

# Greek Monasticism in Southern Italy

The Life of Neilos in Context

Edited by BARBARA CROSTINI and INES ANGELI MURZAKU



ROUTLEDGE



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This volume was conceived with the double aim of providing a background and a further context for the new Dumbarton Oaks English translation of the *Life of St Neilos from Rossano*, founder of the monastery of Grottaferrata near Rome in 1004. Reflecting this double aim, the volume is divided into two parts. Part I, entitled “Italo-Greek Monasticism,” builds the background to the *Life of St Neilos* by taking several multi-disciplinary approaches to the geographical area, history and literature of the region denoted as Southern Italy. Part II, entitled “The *Life of St Neilos*,” offers close analyses of the text of Neilos’s hagiography from socio-historical, textual, and contextual perspectives. Together, the two parts provide a solid introduction and offer in-depth studies with original outcomes and wide-ranging bibliographies. Using monasticism as a connecting thread between the various zones and St Neilos as the figure who walked over mountains and across many cultural divides, the essays in this volume span all regions and localities and try to trace thematic arcs between individual testimonies. They highlight the multicultural context in which Southern Italian Christians lived and their way of negotiating differences with Arab and Jewish neighbors through a variety of sources, and especially in saints’ lives.

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*byzantin en Italie* (with Jean-Marie Martin and Vivien Prigent): I. *La fabrique documentaire*, Rome, 2011; II. *Les cadres juridiques et sociaux et les institutions publiques*, Rome, 2012; III. *Décor monumental, objets, tradition textuelle*, Rome, 2015 (with Sulamith Brodbeck).

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*tra Tardoantico e Medioevo*, by A. Capone, Città del Vaticano 2015, 215–239; Fozio, *Biblioteca*, intr. L. Canfora, by N. Bianchi-C. Schiano *et al.*, Pisa 2016.

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# Introduction

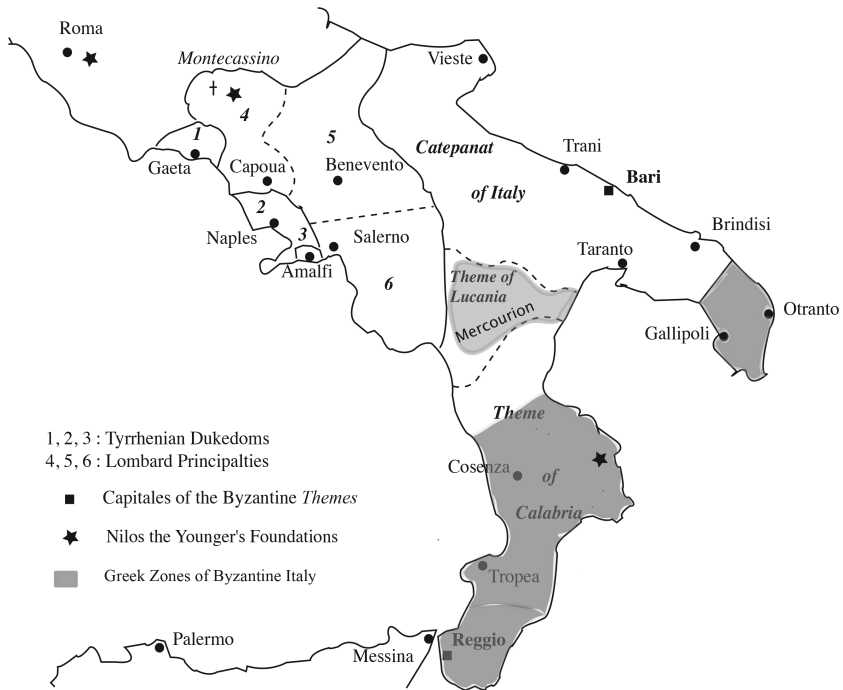
*Barbara Crostini*

This volume was conceived with the double aim of providing a background and a further context for the new English translation of the *Life of St Neilos from Rossano* (*Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca* and *Novum Auctarium* 1370), founder of the monastery of Grottaferrata near Rome in 1004. The translation has been prepared by the volume's co-editor Ines Angeli Murzaku and by one of the volume's contributors, Raymond Capra, together with Douglas Milewski, for the Dumbarton Oaks series *Medieval Texts in Translation*.<sup>1</sup> Both scholars work in a US higher education environment where the paucity of available literature on topics related to this text is sorely felt. Thus, the endeavor of putting together an English-language volume that could reflect the state-of-the-art international scholarship on this particular region, time and subject was conceived and developed, and this volume of collected essays is its final outcome.

Reflecting this double aim, the volume is divided into two parts. Part I, entitled 'Italo-Greek Monasticism', builds the background to the *Life of St Neilos* by taking several multi-disciplinary approaches to the geographical area, history and literature of the region denoted as Southern Italy. Part II, entitled 'The *Life of St Neilos*', comes closer to an analysis of the text of Neilos's hagiography from socio-historical, textual and contextual perspectives. Together, the two parts provide a solid introduction and offer in-depth studies with original outcomes and wide-ranging bibliographies. We have been fortunate in receiving contributions from leading scholars in this field and believe that we have achieved our goal of creating a volume that will disseminate their work more broadly and thereby stimulate further research.

Southern Italy (see Figure I.1) is a complex reality both geographically and historically. It is not only regional through its being on the margins of the Italian peninsula and in-between the Eastern Byzantine and the Western Latin empires, but also compartmentalized as it is further fractioned within itself into a number of individual local realities that defeat attempts at more general characterizations. Such divisions, territorial and political (and therefore cultural), have in turn generated very specialized

*Political Map of Southern Italy at the Beginning of the 11th Century  
(Before the Norman Conquest)*



*Figure I.1 Political map of Southern Italy at the beginning of the 11th century  
(before the Norman conquest)*

'Convivencia between Christians: the Greek and Latin Communities of Byzantine South Italy (9th–11th centuries)', in *Negotiating Co-Existence: Communities, Cultures and 'Convivencia' in Byzantine Society, Selected Papers from the European Science Foundation Exploratory Workshop, Dublin, 1–3 October 2010*, co-edited with Sergio La Porta, Bochumer Altertumswissenschaftliches Colloquium 96 (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2013), pp. 203–220.

Source: Annick Peters-Custot (Saint-Etienne/Lyon)

areas of study, which, with few exceptions, have belonged to Italian researchers often closely identified with those local realities. While the rich and valuable contributions of these schools of research are reflected by the authors within this volume as well as in each chapter's extensive bibliography, the approach taken here has been as wide-ranging and inclusive as possible. Using monasticism as a connecting thread between the various zones and hinging on St Nilos as the figure who walked over mountains and across many cultural divides, the essays in this volume

span all regions and localities and try to trace thematic arcs between individual testimonies.

The fascination of this territory has consisted, from the early middle ages, precisely in this unique encounter of languages, ethnicities, religions and civilizations: from the ninth-century Arab conquests in Sicily and Calabria,<sup>2</sup> to the extensive Jewish presence in the south of Puglia,<sup>3</sup> the indigenous Byzantine Christians had a lot to learn, to cope with, and define themselves against, even before thinking about any distinction with their Latin co-religionists,<sup>4</sup> who later came embodied in the shape of conquering Norman powers.<sup>5</sup> All these realities are reflected in the volume through the mirrors of hagiographical narrative and material remains: in the first section, as broad background to the *Life of St Neilos*; more closely in the second part, through a closer look at the episodes of this saint's *Life*. While the *Life of St Neilos* gives us a snapshot of late tenth- to early eleventh-century Calabria, Campania and Latium, other saints' *Lives* and their cults offer rich sources of information for intercultural interaction over a vast and varied territory.<sup>6</sup>

Part I begins with four grounding essays. The Reverend David Hester sets out the spiritual outline of Southern Italian monasticism by drawing out thematically the strands of observance and asceticism found in the hagiographies. Based on seventeen texts relating to sixteen different saints, Hester identifies a pattern of evolution in the 'cycle of growth in monastic perfection which can be divided into four major parts: the call to monastic life, the importance of a spiritual Father, the disciple as an apprentice to a Father, and the gradual growth in monastic perfection.' He further singles out the areas for such perfection along the lines of the biblical and patristic models that are held up to the monk in his journey. While some of the steps towards the attainment of spiritual maturity consist of virtues such as humility and detachment, other features are primarily practical, consisting of activities such as prayer, work, and correct interaction with both people and nature.

The normative aspect of monastic life is brought home by the detailed survey of the extant rules, or *typika*, redacted for South Italian coenobia, often by the respective founders, but at times anonymously. Cristina Torre presents the evidence, including some aspects of manuscript transmission, problems of authorship and chronology, testing traditional regional divisions and probing the texts for their sources and impact. These documents take us to the heart of the regulated activities of important monasteries such as the Patir at Rossano in Calabria, the St Savior *de lingua Phari* near Messina, the monastery of Casole near Otranto, and, curiously, to the distant island of Pantelleria where a special institution, at times sounding like a place for detention rather than spiritual solace, is documented for us (most probably) by a text peculiarly extant only in Slavonic translation. One can carry out comparative work between prescriptions regarding a set of common issues, such as liturgical observance,

diet and ownership of goods, in order to yield a profile of the coenobitic ideal most suitable to the specific case. But it is often in the degree of detail that these documents vary, leaving us to some extent surprised by the minutiae that were worthy of consideration from time to time, and wondering too quite how these rules matched each reality. An interesting example of such discrepancy is highlighted by Torre in the instructions for the election of the new abbot after the death of Gregory, abbot of St Philip of Fragalà. While the rules lay down that the community should wait up to three years for the return from Jerusalem of the abbot appointed as successor, in practice Gregory appointed his successor himself on the point of death, thus overstepping both the rule and his own previous choice of successor. Travel outside the community is an interesting case of tension between the rules of stability and belonging and the custom of pilgrimages, about which we have many accounts from hagiographies. In discussing the text of Casole, an Apulian foundation famous for his erudite abbot, Nicholas, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, Torre stresses the symbolic import of food rituals and fasting, that show how this monastery is indebted to Byzantine customs beyond its literary dependence on Stoudite traditions. Torre succeeds in presenting an ample panorama of monastic rules without omitting details, while at the same time being able to point to the broader implications regarding allegiance to specific spiritual traditions, as far as these can be determined and discriminated from each other.

Vera von Falkenhausen accompanies us beyond the limits of the deepest South, across to Campania and Southern Latium, and we could hardly ask for a better guide. Her expertise in the field is witnessed by innumerable citations of her work in each bibliography; yet one admires the freshness of the approach as in each contribution von Falkenhausen takes a different angle and delivers new evidence with unfailing sharpness. Here she chooses to take us on an exploration of the many foundations, monastic and ecclesiastical, of a region that will be key to the transition for St Neilos from Calabria to his final destination, Grottaferrata near Rome. With characteristic assurance, von Falkenhausen handles the documentary evidence and demonstrates her central concern, that the phenomenon of monastic communities in those areas reflected a constant flux of immigrants into these regions, from the South, and, in turn, from Eastern areas that belonged to Byzantium. Like today, people come to new regions with a cultural baggage that does not easily fall away even in new circumstances. The struggle to maintain the Greek language and rituals is successful so long as the foundations could keep a substantial independence with respect to larger local institutions, such as Latin Benedictine houses. Gregorian legislation against private foundations at the end of the eleventh century and its subsequent implementation in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries resulted in a loss of independence, which impacted negatively on the preservation of Greek customs. Thus,

while the absorption into Latin customs was not the primary aim of such reforms, which primarily sought to counteract the power of the laity over monastic and ecclesiastical property, its side effects were deleterious to the Greek ethnic minorities in those regions.

A salutary reminder that not all that is Italo-Greek is necessarily monastic comes from the voice of art-historian Lorenzo Riccardi, whose presentation of monumental art and architecture from the territory of Calabria is a fascinating journey into the material remains of the region. Riccardi points out with honesty the often insoluble difficulties of distinguishing between monastic and cathedral architectures, especially when keeping in mind the transitory character of some foundations and the possible change of destination and use over time of the individual structures. In monumental decoration, monastic saints are selected as subjects besides sacred scenes. We encounter an image of St Neilos in the church of St Hadrian at San Demetrio Corone, the locality where Neilos first built a community on his own private property. Even though the present extant structure does not reflect the initial foundation, which was, we are told by the sources, intentionally poor and precariously built, Neilos's presence in the frescos is a tangible commemoration of that experience. Riccardi gathers for us the images of monastics extant in various Calabrian churches, such as the pair of Phantinos and (possibly) Neilos of the church at Scalea, by some identified as the grange monastery St Nicholas *de Siracusa*, all the while methodologically cautioning between too readily associating any monastic presence with a sure sign of exclusive monastic usage. Lay and aristocratic patronage, as well as other forms of destination, need to be taken into account for this region as well. The quality of the paintings also provides an important indication of the background to their execution. Their dating, depending mainly upon stylistic appreciation, is often one of the most problematic aspects, despite being fundamental for a contextualized interpretation.

A modern approach to the study of hagiography, departing from the Bollandists' lists and archives, has sought to understand the nature of such narratives beyond their historical truth-value. New systematizations of primary materials and detailed studies include socio-economic and psychological perspectives, amply made use of in this volume. A corpus of "about forty texts" from Southern Italy is conveniently listed by Mario Re in a recent handbook,<sup>7</sup> and it is opportune to warn the uninitiated about the many cases of homonymy only partly clarified by the further designations of a saint through his/her locality or nickname, since these can themselves vary from time to time, and from author to author. Mastering such corpus is not something quickly or easily done, and relying on the work of scholars who have dedicated years of study to a few of these texts reveals the many problems and issues that they contain.<sup>8</sup> On the positive side, their narrative textures and strategies offer an inexhaustible source for ever more subtle interpretations. This richness alone would

warrant a wider circulation for this literature. It is not clear, however, that distinctive and all-encompassing traits can be gathered that satisfactorily define Southern Italian hagiography as such. Mario Re discusses this problem, and finds some mileage in the characterization of Southern Italian saints as being close to the land and the people who worked the land, that is, as essentially rural rather than urban saints. These saints tied to their landscape often inhabit its most impervious places, such as the rock-cut cave dwellings still visible today. Yet while the Italo-Greek saint is almost invariably also a monk – to the extent that sanctity and monasticism merge indistinguishably –, the heremital vocation is only one aspect of this choice. More frequently, the existence of communities surrounding these saints forms both the background and the outcome of the saint's activity. These communities, however, can be large or small, established with a progeny (as for Bartholomew of Simeri) or remaining ephemeral and shifting, as was even St Neilos's own community before moving northwards and finally finding some longer-lasting stability at Grottaferrata. Stephanos Efthymiades emphasizes the social role of saints in negotiating Christian ideals for the laity.<sup>9</sup> For example, the interaction between medicine and supernatural healing practices is a recurrent challenge in many of these narratives, including that about St Neilos. The saint's wisdom shines when discriminating between magical healing, respite from bodily pain and true salvation, often not by displaying a theoretically articulate orthodoxy, but through simple actions performed in the humble knowledge of belonging to Christ as the only true healer.

Aspects of the local saint's interaction with the varied cultural realities of these regions are thoroughly explored by the essays in this volume. Adele Cilento concentrates on the family nucleus as creating special networks among the saint's relatives and as expanding links to a local, but also a more distant, community. By analyzing the tenth-century *Lives* of Sabas, Christopher and Makarios, she emphasizes how such networks replace the idea of severing oneself from family ties for ascetic purposes. While detachment may be good for spiritual life, it is in fact in the mutual care that parents and siblings take of each other in a hostile world that the tenuous shoot of the love for God can flourish and find a concrete outcome in a saintly life. Resistance to Islam is part of the picture, of course, and is brought peculiarly near by the oriental name of Sabas's mother, Kali. That the author of this triple *Life* is named as Orestes, patriarch of Jerusalem, testifies on the other hand to the spreading networks of fame departing from Southern Italy, and reminds one of the influx of Palestinian monks into those regions around the ninth and tenth centuries.

The question of influences in style and rituals, and the balancing act that the local realities made between this ideal of Byzantine practice and the more mixed local customs, influenced also by the closeness to Latin-rite places and Rome itself, is a recurrent issue in the assessment of the region and its inhabitants. In the examples from Italo-Greek hagiographies

analyzed by Gioacchino Strano, we encounter the thaumaturgic powers of St Cyprian of Reggio as well as the miraculous escape of Luke, bishop of Isola, from the fire which attacked the place where he was celebrating the eucharist in the Byzantine rite. This episode can be considered a concrete reverberation of the theological issues concerning the understanding of the eucharistic sacrifice that were one of the dividing factors in the 1054 schism between the churches.<sup>10</sup> The clerical focus of this latter hagiography can also be viewed in light of the more general phenomenon of the professionalization of the clergy, spreading everywhere in the eleventh century, and affecting sacramental practices. The third saint chosen by Strano, Bartholomew of Simeri, founder of the Patir monastery near Rossano, opens up the world of Southern Italy to the interaction with Byzantium. Discussing the problems of exact chronology regarding Bartholomew's trip to Constantinople and his meeting with the emperor, Strano evaluates the journey as the enactment of that connection of the Italo-Greek communities with the heart of the Byzantine Empire, whence Bartholomew returned with icons and books, furnishings for his new foundations. As Riccardi also noted, this influx in turn stimulates and inspires local production, not least in the area of manuscript copying and illustration. Riccardi touches on the peculiarities of this local production, so indicative of indigenous cultural choices and aesthetic horizons, and a sign of the literature available to the monks in this region.<sup>11</sup>

Bartholomew of Simeri is also one of the protagonists of Enrico Morini's account of how the prestige of Italo-Greek saints, such as Saint Phantinos, undoubtedly spread to Mount Athos. Morini introduces the figure of Phantinos' disciple, Saint Nikephoros the Naked, who practiced his ascetic feats on the Holy Mountain. Despite subsequent traditions preserving nicknames such as 'Italian' and 'Calabrian' which would indicate a Southern Italian origin, exactly who came from where is not always certain. Athonite monasticism, which was at that time being developed according to the rule of Athanasios the Athonite, forms the changing backdrop to these monks's *Lives*, in a climate where the tension between solitary and cenobitic forms of monasticism was still – and perhaps always remained – rife with resonances. Signs of strife between competing ideals are reflected back onto issues of ethnicity and provenance, as the documents from Athos analyzed by Morini attest. Nevertheless, a continued interest of this central monastic community (or rather, federation of communities) in the best products of the Italo-Greek experience of ascesis is both attested and continues down to modern times.

This first more general part is concluded by the essay by Claudio Schiano on Nicholas of Otranto, whom we have already mentioned above as the most famous abbot of Casole in Puglia. This exceptionally learned monk is presented as a singular witness to the complex relations that had to be negotiated between papal obedience and a deep understanding and sense of belonging to the Byzantine tradition. Nicholas, too, traveled to

Constantinople, and it is interesting to witness that in the twelfth century the traffic of books might well have gone both ways. Schiano's study focuses on the textual tradition of the *Tria syntagmata*, delineating the context of its bold and original pronouncements on dogmas and canon law made, however, in a spirit of constructive confrontation rather than sheer hostile controversy.<sup>12</sup> Thus Nicholas is well-placed as a mediator with Rome and intercedes through his informed and learned perorations for the preservation of Greek custom all the while remaining within the Roman jurisdiction, as Schiano fascinatingly exposes. Although happening at a particular time and place, Nicholas's intervention can be taken as symbolic of that constant renegotiation of boundaries and allegiances that each bishop and community experienced in the area of Southern Italy between the ninth and thirteenth centuries.

With Part II, we turn our focus more narrowly on the text of the *Life of St Neilos*. The Greek text was edited by Germano Giovanelli in 1976, but a new edition, revised after the meticulous work by Enrica Follieri, is in press thanks to her students, Francesco D'Aiuto and Andrea Luzzi, the latter also a contributor to this volume. One by one, we encounter in this section the themes already broached in the opening part, but through different sources. We begin with issues of interfaith and intercultural interaction, with the Jewish and Muslim world respectively, in the essays by Giancarlo Lacerenza and Alessandro Vanoli. Lacerenza takes us step by step through the purportedly anti-Jewish passages of the *Life*, which are mainly known through the episode(s) of the encounter with the figure of the Jewish doctor, Shabbetai Donnolo. Lacerenza is able to expose the biblical and other traditional references that underlie the literary construction of these passages in the hagiography, and to at least partially explain through these references the otherwise puzzling situations described as historical in the *Life*. Particularly significant is the episode in which a man whose relative had killed a Jew is threatened with crucifixion. Neilos intercedes for this innocent man by addressing the Jewish judge with an exhortation to honor the Old Testament law, casting the terms of this law in seemingly ambiguous, but ultimately biblical, terms. The anachronistic nature of crucifixion as a punishment pushes the meaning onto a different plane of reasoning, where, however, mention of these references still operates a semantic transfer and allows for a meaningful exchange and outcome between the parties concerned. It is rather our problem to decode quite how these relationships functioned, but that they did take place outside blanket exchanges of prejudiced insults is a tribute to the shared dignity of both parties in the workings of this mixed society.

The Arabs in Alessandro Vanoli's contribution are present as traders, as well as enemies to the safety of Christians in the region. Using primary Arab sources, Vanoli builds a geography of interaction and exchanges around nevralgic sea-ports, such as Amantea, that acted as trading stops

in the routes from Africa to Northern Europe, and from Spain to the East. Vanoli also stresses the daily presence of Muslims in the region, and recalls the building of a mosque in tenth-century Reggio. This fact creates a significant parallel between Reggio and Constantinople, where similarly the use of a mosque (*masgida*) for Muslim prisoners and merchants is recorded in the sources from that time.<sup>13</sup> Even this detail separates out the reality of Southern Italy from that of the rest of the Italian peninsula, and further north in Europe, and makes the experience of its population closer to the cultural diversity of the Byzantines at the heart of the Empire.

The next two papers are more narrowly focused on questions of interpretation. Raymond Capra writes an extended commentary note on one single lexeme used by Neilos, ‘ceramiclast,’ or in transliteration ‘chytroklastes,’ eviscerating all the possible implications for this *bapax legomenon* invented by the saint, or by his hagiographer. Capra singles out the two parts that make this new word for deep exploration, ‘chytra’ and ‘klazw,’ each component explored through the recesses of ancient Greek usage and yielding a sacred ritual background for the ‘broken pot’ at the center of the episode from Neilos’s *Life*, where a disciple’s carelessness is reprimanded by the saint. The assonance with ‘iconoclast’ is also noted by Capra as a sign of typological stigmatization of a fault, with wider implications. This essay is a good example of how philological investigation, even when limited to one curious word, can open up a world of resonances and significances for those who take the time to look into the value of linguistic choices.

Andrea Luzzi certainly belongs to this group of careful philologists. Like his teacher, Enrica Follieri, he can pause and ask of the text all the possible nuances and implications. The passage, or rather, the lacuna in the transmitted Greek text that he is analyzing for this volume is one such instance. With sure hand, Luzzi leads us through the hazards of manuscript transmission, and warns against easy conclusions when looking at material evidence. The now-missing leaves in a Grottaferrata manuscript contained a passage whose contents are now only preserved in the Latin translation by Cardinal Guglielmo Sireto (d. 1585). Scholars who have examined the matter, among them Follieri herself and recently Stefano Caruso, have put forward the hypothesis of voluntary curtailing – in other words, of intentional censoring – of the text, due to the compromising contents of the episode. Nevertheless, Luzzi re-examines both the context of the passage, and the practical dynamics of manuscript transmission, indicating that cause of the lacuna is unlikely to have been anything other than accidental, and, further, that the compromising passage with allegedly homoerotic overtones is in fact much less damning in this sense than previously thought. Ultimately, Luzzi’s analysis is convincing. Surely, one learns a lot in the process about the transmission of the *Life* and its readership by cardinals, scholars and the wider audience of monastic and lay communities interested in the *Life* of this saint.

With David Kalhous and Annick Peters-Custot we return to encounters between cultures. The Northern European saint, Adalbert of Prague, meets St Neilos in Rome, but the contours of this trip, its chronology and its causes are far from clear from the complex state in which the sources have reached us. Kalhous invokes a re-evaluation of the evidence. Adalbert is depicted as a restless person, likely of noble origins, who could have served as the bishop to his home church had he not in fact desired even greater challenges. One is struck by the fact that, despite his trip south, Adalbert honors the spoils of the great Benedict in the Northern French abbey of Fleury, while in the hymns that Neilos dedicates to saint Benedict, written in the shadow of Montecassino, it is here in Campania that Benedict's body lies, incontrovertibly.<sup>14</sup> As Peters-Custot shows, Neilos is imbued of the local reality of Valleluce, and moves along with Benedict in the landscape of Latium and Campania. His Greek poems in honor of Benedict, light of the Latins and legislator of all monks, play the part of advertising Montecassino as the saint's final resting place, and thus as a place for pilgrimage for the whole of Southern Italy, conveniently also located on the way to Rome. It is not surprising that Benedict is known to the East, as his *Life*, included in the *Dialogues* by Pope Gregory the Great, was translated into Greek by Pope Zacharias soon after its composition.<sup>15</sup> Peters-Custot examines the relationship between the Greek *Life* and the verses, pointing out similarities and differences due to authorial choices as well as genre constraints. In the parallel Greek text (from Gassisi's 1906 edition) and English translation that she offers as an appendix to her paper, she helpfully includes references to this source in the margin.

From Montecassino, the final two papers lead us on to Neilos's final destination and "long-lasting" oeuvre, namely, the foundation of the monastery of Grottaferrata on the hills surrounding Rome, known as the 'Castelli Romani.' The Byzantine rite monastery placed close to the see of the papacy is still functioning today, preserving in its library a treasury of Greek manuscripts, among which many witnesses to the activities of Southern Italian monks and their liturgy, and still living a Byzantine liturgical tradition in the architecture, decoration and rituals of its church.<sup>16</sup> Ines Angeli Murzaku is very keen to emphasize the foreignness of Neilos in his constant moving forward to new territories, embodying the ideal of *xeniteia* that makes of this life, and of its various adventures, only a temporary transition towards the eternal abodes. Yet while living this idea of transitoriness, Neilos did establish a heritage that outlasted him. Neilos's progeny comes to fulfillment in the *Life* of his disciple and fourth abbot of Grottaferrata, Bartholomew, whose figure is presented in the contribution by Angela Prinzi. Prinzi is sensitive in discerning the connections between hagiographical and hymnographical traditions, raising methodological issues that are applicable to this case, as well as to others (such as Neilos's treatment of Benedict). Bartholomew's cult found

new impetus in the thirteenth century, when John of Rossano was commissioned to write a new set of texts for his celebration, still extant in John's autograph manuscript at Grottaferrata. Prinzi takes us back and forth between the Rossanese origins, reflected onto Bartholomew from Neilos, and the new place of Grottaferrata, where Bartholomew lived the first moves of the new community together with Neilos, all the while looking at how the tradition about him was retrospectively enriched and modified *ad hoc* to fit the new needs of the community. Emblematic is the example of the interaction between Saint Bartholomew and Pope Benedict IX (Thephylact of Tusculum), where the pope (then also anti-pope) is not only helped by the saint to repent of his sin, but also led to join the monastic community after renouncing the pontificate. With the subtle manipulation of the details of the story of Bartholomew, we are led by Prinzi full-circle to the living tradition of Italo-Greek monasticism, from its cultural roots in Calabria to its vital expansion and sustenance at the doors of Rome.

There is no doubt, I think, that Southern Italy acted as a pivot between Latin and Greek Christianity because of its privileged position, which rendered its inhabitants and its monastics imbued with a double tradition, as well as with a deeper understanding of co-habitation between cultures and religions.<sup>17</sup> So much transpires clearly from the pages of this volume, where many different aspects and details of such variety come to the fore from the pages dedicated to the description of the lives of a few special men, the Italo-Greek monastic saints. Towering among them is St Neilos, whose special charism consisted not only in his great asceticism leading to all the signs of spiritual maturity and wisdom, but also in his capacity for interaction with all the surrounding realities of his region, and beyond. We hope to stimulate the readers to continue in the discovery of his *Life* as a first-hand guide to Southern Italian Byzantine monasticism.

## Notes

- 1 Murzaku, Capra and Milewski 2017.
- 2 For an accessible introduction, see Kreuz 1991.
- 3 Safran 2014 provides wide and fascinating evidence for Jewish and Christian everyday interaction and ritual practices.
- 4 Peter-Custot 2013.
- 5 The northern European origin of the Normans, and the international implications of their expansion, makes them a more popular subject in scholarship, while reserving an important place for Southern Italy in the picture. See Chibnall 2006, 75–103; Loud and Metcalfe 2002.
- 6 Oldfield 2014, esp. 107–16.
- 7 Re 2011, 248–53, with extensive bibliography at 253–8.
- 8 Exemplary has been the search for meaning and historico-cultural contextualization in the metrical *Life* of Leo of Catania (BHG 981c) by Augusta Acconcia Longo. See the posthumous article discussing the problems of

- interpretation as well as the ethics of scholarly methodology, Acconcia Longo 2015.
- 9 Eftymiades 2011.
- 10 Smith III 1978.
- 11 For a summary of the problems of attribution of manuscripts to Southern Italy, with both past and current criteria, see Hutter 2006. Hutter's Corpus of illustrated Greek manuscripts from Southern Italy now preserved at the Vatican Library is awaited. For the Otrantine production, see Lucà 2012. For the production of the later period, see the list of manuscripts assembled in Arnesano 2008. Much work remains to be done, and this field too is very complex and defies simple classifications.
- 12 For a comprehensive history of the issue of papal primacy between Catholic and Orthodox, see now Siewicki 2017.
- 13 Woods 2013.
- 14 On the contours of this prolonged controversy as to the true resting place of Benedict's body, see Galdi 2014.
- 15 See also the review in Crostini 2003.
- 16 Parenti 2005.
- 17 Montecassino consciously acted as such a meeting point for exchanges, particularly at the time of abbot Desiderius in the mid-eleventh century. For an essential historical introduction, see Cowdrey 1983.

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Part I

# Italo-Greek monasticism



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# 1 Monastic spirituality of the Italo-Greek monks

*David Hester*

Throughout the three and a half centuries of Italo-Greek monastic life preserved in the surviving *bioi* of the great Italo-Greek spiritual Fathers, a fundamental unity is to be found in this monastic spiritual tradition. The Italo-Greek monks of this period all have the same heroes and all read the same Fathers and monastic legislators. Their heroes are scriptural figures like Moses, Elias, Elisiaos and Job, and great Fathers like Anthony of Egypt, Basil the Great and John Chrysostom. They hear about these men in their reading, in the divine services, and in the teachings of their own spiritual Fathers. These monks also all belong to the same empire and the same Greek Orthodox Church tradition. They are all part of the common Byzantine commonwealth that extended from Asia Minor to Southern Italy. They share in its ideals and its common religious and monastic aspirations. Some of the monks like Elias the Younger, Elias the Speleot, Phantinos the Younger and Bartholomew of Simeri even spent time in the Byzantine East.

In a certain sense it is difficult to present an exact and detailed analysis of the spirituality that underlies the Italo-Greek monastic life. The *bioi* that preserve and present it are not intended to be treatises on spirituality and the spiritual life. However, the *bioi*, while not being synthetic expositions of spiritual theology, do constantly express in their narratives a spiritual ideal and a way of monastic life that is presented for emulation and imitation. Central to this presentation is a cycle of growth in monastic perfection which can be divided into four major parts: the call to monastic life, the importance of a spiritual Father, the disciple as an apprentice to a Father and the gradual growth in monastic perfection. In these accounts, the monk first senses a call to monastic life, then goes to a spiritual Father and learns the monastic life as his disciple, and finally gradually progresses in perfection so that he too may perhaps become a spiritual Father to the next generation of disciples.

## **The call to the monastic life**

In all of the Italo-Greek monastic *bioi* there is a constant mention, both in the case of the great Fathers and for their disciples, of a time in that

person's life in which he is moved to leave his daily way of life and he decides to become a monk. This call may come from outside, either from another monk or from the Scriptures, or through the example of a monk or a monastic community. It may also be a gradual desire that builds up within the individual for the monastic life. It may even come in the form of a dream or a vision. Elias the Speleot is at the Divine Liturgy when a monk comes and stands before him. The monk exhorts him to give up his rich clothing and become a monk. He does not believe this to be possible for him and waits until he is eighteen years old when he is moved by a passage from the Gospel calling him to renounce all his possessions.<sup>1</sup> Sabas the Younger is inspired by the example of his father, Christopher, to join him in his hermitage. His *bios* notes that he is moved to do this because he learned all these things from his father and thus "a divine yearning burned in his heart".<sup>2</sup> John Theristes is moved to begin the monastic life when the bishop who baptized and instructed him tells him about the life of John the Baptist. When he learns that John the Baptist went to live in the desert, he asks if he can do the same, and goes to a koinobion where the monks follow the asceticism of Basil the Great.<sup>3</sup>

For other monks there is an internal desire that grows within them for the monastic life. Philaretos of Seminara is described as having a desire for the monastic life that began in his youth. As a young man, he started asking himself questions about eternal life and the unsound state of the world. He decided that the monastic life is the only way of life that is blessed.<sup>4</sup> Bartholomew of Simeri decides to become a monk as he comes to realize that "nothing which his parents hold sure and stable has importance because of Christ."<sup>5</sup> Again for other monks the call to the monastic life involves dreams or visions. Christopher of Collesano has a dream three times in which the Archangel Michael tells him to go to Ktisma because "God does not want you in the world".<sup>6</sup> Neilos of Rossano, while suffering from a high fever, is given a vision in which he vividly sees death and the future torments that are awaiting the sinner. He is very shaken by this vision and, without saying anything to anyone, leaves his household and goes off to the monasteries of the Merkourion.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the variety of ways in which one is called to the monastic life, the modes of response of those called all bear a similarity: the person must separate from the mundane, renounce their family and possessions, and be given the "yoke of Christ."<sup>8</sup> The *bios* of Elias the Speleot speaks of the need to "separate and not touch the polluted world."<sup>9</sup> In all the *bioi* the world is regarded in a disparaging light. It is held to be unsound, a place of vanity, unstable and passing.<sup>10</sup> This renunciation of the world requires a severing from all blood connections. Philaretos, for example, is seen to refuse even to speak to his own relatives as they pass him by.<sup>11</sup> Elias the Speleot teaches his monks that they must forget their relatives on account of the command of Christ.<sup>12</sup>

The renunciation of the world also requires a renouncing of all possessions. The monks in the *bioi* give away all their possessions and refuse to accept any gifts. Philaretos states that the monastic tonsure is a sign of the stripping of one's self of all things and of contempt for all things that are in the world.<sup>13</sup> Neilos, as his *bios* notes, thinks often about the peace of those who possess nothing and, shortly before his death, is seen to give his only earthly possessions, a few rags, to his disciples.<sup>14</sup> Elias the Younger, to test his disciple Daniel, tells him to throw his only possession, his Psalter, into a swamp. After Daniel does this, he is then told to go back to retrieve it, with Elias noting that poverty must be embraced with zeal.<sup>15</sup>

Monastic life, however, is founded not only on separation and renunciation, but also on a joining and an acceptance. The monk turns from the world to be able to turn more fully to Christ. Neilos tells his friends, when he is about to leave to become a monk, that he has found a beautiful vineyard and must buy it.<sup>16</sup> John Theristes tells his spiritual Fathers that he comes to the monastery because he desires the salvation of his soul.<sup>17</sup> The ideal and goal that is held out for each of these monks is the hope for a future reward. Philaretos reminds his hearers of this when he tells them to remember that all that is in the world is passing, and that their only hope is in the future, in God.<sup>18</sup> Elias the Speleot expresses these thoughts when he states that "the sufferings of the present time are not to be compared to the future glory to be revealed in us."<sup>19</sup>

### The role of the spiritual father

For the one who answers the call to the monastic life, the first step on the way to becoming a monk is that of finding a spiritual Father, a monk known for his holiness and way of living the monastic life. The spiritual Father may be a hermit or may live in a cenobitic community. In each of the *bioi* the spiritual Father is the central figure, and each of these Fathers is noted for his ability to serve as a spiritual guide. Each of the monks described in the *bioi* goes to a spiritual Father to learn the monastic life from someone who is more experienced and who has progressed far in holiness. This is clearly expressed in the *bios* of Elias the Younger, where Elias goes to each of the Fathers on Mount Sinai to learn a different virtue from each one,<sup>20</sup> and in the *bios* of Christopher, where it is noted that he learned different virtues from different Fathers.<sup>21</sup>

The spiritual Father is responsible for determining where and how a monk is to live the monastic life. A Father would decide when a monk is mature enough to become a hermit, as is seen in the *bios* of Christopher of Collesano, whose Father sends him to live in a hermitage where he is to make better progress in monastic perfection.<sup>22</sup> It is the spiritual Father of Elias the Speleot who sends Elias back to his own home area in Calabria to live the monastic life.<sup>23</sup> It is the spiritual Fathers of the

Merkourion – “the great John and the celebrated Phantinos, and the angelic Zachary” – who tell Neilos to begin the monastic life, and to receive the monastic habit (schema) in a monastery that is in an area controlled by the Lombards.<sup>24</sup>

There is a special relationship that develops between a spiritual Father and his disciples. Luke of Demena becomes like his spiritual Father, Elias the Speleot, “conforming himself to the ways of his most wise instructor”.<sup>25</sup> Elias the Speleot is seen to live in such a close relationship with his spiritual Father, Arsenios, that they become “thus another Elias and Elisaïos . . . as one soul in two bodies”.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps the strongest affirmation of the affection that develops between a disciple and his spiritual Father is found in the relationship between Neilos and his disciple, Stephen. When Stephen comes to Neilos and is accepted as one of his disciples, it becomes obvious that the only way that Neilos can correct Stephen, who is rather simple and lazy, is to treat him harshly and to be severe with him.<sup>27</sup> But later when Neilos believes that Stephen has been carried off by Saracens, Neilos is so sorrowful that he is willing to give his life for Stephen and be a slave with him.<sup>28</sup> Finally, at the end of his life, after Stephen’s death, Neilos so greatly mourns Stephen’s repose that he states that he has been Stephen’s life-long executioner and then asks that a double grave be dug for Stephen and himself.<sup>29</sup>

There are certain specific functions that a spiritual Father exercises among his disciples. The first of these is to be a teacher, admonisher and rebuker. Teaching is an important part of the routine of a monastery, of a small group of monks, or even of a single monk who lives with a spiritual Father. The *bioi* present many of these teachings. Neilos has some sixty monks at one point in his monastery whom he would gather around himself for sacred readings and vigils. During this time many of the monks would fall asleep, but Bartholomew the Younger would remain awake, “seeking after the difficulties of the Scripture.”<sup>30</sup> Elias the Younger is noted in his teachings for being “pleasing, accessible, affable, proceeding along the just path, not having sublimity without humility nor contemptible humility.”<sup>31</sup> When Neilos the Younger meets the monks of Monte cassino and takes a long time before he is willing to speak with them, the *bios* notes that he has the ability to give discourses which are “a useful goad and help to the lazy and weak and to those following the middle road, proceeding harmoniously and righteously, a good yoke and a useful guide”.<sup>32</sup> Neilos even employed a pedagogical method in his teachings in which he would use maxims, or *troparia* from the canons, which he would teach his disciples to memorize, and if that were not possible, he would even write them down and hang the paper on the disciple’s neck or arm until it was memorized.<sup>33</sup>

The second important function of the spiritual Father as presented in these *bioi* is that of serving as an example to be imitated. The *bios* of Saints Christopher and Makarios begins by praising those who illuminate

and are guides.<sup>34</sup> It then states that Christopher is an example for all monks to follow in his prayer, vigils, psalmody, works, service and obedience. It states of him that “the leader must become an example to those who are with him, just as Christ was to his apostles”.<sup>35</sup> Elias the Younger is called the “exact norm and rule of monastic life: calm, simple, putting on a character which reveals the serenity and tranquility of his soul”.<sup>36</sup> The role of the spiritual Father as exemplar is highlighted in all of the *bioi* because the very purpose for their being written is to make the exemplary role of these great monks more visible and better able to be imitated. The *bios* of Elias the Younger notes that those who listen to the *bios* are “not only to be hearers but imitators through all of life, so that we may be held worthy of the same glory coming in the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>37</sup> The *bios* of Bartholomew the Younger states this by noting that “nothing knows how to excite us to imitation better than the memory of the Fathers where these are narrated with sincerity and examined carefully, and passed on to the ears of prudent children.”<sup>38</sup>

A third aspect of spiritual paternity is found in the important role of the spiritual Father as intercessor, mediator and reconciler. This role of the spiritual Father takes on different forms. When, for example, the boat of the monastery of Bartholomew of Simeri is captured by Saracen pirates, Bartholomew and his monks gather in the church temple and pray that their brothers be released from captivity, which they soon are.<sup>39</sup> Or when Neilos senses that his monks are under diabolic attack, he protects them by walking among them and encouraging them to call on the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>40</sup> In some cases of intercession it is not even necessary for a Father to be present. As when the priest Lukios is caught in a fire and he calls upon the name of Elias the Speleot, who is in his cave in a different place, both the priest and his house are saved.<sup>41</sup>

Another aspect of the intercessory and mediatory role of these Fathers is that of seeking for reconciliation among men. This role is seen in the intervention of Neilos in the affair caused by the election of an antipope. Here Neilos tries to bring about a reconciliation between pope and antipope. When this does not happen, Neilos shows God’s displeasure at this failure by foretelling the imminent death of the pope because of his mistreatment of the antipope.<sup>42</sup> Neilos also seeks reconciliation with two brothers who live near his monastery. Although they are constantly calumniating against him, Neilos tries to stop their hatred by never saying anything evil about them. After having no success in this, he goes to the brothers to ask pardon of them. This act brings about reconciliation and peace.<sup>43</sup>

A final aspect of these intercessory powers is seen in the work of these spiritual Fathers as intercessors after death. This is mentioned in most of the *bioi*. The *bios* of Saint Sabas the Younger ends, for example, with a prayer calling upon Sabas to offer his rich and compassionate intercession before the Lord.<sup>44</sup> And the *bios* of Neilos ends with a prayer

asking the saint to intercede for all who read or hear of the virtuous deeds recounted in the *bios*.<sup>45</sup>

### The disciple as apprentice

After a person has the initial experience of being called to the monastic life, the next major step is to go to a spiritual Father. Here the young monk is to develop a strong bond with his spiritual Father, becoming a kind of apprentice to him and gradually growing in perfection in the spiritual life as his Father is also growing. This relationship is very close and is based on complete obedience to the Father and his will. The *bioi* contain many examples of this type of obedience. Elias the Speleot tells his monks to cut down a tree that is near the entrance to the monastery. A monk, who is at first afraid that he might be hurt by such work, obediently cuts down the tree at the word of Elias.<sup>46</sup> When Neilos of Rossano was a young monk, John, an elder in the monastery, wanted to test Neilos by giving him a large glass of wine to drink. The elder knew Neilos never drank wine, but Neilos after asking for a blessing drinks all of it immediately out of a deep sense of obedience.<sup>47</sup> Neilos later expects the same obedience from his monks. When, for example, Stephen brings him a basket that an elder from another monastery had taught him to make, Neilos orders him to destroy it since he had made it without permission.<sup>48</sup> Again Neilos, wanting to test the obedience of his monks, orders them to cut down all the excess grape vines of the monastery. The monks, saying nothing, go forth praying and fulfill his command.<sup>49</sup>

There is a theology of obedience that is found in many of the *bioi*. Obedience is seen, first of all, to be the way to bring a monk into a closer rapport with God. For the person who obeys God's commands, the *bios* of Elias the Younger notes, there is a special relationship with God in which God answers all the requests of the obedient one in proportion to his fulfillment of God's commandments.<sup>50</sup> Obedience is also seen as the way to break one's own will so as to be obedient to Christ. Nikephoros, for example, blesses Sabas telling him: "O child, observe obedience, for Christ came not to do his own will, but that of his Father."<sup>51</sup> The importance of obedience is highlighted in the *bioi* by many demonstrations of the bad results of disobedience. Neilos, for example, severely reprimands two monks who cook a meal in secret some distance from their monastery, so that they do not have to fast. Neilos reproaches them both for not trusting that he would provide something for them to eat and for doing that which is against the rule.<sup>52</sup> Neilos is even more severe with his own nephew who is a monk in his monastery. When the boy, along with some other monks, drinks water from a Holy Cup found along the road, he is severely reprimanded by his uncle for not showing proper respect for holy objects. Neilos refuses to speak with the boy who is so crushed by his uncle's actions that he falls ill and eventually dies. Neilos refuses

to visit the boy during his illness, and after his death, in great mourning, he notes that he did not comfort the boy so that he would in his time of tribulation come to repent and have God receive him.<sup>53</sup>

The second major component in the rapport of the disciple with the spiritual Father is that of the confession of sins and the revelation of all thoughts. A monk disciple must be open and transparent to his spiritual Father. Elias the Younger has many people confess their secret faults to him because he treats them in such a way that people find it easy to confess to him.<sup>54</sup> For Bitalios it is noted that many people confess to him because he helps them to see the foolishness of human nature and the need to be confirmed in penitence so as to turn from evil.<sup>55</sup> But it is not only faults and sins that a monk reveals to his spiritual Father, but also thoughts and desires. In the *bios* of Neilos there is a good example of this revelation of thoughts when it is noted that at one point Neilos begins to have doubts about the interpretation that one of his spiritual Fathers, John, gives to a passage of Saint Gregory the Theologian. Neilos is immediately tempted by Satan, who appears to him under the guise of Saints Peter and Paul, and gives him a heretical interpretation of the passage. Neilos is troubled by this interpretation, and after praying that the thought be removed from him, goes immediately to John to tell him everything that happened so as to be healed.<sup>56</sup>

This confession of one's thoughts is important for the psychic healing of the monk. A monk needs to "lay bare his own passions, and divulge his evil and polluted thoughts", as the *bios* of Christopher notes, so that he can be healed.<sup>57</sup> This is the goal of this revelation, the therapy of thought, so that a monk can be directed more completely towards God. As this goal is more and more attained, the monk grows in perfection. Through this revelation of his thoughts Elias the Speleot "learns to purify his thoughts to the farthest point, for his alacrity of spirit gave him power over the body".<sup>58</sup> Through this transparent relationship with a Father, a monk novice deepens his obedience and allows the Father to better lead and direct him in living the monastic way of life, and the novice learns to have better control over his desires, impulses and thoughts.

### The active way of monastic perfection

Under the guidance of a spiritual Father, and often in a life lived in common with other monks, the monk novice begins to follow a way of life which is to lead him to live ever more perfectly as a monk. The means that the Father employs to lead his disciple into this way of life are made up of two major components: an active component which emphasizes human effort, and a passive component which emphasizes a surrender to divine grace and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. These two ways exist side by side, but here will be presented separately beginning with the active way.

In all the *bioi*, the active way needed for pursuing monastic perfection is constantly emphasized. A monk is expected to put forth great struggles and efforts so as to live in asceticism, vigilance, detachment, prayer and work. This active way emphasized the fact that a monk cannot remain passive, expecting perfection to come to him, but rather needs to work, toil and fight to be able to progress in living the monastic life. This need for human effort is seen in the Gospel passage used in the *bios* of Elias the Speleot in which he exhorts his monks to ascetical struggle: “The kingdom of heaven is for those who use force.”<sup>59</sup> The deeds that are demanded of the monks are not simple or easy, but rather require a struggle.

### Asceticism

Three images employed frequently in the *bioi* to describe the effort required in monastic life are those of the martyr, the athlete and the soldier. The *bios* of Saints Christopher and Makarios begins with a prologue praising martyrs and holy monks, both of whom are seen to have suffered a type of martyrdom, the one in blood and the other in conscience. Here monks are called martyrs of conscience because they give themselves up daily as a holocaust before God.<sup>60</sup> Monks are also called athletes. Philaretos, for example, is commended by the hegoumen of his monastery for the hard labors he undergoes, in which he is like “the master wrestler (who) fights with his adversary”.<sup>61</sup> The monks of the Merkourion are called in the *bios* of Sabas those who “entered into the ascetical palaestra and compelled nature to live with suffering”.<sup>62</sup> Monks are also spoken of as soldiers. Elias the Younger is described in his *bios* as arming himself against pride with “weapons that were for him not carnal but empowered by God: hope, the mantle of faith, righteousness, and the spiritual sword.”<sup>63</sup> Even the monastic schema is described using martial imagery. Nikodemos, after being called a soldier of Christ, is described as fighting against the ruler of this world with his “holy and blessed schema like a breastplate, having put on the helmet of salvation and been fortified in turn by the shield of hope.”<sup>64</sup>

With monastic life understood to be a constant struggle and a continuous effort, there are certain practices of asceticism that characterize the monastic life of the Italo-Greek monks. In all the *bioi* there are constant references to a variety of forms of ascetical practice. This variety is well described in the *bios* of Elias the Younger which speaks of Elias practicing “intensified fasting, more abundant prayer, sleeping on the bare earth, tears, sighs, beatings on the breast, innumerable prostrations, silent cries from his heart reaching up to heaven.”<sup>65</sup> These ascetical practices focus on an asceticism that concerns food, sleep, clothing and shelter for the monks.

The *bioi* speak constantly of the monks fasting, for longer or shorter periods, and of their rigidity in controlling the kinds of foods that they eat and the frequency with which they eat them. The *bios* of Christopher states that Christopher would eat only every three or four days, and at times would spend entire weeks with no food.<sup>66</sup> Fasting is so important for the monastic life that it is part of the daily routine and cycle followed by the monks. The *bioi* speak of monks eating food only as needed, and “eating only once a day that which is ordained without reproach by (the monastic) profession”.<sup>67</sup> In addition, it is noted that monks continually follow the ascetical fast, refraining from certain foods and usually keeping to simple uncooked foods. The *bios* of Bitalios notes that he lives only on herbs and water.<sup>68</sup> That of Christopher states that he only eats grains, raw vegetables, or fruits and herbs from the forest, and that he rarely eats bread, cooked vegetables, or herbs with oil and salt.<sup>69</sup> One particular food that the *bioi* note is forbidden for those in monastic life is meat. The *bios* of Elias the Speleot is particularly severe in its judgment of monks who eat meat. The *bios* presents Elias sternly reprimanding one of his monks whom he discovers eating meat. To show the monk the foolishness of his actions, Elias calls over the dogs of the monastery to eat the meat, which even they refuse to touch because of their habit of not eating meat. He then tells the monks that those who eat meat are like bloodsucking wild animals that are unclean.<sup>70</sup>

It is not only in food that a monk is to be ascetical, but also in his need for sleep. The *bioi* often speak of monks spending entire nights in vigil, praying and reading the Scriptures. Bartholomew the Younger, for example, is noted for his ability to keep awake during the vigils that Neilos keeps with his monks. When all the other monks fall asleep, Bartholomew alone remains awake, asking Neilos to interpret difficult passages of Scripture for him.<sup>71</sup>

The final aspect common to the asceticism of the Italo-Greek monks is asceticism practiced in clothing and shelter. Monks wear very simple clothing, some of them wearing no clothing at all. Bartholomew of Simeri wanders barefoot, with only one torn and sweat-stained tunic and a belt made of animal skin.<sup>72</sup> Philaretos was barefoot with clothing made from straw, woven like a thick plaited basket.<sup>73</sup> Sabas the Younger always wears only a tunic, thus exposing himself to the sun in the summer and the cold in the winter.<sup>74</sup> In addition, the monks heightened their asceticism by refraining from washing. The *bios* of John Theristes notes that people are scandalized at the thought of a monk bathing.<sup>75</sup> The end result of this unwashed, unkempt life is that monks would often appear quite wild. When Bartholomew of Simeri is encountered by some people in the mountains, these people are frightened and run away because of his wild appearance. Bartholomew then has to convince them that he is a human being and does this by the way that he speaks to them.<sup>76</sup>