusades Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 284–5.

29 von Grunebaum, "Observations on the Muslim concept of evil", in *Islam and Medieval Hellenism*, pp. 119, 126–7: "Sin must be repented and atoned for, the damaged relationship healed and restored. Thus blasphemy is sin, but the feeling that the touch of the unbeliever impinges on the sacrality of the Holy Book is an apprehension of pollution. So is the sentiment that the presence of the unbeliever will desecrate a sanctuary".

5 The Feast “6. O believers, when you stand up for the service of prayer wash your face and hands up to elbows, and also wipe your heads, and wash your feet up to the ankles. If you are in a state of seminal pollution, then bathe and purify yourself well. But in case you are ill or are traveling, or you have satisfied the call of nature, or have slept with a woman, and you cannot find water, then take wholesome dust and pass it over your face and your hands, for God does not wish to impose any hardship on you. He wishes to purify you, and grace you with His favours in full so that you may be grateful”.³⁰

Be that as it may, during the period of Byzantine-Arab military confrontation – coinciding also with inter-religious dialogue – monks and theologians would structure their apologetic/polemic reasoning according to the aforementioned Paulian moral code. The body cleanness/enjoyment issue would be commented on in Christian transcendental rather than in hygienic terms and would be developed, correlated with polygamy, as a key-argument of Muslims’ moral deficiency and impurity *par excellence*.³¹ Thus from early on, as is well-known, they would ascribe to the “heretic” Muslims and personally to Muhammad the attribute of unlimited lustful and sodomite sexual practices.³² Mainly, during the first confrontation period, besides their theological objections – more discussed in modern literature – Christians would go so far as to coin at least two defamatory neologisms focusing on the Arabs’ concern for cleanliness. Firstly, the transformation of the commonplace term originating from the *ethnonym* “Hagarens” (i.e. the descendants of Hagar, the slave girl, mother by Abraham of Ishmael), meaning impure people, into the even more negatively *Magarens* (from μαγαρίζω = make dirty, desecrate)/*Magarismos*

30 *Al-Qur’ān A Contemporary Translation* by Ahmed Ali (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 80–1, 98. *Το Ἱερό Κοράνιο*, trans. G. I. Pentakis (Athens: Ap.A. Charisis, 1995), 2nd ed., p. 68: purification by “dust” is called “Tayamum”.

31 Kantakouzenos, *Contra sectam*, col. 545 “Πρό γάρ τῆς παραβάσεως καὶ ἀμαρτίας τοῦ Ἀδὰμ ποῦ λουτρά; [...] ποῦ αἱ πολλαὶ γυναῖκες;” and col. 621; Trapp, Erich (ed.), *Manuel II. Palaiologos Dialoge mit einem “Perser”* (Vienna: Böhlau in Komm., 1966), p. 34: “[...] ὡς εὐθὺς μετὰ τὴν πράξιν ἐπὶ βαλανεῖα τρέχειν”.

32 Griffith, Sidney Harrison, “The Prophet Muhammad, his Scripture and his Message according to the Christian apologies in Arabic and Syriac from the first Abbasid century”, in Griffith, Sidney Harrison, *Arabic Christianity in the Monasteries of Ninth-century Palestine* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1992), pp. 131 f.; Ducellier, Alain, *Chrétiens d’Orient et Islam au Moyen Age VIIe–XVe siècle* (Paris: Armand Collin/Masson, 1996), pp. 147–9; Kantakouzenos, *Contra sectam*, col. 692.

(= Hagarens' dirty religion).³³ Secondly, the ninth-century Syriac monk Bartholomaios of Edessa³⁴ (who continued the anti-Islam polemic of John of Damascus and Theodore Abu-Qurra), by averting the practice of the body's and the soul's cleaning with water and soap, (first ?) coined the composed noun "arse-washer", as an attempt to persuade his imaginative Muslim interlocutor that the Qu'ran contains errors and not God-like admonitions. Obsessed with the tantalizing idea of the eschatological end and departing from the twofold Christian thought-pattern (transcendental-material), he tries to explain that the soul needs nothing but purification and illumination (a transcendental process to be accomplished awaiting the Judgment day) and that earthy/mortal body's filth is indifferent to God. Moreover, he disapproves of the diligent body-care practice as resulting from the ignorance of life's vanity and the lack of due concern for the soul's purification. Finally, he addresses a caricature-like question, extending the body's disdain to extremes: "woe to you, wretched man, on the Judgment day the pure soul is called to paradise or they say «come, arse-washer, into the paradise»?", thus coming to the conclusion: "since in three days' time after death the body is stinking and wasting, [...] what benefit has man to cleanse his bottom all the days of his life?".³⁵

Interestingly enough, the above-mentioned Christian defamatory neologisms can be contrasted with the equally humiliating Muslim counter-gaze at

33 Sahas, *John of Damascus*, pp. 120, n. 3, 70–1, 158, appendix III; Ducellier, *Chrétien*, pp. 251–2, 280, 299, 313, *Theodoros Abu Qurra Opuscula Islamica*, in Gleis, Reinhold and Adel Theodor Khoury, *Johannes Damaskenos und Theodor Abū Qurra Schriften zum Islam, Kommentierte griechisch-deutsche Textausgabe* (Würzburg: Echter, 1995), p. 90: "Μουχοῦμετ κηρύττων τὸν Μαγαρισμὸν".

34 Cf. Khoury, Adel Théodore, *Les Théologiens byzantins et Islam textes et auteurs (VIII–XIIIe s.)* (Louvain: Editions "Nauwelaerts"; Paris: Beatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1969), p. 273, early thirteenth century.

35 Todt, Klaus-Peter, *Bartholomaios von Edessa Confutatio Agareni* ("Ἐλεγχος Ἀγαρηνοῦ"), *Kommentierte griechisch-deutsche Textausgabe* (Würzburg: Echter, 1988), p. 46f. "Ὁ δὲ προφήτης σου οὕτως ἐδίδαξεν, ὅτι ὑπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος καθαρίζεται καὶ ἀπολύεται πᾶσα νόσος ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος. [...] Νῦν δὲ λέγω σοι [...] πρῶτον τὴν ψυχὴν ἀγιαῖσαι καὶ φωτίσαι, καὶ αὐτὸ τε τὸ σῶμα νίψαι μετὰ ὕδατος καὶ σαπουνίου. Οὐαὶ σοι, ἐλκεῖν, ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κρίσεως τὴν ἀγίαν ψυχὴν καλοῦσιν ἐν παραδείσῳ ἢ λέγουσιν 'ἐλθέ, πλυνόκωλε, ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ'. Ὅταν γοῦν τελευτήσῃ ὁ ἄνθρωπος καὶ ταφῇ, καὶ μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας οὐχ ὑπάρχει βρώμα καὶ σκώληξ καὶ ὀζει καὶ φθείρεται, [...] τίς ὠφέλεια τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τὸν κῶλον αὐτοῦ πλύνειν πᾶσας τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς ζωῆς αὐτοῦ; [...] Καὶ ὁ Μωϋσῆς τεσσαράκοντα ἡμέρας καὶ νύκτας ἐνήστευσεν καὶ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ὤζετο. Λαβὼν δὲ φύλλα δένδρου ἀπεσπόγγισε τὰ χεῖλη αὐτοῦ. Καὶ ὀργισθεὶς ὁ θεὸς αὐτῷ εἶπεν, 'διὰ τὴν ἐσπόγγισιν τὰ χεῖλη σου [...]. Ὑπαγε, νήστευσον ἑτέρας τεσσαράκοντα'. Κἀγὼ νῦν ἀγιασμὸν ψυχῆς τε καὶ σώματος ζητῶ. Ἐάν βρωμῇ τὸ στόμα σου, τί πρὸς με; Χοῦς ὑπάρχεις καὶ εἰς γῆν ἀπελεύσῃ"; also pp. 18, 34, 38, 40–1, 96, 48, 50, 150.

the respective Christian practices popularized through the widespread marvels literature: Suffice it to quote a few extracts from *The Arabian Nights* highlighting the Christian stances towards the food's and body's uncleanness. The relative Arabic underlying religious stances seem to be no less embedded corporeally than the Christian ones. Actually, the anonymous author(s), since he has no concern for historical explanations (i.e. the aforementioned collapse of late-Antiquity cities and the baths' integration within the built space of the church and under its control), by arguing that the Christians destroyed baths because of their fear of being seduced by the water, does provide more a rather reasonable explanation, in a religiously defined way, than "a biased portrait", as recently argued. Consequently, his opinion should be considered as containing something more than "an odorous grain of truth",³⁶ after taking into consideration both Christian churches' prohibition of any feeling of satisfaction while bathing, as analyzed above – historical evidence not taken into consideration by post-Cold War cultural researchers. From this perspective, the Arab author's opinion on water being a "temptation" for the Christians can be regarded as an accurate statement; similarly, the author(s)' correlation of the Christians' indifference towards bathing along with the symbolic/transcendental practice of *baptism* – along with *unction* – seems equally reliable. Though the actual term is not referred to, the author(s)' knowledge that it frees Christians for life from the obligation of bathing cannot be passed over unnoticed:

They eat evil-smelling, putrescent things, such as rotten cheese and game which they hang up; they never wash, for, at their birth, ugly men in black garments pour water over their heads, and this ablution, accompanied by strange gestures, frees them from all obligation of washing for the rest of their lives. That they might not be tempted by water, they destroyed the [public baths] and public fountains, building in their places shops where harlots sell a yellow liquid with foam on top, which they call drink, but which is either fermented urine or something worse.³⁷

36 Classen, Constance, David Howes and Anthony Synnott, *Aroma, The Cultural History of Smell* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 70.

37 Cited by Classen, Howes and Synnott, *Aroma*, pp. 69–70. See also, Jacob, "Note sur la prière", p. 145. As for the stinking "liquid with foam on top", this clearly refers to the water used for cleaning the altar which according to a monastic custom was used on the Passion Thursday morning for "all brothers' unction [= sprinkling]", while in the evening the same water is used for the feet's enema. As for the "yellow urine", it is to be linked with the Arabs' idea of the "yellow-faced" Byzantines and Christians generally, associated with pallor, jaundice, bile, etc.: "His blood is yellow" means 'he is a coward', Hillenbrand, *Crusades*, p. 240, n. 151.

Indeed, according to a canon, the Orthodox having sexual intercourse with a Jewish or Hagaren woman was to be punished for fornication and impious/satanic intercourse, but should not be re-baptized, even though the purity fulfilled by the baptism-sacrament was considered as removed.³⁸ Hence, the above-cited text – along with the following paradigms – shows that a) Muslims, experiencing corporeally their devotion and observance to their own religious admonitions on cleanness, targeted their criticism accurately at the equally embodied Christian admonition on the body's despising and indifference of its cleanness along with the ensuing satisfaction's prohibition, and also b) they were well aware that *baptism* was the purification ritual of paramount symbolic significance, concerning both body and soul; otherwise, how can the mounting syncretism (to which we will return) be explained?

Additionally, worthy of mention is a relevant reference drawn from the same marvels-narration (chapter *The Tale of 'Umar b. Nu'man*) regarding the material/symbolic dimensions of an Oriental Christian practice of major significance, namely the fragrant material distributed by the Patriarch of Constantinople to all bishops. Although the material is called "incense" and described as "powder" (produced from the Patriarch's, lesser Patriarchs' and priests' silken and dried excrements plus musk, amber and benzoin), it becomes evident that *myron* is in fact alluded to here, the liquid prepared at the Patriarchate by specialized perfumers (μυρεψοὶ) once a decade in Passion week in order to be used in the sacraments (baptism, unction) throughout Oriental Christendom. This ordinary symbolic practice, enhancing the Patriarch as the highest authority and centripetal religious factor, was not selected for caricature by accident. The unknown author informs us also that Christians attribute beside sacramental also therapeutic properties to this "powder" ("a salve for sore eyes and a medicine for the stomach and bowels"), thus explaining why "kings and queens and very rich" Christians use this highly

38 Theodoros Balsamon, *Αποκρίσεις* (Responses), Rhallis, G.A. and M. Potlis, *Σύνταγμα των θείων και ιερών κανόνων* (Collection of the Divine and Sacred Canons), vol. IV (Athens: 1854), p. 484 "[...]ὅς ἀπονίπτεται τὸ θεῖον καὶ ἱερὸν βάπτισμα [...]", citation included in a four-page photocopy circulated by the late K. Pitsakis while presenting his paper "The Arabs and Islam in the Commentaries of Byzantine Canonists", at the Symposium "Byzantium and the Arab world Encounter of Civilizations", Thessaloniki, December 16–18, 2011. Gonis, D.V., "Το νερό στα μυστήρια, τις ακολουθίες και τις ευχές της Ορθόδοξης εκκλησίας" [The Water in sacraments, liturgies and prayers of the Orthodox church], *Το νερό πηγή ζωής, κίνησης, καθαρισμού, Πρακτικά επιστημονικής συνάντησης, 12–14 Δεκεμβρίου 1997* [Water Source of Life, Movement, Purification, Proceedings of Scientific Meeting, December 12–14, 1997] (Athens: Museum of Greek Popular Art, 1999), p. 28: baptism is regarded as "flesh's and spirit's purification" sacrament.

priced material.³⁹ So, by representing such a polluting practice being diffused by the highest ecclesiastic and secular rulers, the Arab Muslim audience was prompted to distance themselves, out of disgust and fear, from committing the aforementioned "impurity" sin leading them to separate from God. Obviously, the author's prime concern was not merely the Christians' humiliation; similar popular stories both contributed to appeasing social Christian-Muslim antagonisms and were also aimed at deterring syncretistic trends, for example accepting baptism or Christians' medicines.

Modern literature has investigated similar Arabic traditional narrations, during the Crusades, Islam's second period of confrontation with Christianity. We have already pointed out the recurrence of the Arabic anti-polytheism/impurity discourse applied to Eastern Christians. According to the same world view, the Franks were also humiliated through imaginative and amusing bath-stories, since they were accused of filth, lack of hygiene and sexual laxity, disease and contamination. Even more than this, they were regarded as provoking the defilement of Islamic holy sites, equal to menstruating – their *ethnonym* Franks (*Ifranj* or *Firanj*) coincides with the Arabic term for syphilis (*al-ifranji*).⁴⁰ The Muslims' aforementioned emphatic rejection of the Christians' symbolic practices and body's and clothes' uncleanness clarifies not merely a sense of disgust but the fundamental idea of pollution separating the believer from God, i.e. the Islamic argument is structured on the basis of the very idea of pollution and of unbelief – both equating to Christian "polytheism" (i.e. Trinitarian monotheism). On the other hand, however, Christians' uncleanness – when practiced – clearly reveals the flock's obedience, in other words the embodiment of the church's increasingly emphasized priority of the soul's purity. Hence, before hastily viewing Latins' negative representation as one more Arabic prejudice against Christians, it is better to recall both the Western

39 Hillenbrand, *Crusades*, pp. 294, 407–8. On eleventh-century dirty monks etc. referred to in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Turkish epic poetry, Balivet, "Église", p. 83, on the ecclesiastic terminology "patrik"/"batrach" (= patriarch), "medropolit" acquiring malicious connotation: dirty, filthy, nasty, p. 87 "par les vieux prêtres pollués, par la crasse de leur visages qu'ils ne lavent pas!", pp. 95, 96 – a stance not excluding "une alliance turco-byzantine ouverte [...] parfois contre un ennemi commun, l'Occident latin ou les Mongols", p. 82.

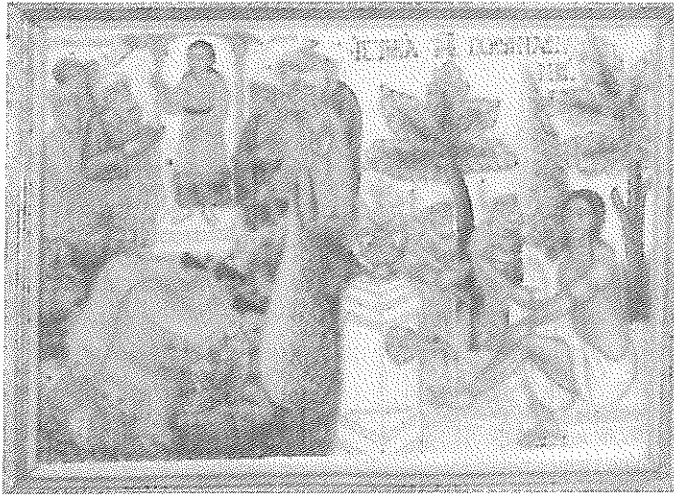
40 Hillenbrand, *Crusades*, pp. 303, 272: "They do not cleanse or bathe themselves more than once or twice a year, and then in cold water", pp. 273 ff., overview of relative sources, pp. 277–8, 295. See also, from the Westerners' viewpoint, the English and French defamatory connotations of the word "bagnio" and "bagne" (from the Italian bagno), initially meaning the prison for hostages near the bath-house in Istanbul, while in the following centuries signifying prison of the galley slaves, house of prostitution etc.: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bagnio> (April 4, 2014).

church's prohibition of any bath-satisfaction – identical with that of the Eastern Church – and the Arabs' mounting fear of impurity/unbelief, in order to comprehend why such an argument was selected to be popularized. Hence, our conceptual research tools have to be sharpened further, so that historical encounters, instead of being represented as producing proliferated identities or clashes of civilizations, may be explored as antagonistic political/religious expressions of dominant ideologies and thought patterns in constant communication and subject to mutual influence/osmosis varying according to period.

Lastly, the water-temptation motif, adjusted in a didactic narration and included in the same popular work, is also worthy of mention here. According to the *Book of Daniel* (13, 62) Joachim's wife, Susana, was calumniated by two vicious elderly people as committing adultery, while she was taking her bath in the garden pool. Although she declared her innocence, it was decided to humiliate her and sentence her to death. Yet, finally, she was saved thanks to the twelve-year-old David who proved that she was innocent. Interestingly enough, the Vetro-testamentary *Susana's story* drawn from *The Peoples' Book* was not accepted by the Jews (and later by the Protestants) as apocryphal; by contrast, Eastern and Western churches considered it authentic and diffused it widely as an admonitory story entitled *Susana's bathing* or *Susana and the Elders*, by indicating, also in its pictorial version, the bath as a perilous place especially for women – a topic also included in the nineteenth-century Orientalistic repertoire. However, the Islamic version differs slightly but in an illustrating way. The chapter entitled *The story of the Virtuous Virgin and of the Two Vicious Elderly*, included in the same popular marvels-narration *The Arabian Nights*, refers concisely to an anonymous virgin – only David is referred to by name – and is adjusted to Muslim customs, i.e. punishing adultery by stoning.⁴¹ More interesting is the second adjustment of the Arabic story. The garden instead of the pool is represented as a dangerous place, thus providing a moral admonitory story avoiding dropping any negative allusion to the bath-space.

There is no need to pursue the Christian-Islamic contrast/encounter any further. The Christian earthy-transcendental dual perception and the Islamic

41 *Χίλιες και μία νύχτες* [A Thousand and One Nights], transl. Kostas Trikoglidis (Athens: Eridanos, s.d.), vol. III, pp. 114–5; Soltes, *Our Sacred Signs*, pp. 64–5; <http://www.answers.com/topic/susanna-and-the-elders> (August 2013). On the punishment of parading around upon an ass riding backwards, see Mellinkoff, Ruth, "Riding backwards: theme of humiliation and symbol of evil", *Viator* 4 (1973), 153–76; Kalafati, K.-F. and A. Katselaki, "Έργα του Δευτερεύοντος Σιφνίου στο Βυζαντινό και Χριστιανικό Μουσείο" [The works by Defterevon Sifnios at the Byzantine and Christian Museum], *Πρακτικά Δ' Διεθνούς Σιφναϊκού Συμποσίου*, *Σίφνος* 25–28 Ιουνίου 1998 [Proceedings of the Fourth International Sifnian Symposium, Sifnos, June 25–28, 1998], vol. II (Athens: Sifnian Studies Association, 2001), pp. 257–2.



Defterevon Sifnou, "Susana's story", 1825

SOURCE: ΚΗΙΟΣ & ΠΑΡΑΔΕΙΣΟΣ ΜΕΤΑΦΟΡΑ ΚΑΙ ΗΡΑΓΜΑΤΙΚΟΤΗΤΑ (GARDEN AND PARADISE METAPHOR AND REALITY), BYZANTINE AND CHRISTIAN MUSEUM, ATHENS 2013 (CALENDAR).

one of purity-pollution – two “religious motifs [...] as a means to accede to the divine” –⁴² did not remain immutable nor were they communicated in an equally sharp way; conversely, from the eleventh century and mainly during the Ottoman ascendancy period, a syncretistic/mystic phenomenon would increasingly emerge out of the common historical background and the long osmosis process together with the mixing with new waves of oriental mystic perceptions and beliefs.

It is worth investigating how the mystic Christian pattern was empowered – along with Christian-Islamic syncretism – and remained dominant, whilst the respective Islamic one, was, in the end, considered as deviant.

Late-Medieval Emergence of the Christian and Islamic Mystic Orthodoxies

The aforementioned Christian-Islamic paradigms illustrate a high degree of mutual inter-religious knowledge on beliefs and sacraments as well as on body

⁴² “The history of the three religions could and, I believe, should be written as a history of the religious motifs that are being articulated and lived through as a means to accede to the divine. From this point of view, the most striking aspect [...] is the complementary selectivity of the three units in relation to each other and, within each one of them, of their orthodox and ‘heretical’ versions”, von Grunebaum, “Byzantine Iconoclasm”, pp. 7–8.

care/disdain and the soul's transcendence, albeit debated with exaggerations or distortions. Similarly, though their underlying fundamental codes differ, as shown already, the political/ideological prevalence of religion in both societies (see p. 2) provide an insight into the matter under discussion. What was debated in various *genres* of discourse (polemic theology, popular literature and so on), in parallel with the seventh- to the tenth-century warlike confrontation, was the key doctrinal issue of Christ's incarnation. Yet, after war was "tamed",⁴³ commercial exchanges intensified and alliances were established, syncretistic practices arose and Byzantine objections were mildly expressed.⁴⁴ Though both religions kept stressing their own dogmatic tenets and the church anathematized Christians who contacted Saracens, yet most remarkably it no longer propagated the representation of Islam as a Christian heresy and Arabs (and Ottomans later on) were integrated in the Providence-economy plan.⁴⁵

This shift goes with significant changes occurring in the wake of the displacement of the Christian-Islamic frontier zone in Anatolia after the Seljuks' victory at the battle of Manzikert (1071). Their Turkic-Muslim state, of Persian culture, was transformed (mainly in cities, by contrast to pasture lands inhabited by newly-Islamized Turcomans who preserved their shamanistic beliefs) into a pole of attraction for heteroclit groups among which a noticeable osmosis, multilingualism and religious syncretism developed.⁴⁶ Yet, further state-decentralizing evolutions with significant political and cultural effects followed in both worlds. The geopolitical balance was drastically reversed after the foundation of Crusader states in the Levant, the capture of Constantinople in 1204 and the dominion's split, the invasions of the superficially Islamized Mongols/Tatars from the late 1230s onwards, and lastly the influx of Turcoman

43 Dagron, Gilbert, "Apprivoiser la guerre. Byzantins et Arabes ennemis intimes", in *Το εμπόλεμο Βυζάντιο (9ος -12ος αι.)* [Byzantium at War (Ninth to Twelfth Centuries)], ed. Kostas Tsiknakis (Athens: Goulandri-Horn Foundation, 1997), pp. 37–49; Rotman, Youval, "Byzance face à l'Islam arabe, VIIe–Xe siècle. D'un droit territorial à l'identité par la foi", *Annales HSS*, 60/4 (2005), 767–88.

44 For example, John VI Kantakouzenos, Umu's father-in-law, goes so far as to state that his anti-Islamic treatise is rather informative than aggressive, *Contra sectam*, col. 553.

45 Ducellier, Alain, "L'Islam et les Musulmans vus de Byzance au XIVe siècle", *Βυζαντινά*, 12 (1983), p. 117. Similarly, Symeon archbishop of Thessaloniki views the Ottoman expansion as God's punishment for Christians' sins: Talbot, A.-M., "Symeon", *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, [hereafter *ODB*], ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan, vol. III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 1982.

46 Balivet, Michel, "Intégration et exclusion des Chrétiens dans le Sultanat Seldjoukide d'Asie-Mineure (XIIe–XIIIe s.)", in Balivet, *Mélanges byzantins*, p. 119. St. Georges venerated as Hızır İlyas, John Kantakouzenos, *Contra sectam*, col. 512, "Χετῆρ Ἁλίας".

tribes.⁴⁷ The collapse of the Seljuk state and Bulgaria's turn into a tributary and dismembered one coincided with the Turcoman *babas'* upsurge under Baba Resul who initiated a heterodox mystic/shamanistic movement and apocalyptic beliefs among the nomads of Anatolia (1240).⁴⁸ The settlement of Byzantium in 1261 was by no means a re-establishment of a centralized power; apart from its dismemberment ("the Latin mode" in Nikephoros Gregoras's words), the state-church balance had in the meantime been reversed to the former's detriment. Moreover, by the end of the century, the exacerbated Western Christian-Arab struggle, led to instability, intra-Christian confrontation and Byzantine-Arab alliances.⁴⁹ Even more destructive were the fourteenth-century Byzantine dynastic wars, Serbian expansion under Dušan, plague, massive peasant eradication together with the Ottoman invasions and involvement in Balkan struggles, often on the Byzantine rulers' side. After setting foot in Gallipoli (1354), the Ottomans rapidly surrounded Constantinople. Apart from the major victorious battles at Evros (Marica) and Kosovo (1371 and 1389), Thessaloniki was captured (1387–1402) as was the Bulgarian capital Tarnovo (1393) too. In the wake of the Mongols' victory under Timur at the battle of Ankara (July 1402) and Bayezid I's (r. 1389–1402) captivity and death, a fierce rivalry arose between his sons supported by influential military/religious groups and opposed to the Turcomans – the so-called interregnum period lasting until 1413. What was claimed was the Ottoman throne of a centralized state, variously extended either to Asia and/or Europe and having as its political ideology Sunni orthodoxy or the mystic Isawi and Hurufi versions. Those Ottoman

47 According to Westerners, the turning point was the fall of Acre (1291) and the Mongols'/Tatars', Christian Kurds' of Turkestan and Nestorians' conversion to Islam, Southern, Richard William, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 68–9. Fruitful skepticism on the term "Middle Ages" applied to the history of Islam, see Varisco, Daniel Martin, "Making 'Medieval' Islam meaningful", *Medieval Encounters*, 13/2 (2007), 385–412.

48 Ocak, Ahmet Yaşar, *La révolte de Baba Resul ou la formation de l'hétérodoxie musulmane en Anatolie au XIII^e siècle* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1989), p. 57f. After founding a *zaviye* (derviş lodge) the stock farmer Turcoman Baba Resul, leading an ascetic life and being represented as a God's friend, was followed by disciples as a shaman (priest and magician), p. 79 on *babas*; Mélikoff, Irène, *Hadji Bektach: un mythe et ses avatars Genèse et évolution du soufisme populaire en Turquie* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 29 ff. Cf. the Bulgarian Ivajlo's visions and claims "as a God-given savior from the Tatars" (1278/9), Fine, John V.A. Jr., *The Late Medieval Balkans A Critical Survey from the Late twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 7, 23 ff., 195.

49 When Frederick Barbarossa, leading the third Crusade (1189), encouraged Stefan Nemanja's and Asenids' aspirations, Byzantium allied with Saladin, Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth*, p. 222.

political/religious stakes were entangled with alliances with Christian rulers who were also in dispute at that juncture. Remarkably, the involvement of Manuel II Palaiologos (Thessaloniki 1382–87, Constantinople 1391–1425) in the bloody antagonism of the interregnum, backed by Symeon of Thessaloniki (1416/17–1429), has been sufficiently analyzed; yet, the archbishop's theological developments, casting new light on the matter at hand, have not been focused upon.

Before analysing the contribution of the ardent hesychast prelate, let us try to review briefly in parallel the eleventh-century launch of the Christian and Islamic mystic dogmatic perceptions and practices emphasizing either the spiritual/emotional 'divine love' or the 'ascetic self discipline' and 'theory of cognition'. At the outset in both Christendom and Islam, two outstanding figures, Symeon the Theologian (Paphlagonia 949?–Constantinople 1022) and Al-Ghazali (Tus, Khurasan 450/1058–505/1111), who negated reality and widely initiated a mystic man-God relationship, admirably delineate the period's dynamic impact of the anchorite practice.⁵⁰ As known, initially, it was drawn from the monastic/Vetero testamentary background, formulated either from Christian neoplatonism and gnosticism or from the newly-Islamized Seljuks' and Turcomans' lively shamanist tradition. The fertile "parallelism" approach indicated by G. von Grunebaum and his conceptualization of the Christian and Islamic re-orientation,⁵¹ constitutes a prolific starting point for research;

50 Symeon the Theologian, saint and abbot of St. Mamas monastery; his inward-turning mystic version of Orthodoxy was popularized after his *Vita's* composition (after 1054) by his follower Nicetas Stethatos; his comprehensive biography, especially on the vision of divine light, individualistic path to salvation, man as capable of direct ascent to God, the human body's divinization, see Kazhdan, *ODB*, III, p. 1987; Patlagean, "Byzance", pp. 566–7, 598, he inspired "the senses' death" idea by John Klimax (seventh century), pp. 611–14. Al-Ghazālī, jurist and theologian, after renouncing his profession, "lived as a poor sufi, often in solitude, spending his time in meditation and other spiritual exercises", Montgomery Watt, W., "Al-Ghazālī", *The Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, WebCD edition, Brill, 2003. von Grunebaum, "Islam: experience of the holy", pp. 20 ff.

51 von Grunebaum, "Parallelism", pp. 101–2: "Culturally speaking, the essential features of this reaffirmation of orthodoxy are the integration of mystical piety and the acceptance of popular practices as part of 'official' religion; a concentration on law and theology with a consequent retrenchment of public concern for the 'foreign sciences'; a heightened awareness of the importance of tradition as justification for and the mortar of the attempted synthesis; wider scope for individual religiosity, which tends to organize in fraternities; a personalization of the experience of the holy, [...] a lowering of critical demands, a depreciation of human reason in a voluptuous relaxation into God's inscrutable omnipotence. [...] – and the stage has been set for a resurgence of the 'popular' into the *Bildungswelt*"; on local traditions, p. 104, on the parallel piety-focusing on Muhammad and on Jesus and on the "shift of motivation from the *mysterium tremendum*, God's

yet, since the intensified antagonism in the eastern Mediterranean engendered deep politico-ideological evolutions influencing the aforementioned state-church “consonance” model and the reverse of the East-West balance, his clear-cut antithesis (intellect’s retreat-popular tide’s diffusion) should be slightly nuanced. Westerners’ advantageous trade concessions and tax exemption in the largest eastern ports, initially ceded to Venice (May 1082),⁵² and Byzantine institutionalization of familial/feudal dependences, launched by Alexios I Komnenos, were synchronized with the church’s empowerment as a landholder; the escalating intellectuals’ concern for popular practices (see p. 5 and n. 51) and with the mounting mystic piety model. Additionally, *in absentia* of any systematic social policy, on the same emperor’s instigation, preaching was to be intensified,⁵³ while the idea of an Evil-dominated *cosmos* – especially the aqueous element –, and of repentance through the inward Christ-centric prayer was being emphasized. Remarkably, when classical Islam was adopted by non-tribal societies, in remote eastern and western areas, its flexibility to cope with various customary law models and different social stratification was questioned and similar theological elaborations emerged.

From the rich evidence illustrating the late-medieval Christian-Islamic *rapprochement* it is worth noting the church’s clear choice in view of the Christian Eastern state’s submission. The Patriarchate, defending the aristocracy’s and its own claims, increasingly opposed both Rome and the rising western-type Byzantine elite,⁵⁴ by elaborating the hesychast version as a weapon to repress deviations (for example, the “Latin” and dualist heresies) and syncretistic practices; particularly during the dynastic struggles of the 1320s and the 1340s and the strife following John Kantakouzenos’s accession to the throne (1347), one can detect an increasing decentralization process, an irrevocable reversal of the state-church “consonance” model and the church’s spiritual/judicial lay interference. In fact, the more the state’s survival was menaced, the more infra-Christian confrontations emerged and eschatological

majesty, to the *mysterium fascinosum*, God’s grace and loving kindness”, traced in Islam, simultaneously with “the revival of enthusiastic piety in Byzantium [...] the growth of sacramental mysticism in late medieval Catholicism”. Also Balivet, Michel, “Byzantins judaïsants et juifs islamisés des «Kühân» (Kâhin) aux «Χιόναι» (Χιόνιος)”, *Byzantion*, 52 (1982), 24–59; Madelung, Wilferd, “Shi’a”, *The Encyclopedia of Islam*.

52 Dölger, Franz and Peter Wirth, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 565–1453*, II *Regesten von 1025–1204* (München, Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1965), p. 27.

53 Gautier, P., “L’Édit d’Alexis Ier Comnène sur la réforme du clergé”, *Revue des Etudes Byzantines*, 31 (1973), 165–201.

54 Kiousopoulou, Tonia, *Emperor or Manager. Power and Political Ideology in Byzantium before 1453*, trans. Paul Magdalino (Geneva: Pomme d’or, 2011 [2007]).

emphasis gained prevalence in the lay sphere. To turn to Westerners for help would ensure ecclesiastic and political dependence; that is why from early on the Patriarchate, along with powerful monasteries, had no dilemma over whom to ally with, Rome or Islam⁵⁵ – even more, since mystic corporeal practices grew widely (such as baptism practiced usually before circumcision for hygienic reasons, usage of *hagiasmata*, saints' cult and so on) after the age-long symbiosis and mixed marriages.⁵⁶ A mutual trend can be noticed among the Arabs. In particular, the political and ideological changes, which occurred in Muslim regions after the eleventh century, led, from a non-iconic perception of the divine and from a quasi *absentia* of a structural material-transcendental antithesis, to an “anthropomorphic”, “comprehensible and tangible deity” pattern emphasizing the Prophet's miracles and ascension (see n. 61), the saints' veneration and so on, contrary to the classical Islamic orthodoxy. Thus, the mystic-piety beliefs and corporeal practices infusing everyday life functioned as a bridging between Eastern Christianity and Islam. Remarkably, George Pachymeres (1242–1310) informs us that, after the approach of the former eastern enemies, the westerners viewed them allegedly as two “Hagaren” groups differing only in their skin colour: “the Greeks are rather thought of as white Hagarens”.⁵⁷ Yet, it was rather a matter of the development between Greeks

55 The patriarch Michael Anghelos's (1170–8) address to Manuel Komnenos argues in favour of Byzantium's submission to the Muslims, not to the Westerners, for the benefit rather of the souls than the bodies of the flock: the reference in Zambelios, Spyridon, *Βυζαντινά Μελέται: Περί πηγών νεοελληνικής εθνότητος από Η' ἄχρι Ι' εκατονταετηρίδος μ.Χ.* [Byzantine Studies about Sources on Neohellenic Nationality from the Eighth to the Tenth Hundred after Christ] (Athens: Nikolaïdis Philadelphus, 1857), p. 692, n. 413; Ducellier, *Chrétien*, pp. 248–9, 174–5; Angold, Michael, *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni 1081–1261* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 110–1, 511, 512 on the use of the term Hellene instead of Romaïos; Magdalino, Paul, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos 1143–1180* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 77.

56 *Κανόνες*, Rhallis and Potlis, *Σύνταγμα*, vol. II (Athens: 1852), p. 498: “ὅτι συνήθειά ἐστι πάντα τὰ νήπια τῶν Ἀγαρηνῶν βαπτίζεσθαι παρὰ ὀρθοδόξων ἱερέων· [...] διὰ θεραπείαν σωματικὴν. Δέδοκται γάρ παρὰ τοῖς Ἀγαρηνοῖς τὰ τέκνα τούτων δαιμονῶν, καὶ κατὰ κύνας ὅζειν, εἰ μὴ βαπτίσματος τύχῃσι χριστιανικοῦ· κἀντεῦθεν, οὐχ ὡς καθαρτήριον παντός ῥύπου ψυχικοῦ, καὶ φωτός θείου καὶ ἁγιασμοῦ πάροχον ἀνακαλοῦνται τὸ βάπτισμα, ἀλλ' ὡς φαρμακείαν, ἣ ἐπωδὴν. Τινὲς δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν εἶπον, μητέρας ἔχειν ὀρθοδόξους”, p. 585; vol. VI (Athens, 1859), p. 120: “ἔθος γοῦν ἐστὶ τῶν Ἀγαρηνῶν τοῖς πλείστοις, μὴ πρότερον τὰ σφέτερα περιτέμνειν βρέφη, πρὶν ἂν οἱ ὑποτελεῖς ὄντες αὐτοῖς τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἱερεῖς, καὶ ἄκοντες ἀναγκασθῶσι ταῦτα βαπτίσαι”.

57 Pachymeres, George, *Relations historiques*, ed. Albert Failler (Paris: Société d'Éditions “Les Belles Lettres”, 1984), p. 471, “λευκοὺς Ἀγαρηνοὺς εἶναι Γραικοὺς παρ' ἐκείνοις μείζον ἥρητο”, commented on by Balivet, Michel, “Pratiques et representations du pouvoir à Byzance entre Rome et le monde musulman”, in Balivet, *Mélanges byzantins*, p. 29;

and Muslims of a common religious code – namely the mystic world view – and of their political and cultural consensus which ensued from both long osmosis and the ongoing historical changes, highlighted above. Moreover, since the eastern Mediterranean worlds were being structured as regionalized landlord economies, pursued jointly by aristocracy and church, with a commonly developed mystic piety model, these worlds should rather be perceived as a quasi homogenized area and civilization. Additionally, they were replying in similar terms to their western enemy, who, by contrast, was increasingly involved in a secularization process. From this perspective, the Christian-Islamic mystic emphasis on Latin heretics' demonization and on their alleged corporeal or moral impure character,⁵⁸ can be explained as a) a reshaping of the church to cope with the westerners' domination over the Orient and b) an attempt to halt, in interior conversions, deviations and syncretistic beliefs, by requiring mainly repentance and imposing anathema instead of reclusion and capital punishment applied simultaneously in persecuting (Western) Europe.⁵⁹ Thus, it is of no surprise that within the framework of an increasing mystic trend, Christian-Islamic political plans were even aspired to, illustrating the widening gap with the westerners and the significant monitoring role of the religious institutions and the endurance of traditional structures.

Hence, the Oriental "synthesis" – to use a term suggested by Alain Ducellier –, viewed as a multifold phenomenon, surmounts the uni-dimensional representation of the Levant or of Byzantium as a "paradox".⁶⁰ In particular, the mystic conceptualization of the body – besides the soul – should be investigated on a safer basis, namely a combinational approach. Further light can in fact be shed

Balivet, Michel, "Le personnage du 'Turcophile' dans les sources byzantines antérieures au Concile de Florence (1370–1430)", in Balivet, Michel, *Byzantins et Ottomans: Relations, interactions, succession* (Istanbul: Isis, 1999), p. 47.

58 By accusing the Latins of their "novelties", Symeon of Thessaloniki appropriates the Muslims' filth-argument: "they are filth and even touching excrements and drinking urine, as many have seen", *P.G.* c.1.v, col. 105.

59 See my paper "Repetant or dead: East and West attitudes towards late-Medieval heretics", *Srednovekovna Hristijanska Evropa: Iztok i Zapad Cennosti, Tradicii, Obshtuvane/Medieval Christian Europe: East and West Tradition, Values, Communications* (Sofia: Gutenberg, 2002), pp. 469, 473–4, on the church's "more humane" stance and on the observance of local customary law as consensus-bond. By contrast, in the West strong control and systematic exploitation was exercised over poor, ill people, deviating groups, etc., see the pioneering work by Vexliard, Alexandre, *Introduction à la sociologie du vagabondage* (Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1956).

60 Ducellier, *Chrétiens*, pp. 36 if., ch. "Début de synthèse en Anatolie"; see also the synthetical and path-breaking work by Balivet, Michel, *Romanie byzantine et pays de Rûm turc Histoire d'un espace d'imbrication gréco-turque* (Istanbul: Isis, 1994). Cf. the Byzantium "paradox"

on our subject, if one draws from the prolific suggestions of both Henry Maguire and Evelyne Patlagean for the post-iconoclastic church's watch over the two-fold (corporal/immaterial) saints' portraiture and home-cult – mentioned already – and the individual character as well as the structural duality (material/transcendental) of the piety model, respectively. Departing from this basis, a new insight into the Christian-Islamic comparison of the soul-body issue can be provided by focusing on, firstly, the newly-inspired symbolic/allegoric iconographic motifs (such as the Last Judgment, Jesus's radiant transfiguration symbolizing the divine light of Tabor, *Myron* and so on);⁶¹ secondly, the "individual spirituality" like the *apatheia* monastic piety model, leading to symbolic death and practiced even at home; and lastly the escalating intellectual concern for the revival of popular Greek and Slavic gods/demons (for example, 'water demons' and the female Gyllou in Psellos's work).⁶² In particular, some intellectuals, perceiving earthly life as influenced by harmful effects of Evil taking the face either of Dualists (perceived as 'demon-faced') or of monsters

idea, explained in idealistic terms and without taking into consideration the development of the inter-faith mystic piety: Shepard, Jonathan, "The Byzantine Commonwealth 1000–1550. Introduction", *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. V *Eastern Christianity*, ed. Michael Angold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 12: "It is in this ability [claims to moral superiority over the 'barbarians'], rather than just brute force, which ensures a 'superordinate' centre's [Constantinople] continuing prestige and goes a long way towards explaining the Byzantine paradox".

- 61 The Transfiguration of Jesus depicted in John Kantakouzenos's manuscript (Paris Bibliothèque Nationale, Gr 1242), Talbot-Rice, David, *Βυζαντινή τέχνη* [Byzantine art], trans. Andreas Pappas (Athens: Ipodomi, 1994), p. 228, fig. 231. On Islam, respectively: von Grunebaum, "Parallelism", pp. 101–2, 104, 110; Thompson, Jon and Sheila R. Canby (eds.), *Hunt for Paradise, Court Art of Safavid Iran 1501–1576, Exhibition Catalogue* (New York: Asia Society Museum, 2003–2004, Milan: Skira editore, 2003), pp. 117–18, no 4.29, available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Miraj_by_Sultan_Muhammad.jpg.
- 62 Patlagean, "Byzance", pp. 610 ff., 566, 589; Greenfield, R.P.H., "Saint Sisinnios, the Archangel Michael and the female demon Gylou: the typology of the Greek literary stories", *Βυζαντινός*, 15 (1989), 83–141; Lauritzen, Frederick, "Psellos the Hesychast. A Neoplatonic reading of the Transfiguration on Mt Tabor (Theologica I.11 Gautier)", *Byzantinoslavica*, 70 (2012), 167–79; cf. Kohlberg, Etan, *Shi'ism* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2003), p. 32 on human-shape Satan, Kontoulis, Elias, "Ο εικονογραφικός κύκλος του Προφήτη Ηλία στη Μονή των Φιλανθρωπινών Μια ερμηνευτική προσέγγιση" [Prophet Elias' Iconographic Cycle at the Philanthropenon Monastery. A hermeneutic approach], *Δωδώνη*, 34 (History & Archaeology Department, Ioannina University 2005), pp. 174–5, living water (ζών ὕδωρ) as baptism and holy-Spirit allegory. The terminology on popular religion, private/inward devotion, inner/no corporal senses, etc. is discussed by Williamson, Beth, "Sensory experience in Medieval devotion: sound and vision, invisibility and silence", *Speculum*, 88/1 (2013), pp. 1–43.

(in Islam), went so far as to highlight magic *apotropaic* practices. Hence, dissemination of mystic symbolic expressions could be further understood as an ideological attempt to anagogically re-define man's relationship with nature and God, in order to cope with the complexity brought about by the eastern demographic intermingling and Westerners' economic ascendancy. As we shall see below, a more sophisticated mystic/eschatological system of symbolic signs would be proposed, according to the structural approach indicated by Patlagean (see mainly her subtitle "Demons and wild thought", recalling Cl. Levi-Strauss' outstanding work *La pensée sauvage*, 1962). Additionally, the emphasis on piety's inward-turning character brought onto the stage, besides the diffusion of prophylactic practices against Evil, the body's closer control and discipline by visualizing its enduring suffering as a prerequisite of the soul's salvation (no more as material-spiritual antithesis). Since the twelfth century, fearful scenes of human bodies horribly suffering in Hell and specific tortures, with social and gender connotations, imposed on professionals or moral sinners are depicted in multi-personal and pompous compositions. Similarly, spectacular motifs stressing God's punitive role and man's mortality overwhelmed the believers' space and time: death agony («ψυχομαχία»)-*Consolatio* – imitating the *consolamentum* of the Dualists (Bogomils/Paulicians) and Cathars –, personifications of the soul (contrasting to the archangel Michael as the Princes' "soul sender" to heaven) and last but not least time-personifications stressing the so-called pernicious cycle of life's vain time. Remarkably, no less emphasis on bodies being tortured in Hell is traced in the widespread narration on Muhammad's visit to God (*mi'raj name*) where symbolic syncretistic practices are also observed.⁶³

63 Vokotopoulos, Panagiotis L., "Η εικονογράφηση του Κανόνος Εις Ψυχορραγούντα στο Ωρολόγιον 295 της Μονής Λειμώνος" [The illustration of the Canon on the one being in agony in the Prayer book 295 of the Leimon Monastery], *Σύμμεικτα*, 9 (1994), 95–114; Goar, Jacques, *Ευχολόγιον sive rituale graecorum* (Venice: Ex typographia Bartholomæi Javarina, 1730, 2nd ed. [reprint 1960]), pp. 587–8, Εὐχή «εἰς ψυχορραγούντα». Cf. Weis, René, *The Yellow Cross The Last Cathars 1290–1329* (New York: Knopf, 2001), ch. II. While the idea of Purgatory rose in the West, that of the "eternal Hell" was instead emphasized in the Orient: Symeon of Thessalonica, *Dialogos contra haereses*, P.G., CIV, col. 117. The issue was also debated by Manuel II. Palaiologos *Dialogue mit einem Muslim*, Kommentierte griechisch-deutsche Textausgabe Karl Förstel (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1993), p. 158 and commented on by John Kantakouzenos, *Contra sectam*, col. 676–7; Anonym, *Η σκάλα του Μωάμεθ* [The Ladder of Muhammad], trans. Milas Demitris (Athens: Enalios, s.d.); Kotzageorgis, Phokion, *Το Ισλάμ στα Βαλκάνια Ένα Ελληνόφωνο μουσουλμανικό χειρόγραφο από την Ήπειρο του 18^{ου} αιώνα* [Islam in the Balkans A Greek Muslim Manuscript from Epirus of the Eighteenth Century] (Athens: Association of the Athenians graduated the Great School, 1997), p. 152 on the *ferište* (= angel) "Asrailis who takes the souls". On the impact of the thirteenth-century Latin translation of the *mi'raj name*, see Southern, *Western Views*, pp. 55–6.

Furthermore, by initiating the mortal/sinful body's possibility of being perceived in a transcendental dimension, hesychasts brought onto the stage a Fathers' path into man's corporeal communication with God. As already referred to, during the Byzantine dynastic wars, the mystic piety version was being hotly disputed as a controversial "monstrous" novelty and was even accused of being heresy;⁶⁴ yet, it acquired its comprehensive structure and political dominance after the mid-fourteenth century victory of the aristocratic front under John VI Kantakouzenos (Feb. 1347–Dec. 1354).⁶⁵ At that juncture, Gregory Palamas, archbishop of Thessaloniki (1347–59) distinguished God's essence from his *energies*, while in his *Triads* he attached "the earlier effect of the Holy spirit to the eyes of the body", thus launching the acknowledgment of man's capacity to "corporeally gaze" at God through his *energeiai* presented as *grace*.⁶⁶ Thus, instead of the "intellect's eye" suggested hitherto for the man-God spiritual relationship, believers were admonished (apart from repentance, fasting proclaimed as treatment and salvation's gateway, divine love, the unique means to untie passions' chain, abstinence and flesh apathy) to exercise the inward-turned Christ-centric "god's remembrance" prayer in order to stare at the Light of Mount Tabor with "corporeal eyes" (*theasis, theoptai*) – the respective Islamic prayer "dhikr" (= constant remembrance of God), practiced in common by Christians and Muslims in Chios, in 1416, according to Doukas (see n.87). Since then, the body was exalted as capable of gazing at God and, thus, of being saved. Henceforth, in a period of incessant turmoil and extreme privation for many, the mortal human body, exalted through a system of ritual signs, was transformed into a crucial *topos* where man's salvation or everlasting punishment and society's reproduction were at stake. Without distancing himself significantly from earlier hesychasts, Symeon archbishop of

64 Kazhdan, "The dispute over Palamism", *ODB*, III, pp. 1561–2. Patlagean, "Byzance", p. 614 on Symeon New Theologian's and dualist Bogomils' common inclination to the inward-turning piety. See also n. 77.

65 On his aristocratic circle, see Laiou-Thomadakis, Angeliki E., "Saints and society in the late Byzantine empire", in *Charanis Studies. Essays in Honor of Peter Charanis*, ed. Angeliki E. Laiou-Thomadakis (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1980), pp. 84–114.

66 Podskalsky, Gerhard, "Energy", *ODB*, I, p. 698. Cf. Gregory Palamas, *Εἰς τὴν Μεταμόρφωσιν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* [On Christ's Transfiguration], *PG.*, CLV, col. 437–40 and 423–8, where "θεῖον φῶς" could be seen by the intellect's eye; Podskalsky, Gerhard et al., "Transfiguration", *ODB*, III, p. 2105; also Papadakis, Aristeides, "Palamism", *ODB*, III, pp. 1560 and 1561; Papadakis, Aristeides, "Hesychasm", *ODB*, II, pp. 923–4; Podskalsky, Gerhard and Anthony Cutler, "Light", *ODB*, II, p. 1226: "Palamas incorporated the vision of the (transfigured) light in his doctrine of energies and assigned it first rank in spiritual life".

Thessaloniki will put forward the idea of the body's transcendental *apotheosis*, by indicating Christ-centric prayer as both the "body's and soul's sanatorium and spring of god's mercy".⁶⁷

Not surprisingly, Thessaloniki, the empire's second city and outstanding ecclesiastic see, having experienced a period of Ottoman rule (1387–1402), was once more involved in the intensified interregnum conflict in 1411, when the decade-long clash between Bayezid's sons was transferred to Rumeli. Hereafter the Balkan peninsula, already inhabited by heterodox Turcomans (settled down in the Dobruja in 1263 under Sarı Saltuk the syncretist saint *par excellence*) and Ottomans, was transformed into the main battle-field between, on the one side, the powerful groups of "the frontier and the center", namely the hereditary conquest pioneers, heterodox and centrifugal border *beys* (*uç beyi*, *akıncı*), and, on the other, the cavalry soldier *timar* holders aspiring to a centralized and orthodox Muslim state.⁶⁸ Each claimant played his own stake by exterminating one of his brothers, in alliance with various vassal Christian rulers – among them Manuel II – working to ward off the foundation of a centralist Ottoman/Sunni state. In 1411, supported by powerful families and Bektaşis and in alliance with Manuel and George Branković, Süleyman Çelebi, obviously an Isawi follower, was defeated and soon murdered by

67 Symeon, *De sacra precatone*, col. 545: "καὶ ψυχῶν καὶ σωμάτων θεραπευτήριον [...] καὶ ἐλέους Θεοῦ βρύσις"; *De euchelaeo*, 525; also holy oil purifies both mind and all senses; and 528. The same idea in Nicolai Cabasilae, *De Vita in Christo*, P.G. clv, col. 517 and 520–521. Charalampidis, Konstantinos P., "Ἡ παράσταση του ακτίστου φωτός (Lux increata) στη βυζαντινὴ εἰκονογραφία της Μεταμόρφωσης του Χριστοῦ" [Lux-increata depiction in Byzantine Transfiguration iconography], *Μίλτος Γαρίδης (1926–1996) Αφιέρωμα* [Miltos Garidis (1926–1996) Festschrift], vol. II (Ioannina: University of Ioannina, 2003), pp. 847–58. Cf. the Islamic version of God's *theosis* (vision and touch), for example, in the *aljamia mi'radj-name* by the molla Mouratis t' [= ibn] Ali Sipahi [= μόλα μο ρατησταλῆς.παχη] in Epirus on March 5, 1799, Kotzageorgis, *Το Ισλάμ στα Βαλκάνια*, pp. 213–14, also 166 ff., 186, 204, 214 and Anonym, *Ἡ σκᾶλα του Μωάμεθ*.

68 İnalçık, Halil, "Το Οθωμανικό κράτος: Οικονομία και κοινωνία, 1300–1600" [The Ottoman state: Economy and Society, 1300–1600], İnalçık, Halil and Donald Quataert (eds.), *Οικονομική και κοινωνική ιστορία της Οθωμανικής αυτοκρατορίας 1300–1600* [Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1600], trans. Marinos Sariyannis, vol. I, (Athens: Alexandria, 2008), pp. 13–4. On Sarı Saltuk between 1262 and 1297 and afterwards: Kiel, Machiel, "Ottoman urban development and the cult of a heterodox Sufi saint: Sarı Saltuk Dede and towns of İsakçe and Babadağ in the northern Dobrudja", in *Syncretismes et hérésies dans l'Orient seldjoukide et ottoman (XIVe–XVIIIe siècle)*, *Actes du Colloque du Collège de France, octobre 2001*, ed. Giles Veinstein (Paris: Peeters, 2005), pp. 283–98.

his brother Musa.⁶⁹ The latter had already established his alliances with Stefan Lazarević, Carlo Tocco and Mircea I the Ancient of Wallachia by marrying his daughter.

In the meantime, apocalyptic/eschatological ideas about the world's end gained popularity, while the power's holy character provided arguments for legitimization.⁷⁰ In particular, Sufi mystic versions were disseminating, mainly Isawi, initiated by the Arabo-Andalousian Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi (1165–1240) who visited Romania in 1205, and attributing a particular significance to Jesus, son of Mary (Isa ibn Maryam) “facilitating, i.e. encouraging inter-communitarian relations”,⁷¹ and Hurufi professed by Fazlullah Na’imi Tabrizi or Al-Hurufî [= Letterist] (Astarabad 1339/40–1394); the latter professed a mystic version focusing upon the ‘Unity of the being’ with its central idea being either the letters as attributes of ‘divine Unity’ or the neoplatonic/gnostic concept of ‘Love’ and a pantheism of anthropomorphist form. Disseminated widely during Timur’s destructive expansion, this sublimating preaching, allegedly liberating from earthy ordeals, not surprisingly, brought about a socio-religious movement in Khorasan and Central Asia with repercussions in Anatolia. Later on, İmadeddin Nesimi (c.1370–1417), Fazlullah’s disciple, son-in-law and poet, emphasized the “divinization of man” by transforming his teacher’s doctrine into a syncretistic sufi version. Remarkably, until he was (like his teacher) executed in Aleppo, he professed that “there is no difference between the Muslim and the Christian on the road of the Truth”. Hurufi, anchorites in white, persecuted in Asia, settled in the Balkans, mainly in Thrace and Bulgaria, where they would contribute to the conquest by propagating

69 Balivet, Michel, “Un épisode méconnu de la campagne de Mehmed Ier en Macédoine: L'apparition de Serrès (1416/819 H.)”, *Turcica*, 18 (1986), p. 141. Süleyman was not the only of Bayezid's sons to have a heterodox affiliation (“ἐφ’ ἡμῖνος καβούρ ἐγένετο”); his “under age” brother, a hostage at Constantinople, stated that he was a Christian and on his bed-death was baptized by Manuel II, Doukas, *Ἱστορία Βυζαντινῆς*, ed. I.M. Bekker (Bonn, 1834), pp. 91 and 99. Zachariadou, Elizabeth A., “Süleyman Çelebi in Rumili and the Ottoman chronicles”, *Der Islam*, 60 (1983), p. 295; Kastritsis, Dimitris J., “Religious affiliations and political alliances in the Ottoman succession wars of 1402–1413”, *Medieval Encounters*, 13 (2007), pp. 232 ff., 235.

70 Beldiceanu, Irène, “Péchés, calamités et salut par le triomphe de l’Islam. Le discours apocalyptique relative à l’Anatolie (fin XIIIe-fin XVe s.)”, in *Les traditions apocalyptiques au tournant de la chute de Constantinople*, ed. Benjamin Lellouch, Stefanos Yerasimos (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1999), pp. 28–9. Zachariadou, Elizabeth A., “À propos du syncrétisme islamo-chrétien dans les territoires Ottomans”, in *Syncrétismes et hérésies*, pp. 395–403.

71 Balivet, *Romanie*, p. 165; Balivet, *Islam mystic*, pp. 6 ff. Mélikoff, *Hadji Bektach*, pp. 160, 245.

their doctrines endorsed afterwards in Bektaşism. Some of their *türbe* are still extant.⁷²

The Christian-Islamic mystic beliefs seem to have reached the culmination point, at least in Rumeli, during the so-called interregnum juncture. Syncretistic practices and Islamic conversions, in particular, were further developed after Musa appointed his spiritual teacher, the Seldjuk-Rumeli Sufi/Isawi Şeyh Bedreddin as *kadiasker* (1411–1413).⁷³ Musa gained power by unifying the Turks of the Danube, Deliorman and Dobrudja regions with the followers of the two disciples of Bedreddin, namely Düzme Mustafa, governor of Achridos (close to Edirne) and Cüneyd (son of a *pronoia* holder in İzmir (Smyrna), expelled from Ionia by Süleyman in 1407 who was appointed *uç beyi* at Nikopolis), but he was finally defeated. Supported by newly-converted Albanians, the victorious Mehmed I (July 1413–21), who aimed to unify the Asiatic and European parts of the dominion and to defend religious orthodoxy by persecuting sufi believers, did not fail to expel Cüneyd. In order to repress the mounting agitation, he turned to Macedonia and tried to defeat his brother Mustafa who took refuge in Thessaloniki together with Cüneyd (Nov.–Dec. 1416) – a development that led to his temporary exclusion from the throne, since Manuel consented to hold both of them as hostages for life. The available evidence clearly shows a

72 Mélikoff, Irène, “Fazlullah d’Astarabad et l’essor du Hurufisme en Azerbaydjan en Anatolie et en Roumélie”, in Mélikoff, Irène, *Sur les traces du Soufisme Turc. Recherches sur l’Islam populaire en Anatolie* (Istanbul: İsis, 1992), pp. 163–76; Mélikoff, Irène, “La communauté Kızılbaş du Deli Orman en Bulgarie”, Mélikoff, *Sur les traces du Soufisme Turc*, pp. 105–13; Mélikoff, *Hadji Bektash*, pp. 116 ff., 160, 245, 121–5, 147, 249, “divinization de l’homme”, p. 246 its late nineteenth-century resonance in Harabi’s poetry: “le secret de la Divinité est à nous”. On the attempt to convert Mehmed II and on “the idea that divinity can reside in a human body (*hulul*)”, Bashir, Shahzad, *Fazlallah Astarabadi and the Hurufis* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), pp. 106–8; Zhukov, Konstantin, “Börklüce Mustafa, was he Another Mazdak?”, in Veinstein, *Syncretismes et hérésies*, p. 123. On the Roman idea of deification, see n. 6.

73 Balivet, Michel, *Islam mystique et révolution armée dans les Balkans ottomans Vie du Cheikh Bedreddin le “Hallâj des Turcs” (1358/59–1416)* (Istanbul: İsis, 1995), pp. 109, 63 f., 67 ff. on Bedreddin’s Isawi world view; Balivet, Michel, “Deux partisans de la fusion religieuse des Chrétiens et des Musulmans au XVe siècle: Le Turc Bedreddin de Samavna et le grec Georges de Trebizonde”, *Βυζαντινά*, 10 (1980), 361–96. On the upsurge “with the aim of founding a state based on a new religion derived from both Islam and Christianity”: Zachariadou, Elizabeth A., “Religious dialogue between Byzantines and Turks during the Ottoman expansion”, in Zachariadou, Elizabeth A., *Studies in Pre-Ottoman Turkey and the Ottomans* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2007), pp. 301 ff., 302–3 on mixed marriages. Demir Baha, disciple of Bedreddin, is venerated as a saint (more significant than Hacı Bektaş, d. c. 1270) by the Kızılbaş at Zavet, Deliorman in Bulgaria, where his *tekke* is, Mélikoff, *Hadji Bektash*, pp. 53 ff.

wider turmoil and diffusion of heterodoxy. Michel Balivet has convincingly pointed out the purposeful and bold joint Muslim-Christian anti-Ottoman political plan, defending mystic versions through landlessness, anchorite and collectivist stances under Şeyh Bedreddin and some of his disciples.⁷⁴ In fact, the revolts broke out at different points of the vertical axis connecting the Ottoman dominion's eastern-western sections, where both religions were intermingling, namely the Danube, Thrace/Macedonia and the Asia Minor shore/Chios-İzmir; their guidance was assumed by Bedreddin himself, Düzme Mustafa, and the *kadiasker* Börklüce Mustafa. Finally, all the revolts were crushed. Bedreddin was arrested and sentenced to death (Serres, Dec. 18, 1416 or 820/1417–18, according to Ottoman sources).⁷⁵ Mehmed's political dominance was assured by the defeat and massacre of Christians and Muslims, but hardly the prevalence of the Sunni version. The overall new *status quo* was challenged since Isawi and Hurufi mystic believes were in meantime widely popularized along with syncretistic practices – we have to imagine many more syncretistic Christian-Muslim nuclei in revolt, similar to the one described so vividly by Doukas. From this viewpoint, apart from the widely imposed repression, theological elaborations and intensification of preaching were manifested on both sides. On the Christian side, although Symeon of Thessaloniki had a hard time due to plundering, famine, the siege and strife between the city's magnates and the flock, and, lastly, the Mustafa affair,⁷⁶ he supported Manuel's alliances with alternative sufi claimants and also re-elaborated theological answers to issues hotly-debated by all three monotheist believers.

The archbishop's works have drawn the close attention of researchers, yet, his suggestion regarding body/soul theology has not been focused upon, as far as I know. Let us, then, turn briefly to his theological developments (coeval with the interregnum period?). During the military-religious effervescence

74 Balivet, *Islam mystique*, p. 64; Zachariadou, Elizabeth, "Co-existence and religion", *Archivum Ottomanicum* 15, (1997), 119–29.

75 Balivet, *Islam mystique*, pp. 77 : "Börklüce, Turc d'Ionie, donc de la même région que les fugitives de Palatia/Milet et d'Alto-Luogo/Ephèse [...] séjourna à Samos où il dut rencontrer le moine interrogé ultérieurement par Doukas à Chio", pp. 81, 84 n. 99, 110; Mélikoff, *Hadji Bektash*, p. 149, his memory is celebrated in the Silistra-Deli Orman region, which was the centre of the revolt; Zhukov, "Börklüce Mustafa", pp. 124, 127. See also n. 87.

76 On Symeon's personal story, see Balfour, David, *Politico-Historical Works of Symeon Archbishop of Thessalonica (1416/17 to 1429) Critical Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Vienna: Verl. der Österr. Akad. der Wiss., 1979), pp. 229 ff., 48²¹ 35, 57³ 10, 244; Balfour, David (introduction, critical edition), *Αγίου Συμεών Αρχιεπισκόπου Θεσσαλονίκης (1416/17–1429) Έργα θεολογικά* [Saint Symeon Archbishop of Thessaloniki (1416/17–1429) Theological Works] (Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Foundation of Patristic Studies, 1981),

throughout Rumeli and the diffusing of mystic piety in both Christianity and Islam, Symeon returns “piously” to the Scriptures to re-structure the long-disputed incarnation issue in a Christ-centric framework. In order to contribute further towards the aforementioned idea of salvation through the body’s participation in the corporeal (heart and eyes) vision of divinity’s *energeiai*, launched by Palamas, he suggests, more generally, a cosmos duality, clearly distancing himself, however, from the fundamental antithesis between God and all the rest (κτιστὰ-ἄκτιστα).⁷⁷ Firstly, he generalizes duality as structural cosmic property, ranging from creation’s (illogical-logical/senseless-perceptible) and man’s double dimensions (visible-invisible) – the body’s twin perception (corporality-immateriality) included – to God’s *grace* and *energeiai*, as well as to cultural practices – baptism and unction – and even to prayers and piety practices (material-spiritual/tangible-sacred).⁷⁸ Secondly, having a vivid pastoral concern for believers’ *parousia* in the ritual remembrance of Christ’s life and sacrifice, he preoccupies himself with the codification of the specific attributes of symbolically overcharged and senses-provoking liquids used during the sacraments and liturgy. In particular, by escalating further his

pp. 36–7 n. 51–53, 45–9; on his efforts to influence also Andronikos Palaiologos, despot and governor of Thessaloniki, p. 40.

- 77 For example, Nikephoros Gregoras, *Ἱστορία Βυζαντινῆ*, vol. III (Bonn, 1855), p. 231 “νεόλεκτος τερατεία” and *Contra Gregorae ineptias*: Garzya, Antonio, “Un Opusculé inédit de Nicolas Cabasilas”, *Byzantion* 24 (1954), p. 527: “καὶ προῦβάλλετο δεῖξαι τὴν θείαν μόνην οὐσίαν ἄκτιστον τὰ δ’ ἄλλα καὶ μετ’ αὐτὴν κτιστά”. Cf. western theological elaborations: Albert, Jean-Pierre, *Odeurs de sainteté La mythologie chrétienne des aromates* (Paris: Éditions de l’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1990), pp. 231 ff. *Theosis*, a term defined by the early Fathers as “deification realised with the grace of God”, Uthermann, K.-H., “Theosis”, *ODB*, III, pp. 2069–70.
- 78 Symeon, *Dialogos contra haereses*, P.G., CLV, col. 165 “Ὅμως ἐπειδὴ περ διπλοὶ ἡμεῖς, ἀληθῆς δὲ ἡ λάμψις ἐκείνη ἐκ τοῦ τῆς δικαιοσύνης Ἡλίου, καὶ ἡ ἀστραπὴ νοητὴ τῆς Θεότητος, καὶ νοητῶς ἐκ Πνεύματος ἁγίου ἡμῖν ἐπιλάμπουσα, οὐ τὴν ψυχὴν ἀυγάζει μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ σῶμα καταλαμπρύνει.”; col. 168 “[...] ἐν ᾧ [θεῖον πρόσλημμα] καὶ πᾶν τὸ πληρωμα τῆς Θεότητος σωματικῶς, ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος δὲ ἡμεῖς λαμβάνομεν χάριν ἀναλόγως [...] ὡς ἐκ πηγῆς [...]”; col. 176 “[...] Ὅθεν ἄλογός τε καὶ λογικὴ πᾶσα κτίσις, καὶ αἰσθητὴ καὶ ἀναισθητος θεία δύναμις καὶ ζῆ, καὶ νοεῖ, καὶ κινεῖται, καὶ λέγει, καὶ ἐνεργεῖ, καὶ μένει καὶ ὅσα περ ἑκαστον ἔχει κέκτηται. Οὐκ οὐσίας δὲ Θεοῦ μετέχει, εἰς γὰρ μόνος Θεός ὑπερούσιος, ἡ Τριάς ἡ παντοδύναμος. Ταῦτα καὶ ἡμεῖς περὶ τούτου, ὡς ἐνόησαμεν ἀπὸ τῶν Γραφῶν, εὐσεβῶς καὶ κατὰ δύναμιν ἡμετέραν ὑμῖν εἰρήκαμεν.”; col. 524 ch. Διατί διτταὶ εὐχαὶ ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς μυστηρίοις. “[...] τὸν διφυῆ σημαίνουσιν Ἱησοῦν [...] ἵνα καὶ ὑμᾶς διπλῶς κατὰ τε τὸ ἀόρατον καὶ ὁρατὸν ἀγιάσῃ τὴν ψυχὴν λέγω καὶ τὸ σῶμα.”; col. 525 ch. Ὅτι διπλὰ τὰ μυστήρια ἐξ ὕλης καὶ πνεύματος δι’ ἡμᾶς διπλοῦς ὄντας. “[...] ἱατρείας χάριν σωματικῆς τε καὶ ψυχικῆς”. Balfour, *Συμεῶν Ἔργα, Epistle [...] against Hagarens*, pp. 119–20.

sacramental mystic theology, Symeon insists on symbolic purifying means and emphasizes, instead of the well-known *hagiasma* (see p. 4), the holy water – used also by Westerners and Muslims – as proper for both the body's and soul's rinsing⁷⁹ – and thus distances himself from Bartholomaios' aforementioned argument, that mortal body and soul are not to be cleansed with water and that the body's filthiness is insignificant for God (see p. 10, n. 35). Additionally, he arranges in detail the symbolic use of holy oil and holy *myron* – the antiseptic and symbolic material *par excellence* since Antiquity – as a sanctifying, cleansing and therapeutic means of soul and body too.⁸⁰ Additionally, he enhances the so-called *myroblyte*-saints' piety practice, popularized since the tenth-eleventh centuries through hagiography, iconography and the household practice consisting of *myron*'s preservation in flasks (κουτρούβια) as *apotropaic* and therapeutic, mainly in the wake of the experience of the black death.⁸¹ Actually, *myroblysia* symbolizes the body's "imperishability", since the "most perfect" liquid *myron* emanates from the corpse of the "perfect" men, a term borrowed from the dualistic terminology meaning spiritual fathers, in an attempt to represent the Bogomils'/Cathars' *τέλειοι* as deficient and erroneous.

79 Metaphorical terms on cleanness (faucets, spring, fountain, stream, baths, wells and *χοῦς* = purifying material, "dust" [see here p. 9], referred to in the *Qur'an*) abound also in all hesychasts' works: for example, Palamas, *Homily to Thessalonians*, P.G., CLV, col. 12; Nicolaos Cabasilas, *Ἐν Χριστῷ ζωή*, col. 516–7, 520–21. By contrast, vocabulary on hygiene/cleanness = νῆψις [not to be confused with νήπις = sobriety] is lacking in the church's lists of recommended virtues.

80 Symeon, *De sacramentis*, col. 529ff. ch. "Ὅσα ἐνεργεῖ τὸ ἅγιον ἔλαιον. "[...] Τοῦ ὕδατος μὲν οὖν μόνον κατὰ φύσιν ἐστὶ τὸ καθαίρειν τὸν τοῦ σώματος ῥύπον, καὶ δίψος καταπαύειν τοῦ ἁγίου δὲ ὕδατος, τὸ ἐκπλύνειν ἅμφω σὺν τῷ σώματι τὴν ψυχὴν, καὶ ἀγιάζειν καὶ ἀναπλάττειν, καὶ δροσίζειν πνευματικῶς καὶ υἱοποιεῖν τῷ Θεῷ. "Ὡς καὶ πᾶν μὲν ἀπλῶς μύρον εὐωδιάζει καὶ κατευφραίνει μόνην τὴν αἰσθησιν χριόμενον ἢ κρατούμενον· τὸ μύρον δὲ γε τὸ ἅγιον ζῶν ἐμπνέει θείαν [...] Οὕτω τοῖνον καὶ ἔλαιον μὲν τοῦτο, ἀλλ' ἔλαιον ἅγιον τῇ ἱερᾷ τελετῇ, [...] καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς λαμπρύνειν καὶ ἀγιάζειν ὁμοῦ, σώματά τε ἰσχύον καὶ πνεύματα"; 180 ch. *Περὶ ἁγίου ἐλαίου*. "[...]καθαγιάζει ἡμῶν καὶ τὰ σώματα, καὶ ὀλοτελῇ παρέχει τὴν σωτηρίαν". Cf. Balivet, *Islam mystique*, pp. 29f. Yunus Emre on the "Religion of Love", p. 30, love inspired in every cult space, p. 31 "[...] Jusqu'à quelle point l'eau purifie-t-elle un méchant? La grâce de la Verité parvient seule à nous laver".

81 Albert, *Odeurs*, pp. 101 f., ch. "Longévitité et immortalité"; pp. 106 ff. Maguire, *The Icons*, ch. "The Saints and Household Magic", pp. 118 ff. See my study *The Rise of a Mystic Piety in the Late-Medieval Balkans. Heresies and Myroblytoi Saints*, forthcoming 2nd edition, Stefan Nemanja, grand *jupan*, who died as monk Symeon (1207) at the Monastery of Chilandar, Athos, and was venerated as *myroblyte*-saint, on the instigation of his son Sava, also a monk and later the first prelate of the Serbian church, is the major Balkan paradigm of mystic piety and politics intermingling, Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth*, pp. 301, 222–3.

Moreover, this property of the holy *myron*, associated with the divine-*energeiai* symbolism⁸² depicted in Christ's radiant-transfiguration iconography as "divinity's spiritual flash", confirms, besides the human *physis* of Jesus taken into heaven, also the human body's capability to be – like the soul – spiritually cleansed and saved. With such emphasised and broadly disseminated *material*-piety practices, enriched by Symeon with additional symbolic connotations through a "complementary selectivity", the body's two dimensions are pushed to extremes – thus clearly replying to the "demon-faced" eastern and western dualists. In this way, on the one hand, he warns the believers to obliterate the body's biological terms – the hygienic one included –, by "surmounting their flesh" and by leading an ascetic life, trembling with the "eternal fear" of hell⁸³ and being distressed by grief and repentance; on the other, addressing the "pure" (καθαροί) believers who aspire to spiritually cleanse their "body and soul",⁸⁴ he acknowledges a kind of spiritual sublimation to those who corporeally "enjoy the divine flash, that is to say, gaze at God" through divine *energeiai* and become God (θεόπται, θέωσις) by *grace* not by "nature" – a clear hint to Hurufi mystic preaching.⁸⁵ In other words, Symeon, by admonishing believers the mystic perfumed corporeal "divine love" experience – morally superior to the "lust" allegedly enjoyed by Dualists and Sunni Muslims – and a spiritual salvation, in reality, seeks to sublimate the wider masses' extreme penury/famine, to tame social wrath and despair and to legalize the prohibition of any satisfaction, thus, assuring the church's dominance and relieving the state's social concerns.

Such a contribution to the mystic body-soul theology acquires a timely significance with far-reaching repercussions. By representing the controversial incarnation issue as a dual-character fundamental episode included in a dual cosmic order, Symeon tries to legalise it and also to adjust it anew by connecting it to the divine-*energeiai* symbolism.⁸⁶ Thus, he replies to previous

82 Symeon, *De euchelaeo*, col. 520; 229 "ἐνεργεῖ".

83 Symeon, *Dialogus contra Haereses*, col. 117; *ODB*, III, pp. 1981–2.

84 On "νήψις" and "προσευχή" ("ἡ ἱερὰ δυνάς καὶ μητρὸς τῶν ἀρετῶν"), *Περὶ νήψεως καὶ προσευχῆς* (1317) and *Περὶ νήψεως καὶ νίψεως* by Theoleptos of Philadelphia, Gregory Palamas's teacher, see Gregoropoulos, I.K., "Ἡ νήψη κατὰ το Θεόληπτο Φιλαδελφείας (1283–1322)" [Sobriety according to Theoleptus of Philadelphia], *Γρηγόριος ο Παλαμάς*, 741 (1992), pp. 251–2, 260, "κοσμικοὶ ἔρωτες".

85 Balfour, *Συμεών Έργα θεολογικά*, pp. 204–5, "Ἰνα καὶ ἡμεῖς θεοὶ κατὰ φύσιν ἢ θεάνθρωποι τελεσθῶμεν ἢ υἱοὶ θεοῦ φύσει; Οὐδαμῶς· ἀλλὰ κατὰ χάριν [...] διὰ τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν [...] Υἱοῦ", p. 225, "οἱ ὑπὲρ τὸ σῶμα γενόμενοι". Cf. Balivet, *Romanie*, p. 148.

86 For example, the perception of god's essence was a topic explained by Manuel to the impressed *mouterizis* (= *müdderris*), his interlocutor in Ankara (1390/1), *Manuel II. Palaiologos Dialoge mit einem Muslim*, p. 338.

monotheistic synthesis already circulating (like that of Fazlullah, see n.72), but, in particular, he provides clarifications to the Dualists, Jews'/Jewdaizers' and Sunni Muslims' challenging of Christ's Incarnation as a Christian peculiarity; on the basis of Christ's two *physeis* and in accordance with the body's "imperishability" and man's *theosis*, he tries to empower the mystic Christian belief and to make it attractive to heteroclite believers already aware of "man's divinization" and Jesus's superiority, namely the Sufi Isawi and Hurufi Muslims with whom the Christian masses had jointly revolted – an alarming clash closely bound up with the church's concerns and Manuel's political stakes. Additionally, by codifying the material/spiritual symbolic sign-system and particularly by representing baptism, confession, repentance and "holy myron" as "purifying baths", Symeon attempts to heal the stigma of filthiness weighing on the Eastern Christians, incessantly put forward by Sunni Muslims. As for the Westerners, he agrees with the Muslims that they are "filthy" (see n.58). Thus, at the peak of the political radicalization of the Christian-Islamic mystic syncretism, the ardent hesychast archbishop further enhances the hesychasts' appropriation of the popular, corporeal/material, perception of the divinity aiming at gathering the deviant Christian flock; simultaneously, he codifies accordingly the mystic language, having in mind the aforementioned persecuted Sufi groups, i.e. the hesychasts' "συνασκηταί", the zahid/ζεχχέται – Doukas's *monochytones* or *toyrkokalogeroi*.⁸⁷ Generally, in view of the ongoing Ottoman/Sunni dominance, Symeon adjusts the mystic piety model to a Christian-universalism – respective to the Sufi one –⁸⁸ in order to bridge a wider space than Romania and even the former Byzantine Commonwealth, where religious syncretism had long been experienced.

Yet, at a juncture of unprecedented upheavals, Symeon of Thessaloniki, by highlighting the timeless mystic rituality in an attempt to immobilize rather body and society, indoctrinates a morally normative and politically abortive eschatological fear.

87 An illustrative paradigm is the old Cretan co-anchorite (συνασκητής) of the aforementioned Börklüce Mustafa who revolted in Karaburun, Chios, and was sentenced to death (1416): Doukas, *Ιστορία*, pp. 112 ff.; Balivet, Michel, "Un 'foux en Christ' au Concile de Florence: Quelques remarques sur les «Μονοχίτωνες» Chrétiens et Musulmans au XVe siècle", in Balivet, Michel, *Autours des Ottomans, Français, Mameluks, Grecs XIVe–XIXe siècles* (Istanbul: Isis, 2011), pp. 53–8; Khoury, *Théologiens byzantins*, p. 287, "ζεχχέτης" = ησυχαστής.

88 Melikoff, Irène, "Univerlisme et gnosticisme dans les heterodoxies du Proche et du Moyen-Orient", in Melikoff, Irène, *Au Banquet des Quarante Exploration au Coeur du Bektachisme-Alevisme* (Istanbul: Isis, 2001), pp. 135–56. On other hesychasts' conciliating tradition, Balivet, *Romanie*, pp. 150–78.

The Medieval Aftermath

By the endorsement of the anti-Latin Patriarchate, soon after 1453, within the Ottoman empire's mechanisms, the mystic version of Orthodoxy, the so-called *Palamism* (named by the aforementioned archbishop of Thessaloniki who initiated the corporeal experience of gazing at the Light of Mount Tabor) was provided with greater dynamism. During the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries the ecclesiastic prelates and Christian *timar* holders functioned as intermediates between the Ottoman state and the multilingual *reaya*. By monopolizing God's truth within the Ottoman theocratic society and keeping a watchful eye on the almost constantly unified flock, the Great Church monitored the mystic piety practices and world view analysed above.

In bringing this article to a conclusion, it is worthwhile to refer to a few paradigms illustrating the long endurance of the embodied religious stances discussed above. Firstly, two (Arab and Turkish) fossilized sayings, particularly illustrative for the issue under discussion, are: "Purification is half the faith"⁸⁹ and "Cleanness derives from piety" (*temizlik imandan gelir*) conveying the Islamic origin of the fundamental purity idea. In turn, both phrases call for comparison with two Greek contradictory sayings, the first, rather old-fashioned nowadays, popularizes the afore-analysed church's bath prescription: "On Wednesday and Friday do not cut your nails nor on Sunday take a bath, if you want to progress". The second one, still often heard, identifies cleanness rather with the wealthy strata than with religion: "Cleanness is the half of nobility" (*αρχοντιά*), showing that bathing/cleansing is perceived rather as a secular and socially determined matter, irrelevant to person's piety – hence, obviously ensuing pleasure and delight.

In order to illustrate our comparison further, a few references are also worthy of mentioning, since they provide food for further thought on the nineteenth-century tradition versus modernity correlation. The widely diffused Christian stereotype of Muslims' morally unclean body was challenged by Vlasios Gavrilidis, originating from Istanbul, a liberal and proprietor of the Athenian daily *Akropolis*. He is, surely, the one who translated the extracts from a leaflet, which had recently appeared in the Ottoman capital and entitled *Religious Admonitions of the Muslims from the Hygienic Point of View*, by the military doctor Ahmed Ceyhun. Gavrilidis in his article ("Hygienic and Mohammad Admonitions on Health of the Islamic religion. Why Turks are healthy", 15 May 1892), informed his readers about Muslims' mentality on hygiene, thus included in a traditional frame. His idea, launched during the

89 Hillenbrand, *Crusades*, pp. 257 and 284.

mounting secularist process within the nation states and the public debate on the sanitation of large cities, can be regarded as going hand in hand with the social-economic upheavals that did away with religiously defined embodied practices. However, Gavrilidis's – no less than Ahmed Ceyhan's – cleanness discourse raises the question of whether both intellectuals' viewpoint conveys a modern stance or a version of religiously defined secularism, i.e. a case of Balkan traditionality – nowadays described as backwardness.

In the early twentieth century, a radical solution for the hotly-debated cleanness issue emerged. P. Nirvanas, doctor and writer, well informed on the current European trends and practices, dedicated one of his daily columns in the, then, liberal newspaper *Estia* (Λαϊκά λουτρά, 10 June 1916) to the "Popular baths". In the column he debates with a doctor who is attempting to find an effective way to accustom the masses to bathe *gratis* at the public baths. Their conversation goes as follows, when the baptism-unction issue arises:

"–But, then, what about the tradition of the Holy Myron?", he asks.

"–This is a nonsense, the doctor continued. [...] The Holy Myron tradition, I think, is a pretext, but even if it exists, it is high time we put an end to it, by offering water and soap to the people".

Avra Theodoropoulou, a liberal feminist, expresses herself more clear. Coming back from a Congress on feminism hold in Belgrade, she admires the public baths at Drachevo, a village close to Skopje. She recalls the Greek tradition relating to the same embodied Christian practice and bursts out with indignation, when writing her travel impressions: "How jealous I was! Hot and cold baths, for free, during winter and summer too. This is how the peasants use to bathe without fear lest the holy myron (!) goes away with the water".⁹⁰

90 "Φεμινισμός εις την Γιουγκοσλαβίαν" [Feminism in Yugoslavia], *Η Πρωΐα* (Athens, 7 June 1931).