

catastrophes in the Natural and Anthropogenic Environment of Mount Athos

καταστροφές στο Φυσικό & Ανθρωπογενές περιβάλλον του Αγίου Όρους



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Christian monasticism started around 329 AD

monastic spaces include the practice of renouncing worldly pursuits,
in places of:

- **difficult access**
- **harsh living**

when this is not possible, conditions are reproduced for **monastic life:**

- **technically secluded (monastic complexes / monasteries)**

(Greek: *μοναχός*, *monachos*), derived from Greek *monos* (*alone*)

Mt. Athos
is the far eastern
from the 3 peninsulas of Chalkidiki
(Macedonia)
area: 340 km²

the largest monastic living
of Orthodox Christian mysticism
in the world

it functions **with constitutional continuity**
from 870 AD (initial geographical arrangement)

today: the site is part of the
World Heritage Monuments
of UNESCO





United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



World Heritage

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Creating the List

- Global Strategy
- Criteria
- Tentative List process ▶
- Tentative Lists Database
- Nomination process ▶

World Heritage List

- New Inscriptions
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The List ▶ World Heritage List



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Mount Athos

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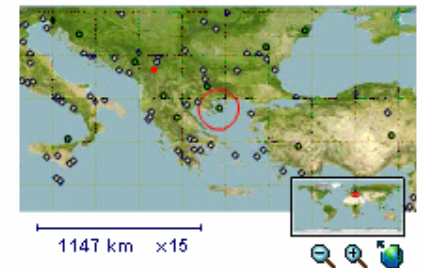
Greece

Date of Inscription: 1988

Criteria: (i)(ii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)

Autonomous region of Mount Athos

24 13



Greece

Date of Inscription: 1988

Criteria: (i)(ii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)

Autonomous region of Mount Athos

N40 16 E24 13

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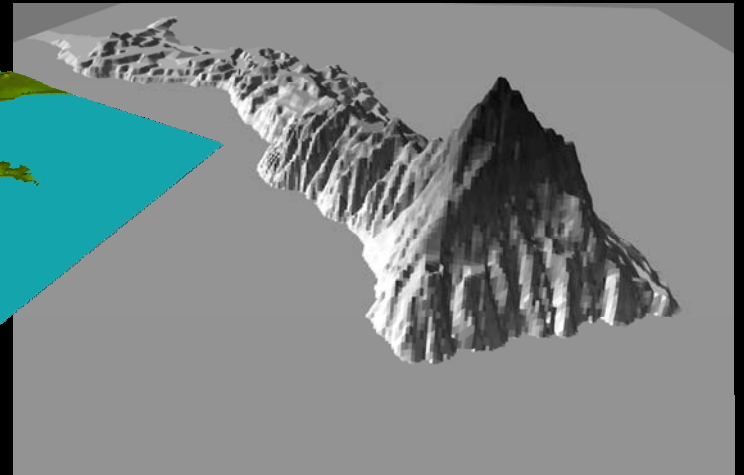
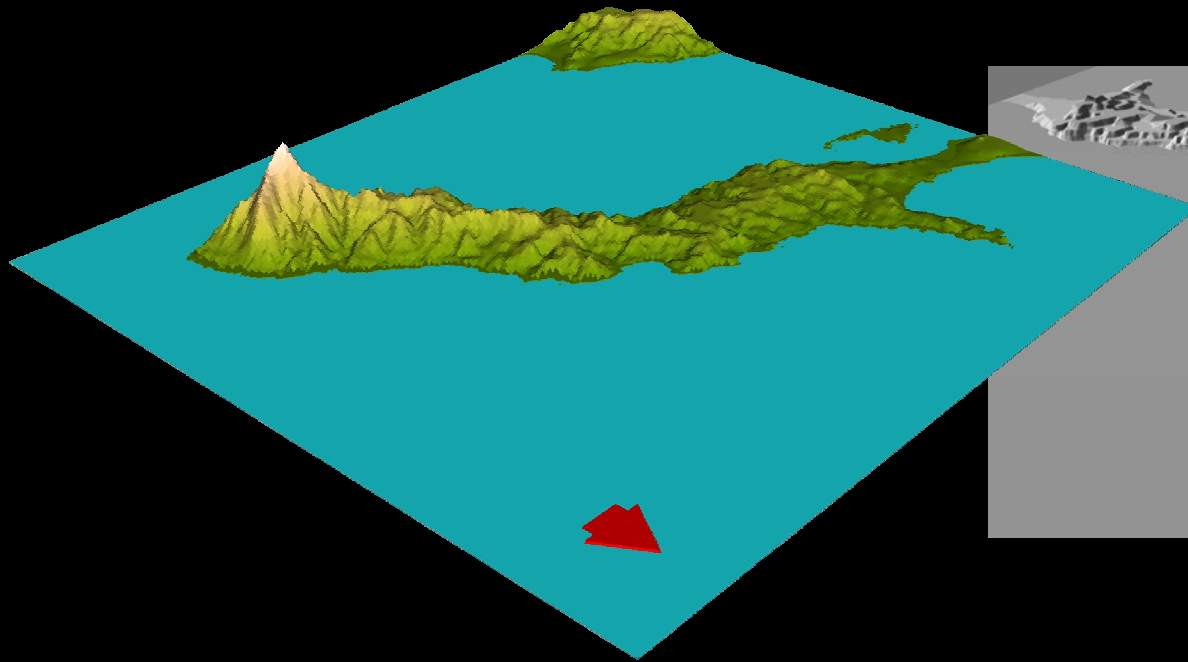


An Orthodox spiritual centre since 1054, Mount Athos has enjoyed an autonomous statute since Byzantine times. The 'Holy Mountain', which is forbidden to women and children, is also a recognized artistic site. The layout of the monasteries (about 20 of which are presently inhabited by some 1,400 monks) had an influence as far afield as Russia, and its school of painting influenced the history of Orthodox art.

protection of monastic seclusion
by geographical isolation
with physical borders



topography







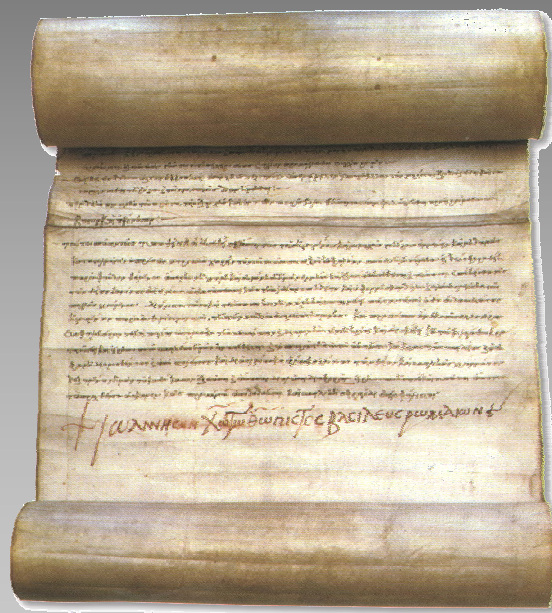


technical reproduction of seclusion conditions

official borders from 943 AD

customs and coastal patrol, guarding their enforcement

- *ad-hoc* non synchronized marine transportation
- no road connection with the mainland
- enactment of austere entrance rules



1^ο ΤΥΠΙΚΟ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΟΡΟΥΣ (ΤΡΑΓΟΣ) 972
υπογραφή του αυτοκράτορα Ιωάννη Τσιμισκή

particular administration system

central administrative representation of the 20 monasteries

legislative body: I Assembly / Σύναξη

executive body: I Superintendence / Επιστασία



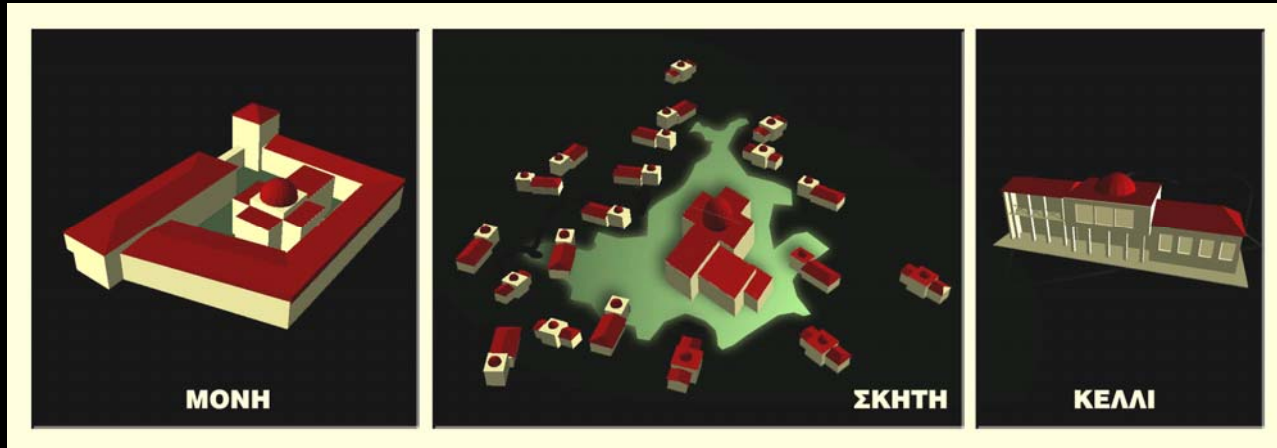
KARYES: capital community / administrative center

visitors: entrance rules



TYPES OF SETTLEMENTS

- monasteries
- sketes: monastic dwellings
 - cells



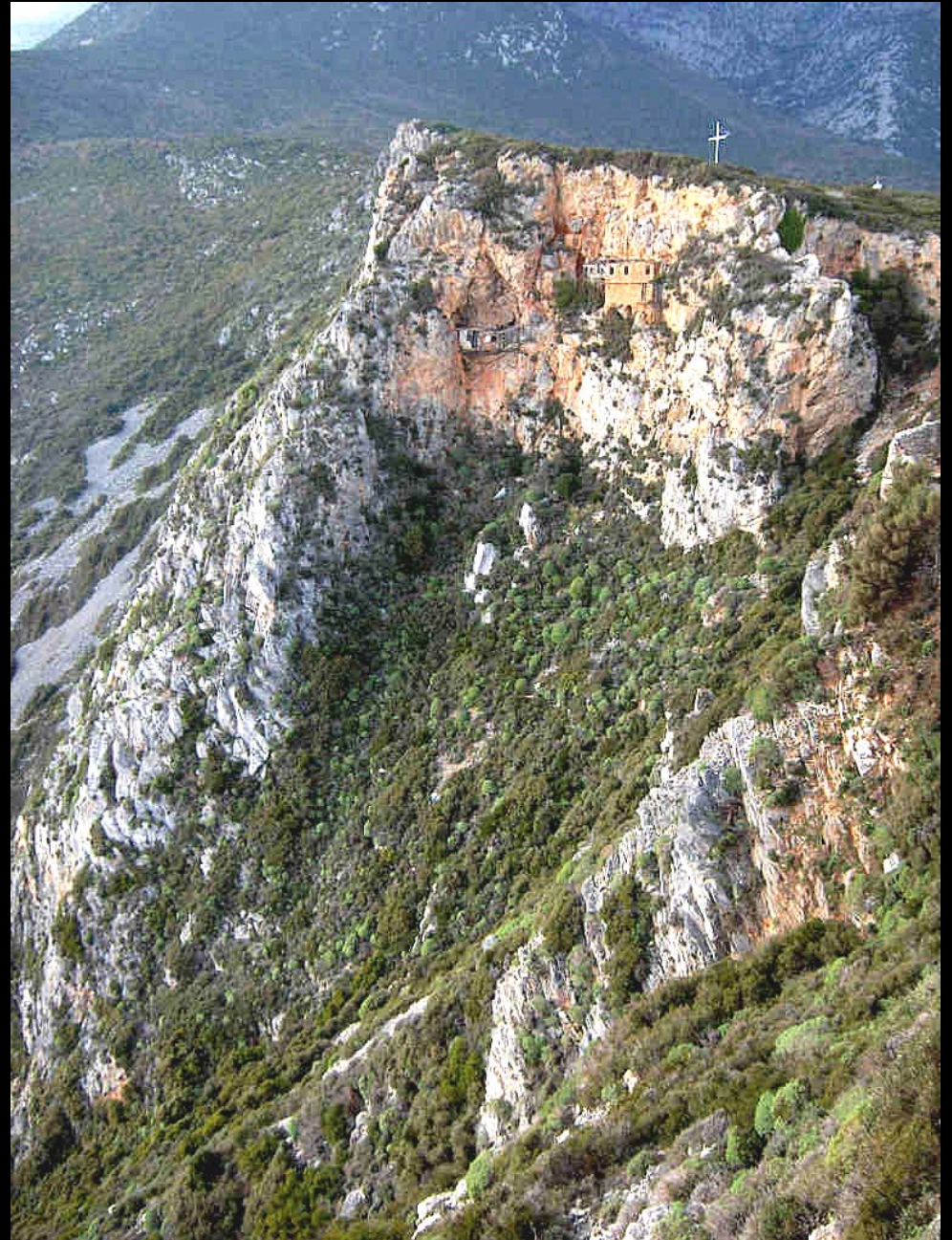
cell / κελλί



anchoritic life



eremitic life



skete: monastic dwelling



monastery



monastery / μονή







characteristics of small state entities

foundational rule of monasticism:
seclusion

Mount Athos (Holy Mountain)

either by enforcing
the **geographical isolation**

or by
artificial reproduction
of **seclusion conditions**

makes the peninsula
a particularly isolated area
that **technically gains**
characteristics
of **small island states**

απομόνωση

(relatively isolated)

περιορισμένη γεωγραφική έκταση και πηγές

(limited geographical size & resources: human & natural)

περιορισμένη ποικιλότητα

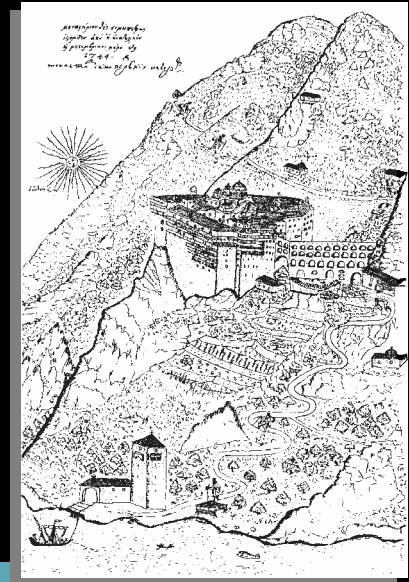
(limited diversity)

οικολογική και οικονομική τρωτότητα

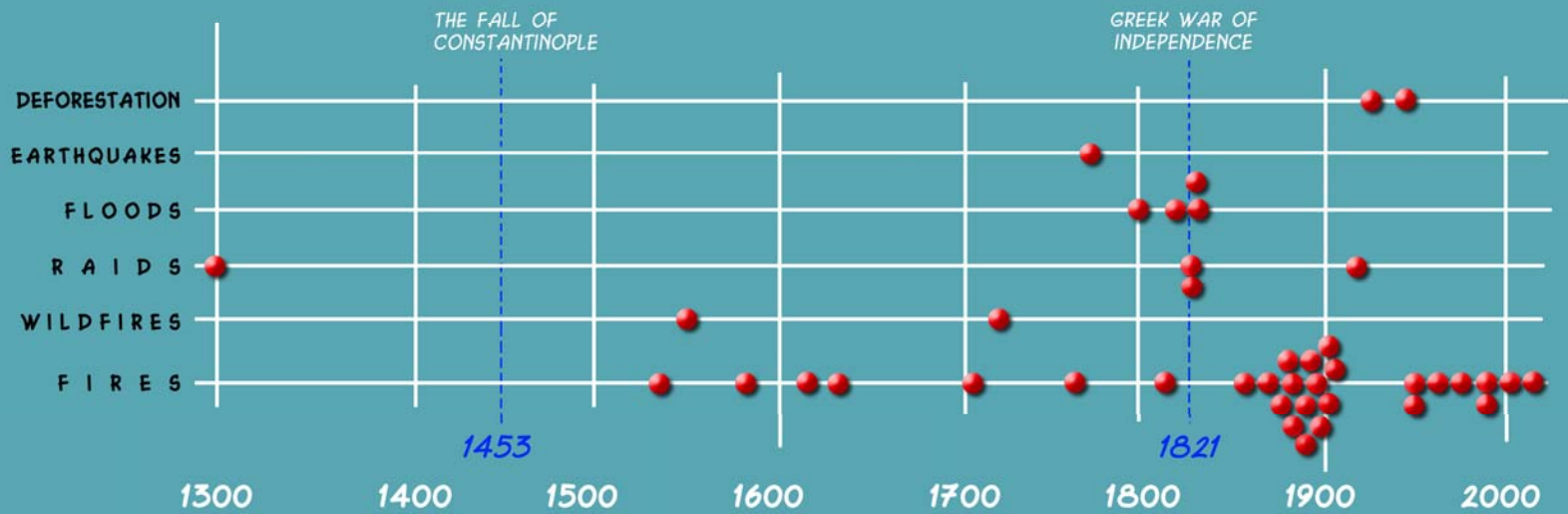
(economic & ecologic vulnerability)

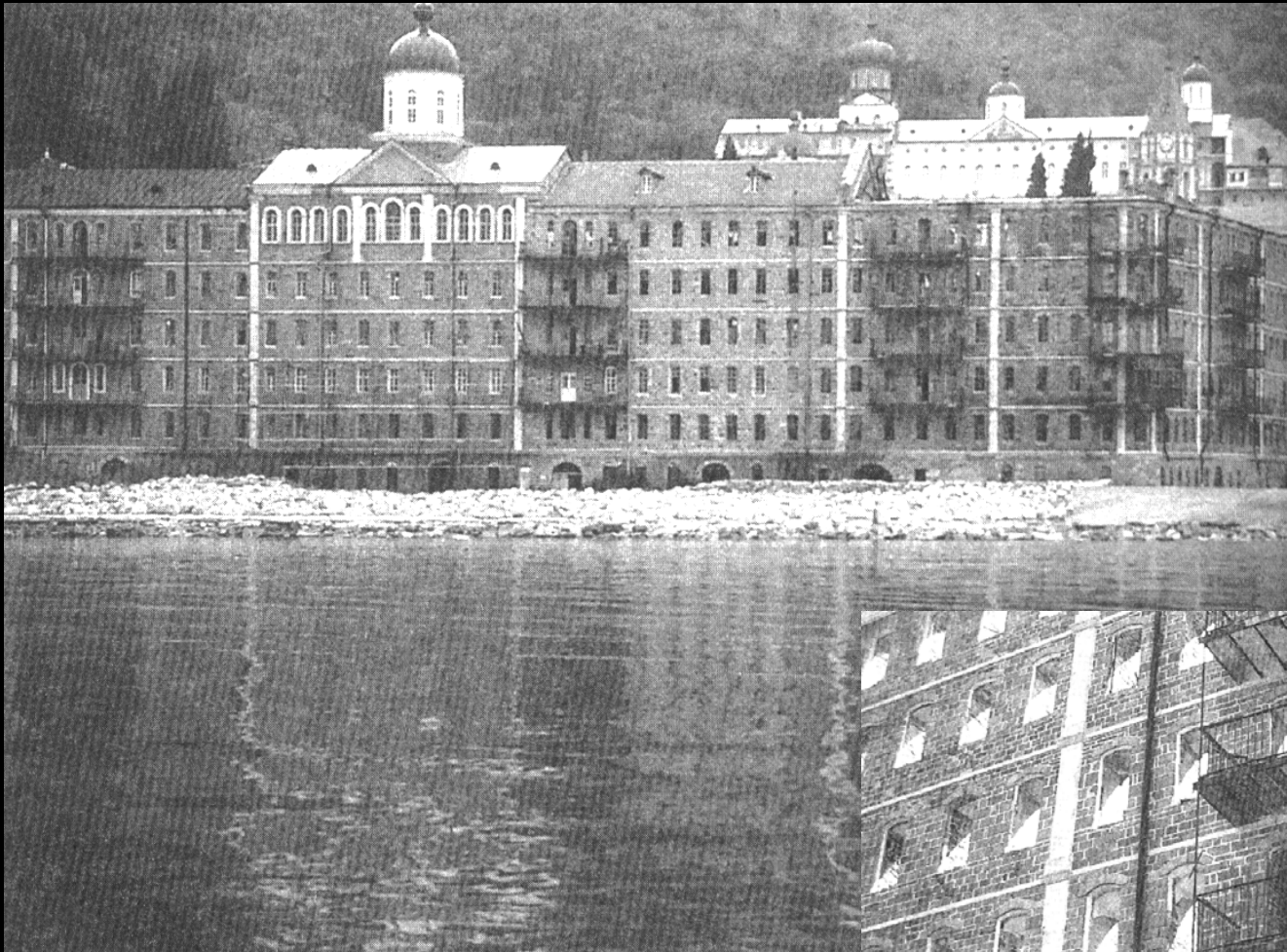
ευαισθησία

(fragility)



HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF CATASTROFES (1300 - PRESENT)





geopolitical catastrophes: **population depletion**
Russian Monastery 1914

wars: A World



wars: **B' World**



demography





deforestation



natural disasters: **storms**

natural disasters: **floods**

Simonopetra 2001

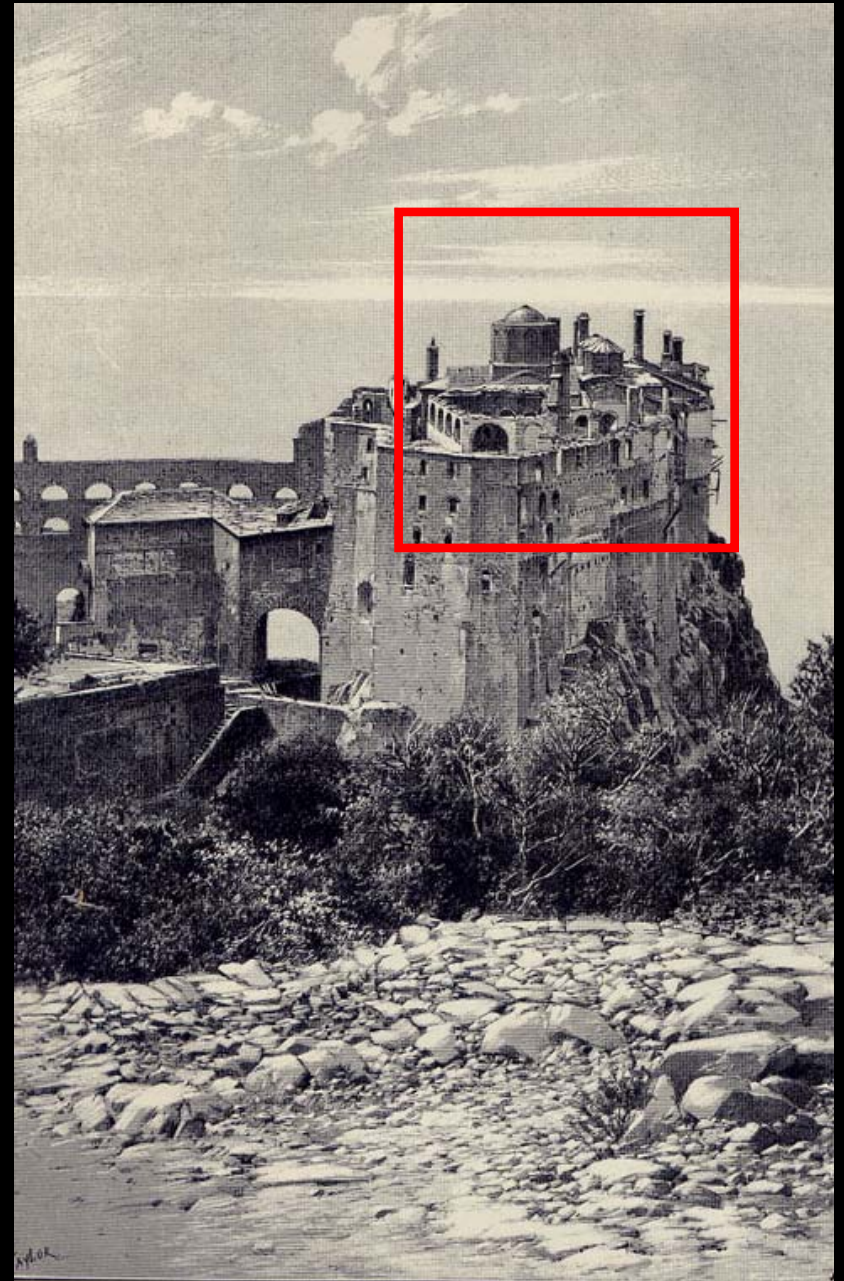


natural disasters: **wildfires**

Simonopetra 1990



human disasters: **fires**
Simonopetra 1896



disasters: **structural fires**

Karyes 2004





disasters: **fires**
Hilandariou 2004

natural disasters: **earthquakes**
skete Koutloumousiou 1978



AN ASCETIC FUNCTIONALISM !



Kapsokalyvia

St. Maximos of Kapsokalyvia (1290-1375)

regularly burnt down his temporary hut of branches before moving on somewhere else – hence his name “Kapsokalyvites” (of the burnt hut)

the area is till now called [Kapsokalyvia](#)

on the same line during the 19th century, monks of Kapsokalyvia **repeated** this extreme form of monastic kenosis and self-stripping (burnt their cells on a regular basis) to create conditions of perpetual [ascetic mobility](#)

effects of catastrophes

natural disasters (fires, earthquakes, floods, droughts, landslides, storms, etc.) are critical & important events because **the evolution of the natural environment goes along with the local history**

Areas of research interest should be the:

- condition of historical, religious & archaeological items
- decline of forest habitat & wilderness areas (as they start a new life-cycle)
- diversity and abundance of plants & ecosystems
- impact on the management regime of Mt. Athos resources
- increase / decrease of other habitats
- evaluation of the road, hydrological & firebreak networks
- influence of catastrophes in the wider region

anthropogenic catastrophes should be approached in similar ways

example:

the influence of **fire** on ecosystems

is not static and instant

**it has dynamic perspectives in
space & time**

changes in the natural environment are not restricted in the timeframe following an event, but they occur in the long run

preventive measures: **construction of firefighting artificial lakes** Vatopedi



preventive measures: road network

- construction of surface runoff drainage
- biyearly cleaning of the drainage system



Mt. Athos constitutes a subject of special interest, as architecture, miniatures, archives, etc.,
have come across extensive study

survey of catastrophes (as a "negative" expression of reality in the region)
was never the topic of direct and systematic research until today

in relation to the
past



systematic study will contribute in
standardization & coding of risks,
to assess which types of catastrophes

- were important events
- influenced critically the area (in local and regional scales)
- attributed to the formation of its historical character

for **contemporary times** there should be:

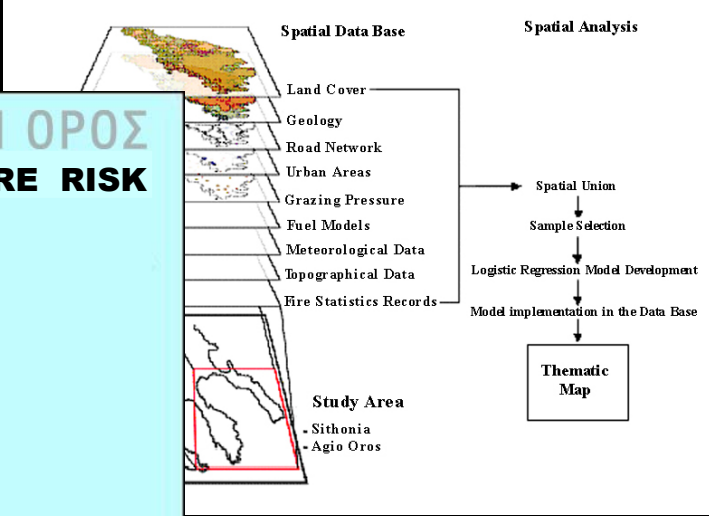
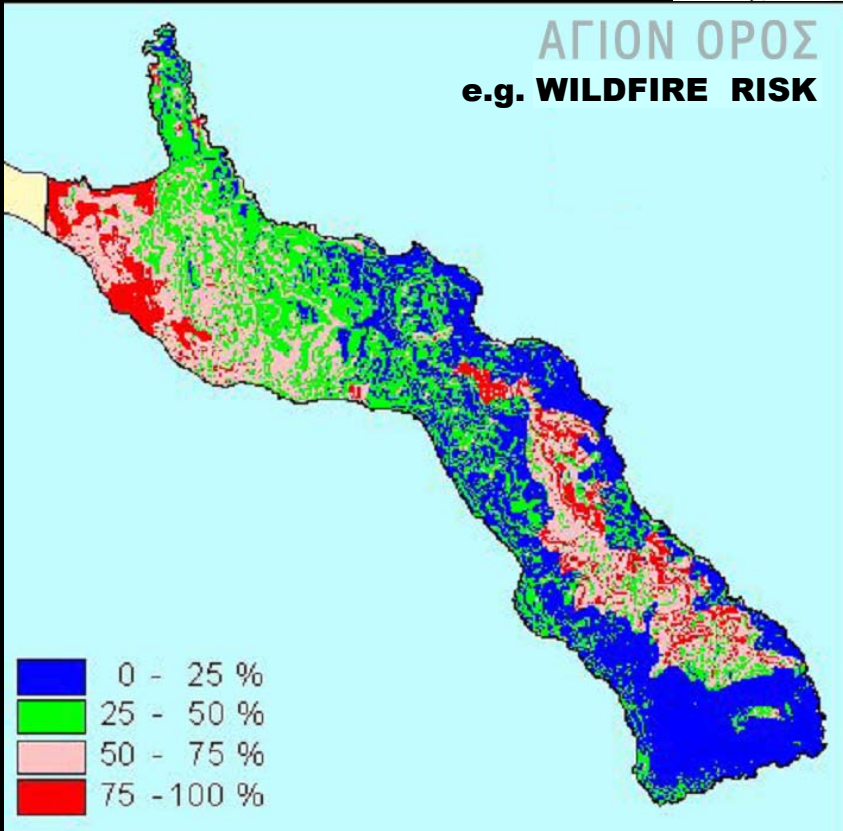
in relation to the
future



- thorough analysis of recent catastrophes
- analysis of their origin (natural or anthropogenic)
- study of ways and means of intervention
 - policies of interventions
 - planning policies

the approach for Mt. Athos till today has had a local character,
since studies **in geographical scales** are limited

planning ought to scan the subject in **«large» scale**
with **methodologies and tools of geography**



RISK

(κίνδυνος):
human-environment
relations

=

Hazard

(επικινδυνότητα):
physical geography

X

Vulnerability

(τρωτότητα):
human geography

LAND COVER TYPES vs. LARGE WILDFIRES vs. MAJOR MONASTERIES

