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***MASTER'S DEGREE IN SOUTHEAST EUROPEAN STUDIES***  
MASTER'S DEGREE THESIS

“Prevailing Faith” at the crossroads:  
Greek Church and State relations adjust to immigration from SEE

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**ABSTRACT**

The first migrants from Southeastern Europe to reach Greece in the early 1990s found a country where almost the entire citizenry subscribed to the constitutionally recognized “prevailing faith” of Christian Orthodoxy and with it the Church of Greece. The influx of over one million immigrants including several hundred thousand Muslim or ambivalent Albanians and thousands of co-Orthodox Bulgarians and Romanians called into question whether Church and State could remain so closely intertwined in Greece. It is argued that Church and State relations have evolved and modernized over the course of three Archbishops’ administrations (Seraphim 1974-1998, Christodoulos 1998-2008, Ieronymos 2008-present) to cope with immigration in a way in which cooperation between the two remains close despite Greece’s more pluralistic society. Media reports, interviews and primary sources have been gathered to help close what has been a lacuna in research on Church-State relations in Greece to this point.

## Table of Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Part A:</b>   |           |
| <b>Chapter I: Introduction</b>                                       | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Chapter II: Literature Review</b>                                 | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Chapter III: Methodology</b>                                      | <b>10</b> |
| <b>Part B:</b>   |           |
| <b>Chapter IV: Shock and Seraphim in the 1990s</b>                   | <b>12</b> |
| IVa: SEE Newcomers   | 12        |
| IVb: KSPM/ΚΣΠΜ   | 14        |
| IVc: Clash of Civilizations, Secularism and Seraphim                 | 15        |
| <b>Chapter V: “Conservative Modernization” under Christodoulos</b>   | <b>18</b> |
| Va: Enter Christodoulos  | 19        |
| Va-1: Identity Crisis?   | 21        |
| Va-2: The Case of an Albanian Student                                | 29        |
| Va-3: Mosque Issue   | 32        |
| Vb: Conservative Modernization                                       | 35        |
| <b>Chapter VI: New Norms, Same Relationship in the Ieronymos Era</b> | <b>40</b> |
| VIa: Theory  | 41        |
| VIb: Enter Ieronymos   | 44        |
| VIc: Citizenship for Migrants  | 46        |
| VId: Suggestions for Further Study and Future Investigation          | 51        |
| <b>Part C: Conclusion</b>  | <b>52</b> |
| <b>Bibliography</b>  | <b>56</b> |

## ABBREVIATIONS

BBC- British Broadcasting Company  
 CIA- Central Intelligence Agency  
 ECHR- European Court of Human Rights  
 EU- European Union  
 KSPM- Center for the Integration of Returning Immigrants  
 NGO- Non-governmental Organization  
 SEE- Southeastern Europe  
 TIP- United States Department of State *Trafficking in Persons* annual report.  
 WCC- World Council of Churches

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## PART A

### Chapter I: Introduction

The Greek State and the Church of Greece have had to come to terms with a massive influx of migrants from the former communist bloc— particularly Southeastern Europe (SEE)— since the Cold War ended twenty years ago. Yet Church and State remain firmly intertwined in Greece. Instead of the influx of non-Greek, non-Orthodox immigrants breaking up Greece’s religious hegemony and this newfound pluralism compelling secularization akin to other Western democracies, Church and State have modernized and evolved without losing their influence on each other. It is argued in this thesis that the way the Church has responded to immigration has brought Church and State closer together.

Somewhere between one and two million migrants have settled in Greece since the end of the Cold War.<sup>1</sup> Most of the migrants are from SEE countries with a majority from Albania (63 percent) and significant numbers from Bulgaria (4.2 percent) and Romania (2.4 percent).<sup>2</sup> Before 1990 these countries had been on the opposite (communist) side of the Iron Curtain from Greece. Scars from previous twentieth century wars (such as the Bulgarian occupation in World War II) ran deep. In the case of Albania, the two countries had been formally at war from 1941 until 1987.<sup>3</sup> Before taking religion into consideration (a mix of atheist ambivalence, Islam and Orthodoxy) these nationals were seen as fundamentally foreign, hostile elements. In other words, the West had won the war but the “enemy” was in Greek neighborhoods.

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<sup>1</sup> Triandafyllidou and Marouf (2008) 16, 26, 27. Since many migrants are either irregular or enter and exit Greece illegally it is difficult to have a sure count.

<sup>2</sup> Triandafyllidou and Marouf (2008) 16. Numbers of people with valid residence permits in 2008. It is worth noting both that the number of Bulgarians and Romanians declined from 2001 to 2008, even though the two countries entered the EU in 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Zanga (1987). State of war was lifted in August 1987.

This change shocked Greek society. From the 1890s to the 1970s, Greece exported migrants to diners in New Jersey, shoe shops in Melbourne and factories in West Germany, among other places. Migration to Greeks meant the “Uncle from America” as one interview subject put it.<sup>4</sup> The wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had cleared out most of Greece’s ethnic minorities and in the 1980s Greeks from abroad returned in significant numbers, making the country even more homogenous.<sup>5</sup> According to the 1991 census, Greece was not only overwhelmingly Greek, 98% of the citizenry belonged, at least nominally, to the Orthodox faith.<sup>6</sup>

As a result, the Church of Greece sits at the heart of Greece’s state and society. Its resources and influence are so vast and yet so assumed that the Church becomes difficult to define. An inestimable amount of land, 900 million euro in assets (including about 8 million shares of the National Bank of Greece) and approximately 20 million euro in revenue per year make the Church a major economic player.<sup>7</sup> 9,000 priests, 6,000 parishes, 800 charities and 90 Metropolitan units, operate almost like a parallel government, in terms of its hierarchy, its attachment to a constituency that is almost contiguous with the Greek citizenry and its ability (and willingness) to provide services to all residents in Greece.<sup>8</sup> All told, the Church possesses a certain gravity that outweighs classification as a religious group, but categorizing the Church as an organization would be too cynical considering the legitimate, intangible emotions and obligations that Orthodox members of Greek society feel for their faith and that the

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<sup>4</sup> Interview, Papantoniou, 4/12/2009

<sup>5</sup> Triandafyllidou and Marouf (2008) 4

<sup>6</sup> The 2001 census did not ask for religious affiliation. The citizenry is still approximately 98 percent Orthodox, according to the CIA World Factbook.

<sup>7</sup> Ekathimerini.com, “Church collection box full to brim” 29/8/2009, “Church rails against ‘unfair’ tax” 17/11/2009.

<sup>8</sup> Ekathimerini.com, “Church rails against ‘unfair’ tax” 17/11/2009, ecclesia.gr, interview Fr. Pappas, 19/3/2010.

clergy feels for its flock.<sup>9</sup> As Victor Roudometof has explained, there is a certain spillover effect in the Eastern Orthodox world from the spiritual to the temporal world.

Unlike its Catholic and Protestant counterparts, the Greek Church (like its sister Eastern Orthodox churches throughout Eastern Europe) does not differentiate between the institutional structure of the organization and the religious community of believers, but, instead, it maintains the organic unity of original *Ekklesia* inherited from early Christianity.<sup>10</sup>

In other words, the Orthodox Church, in Greece as elsewhere sees itself as contiguous with its congregation, which, until recently, was almost the entire citizenry of Greece.

In this thesis, the Church will be classified as a *Social Institution*, taking into the consideration the Church's ambiguous relations with the State, its weight and interests as an independent organization and the deep roots in society forged by clergymen and devoted laymen. The purpose of calling the Church a social institution – a term borrowed from Bishop Theoklitos of Ioannina<sup>11</sup> – is to describe how the Church straddles roles both in civil society and government. In other words, the Church's reach in society is so vast and its structure so developed – complete with a hierarchy, social services and court system – that in Greek society it acts as a “relatively stable pattern of human activity”<sup>12</sup> and as an entity that is both roughly akin to a legislature, judiciary, school system, military or police force and has influence on those aspects of government. Then as a social institution the Church's members take upon the interests of its constituents almost like a branch of government. The Church's status as a social institution does not indicate a subversion

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<sup>9</sup> Molokotos-Liederman (2009) 53. Interviews, Papanicolaou 4/11/2009, Avramides 27/4/2010. It is worth noting that 81 percent of Greeks cite a strong belief in God, according to a 2005 Eurobarometer poll.

<sup>10</sup> Roudometof (2001) 92

<sup>11</sup> Ekathimerini.com, “Church rails against ‘unfair’ tax”, 17/11/2009

<sup>12</sup> Turner (1997) 6

of the state but rather a sense of deeply entrenched responsibility and authority, which lies somewhere between a branch of government and a massive NGO.

This sentiment of the Church for the faithful, and its self-mandate to represent the interests of its congregations often causes priests and hierarchs to stray into the public sphere with their sermons, their newsletters and increasingly their blogs.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, these messages often conflict, making it difficult to say what the opinion of “The Church” really is. The Church is by no means a monolithic entity. The Archbishop of Athens and all Greece chairs the Holy Synod as *primus inter pares*. The other 15 rotating members of the Synod are entitled to their own votes and the 90 Metropolitan bishops and 9,000 priests are also obliged to their own opinions on social issues, in a situation known within the Church as *oikonomia*.<sup>14</sup> In order to have some sense of coherence from all of these perspectives, this thesis will follow the overall trends under three different archbishops (Seraphim 1974-1998, Christodoulos 1998-2008 and Ieronymos 2008-present). Nonetheless, variation within the hierarchy and the lower priests is essential to understanding the clergy’s views and actions on migration and Church-State relations.

This blurry demarcation of clerical influence in state and society is enshrined in the Greek Constitution of 1975, which recognizes Eastern Orthodoxy as the “prevailing faith” in Greece.<sup>15</sup> On the one hand there is a clear effort not to declare an official state religion but other provisions establish protections (such as who can translate the Bible)<sup>16</sup>, controls (such as state ‘supervision’)<sup>17</sup> and areas of influence (such as education that develops national *and* religious sentiment).<sup>18</sup> There are

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<sup>13</sup> For an example see: [mkka.blogspot.com](http://mkka.blogspot.com)

<sup>14</sup> Prodromou (2004a) 66

<sup>15</sup> Constitution of the Hellenic Republic, Article 3

<sup>16</sup> Constitution of the Hellenic Republic, Article 3.3

<sup>17</sup> Constitution of the Hellenic Republic, Article 13.3

<sup>18</sup> Constitution of the Hellenic Republic Article 16.2

numerous *de facto* connections, such as the State paying clergy salaries (estimated at 150 million euro) and prohibiting proselytism.<sup>19</sup> Beyond the legal framework, there is a constant symbolic association of the Greek state with the Church from the cross on the flag to black robed priests swearing in public officials. A “Theocratic Aura,” as Theofanis Stavrou (1995) has termed it, hangs over the affairs of both church and state.<sup>20</sup>

Such an aura would seem incompatible within an increasingly pluralistic society where the “prevailing faith” is no longer as “prevailing.”<sup>21</sup> The intertwining of Church and State may have been tolerable in a 98 percent homogeneous setting. But as immigrants become integrated is that relationship still acceptable in a population that is 92 percent, 88 percent or 75 percent Orthodox? This conflict raises other questions related to Church-State. For instance, how can the Greek state provide Orthodox religious education when it must also accommodate significant numbers of Muslim, Catholic, Jewish and secular students? Can the Church act as a state agent of social welfare for all parts of society?

These questions lead to my larger research question. How has immigration from SEE countries affected Greece’s Church-State relationship? Within this question there are a number of sub-questions. Has the Church opposed state immigration policies and if so in what ways and from which corners of the Church? In what ways has the State co-opted the Church to facilitate its immigration policies? What can we understand from anti-immigrant groups that label themselves as Orthodox whether or not embraced by the Church itself? How has the Church used immigrants to improve relations with the State and vice versa? Does cooperation on immigration issues push

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<sup>19</sup> Gilson (2008b), CIA World Factbook “Greece”, Alivizatos (1999)

<sup>20</sup> Stavrou (1995) 42-43

<sup>21</sup> See: Clapsis (2004)

Church and State closer together or offer the Church an independent role in Greek society?

My working hypothesis is that while Church and State have had to make adjustments due to the demographic and societal changes brought on by immigration (particularly from SEE), the underlying relationship – constitutionally, spiritually and functionally – has remained intact. Furthermore, the Church has evolved from an opponent of immigration to a facilitator of immigrant integration – all with an eye toward maintaining influence on the State. As a result, close Church-State relations remain alive, well and close, two decades after the first waves of immigrants from the former Communist Bloc arrived.

## **Chapter II: Literature Review**

One purpose of this thesis is to help close a lacuna in literature on the Church of Greece's relationship with migrants. Many texts from immigration studies and the social sciences reference the issue of Church and immigrant but few have addressed the topic directly. As a result, there is little literature to draw upon. Papers that do exist have a secularist bias although within the last two years there has been a surge in texts trying to reconcile the Church-State relationship with 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations.

Texts on immigration form a key pillar of the available literature. Anna Triandafyllidou, Ruby Gropas and Dia Anagnostou have written key works not only on the fundamental aspects of migration to Greece but also on topics that touch on religion. Because this thesis focuses on the Church-State relationship and the internal dynamics of the Church specifically, their data provide context to the immigrant side. Their analyses of the identity card crisis and the ongoing mosque debate form a crucial intersection between migrants and the Church on two levels. First, they establish the facts of these encounters. Second, the admitted unfamiliarity of the



writers with the Church as a social institution speaks to why this topic has fallen into a lacuna.

The second pillar is made of writers who have commented on Church-State relations. Nicos Alivizatos, Victor Roudometoff, Theofanis Stavrou, Lina Molokotos-Liederman, Constantine and Andrew Danopoulos, Elizabeth Prodromou and Evangelos Karagiannis are a few of the scholars who have written on the subject. Their writings focus primarily on the conflict between secularization and close Church-State ties. These authors offer multiple perspectives on the evolution and destination of Greece's Church-State relationship, ranging from calling for total separation to pragmatism about the traditional role of the Church.

The third pillar is made of authors who have written about the adaptation of Church and State since the Cold War. Athanasios Anasstassadis' concept the Church's "conservative modernization" is crucial to explaining how the Church reconciled and took advantage of its dogma and relations with the State to curry further favor and resources. Effie Fokas focuses on the role of the Church within society as well as the role the Church's philanthropic network plays in Church-State relations. These authors are crucial to understanding how SEE migrants have produced profound changes in Greece and yet Church-State relations persist.

Fourth and finally some writers within the Church are referenced below. Kallistos Ware and Emmanuel Clapsis are intimately familiar with the history, theology and bureaucracy of the Church but with an eye to a wider world. Stefanos Alexopoulos is one of the few writers to write specifically on the issue of the Church and immigrants (in English). Though used to a lesser extent, the role of Church documents should be noted. Several Church bulletins, sermons and reports are

referenced below. These authors capture the spirit of the Church in a way that is often neglected in academic discourse about the Church as a social institution.

### **Chapter III: Methodology**

In order to fill this lacuna in the research it has been necessary to establish the narrative of how the Church came into contact with Greece's migrants. Due to the gap in the literature, the author gathered primary materials, attended meetings and conducted approximately two-dozen formal and informal interviews, 16 of which are cited here, July 2009 – June 2010. The narrative provides milestones for the analysis of how SEE migrants have caused Church-State relations in Greece to evolve.

The interviews for this thesis were targeted at actors directly involved with the Church's activities with migrants and the State. There was no set questionnaire for these interviews because so many basic facts had to be gathered for the first time. Six priests in Athens and Arta (for an urban and a rural example) were interviewed about the internal workings of the Church and their specific efforts with migrants. Six academics were interviewed on specific areas related to Church-migrants and Church-State to elaborate on themes that were mentioned in their written work but not explained in great depth. Perhaps the most crucial interviews were with lay people who are closely related to the Church, including the Synodal NGO, The Center for the Re-integration of Returning Migrants or KSPM. Due to the changeover of government in 2009 and the current political and economic crisis in Greece it was difficult to secure interviews within the government. Ambassador Christodoulos Lazaris, however, explained how Church and State cooperate but try to stay separate behind the scenes. Other interviews were taken with immigrant groups and journalists for further context.

Media reports, particularly since 2008, have been crucial for establishing the Church's activities in the Ieronymos era. There are three major areas of concern; outreach and opposition to migrants; data from the planned taxation of the Church; and the Church's role in the immigrant citizenship bill. Grouped into this primary source category are the organs of the Church ranging from newsletters to official websites to priests' blogs.

With these narratives in hand, the thesis will progress chronologically in three sections with demarcations at the reigns of the last three archbishops. Chapter IV details how the Church reacted to the onset of immigration under Seraphim. Chapter V explains how the late Archbishop Christodoulos carried out a "Conservative Modernization" that shifted Church-State relations from opposing immigrants to supporting integration. In Chapter VI the current Archbishop Ieronymos takes a step back from the public debate but uses the instruments, established in the Christodoulos era, to expand the Church's influence at the grass roots level of society, especially with migrants. As a result, Church and State have evolved but remain in the mold of one "Prevailing Faith."

## PART B

### Chapter IV: Shock and Seraphim in the 1990s

The Church has a case for arguing that they were among the first to support immigrants. The Holy Synod founded a NGO for returning Greek migrants in the 1970s and allowed its focus to shift to non-Greek migrants in 1990. Migrants from SEE countries in particular had begun to flood in almost immediately after the Berlin Wall fell, successor regimes loosened their border controls and the painful transition to market economies began. While the Church quietly pursued small-scale programs to assist migrants, its public rhetoric during the reign of Archbishop Seraphim (1974-1998) was openly hostile, to the point of reinforcing the Clash of Civilizations theory and the notion that close Church and State relations violate the idea of a secular state.

#### *IVa: SEE Newcomers*

Immigration from SEE is an indicator of the human toll the collapse of the Communist bloc and its reconstruction took on people from the region. Thousands of people migrated either to gain opportunities previously denied or because their economies were in such dire straits that they had no other choice. A much smaller number (primarily Serbs) migrated temporarily due to the Yugoslav wars. Greece became the destination country for Albanians, Bulgarians and Romanians seeking the Balkans' lone Western economy. All three of these SEE countries had experienced massive drops in production and suffered huge spikes in unemployment.<sup>22</sup>

Albanians made up the vast majority of all migrants (SEE and non-SEE) with the total number of inflowing immigrants peaking at an estimated 120,000 in 1992.<sup>23</sup> Most were nationalities that had recently been on the other side of the Cold War

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<sup>22</sup> See: Stubos (2002)

<sup>23</sup> Triandafyllidou and Marouf (2008) 11

divide. Approximately one-tenth (100,000) of Greece's immigrants are co-ethnics, the majority of which are Pontic Greeks from the Black Sea region of the former Soviet Union. A small number of these co-ethnics came from the long contested Greek minority in Northern Epirus (Southern Albania) and were treated more favorably in the press than their atheist and Muslim Albanian counterparts.<sup>24</sup>

Organized religion in all three countries – Albania, Bulgaria and Romania—had been stagnated or repressed for 40 years, if not almost eliminated. In Albania, atheism was a dogma that bordered on leadership worship. In Romania and Bulgaria, the Orthodox Church was not crushed because of its national implications but its activities were severely curtailed. As a result, the people coming from these countries departed a secular environment to enter another one where Orthodox Christianity is ever-present. Albanian journalist Gazi Kapplani summarized, in an interview, how migrants, especially from Albania, have perceived the Church's influence over the last 20 years.

The new generation had no contact with religion at all and from this point of view we came to a country where religion was an overwhelming presence...A lot of them (had) an attitude of cultural conformism and were quite elastic with religion. I know that a lot of Albanians for example have been baptized or have changed their name... Someone who comes from a country where secularism is the norm is quite amazed that all the ministers and the Prime Minister of Greece have to be blessed by the Archbishop, or seeing people on the bus making their crosses.<sup>25</sup>

No studies were published in the 1990s to gauge immigrants' reaction to the role of the Church in Greek society. But as Kapplani's quote suggests, migrants were more than aware of the Church's influence on society although the specific connections with the Church as an institution are a bit more vague.

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<sup>24</sup> Triandafyllidou and Veikou (2002) 198

<sup>25</sup> Interview, Gazi Kapplani, 23/4/2010. In addition to living and working in Greece for the last 20 years, Kapplani is currently collaborating on a project about "Old and New Islam in Greece" comparing the Muslim minority in Western Thrace with the new wave of Muslim immigrants.

*IVb: KSPM/KΣIIM*<sup>26</sup>

The Church's work with immigrants has its roots in work with Greek emigrants. Soon after the fall of the Greek Dictatorship in 1974, sociologist Dr. Antonios Papantoniou, the son of an island priest, approached the Holy Synod about forming a committee dedicated to the re-integration of Greek migrants. The Synod and Archbishop Seraphim, whom Papantoniou knew personally, assented to the formal creation of an NGO in 1978 but were hesitant to fund the organization. For 20 years, the NGO was funded almost entirely by grants from Germany.

In 1990, the flow of migrants to Greece became obvious and Papantoniou shifted the organization's focus to all migrants coming into the country. The Church allowed the shift in focus but at first did not see the purpose. Dr. Papantoniou described a situation in which priests were not so focused on protecting Christianity or the *ethnos*, but were, quite simply, oblivious.

The Church is a little bit introverted. It was difficult to see that the problems outside the walls of the churches are affecting the church... And then (priests) discovered in their parishes that there are many problems. The parish is not what it was in the 60s, 70s, 80s 98% Orthodox. ... The image of the parish is changing.<sup>27</sup>

Embedded in Papantoniou's description are questions of responsibility and expectations from and toward the Church. Within Greek society the parish priest acts like a mayor or ward leader of a tangible geographical area. Priests not only provide spiritual leadership but also material assistance such as food, clothing and small amounts of money for expenses like utility bills. Priests and their communities see the Church as responsible for providing for the temporal needs of the parish's vulnerable.

The question in the 1990s within the Church was whether the parish priest was also responsible for non-Greek migrants, some of whom were Orthodox, others who

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<sup>26</sup> The vast majority of material in this sub-chapter comes from Interview, Papantoniou, 4/12/2009 with material also from kspm.gr.

<sup>27</sup> Interview, Papantoniou, 4/12/2009

were not, and all of whom were looking to find opportunity away from their collapsed states. At that moment, however, the Church as an institution looked to the Greek State for guidance, according to Papantoniou.

There were many bishops and many people in the administration, not clergy but lay people, who (thought), “This is not our work this is something that has to be done by the state. We are not ready to be involved.” Until 2000, it was the majority opinion.<sup>28</sup>

Papantoniou and others within the Church countered that the Church was the right entity to intervene first. In addition to the parishes, the Church also has a substantial philanthropic system through its *Philoptochos* organizations and volunteer networks. In interviews with three different sources acquainted with these networks – a priest, a professor and a state social worker – it was emphasized that the Church mobilized volunteers (mostly women) to perform these services and that migrants were not only welcome to partake of these services but that they do so in visible (but uncounted) numbers.<sup>29</sup> Thus, in functional terms the Church has worked closely and quietly with immigrants but in rhetorical terms the relationship was less hospitable.

#### *IVc: Clash of Civilizations, Secularism and Seraphim*

Greece’s shift from an immigrant exporting to an immigrant receiving country took place entirely during the reign of Archbishop Seraphim. Enthroned in 1974, Seraphim had checkered relations with the state by 1990. He had been instrumental in the ceremonial overthrow of the military dictatorship and the legitimation of the new republic. Under his leadership, the Church had resisted but ultimately assented to secularizing changes brought on by entry into the European Union and deftly used the European Court of Human Rights to defend Church property against a State appropriation. As the *Independent* wrote in its obituary, “Although much of his

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<sup>28</sup> Interview, Papantoniou, 4/12/2009

<sup>29</sup> Interviews, Vayas 16/3/2010, Zoe 18/3/2010, Fr. Kontogiannis, 20/3/2010

stewardship hinged on relations with the state, the Church has adapted to a greater distance from secular power while maintaining its authority and central position in Greek life.”<sup>30</sup> In a sense, Seraphim set the tone for the Church’s gradual shift from power within the state to influence within society.

On immigration, Seraphim chose to publicly wield that power in an ethno-religious manner that favored some migrant groups but put the majority on their guard. At his enthronement in 1974, Seraphim pledged to give his life for “our unredeemed brethren,” the Greek minority in Northern Epirus.<sup>31</sup> When the Cold War ended, Seraphim did not hesitate to spout xenophobia toward Albanians and irredentism toward Albania, as some of his subordinates even sympathized with the terrorist band MAVI.<sup>32</sup> More quietly, the Church offered to share facilities with Bulgarian and Romanian Orthodox Christians, and still does today.<sup>33</sup> Thus the Seraphim administration’s policies contributed to Greece’s becoming more hospitable to Orthodox migrants and less so for other faiths.

At the time of Seraphim’s death and Christodoulos’ enthronement, two realities of the Church’s approach to immigrants had emerged. Publicly, the Church maintained ethno-religious rhetoric that assumed a national as well as religious character and impacted decisions made by the State. Privately and quietly, the Church extended assistance. Thus, the Church’s position toward immigrants in 1998 was not the same as it had been in 1990, according to Dr. Papantoniou. “Only after the 90s have (we) realized what migration means, because we have received migrants and we have seen what it means for the Greek society.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Corley (1998)

<sup>31</sup> Corley (1998)

<sup>32</sup> Roudometof (2005) 86

<sup>33</sup> Interview, Fr. Avramides, 27/4/2010

<sup>34</sup> Interview, Papantoniou, 4/12/2009



## Chapter V: Conservative Modernization under Christodoulos

The Orthodox Church of Greece is overcoming (new challenges as) evidence of our faith and our tradition. In recent years, the Church has felt the need to confront new social problems ... immigrants, refugees, victims of human trafficking... We decided not to allow ourselves to remain unconcerned when faced with the pain and suffering of our fellow man, regardless of race, nationality or religion... The State supported our work and private bodies and organizations stood by us, generously assisting us in our efforts.<sup>35</sup>

Archbishop Christodoulos, 2007

Archbishop Christodoulos (1998-2008), was much more interested in increasing his political power through mobilising the citizens for issues like the inscription of religion on national identity cards rather than in catering for the destitute, including irregular migrants, victims of human smuggling or trafficking. To put it bluntly, social work and solidarity with migrants was not a main topic on the Orthodox Church's agenda in this period.<sup>36</sup>

Anna Triandafyllidou and Michaela Marouf, 2008

As these quotes indicate, analyzing the Church of Greece's approach to immigrants during the Christodoulos era is an exercise in explaining contradiction. The late Archbishop produced a large corpus of public statements on almost every social topic, including immigration, which has been interpreted in a multitude of manners. He held conferences on the Church's activities for migrants but he spewed nationalist rhetoric in rallies and on television. Church NGOs built shelters, including for victims of human trafficking, but Christodoulos' political posturing helped stalemate the construction of a mosque in Athens. Likewise, other bishops such as Anthimos of Thessaloniki are often lambasted for anti-immigrant rhetoric, yet Anthimos supported the right of non-Greek students to carry the Greek flag in student parades.<sup>37</sup> Once the rhetoric is peeled away it becomes clear that while Church and State were publicly combative, the issue of migration drew Church and state functionally closer together. For instance, the Church provided much needed social services, which were funded in whole or in part by the State. As will be discussed further in this section, the NGO

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<sup>35</sup> Solidarity.gr (2007) 7

<sup>36</sup> Triandafyllidou and Marouf (2008) 60

<sup>37</sup> Ekathimerini.com, "Support for non-Greeks in flag row", 24/10/2004.

“Solidarity”, founded in 2002, epitomized how Church and State found a mutually beneficial *détente*. In 2007 “Solidarity” published a book of its work to date saying:

The Greek state has supported and assisted us on our difficult “journey”. The political leadership of the country, the local authorities and many other organizations have cooperated with us in several ways.<sup>38</sup>

In other words, during the same era that Church and State publicly clashed over identity politics, the two sides were increasingly cooperating on social issues with state resources pouring into the Church.

*Va: Enter Christodoulos*

From the day of Christodoulos’ enthronement in 1998, relations with immigrants and perceptions of racism became tangled with Church-State relations. Christodoulos seemed to juxtapose hospitality with ethno-Orthodox chauvinism. In back-to-back paragraphs the *BBC* described Christodoulos warning against racism and discrimination toward migrants while human rights groups criticized him for his “nationalist stance” toward religious minorities among Greek citizens. Both the Prime Minister and the President of Greece at the time chose not to attend Christodoulos’ inaugural mass.<sup>39</sup> Nicos Alivizatos noted in 1999 that Church and State were at a crossroads when it came to immigration with a choice of whether to pursue a nationalistic line or adopt a more pluralistic tone.

It remains to be seen whether, following the advent of the new archbishop, Greek legislators will be persuaded in the foreseeable future that both on the domestic front and internationally they will win more than they will lose if they decide to proceed in the direction of tolerance.<sup>40</sup>

Evaluating Christodoulos’ legacy in hindsight, the Archbishop did proceed in the direction of tolerance but with a great deal of ambivalence.

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<sup>38</sup> Solidarity.gr (2007) 61

<sup>39</sup> *BBC News*, ‘New Greek Orthodox Bishop enthroned’, 9/5/1998

<sup>40</sup> Alivizatos (1999) 34

A year after his enthronement, Christodoulos published a book entitled *From Fire and Water* in which he laid out his agenda as Archbishop. He labeled Islam the “lava that burns the Balkans” and expressed solidarity with Orthodox Serbs.<sup>41</sup> The “lava” had headed Greece’s way in the form of Albanian migrants and refugees from Kosovo and Bosnia. The new Archbishop expressed his dismay that “modernizers” and the EU would have “disastrous consequences for Hellenism.” Yet Christodoulos had deftly played European institutions in the past. As a bishop he had led the Church’s case in the media and the European Court of Human Rights to protect its land from the Greek state in 1987-8.<sup>42</sup> Christodoulos supplied villain (the West), damsel in distress (Hellenism) and hero (The Church and himself) to a waiting audience of believers, journalists and academics. By 1999, Christodoulos already had a record – often misinterpreted – of shrewdly exploiting populism, church-state relations and European institutions all with the underpinning (or veneer) of Orthodox theology. Just as the Church is not monolithic, Christodoulos’ rhetoric and activities operated on multiple levels.

The following subchapter will briefly analyze three well-studied events during Christodoulos’ tenure that either directly or indirectly related to migrants from SEE countries. The first, and most thoroughly cited, case is that of the so-called “Identity Card Crisis” of 2000-2001 in which Christodoulos’ campaign to keep religious affiliation on the identity cards was cast as a battle between secularism and tradition with migrants invoked as a reason the measure should not only be taken but also that Church-State separation should become reality. Second, the case of an Albanian student who converted to Orthodoxy but in 2003 was denied by local threats the right

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<sup>41</sup> Stavrakakis (2002) 33

<sup>42</sup> *New York Times*, (AP) ‘Greek Priests Protest Government Plan to Acquire Church Land’, 2/4/1987. ECHR Case Law: THE HOLY MONASTERIES v. GREECE - 13092/87; 13984/88 [1994] ECHR 49 (9 December 1994)

to carry the Greek flag demonstrates the limits of religion and the Church as a means of integration. This case also differentiates the Church hierarchy from the people they represent. Finally, the ambiguous case of the stalled Athens mosque and Muslim cemetery typifies the Church's ambivalence on the subject of multi-culturalism more generally and immigration specifically.

*Va-1: Identity Crisis?*

The scholarly debate on the 16-month media war (2000-2001) that Archbishop Christodoulos waged over the deletion of religious affiliation from police identification cards has centered on the tensions between secularism and tradition, homogeneity and pluralism. Christodoulos argued – at rallies, in the media and with a three million signature petition – that the majority have the right to declare their religious affiliation on a symbol of their identity and that outside forces (among them the European Union) were at work trying to separate Church and State. This position was a pragmatic adjustment of his original stance that religious identification should be compulsory.<sup>43</sup> Just as when Christodoulos was enthroned, he focused his campaign on skepticism toward the West and Greek religious minorities, but not immigrants.<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, immigrants have been attached to this discussion and issues of secularism and modernization affect any discussion of Church-State relations.

Greece has been described as an incomplete or selectively secularized country<sup>45</sup> and the Church is described both as having outstanding influence and as being secularized itself since, after, the Church was competing for a place in the national myth, the antithesis of religion.<sup>46</sup> The reasons for this in-between status are as functional as they are theoretical. The Greek state founded the Greek Church in 1833

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<sup>43</sup> Molokotos-Liederman (2007) 8

<sup>44</sup> In the Stavrakakis (2002) analysis of Christodoulos' statements there is no mention of migrants. Prodromou (2004a) 66 postulates that the Church is skeptical of pluralism.

<sup>45</sup> See: Stavrakakis (2003) and Molokotos-Liederman (2009)

<sup>46</sup> Molokotos-Liederman (2009) 44. Karagiannis (2009) 15

as a way to sever ties to the Ottoman-controlled patriarchate in Constantinople and transfer the energies of Christian peasants who fought for their religious independence to the newly formed national government, which was crafted by elites influenced by the Enlightenment.<sup>47</sup> In the nearly two centuries since, the State has repeatedly called upon the Church as a symbol and actor of national unity and the Church accommodated (with debate) societal shifts ranging from technology to civil marriage and divorce.<sup>48</sup> There were often trade-offs between the two sides that brought Church-State relations closer. For instance in the 1920s, the Church ceded a great deal of land to re-settle Christian refugees from Asia Minor. In return, the Church gained a ban on proselytism and assurance that the State would pay the clergy payroll.<sup>49</sup> There is a converse effect in that the Church of Greece became secularized itself as a national symbol and quasi department of state. Thus the Church and the State have worked in partnership since Greece's inception so that both are composed of secular and religious elements with each having a stake in the other.

The usual accommodation between Church and State broke down with the identity card issue as the Simitis government pursued a secular, modernist path and the Church retaliated publicly and in the courts with little effort between the two sides to find common ground. Nicos Alivizatos was a member of the data protection committee, which proposed the change, and watched the crisis unfold.

Under the Simitis government (1996-2004), the government took the initiative to change the identity cards so that religion is not included. The Church of Greece, not directly, but indirectly brought the case to the Greek courts. It lost it. Then it brought the case to the Strasbourg court (European Court of Human Rights). It lost there at the very first stage.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Gallant (2001)

<sup>48</sup> Patrikios (2009), Prodromou (2004a)

<sup>49</sup> Karagiannis (2009) 18

<sup>50</sup> Interview, Alivizatos, 7/12/2009

To put it succinctly, the State attempted to ignore or remove the Church as a stakeholder in order to meet its obligations to minorities and the Church saw not only the measure itself, but also the exclusion from the process as a threat.<sup>51</sup>

The lasting images from the “Identity Card Crisis” are the rally and petition drive Christodoulos held. Christodoulos was competing not to make the state or the people more religious but to keep the Church relevant and influential in Greek society.<sup>52</sup> “The primary purpose of this reaction (was) not to boost individual religiosity, but to preserve the strength and mass acceptance of the Church's voice in public debates.”<sup>53</sup> Christodoulos’ strategy did reap benefits for the Church’s role in society. Christodoulos became the most popular public figure in Greece and Greeks, especially younger ones, felt the Church should influence politics.<sup>54</sup>

Parsing out Christodoulos’ words reveals that the late Archbishop’s populism was largely targeted at ‘protecting’ his own followers and the Church as an institution. Christodoulos’ words do appear highly antagonistic. “The Church was attacked because it did not succumb to the secular power, because it did not “modernize” and did not follow its orders, orders that opposed the Law of God.”<sup>55</sup> But upon a closer reading it becomes apparent that there is a difference between “succumbing” and cooperating with secular power. There is also a certain skepticism within the Church about modernizing as the term is often used and what it entails. The Church was still capable of adjustments, as Christodoulos’ own pragmatism indicates.

Christodoulos and the Church did feature a certain ambivalence toward religious pluralism among Greek citizens, with migrants not being entered into the

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<sup>51</sup> Stavrakakis (2002) 30-31

<sup>52</sup> Patrikios (2009) 360

<sup>53</sup> Patrikios (2009) 360

<sup>54</sup> Patrikios (2009) 364

<sup>55</sup> Stavrakakis (2002) 43

same political calculus.<sup>56</sup> As those in favor of the removal of religious identification advocated on behalf of minorities, Christodoulos reasoned that he could speak on behalf of the Greek people because those minorities constituted only two to three percent of Greece's population.<sup>57</sup> This estimate obviously did not factor in the country's immigrant population toward which Christodoulos often adopted a 'host' or paternalistic attitude. As Stavrakakis has argued, the flock, or the majority, expected the Church to take an active role and it was to this audience that Christodoulos focused his populism.

‘Nowhere else in the world are People and Religion so close’ ... and that is why the people expect support from the Church, ‘that’s why the Church speaks on behalf of this People.’<sup>58</sup>

It should be noted that not every priest or Bishop agreed with Christodoulos that the Church should wage such a campaign to keep Church, State and Citizen welded together. Certain priests and journalists saw the Church's campaign as a dangerous form of nationalism that subjugated the Christian mission.<sup>59</sup> There was a clear acknowledgment that the Church has a role in Greek society but different ideas of where the boundaries lie. Interior Minister Dimitris Reppas went so far as to say, “The holding of the rally and the content of the (Archbishop's) speech confirmed intentions and goals which contradict the spiritual and social role of the Church.”<sup>60</sup>

If the Church effectively excluded immigrants from its identity card argument, what then can we glean from the identity card crisis about the relationship between Church, State and immigrant? The issue seems to be a matter of perception. Migrants became associated with the dispute because journalists and scholars cited them as an example of how Greece was becoming more pluralistic. It followed then that if

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<sup>56</sup> Prodromou (2004a) 69

<sup>57</sup> Stavrakakis (2002) 11

<sup>58</sup> Stavrakakis (2002) 40

<sup>59</sup> Molokotos-Liederman (2003) 302, cited Bishop Metallinos.

<sup>60</sup> Cited in Payne (2003) 267

migrants were one of several factors making Greece more pluralistic, that the most just course would be to pursue a more full secularization and diminish the Church's influence in the public sphere. This point has been adopted in a number of influential texts (Alivizatos 1999, Payne 2003, et al) even as secularization theory has changed. Scholars and philosophers in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, such as Peter Berger, questioned the supposed link between pluralism and secularism that three decades earlier they had professed.<sup>61</sup> Nonetheless, with a few exceptions, it is only since 2008 that the new methodology appears to have been taken into account. Before 2008, migrants were often attached to analysis of the identity card crisis as another reason why secularization in Greece was necessary.

Migrants themselves were not so engaged in the debate as it was happening but they were cited at the time as an example to take into account in the future and analyses years later appear to have conflated their influence. To take one author as an example, in 2003, two years after the ID debate, Lina Molokotos-Liederman wrote, "The degree of religious and national homogeneity in Greece is expected to change with the recent influx of immigrant populations from different religious and ethnic backgrounds."<sup>62</sup> There was one other similar reference to a future influence of immigrants in that text. Four years later (6 years after the events took place)

Molokotos-Liederman wrote:

Ignorance about immigration and about the status of Greece's minorities both at popular and government level is part of the problem. This can lead to explicit and more subtle attitudes of intolerance towards both foreigners and established minority groups; the OCG has an indirect role in this, through its public discourse and interventions in social or political issues involving minorities and immigrants in Greece.<sup>63</sup>

Minorities and immigrants were grouped together in 2007 in a way that they were not

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<sup>61</sup> Gorski and Altinordu (2008) 56

<sup>62</sup> Molokotos-Liederman (2003) 293

<sup>63</sup> Molokotos-Liederman (2007) 155



in 2003 or 2001 when the crisis took place. Molokotos-Liederman conceded that she did not interview migrants for her latter research as they were “not well organised.”<sup>64</sup>

This one researcher is not alone as references to immigration multiplied in articles on the ID crisis from 2001 to 2008.<sup>65</sup> Others more explicitly attached the Church’s campaign against modernization and foreign elements to immigrants, Albanians in particular.

The root of the problem, as they see it, is the de-Christianization of the society in the face of the avalanche of foreign and mainly non-Christian elements... Although the Church avoids naming the Albanians, it is nevertheless clear that they are viewed as the main culprits.<sup>66</sup>

Here Danopoulos and Danopoulos, in the absence of written evidence, assert that the Church is implying hostility toward Albanian migrants and fail to provide other forms of evidence. Christodoulos’ nuanced comments such as referring to “foreign elements” sent double and triple messages, which could have been read as anti-EU, anti-globalization, anti-immigrant or all of these possibilities. They also have to be weighed against his more philanthropic commentary and public acts such as visiting the Church-run orphanage for migrants *Kivotos tou Kosmou* (Ark of the World) and the annual December 26 breakfast with migrant communities. Although no survey was conducted to ascertain how immigrants perceived Christodoulos, at least some migrants saw the late Archbishop’s rhetoric aimed at them whether or not that was the intention.<sup>67</sup> Thus it is difficult to say whether there is an academic bias, which assumes the Church and migrants are opposed, or if Christodoulos’ veiled rhetoric

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<sup>64</sup> Molokotos-Liederman (2007) 143

<sup>65</sup> Payne (2003) 268, states the ‘human rights’ argument for separation of Church and State the most succinctly. Molokotos-Liederman’s analysis changed from 2003 to 2007. Danopoulos and Danopoulos (2004) (discussed below) asserted that the Identity Card Crisis included = immigrants. Triandafyllidou and Marouf (2008) cited the ID cards and expressed skepticism about the Church’s social work and other pro-immigrant comments.

<sup>66</sup> Danopoulos and Danopoulos (2004) 113.

<sup>67</sup> Interview, Gazi Kapplani, 23/4/2010. Kapplani specifically cited Christodoulos’ use of the term “foreign elements”. Other interviewees, especially those who came to Greece after 2001, such as the President of the Union of Migrants, saw Christodoulos and Ieronymos as positive figures.

was aimed toward disparaging migrants.

There have been other studies on the identity crisis using sound academic methodology to arrive at questionable conclusions about the Church's influence on anti-immigrant attitudes. Karyotis and Patrikios (2010) pioneered a methodology that would include both the Church and the State in a single framework to analyze secularization within society.<sup>68</sup> Applied to migration, they concluded in 2010 that in 2001 the Church's rhetoric, particularly in Church services, did make Greeks more hostile toward migrants, especially when it came to matters of personal and job security, using European Social Survey (ESS) data. Background material cited in the study included newspaper articles (in English) that showed the Church presenting an allegedly hostile attitude toward immigrants while positive press reports and materials such as liturgy pamphlets, sermons, personal interviews, Church NGO literature, etc. were omitted. In other words, while there was evidence to support the thesis of Karyotis and Patrikios, there existed evidence that undermined it, which was not taken into account.

Christodoulos did try to express the Church's support for migrants, especially after the identity card crisis and before the analyses of the crisis were published, in a way that re-cast Church, State and Modernity as compatible. For instance, "tradition" in secularism theory is associated with what came before the Enlightenment and with religious actors who cling to pre-Enlightenment influence. The logic follows then that because Greece did not directly experience the Enlightenment, the Church has been allowed to maintain an active role. Yet, within the Church "tradition" is viewed as being dynamic.<sup>69</sup> To make an analogy, constitutions and bodies of law provide precedent for decisions in the modern-day. Likewise, the Church reaches back into its

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<sup>68</sup> Karyotis and Patrikios (2010)

<sup>69</sup> See: Ware (1997)

founding documents to take “new” paths. Christodoulos in particular reached into theology to justify the Church performing more outreach to immigrants as he did in his opening speech for the first of two conferences the Church held on its philanthropic work in 2002 and 2003 respectively.<sup>70</sup>

Christ was born as a refugee, lived as a foreigner, taught us through the parable of the Good Samaritan the love towards the neighbour, who is equated with the stranger, and affirmed that in the Last Judgment our stand towards the stranger will be of paramount importance for our salvation. In Christianity, the stranger is not just placed under the protection of the God, as in ancient Greek religion, but God is identified with the stranger!<sup>71</sup>

Here Christodoulos has transformed the derogatory *xenos* into a direct relation with the Orthodox faith. Thus, he applied the Church’s corpus of material – namely scripture – to apply for the sake of positive social change in homo and heterogeneous settings in a way that does not have to conflict with pluralism, although Orthodoxy’s particular preoccupation with nationalism is “unfortunate.”<sup>72</sup>

Claims that the Church was invoked to fuel anti-immigrant sentiments are not completely unfounded, but there is a question of agency. In 2002, former journalist Georgios Karatzaferis was expelled from the centre-right New Democracy party and went on to form his own party, the Popular Orthodox Rally, whose acronym LA.O.S. (meaning “the people”) was laced through all of Christodoulos’ own rhetoric. The Church has not backed the party, but LA.O.S. MPs consistently speak as if they have one or all of the elements – hierarchy, clergy, the parishes, etc. – of the Church on its side. This fusion of Orthodoxy and populism, born out of the ID crisis, has often been turned against immigrants. Although LA.O.S. is far from the ruling party in Greece, its existence exemplifies how the Church – or rather the invocation of the Church— expanded its influence in politics.

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<sup>70</sup> Alexopoulos (2008) 203

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Alexopoulos (2008) 203

<sup>72</sup> Clapsis (2004) 134

*Va-2: The case of an Albanian student.*

One question which has yet to be addressed is the role of the migrants' own religion and whether being Orthodox or converting to Orthodoxy assists in the integration of migrants, especially from SEE countries. The answer seems to be that the Church's influence has limitations and that nationalism means more than religious affiliation in the eyes of many Greeks. A particular flashpoint comes in the usually integrative area of education. Legally, all migrant students are allowed to enter Greek primary and high schools and receive the same honors as their Greek peers. The Greek Church has a particular interest in education where it has managed to maintain influence but its opinion and the opinion of school districts vary.<sup>73</sup>

One illustrative case study comes from Northern Greece where in 2003 local pressure forced Albanian student Odysseas Tsenai to abdicate his right to carry the Greek flag as the top student in his class. Not only did Tsenai – born Oddisej Qena – adopt the classical-sounding Greek name Odysseas, he converted to Orthodoxy in 2001, a year after similar pressure forced him to give up the middle school division flag. As Baldwin-Edwards pointed out, being baptized Greek not only entails changing religions, but it involves being “sponsored” by Greek Orthodox Christians into the faith and society.<sup>74</sup> Tsenai's godfather was a prominent journalist who supported his cause to carry the flag.<sup>75</sup> Asked why he got baptized, Tsenai responded, “exactly because of the Christian message of love between people.” He also responded frankly that he thought it would help his chances of carrying the Greek flag

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<sup>73</sup> Public religious education will be discussed further in Chapter VI.

<sup>74</sup> Baldwin-Edwards (2004) 64

<sup>75</sup> In.gr “Χριστιανός βαπτίστηκε ο αριστούχος Οδυσσέας Τσενάι” 24 June, 2001

when he became a senior.<sup>76</sup> Nonetheless, local threats again forced Tsenai to give up the right to carry the flag.<sup>77</sup>

It is commonly acknowledged that migrants in Greece – particularly Albanians – have converted to Orthodoxy to try to facilitate their integration into Greek society but no official statistics exist. Other SEE migrants such as Bulgarians, Romanians and Serbians come from Orthodox backgrounds and are at least offered the use of Orthodox religious space for services in their own tongue.<sup>78</sup> Albanians, however, came to Greece with a wide degree of religious ambiguity. The Hoxha regime (r. 1941-1985) banned but failed to stamp out religion. Two generations of Albanians were raised without visible religious symbols. When communism fell, the country returned to its presupposed religious makeup with a majority of Muslims and significant Catholic and Orthodox minorities.<sup>79</sup> More importantly, religion among Albanians is met with a great deal of ambivalence in the post-communism era. Thus there is anecdotal evidence that Albanians were willing to join the Orthodox faith for social and bureaucratic benefits, although conversions have helped little with receiving residence and citizenship papers.<sup>80</sup>

Conversions have met a mixed response in the Church. Orthodoxy does not feature a robust missionary agenda and although the faith has become closely associated with nationalism, clergymen, place a premium on genuine belief, instead of bureaucratic or social expedience. Fr. Stefanos Avramides, secretary for the Holy Synod's Committee on Inter Christian and Inter Orthodox relations said, "As much as

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<sup>76</sup> In.gr "Χριστιανός βαφτίστηκε ο αριστούχος Οδυσσέας Τσενάι" 24 June, 2001

<sup>77</sup> van Versendaal (2003)

<sup>78</sup> Interview, Avramides, 27/4/2010

<sup>79</sup> According to statistics cited in Molokotos-Liederman (2007), the ratio of Muslim to Catholic foreigners (both mostly Albanian) is 800,000 to 300,000. These statistics seem to be based on the distribution of religion in Albania. Orthodox migrants were not included.

<sup>80</sup> Karagiannis (2009) 5

it can, the Church tries to sift these people to see how sincere they are.”<sup>81</sup> Other priests encourage migrants to convert. The parish of Fr. Athanasios Pappas in the Southern Athens suburb of Faliro baptizes approximately one migrant per month and Pappas himself sees baptisms as a sign that migrants respect and want to become part of Greek society, although he stressed it should not be a requirement for integration.<sup>82</sup> While the numbers are unclear, it the Church has shown little motivation for converting immigrants to maintain its hegemony.

A year after the Tsenai case (2004), the same issue brought about an interesting case of Church-State cooperation. Both the Church and the State – now under the center-right New Democracy government – took proactive stances before the October national holiday to send a message of support for foreign students at the top of their classes. Calling on the Church, especially local priests and bishops, is not unusual considering the “village triptych of policeman, teacher and priest.”<sup>83</sup> The bishop of Thessaloniki, Anthimos, a well-known opponent of immigration supported non-Greek students.

“Since the children are studying at Greek schools, they have the same rights as Greek students,” said Anthimos. “We must all be friends in the same neighborhood, do the best for our people and not be ruled by rampant nationalism,” he added.<sup>84</sup>

In this instance, Anthimos acts as educator (citing the law) and peace-builder (talking of friendship). The fact that there is such a divergent view between local attitudes and the views of Church elites indicates the limitations of the Church, which often cites local attitudes as something to be ‘taken into consideration.’

It should also be reiterated that Church elites and lower clergymen do not always speak in unison vertically or horizontally. Almost six years after Tsenai

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<sup>81</sup> Interview, Avramides. 27/4/2010.

<sup>82</sup> Interview, Pappas, 19/3/2010.

<sup>83</sup> Molokotos-Liederman (2007) 154

<sup>84</sup> Ekathimerini.com, “Support for non-Greeks in Flag Row” 22/10/2004

graduated from high school, Bishop Ambrosios of Kalavriton included him in a diatribe laced with national prejudices especially against immigrants from neighboring Albania. After accusing Tsenai of spreading Albanian propaganda, Ambrosios asked, “Therefore will we prepare with our own hands the gallows on which they will hang us?”<sup>85</sup> Thus, while Church and State attempted to collaborate on a pro-immigrant stance it is clear that there are factions within the Church that chose nationalist fear over acceptance of converts.

### *Va-3: Mosque Issue*

The Athens central mosque issue is perhaps the most ambiguous of the three cases and one that still lacks a resolution.<sup>86</sup> Christodoulos openly embraced the idea of a mosque, tried to solve the issue himself and then supported local opposition to the mosque’s construction. Blame is often pinned on the Church for blocking the construction of the mosque when a) bishops could not approve or veto the building of mosques although they could render an influential opinion b) that right was stripped in 2006 although anyone can air their grievances through the media c) the Church did provide land for a Muslim cemetery.

So what does a mosque mean to the Church of Greece and Greeks more generally when it comes to migrants from SEE countries? In the late 1990s, the issue was that Albanian migrants, who, as discussed earlier, have ambiguous feelings toward religion, would be evangelized by Muslim fundamentalists. Indeed, in 1999 certain Muslims were trying to proselytize their Albanian co-religionists.

Although Muslim in name, many Albanians and Balkan Muslims know very little about Islam. This is the result of decades of suppression of communist rule and misunderstandings arising from the conflict between Turks and local Christian populations. Dr Anwari has created the Al-Nur Foundation to carry

<sup>85</sup> mkka.blogspot.com. ‘ΑΒΑΣΑΝΙΣΤΗ ΑΠΟΝΟΜΗ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΙΘΑΓΕΝΕΙΑΣ ΣΕ ΑΛΛΟΔΑΠΟΥΣ’ 19/1/2010.

<sup>86</sup> A Muslim cultural center has been established and the Church has set-aside land for a Muslim cemetery.

the message of Islam to this region... It was decided to translate (some guidebooks to Islam) into Greek and Albanian initially...a search for properly qualified university professors was also started for the translation of the Holy Quran into Greek and Albanian.<sup>87</sup>

Thus, while there may not have been any mal-intent in terms of security concerns, there were reasons for Greeks and the Church to suspect that there were foreign elements who wanted to make Albanian immigrants more active in their Islamic faith. The Athens mosque project has long been on the agenda of Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries with the main immigrant activists hailing from countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>88</sup>

Nonetheless, The Holy Synod of the Church backed a state decision to build the Mosque in the suburban district of Paiania, relatively close to the Athens airport, overriding the Bishop of Mesogia. Christodoulos in particular was aware of the limelight about to be shone on the country by the Olympics, which was filled with many obvious layers of national pride. The official statement read that the Church respected the well-known religion of Islam but that local factors made building a mosque with a minaret too sensitive for the heart of Athens. Denied his official opinion but undeterred the Bishop of Mesogia asked his “beloved flock” of “citizens” to struggle against “foreign, dangerous and heretical elements.”<sup>89</sup> In one statement, a single bishop mixed the flock metaphor of a local cleric, secular rhetoric (citizens) and took on the priest-defender mantle by calling for a struggle. A year later, as the *Athens News* aptly put it, Christodoulos joined the chorus against the mosque which he had originally approved of.<sup>90</sup>

This inherent contradiction has befuddled researchers leading Anagnostou and Gropas to label the Church’s role as the “Production of Uncertainty.”

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<sup>87</sup> Antoniou (2003) 167-8

<sup>88</sup> Triandafyllidou and Gropas (2009) 980

<sup>89</sup> Antoniou (2003) 171

<sup>90</sup> Tzilivakis (2003)



Discerning the church's position regarding the issue of the mosque is not an easy task, not the least of which is because of the diversity in the statements made by different representatives of the Orthodox Church of Greece.<sup>91</sup>

Despite the confusion, it is clear that the mosque, which remains un-built, is one case where local, defensive elements of the Church defeated a conciliatory hierarchy in the name of their (loosely) mobilized of their local 'flocks.' In this instance there have been many other factors in the stymieing of a state-run, central mosque but the Church added to the confusion instead of helping to sort out the issue on behalf of migrants.

*Vb: Conservative Modernization*

The Church's moderate positions on the Albanian student and mosque issues (both post identity cards) suggest that a shift was underway in the Church's approach to migrants. Indeed, by 2006 the World Council of Churches (WCC) congratulated the Church of Greece and Archbishop Christodoulos for taking over certain WCC auspices related to migrants through its NGOs; KSPM and the newly founded "Solidarity."

Today, we discover with great pleasure that the Church of Greece is becoming a precious partner - sometimes even a pioneer - in the areas of bioethics, concern for migrants and refugees, as well as reflection on the values and roots of European culture.<sup>92</sup>

The same social institution that was blamed for anti-European and anti-immigrant policies was better known in Brussels (where the Church established a liaison office) and Geneva than in Athens for its work with migrants. To answer how this shift took place we must examine what has been termed the Church's "Conservative Modernization."

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<sup>91</sup> Anagnostou and Gropas (2010) 99

<sup>92</sup> World Council of Churches (2006)

Anastasios Anastasiadis has advanced the thesis that the Church of Greece saw an opportunity to increase its influence in society, including with immigrants, by modernizing its charitable network through cooperation with the State.<sup>93</sup> In other words, the same Church and Archbishop cooperated with all of the elements they supposedly opposed in eschatological terms based on a certain reading of the Archbishop's statements. Anastasiadis has theorized that Christodoulos quickly and shrewdly saw the writing on the wall that pluralism and European integration were a reality as a result of the ID card confrontation. If separation of Church and State were to become a reality, the Church would still have to find a way to maintain influence if it were to also legitimate its position as defender of the Greek *ethnos*. The Church's constitutional protections, however, affords it the time to re-invest in Greek society, a society that increasingly includes migrants.<sup>94</sup> More specifically, the Church came to see as in its best interest the integration of immigrants into a society where it holds sway.

The Church employed soaring rhetoric to increase its influence among the flock during the ID card debate, but took a more functional tact to draw itself closer to the State. Three steps were crucial to this process; the Church being made a legal agent of state-run social welfare, concessions of land control for philanthropic use and the foundation of the Church's flagship NGO "Solidarity." As a result, the Church literally invested millions of (taxpayer) euros into Greek society and causes related to migrants.

One of Christodoulos' first coups as Archbishop was to secure legislation that further intertwined the missions and resources of Church and State. Law 2646/1998 Article 8 made the Church a *de jure* (by law) member of the Greek Council of Social

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<sup>93</sup> Anastasiadis (2004) 16

<sup>94</sup> Anastasiadis (2004) 22

welfare and Law 2873 increased the tax-free limit on donations from 300 to 3000 euro. The Church added itself to another institution of state and opened the gates to resources from both the State and its followers. It should also be noted, that the Church of Greece's newly established EU liaison office was busy filing proposals for grants.<sup>95</sup> As Anastassiadis points out the Church was anything but defeated by the State and EU with all of the money that was flowing in as early as 2002.<sup>96</sup>

Second, Christodoulos took advantage of a previous coup to free-up the Church's most precious resource; land. In 1987, Christodoulos was the lead priest assigned to the Church's case to protect its landed assets from nationalization. Law 1700/1987 pledged that any land devoted to philanthropic purposes could not be nationalized. The Church founded 68 summer camps in 2001 alone, drawing millions of euro in support from the State just as Christodoulos was involved in a media war over Church-State relations.<sup>97</sup>

Third, the Church founded its flagship NGO "Solidarity" in 2002. From the outset, the Church included migrants in the NGO's mission as Christodoulos blended Church-State relations with the Christian pastoral mission.<sup>98</sup> Among the NGOs primary services are free Greek language lessons, which are expensive to obtain privately and necessary for acquiring residence and work papers. Instructors sent directly from the Ministry of Education and Religious affairs teach these courses, another example of close Church-State cooperation leveraged by immigrants.<sup>99</sup> In 2004, the Church founded a shelter for victims of domestic abuse and human trafficking named *Storgi*.<sup>100</sup> Public officials attended the grand-opening next to

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<sup>95</sup> Anastassiadis (2004) 30

<sup>96</sup> Anastassiadis (2004) 29

<sup>97</sup> Anastassiadis (2004) 28

<sup>98</sup> Solidarity.gr (2007) 7

<sup>99</sup> Personal conversation with language instructor, who declined to participate fully in this research.

<sup>100</sup> *Mosaic*, "Church's Hostel for Women Victims of Trafficking", 13/10/2005

Christodoulos. Although the shelter's mixed purpose is still a matter of some controversy, the Church did recognize the need. Greece had dipped down to a tier 2-watchlist country on the US State Department's annual Trafficking in Person's report with female victims hailing from Eastern Europe, Bulgaria, Romania and Albania and the majority of child victims being Albanian.<sup>101</sup> These two programs in particular showed that the Church was using tangible and modern methods to assist immigrants.

Unfortunately, it appears that philanthropic work fell prey to other excesses of the Christodoulos administration. Court proceedings and investigations by journalists reveal that "Solidarity" became the depository of a great deal of state funding, perhaps as much as 10-15 million euro.<sup>102</sup> Much of the money appears to have been embezzled as evidenced by Foreign Ministry and Church of Greece lawsuits.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, priests and bishops have been implicated in human trafficking schemes.<sup>104</sup>

By the twilight years of Christodoulos' reign the Church had completed its 'conservative modernization' – it remained relevant in society but with new mechanisms such as public relations, NGOs and conferences – but journalistic and academic sources taking little notice of how the Church's attitude had become demonstrably pro immigrant integration. Where there are well over 1,000 press articles on the ID issue, it is almost impossible to find one on the conferences Christodoulos held.<sup>105</sup> According to sources within the Church, Christodoulos' efforts made a large organizational difference when it came to preparing local priests to attend to the needs not only the needs of their congregation but of their whole parish

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<sup>101</sup> US Department of State, 2004 TIP Report, "Greece"

<sup>102</sup> Siouti (2010), Ekathimerini.com, "Church set to file lawsuit against own NGO", 30/7/2008. "Solidarity" was renamed *Agapi* in June 2010 and shut down in favor of a new NGO "Mission" led by the Archdiocese in August 2010.

<sup>103</sup> Ekathimerini.com, "Church set to file suit against own NGO" 30/6/2009. Papachristou (2009)

<sup>104</sup> Fokas (2006) 221

<sup>105</sup> Molokotos-Liederman (2003) 296

including non-Orthodox although coordinating hierarchy and parish is a “never-ending struggle”.<sup>106</sup> One of the Church’s own organs, *Mosaic*, recorded

Christodoulos’ comments at the second annual conference for the Institute on Immigration Policy in 2005:

Cultural and social inclusion of immigrants can only be completed within the framework of local society: the neighbourhood, the parish, the school, the village square, the village market, daily association. And at this point, the Church, the most decentralized institution of Greek society, the institution which continues to be represented even in the most far-flung areas...wants to and can contribute substantially to the smooth, creative and impartial inclusion of our immigrant brothers in Christ.<sup>107</sup>

This analysis of Christodoulos’ comments away from crises shows that there was an awareness on the part of the Church that as a Social Institution it could play a crucial role in the integration of immigrants and a conscious effort to do so. Nevertheless, there is still space for a significant amount of debate within Greece’s “most decentralized institution”.

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<sup>106</sup> Interviews, Papanicolaou 4/11/2009, Papantoniou 4/12/2009, Vayas 16/3/2010

<sup>107</sup> *Mosaic*, “The Church on Migration”, 13/10/2005

## Chapter VI: New Norms, Same Relationship in the Ieronymos Era

Victor Roudometof categorized the Church of Greece into pro-Orthodox and pro-modernizer camps in the late 1990s and early 2000s.<sup>108</sup> One decade into the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is difficult to establish such a binary. For instance, pro-Orthodox then was a code word for nationalism but pro-Orthodox today would best describe the current Archbishop Ieronymos and his supporters who publicly emphasize theology and pastoral practice over nationalism. There pro-Nationalist wing of the Church still exists, spearheaded by Bishops Anthimos and Ambrosios. Furthermore there are progressives and anti-dialoguists and any number of shades in-between.

Despite the variance in opinion within the Church it is clear that immigrant integration is one field where Church and State have drawn even closer together since the passing of Archbishop Christodoulos in January 2008. His successor Ieronymos looks like a break from Christodoulos because he maintains the line on philanthropy but has made a statement of not commenting on national issues. Yet on some national issues the Church has sided (and increased its influence) with the State, keeping alive its role as symbol of national unity. As a result SEE migrants who have been living in Greece for years stand to become Greek citizens yet Church and State remain closely related. Based on the literature produced in the last decade this would seem a highly unlikely outcome for a faith that “cannot be seen to change.”<sup>109</sup> Before proceeding to the events of the last two years, a re-evaluation of the theoretical underpinnings is in order.

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<sup>108</sup> Roudometof (2005) 101

<sup>109</sup> Stavrakakis (2002) 40

*Vla: Theory*

The common perspectives on the Church of Greece's interactions with foreigners and the region have centered along civilization or conflict-exacerbating lines. To be certain, the Church's support of Serbia during the Bosnian Civil War and the Kosovo Conflict did little to dissuade this perspective. Less attention has been paid to the idea of religious figures as peace builders, theology and the Church's pastoral philosophy, all of which have played a key role guiding the Church of Greece's efforts to assist immigrants while complementing its role in Greek society.

Because immigration – and the Church's response – have often been securitized it is useful to look at the Church through the lens of a peace-builder. Although immigration is not a conflict and the Church is not a belligerent *per se* both were securitized in the aftermath of the Cold War; immigrants for border violations and petty crime, and the Church of Greece for its rhetoric. Yet immigrants have been seen to be a benefit to previously homogeneous societies. It has also become clear that the Church of Greece, and other churches like it, can not only adapt and function productively in a pluralistic setting but can also help the society at large make that adjustment.<sup>110</sup> As R. Scott Appleby put it, religion in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is neither the “bane of modernity nor its victim” and Church and State have found new “symbiotic relations.”<sup>111</sup>

This chapter and the chapter V describe how those symbiotic relations came about through “conservative modernization” that often entailed cooperation with migrants from SEE countries. Why then has this discussion been missing in the literature up until now? While it is difficult to measure, using Appleby's logic it is not surprising that the Church acquired a reputation for being anti-immigrant after the

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<sup>110</sup> Appleby (2000) 245

<sup>111</sup> Appleby (2000), X, 3

intense news coverage of the 2000s on tangentially related issues. “The prejudice against religion is strongest among secularized professionals who read page 1 of the newspapers and know a bit of history.”<sup>112</sup> Thus media-tization likely had an effect on the situation.

The Church has supported immigrants, but in a way that has left observers unconvinced. Prof. Charalambos Kasimis’ research on immigrants in rural Greece has not directly touched on the role of the Church in immigrant integration, but he has observed the following paradigm among parishes in the countryside; a few heroic individual clergymen, generally philanthropic congregations and a great deal of ambivalence. “In general terms, I don’t think the Church has played a negative role but one would have expected it to play a more positive role.”<sup>113</sup>

The Orthodox Church does not have as developed a social gospel as its Western Christian counterparts nor is charity designated as prominently as it is in Islam. The Church does, however, have a tradition of informal, discreet assistance and liturgical references to universal philanthropy based off of Christ’s missionary work abound.<sup>114</sup> Priests almost universally cite Matthew 25 as the theological underpinning of their work.<sup>115</sup>

For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was Naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me. I was in prison and you came to Me... inasmuch as you did it to the least of My brethren, you did it to Me.<sup>116</sup>

As this passage suggests, there is a precedent for reaching out to the less fortunate.

Furthermore, there is an emphasis on doing social work “in secret” in an era when

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<sup>112</sup> Appleby (2000) ix

<sup>113</sup> Interview, Kasimis, 29/4/2010

<sup>114</sup> Alexopoulos (2008), 205. Personal interviews, Fr. Avramides, Fr. Kontogiannis, Fr. Pappas. Father Pappas put the amount of money his parish spends on discreet aid around 1,000 euro per month in increments ranging from 30-50 euros to parish families in need, not just Orthodox Christians.

<sup>115</sup> Alexopoulos (2008) 205. Personal interviews, Fr. Avramides, Fr. Saliveros, Fr. Kontogiannis and Fr. Pappas. In Solidarity.gr (2010) Archbishop Ieronymos referenced this same passage.

<sup>116</sup> Matthew 25: 35-44. Another popular passage is Matthew 6:3 “But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.”



“raising awareness” through media and information campaigns is considered a crucial aspect of social work.

It is also important to note that the Church of Greece is not only made up of priests and bishops. Lay people, particularly women, make the Church easily Greece’s largest volunteer organization and these efforts are often turned toward migrants.<sup>117</sup> This mobilization of the congregation into social work is referred to as “liturgy after the liturgy” with liturgy of course being a derivative and cognate for the Greek word *leitourgeia*, meaning work. Even Bishop Anthimos, in his invective sermon against the citizenship bill, said the Church helps and would help migrants “everyday”.<sup>118</sup>

This kind of contradiction speaks to a larger truth about the Church of Greece. The Church, like many other religious organizations believes it has a monopoly on the truth.<sup>119</sup> Within that monopoly, however, there is a great deal of variation and cooperation, known as *oikonomia*. “This permits various possible ways of practically implementing Orthodox law, thus implying a certain degree of flexibility, conciliation, discussion and openness.”<sup>120</sup> It is because of *oikonomia* that opinions between and among hierarchs and lower clergy can vary so much. Statements by the Church of Greece often reflect *oikonomia* in the way that they nuance the clearly oppositional viewpoints on the ruling Synod. It is this emphasis on harmony that paradoxically leads the Church to put accommodation ahead of concepts such as multiculturalism, a particular facet of the current Ieronymos

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<sup>117</sup> Fokas (2006), 229. Interview, Papantoniou, 4/12/2009. Interview, Fr. Martzouchos, 20/3/2010

<sup>118</sup> Panagiotopoulos (2010). See also Youtube, «'Ανθιμος: όλοι οι μετανάστες είναι παρανομίοι!!!» URL in bibliography.

<sup>119</sup> Stavrakakis (2002) 41. Prodromou (2004a) 67.

<sup>120</sup> Molokotos-Liederman (2003) 293.

administration.<sup>121</sup> It is crucial to note these internal dynamics in order to understand the conflicting messages emerging from the Church on the immigration issue in the Ieronymos era.

#### *VIIb: Enter Ieronymos*

There was a small note at the end of a longer news article about Ieronymos' first sermon as Archbishop of Athens and all Greece. "Ieronymos also pledged to cooperate with the state on fighting poverty, supporting disabled citizens and boosting the social integration of immigrants."<sup>122</sup> That one line epitomizes how the Church's agenda includes immigrants, which necessitates cooperation with the State. Ieronymos came into his office with a record for pastoral work and has since built on the institutions that Christodoulos established to deepen the Church's commitment to immigrants in terms of both rhetoric and practice.

One of Ieronymos' first moves was to overhaul the Church's main NGO "Solidarity." Former journalist Kostas Dmitsas was hired to raise the organization's profile and the *modus operandi* was shifted from large-scale infrastructure, such as shelters, and overseas aid projects to many more, small programs in Greece. Among them is a program dubbed "Church in the Streets" a food handout on a City of Athens lot that is financed by "Solidarity" and carried out largely by volunteers from African and Anglican Christian parishes.<sup>123</sup> Politicians were quick to back the program and the Church played a five-minute video of the program in the Athens metro system. Ieronymos said the Church had to intervene because, "there is so much waste," referring to programs by the State and other NGOs.<sup>124</sup> Once again the Church

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<sup>121</sup> Prodromou (2004a) 66

<sup>122</sup> Ekathimerini.com, "Ieronymos to avoid politics", 18/2/2008

<sup>123</sup> Mesthos (2009)

<sup>124</sup> Youtube, "Church on the Streets", URL in bibliography

portrayed itself as the lone defender of Greek society, but this time most of the people they were defending were clearly migrants.

“Church in the Streets” is a hierarchical or national version of myriad local programs that the Church’s 6,000 de-centralized parishes have taken, which either support state welfare or fill gaps where it is lacking.<sup>125</sup> Many parishes run soup kitchens of their own, which are meant for their congregations but do not exclude local minorities.<sup>126</sup> Before Ieronymos became Archbishop his local, rural parish of Thiva had also implemented programs for migrants that were spearheaded by a priest or two on their own initiative in areas where the state’s programs have been found lacking.<sup>127</sup> Ambassador Christodoulos Lazaris identified the Church as a positive actor because of this initiative, its wide reach, charitable programs and connections with other religious groups. On a number of occasions, the ambassador added, the State has gone to the Church to ask what is happening on the ground in the parishes.<sup>128</sup> Clergymen:

Are in the street ... They are more knowledgeable than us. They work in a different way than the police, and migrants trust them more than the police. Muslims talk more comfortably with the Church than the State.<sup>129</sup>

As Lazaris added, social workers have found that the Church has often “beaten” them to the areas where migrants are most in need.

One particular case is the Athens downtown district of Aghios Pantelaimonas where priests have provided material assistance to migrants only to be attacked by right-wing extremists who ironically are often believed to cooperate with the Church. Fr. Prokopios, the priest spearheading the mission, used the incident to criticize not only the State but Greek society. “We could say in 1989 that we were not prepared for

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<sup>125</sup> Fokas (2010)

<sup>126</sup> Fokas (2006) 241

<sup>127</sup> Fokas (2003) 233

<sup>128</sup> Interview, Lazaris, 20/4/2010

<sup>129</sup> Interview, Lazaris, 20/4/2010

migrants. Can we still say we're not ready 20 years later? ... We must do something."<sup>130</sup> It is important to note that many of these migrants were Muslim hailing from Africa, Pakistan and Afghanistan, not SEE.

Work with immigrants during the Christodoulos era was almost synonymous with Southeastern Europe. But by 2008, almost two decades after Greece became an immigrant-receiving country, many of these migrants had become integrated *de facto*. A series of legalizations had provided a path to residency, opened up avenues to legitimate work and removed the threat of deportation, particularly for Albanian migrants. Meanwhile Bulgaria and Romania had joined the EU, making their nationals automatically legal residents of Greece. The new crisis was what to do with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers from Africa and the Middle East, who arrived in a country that no longer had labor gaps and could not return home if their mission failed. The Church stepped into this void, perhaps more enthusiastically than it did with SEE migrants initially. The full integration of SEE migrants stayed on the Church's and the State's agenda, showing how tight the bonds remain after the Church's 'conservative modernization' during the Christodoulos era.

#### *Vlc: Citizenship for Migrants*

The Hellenic League for Human Rights had perhaps a surprise opening speaker for its forum on the recently tabled 'Immigrant Citizenship' bill on February. Bishop Chrysostomos of Messinia gave a speech in favor of immigrant integration. Soon after Chrysostomos spoke, members of the – among other things—anti-immigrant group *Chrysi Avgi* or "Golden Dawn" stormed the podium right next to the bishop. A few months earlier, *Chrysi Avgi* was implicated in the fire bombing of a Muslim prayer room, drawing a fierce rebuke from the Archbishop. "The peaceful coexistence of

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<sup>130</sup> Dede and Papastathopoulou (2009)

people of different faiths... is a basic prerequisite for social cohesion.”<sup>131</sup> This group had been associated with the Church but were there opposing a bishop’s statement. In addition to the activities of *Chrysi Avgi*, the Hellenic Coast Guard used the March 25 Independence Day military parade to sling ethnic slurs at Albanians.<sup>132</sup>

The bill itself provided immigrants with at least ten years of residency and five years of public school education to apply for citizenship and receive an answer or explanation on their application within two years.<sup>133</sup> The primary beneficiaries of this bill were obviously Albanians who were the largest group and whose country is still outside the European Union. The law was unveiled in December at a special, open cabinet meeting in which the Archbishop was included.<sup>134</sup> Prime Minister George Papandreou had summoned Ieronymos and the Church as a symbol of national unity for immigrants. The Church symbolically showed itself engaged with social issues. The Archbishop did not overtly express his support for the measure though he lent his black-robed, “theocratic aura” to the proceedings.

Changing the religious make-up of the citizenry could be viewed as a threat to the Church’s hegemonic hold while other provisions in the bill favor the Church’s continued influence. For instance, the bill’s prioritization on education places the Church in a privileged position as the Greek curriculum is rife with references to Christianity that condition Greek and non-Greek students alike to the Church’s influence.<sup>135</sup> Religious education in Greek public schools is compulsory although due to Greece’s international obligations students must be offered an alternative or the ability to “opt out.” Studies and anecdotal evidence, however, have shown that because students are at risk of ostracization that minority parents register their

<sup>131</sup> Ekathimerini.com, “Help with immigration” 29/5/2009

<sup>132</sup> Ekathimerini.com, “Greek apology for racist chants” 30/3/2010

<sup>133</sup> Tzivilakis, (2010a,b) 5/4/2010

<sup>134</sup> Ekathimerini.com, “Immigrants to Get Citizenship”, 23/12/2009

<sup>135</sup> Zambeta (2000) 151

children as Orthodox so that they attend the courses and teachers have been known to see conversions to Orthodoxy as a positive sign.<sup>136</sup> Whatever the moral implications, the Church's role in society is reinforced by its emphasis within Greek public education.

The citizenship bill stoked debates within the Church in the three months between its proposal and passage (December 2009 to March 2010) as bishops represented both their own ideologies and the interests of their parishes with the Church once again positioned as defender of *kratos* and *ethnos*.<sup>137</sup> On January 19, Bishop Ambrosios of Kalavriton used his web log (blog) as a platform to warn of the dangers from giving non-Greeks the same status as ethnic Greeks. "This decision blows up the ethnic consistency and purity of our race."<sup>138</sup> Two weeks later, Bishop Anthimos of Thessaloniki responded in a more legalistic manner comparing orderly Greek migrations after World War II to the haphazard means most immigrants to Greece arrived. The message replayed in the media was Anthimos' statement, "No legal immigrants exist in Greece!"<sup>139</sup> This statement, is of course untrue as approximately 800,000 migrants in Greece – predominately Albanians – have regularized or, in the case of Bulgarians and Romanians, have joined the European Union.<sup>140</sup> Ieronymos quietly sidelined and rebuked the bishops for their nationalistic comments and was criticized as a 'dictator' for violating *oikonomia* when he refused to let them hold public forums and rallies.<sup>141</sup> Ieronymos subtly chastised Anthimos

<sup>136</sup> Interviews, Triandafyllidou, 21/10/2009, Zambeta 29/10/2009,

<sup>137</sup> It is worth noting that the Church's opposition to the ID card change lengthened that process to sixteen months and the citizenship bill, which will inevitably reduce Orthodoxy's statistical share in the citizenry, passed in three months.

<sup>138</sup> mkka.blogspot.com, "ΑΒΑΣΑΝΙΣΤΗ ΑΠΟΝΟΜΗ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΙΘΑΓΕΝΕΙΑΣ ΣΕ ΑΛΛΟΔΑΠΟΥΣ", 16/1/2010

<sup>139</sup> Panagiotopoulos (2010). See also: youtube, «'Ανθίμος: όλοι οι μετανάστες είναι παρανομίοι!!!» URL in bibliography.

<sup>140</sup> Triandafyllidou and Marouf (2008) 26

<sup>141</sup> *Eleftheri Ora*, 'ΔΙΚΤΑΤΩΡΙΑ: ΚΗΡΥΞΕ Ο ΙΕΡΩΝΥΜΟΣ!' 7/2/2010

during ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew's visit to "Church in the Streets" on February 3. "Let him come down here and see what the true laws of life are."<sup>142</sup>

The public reaction to the Church's ambivalent support was muted. L.A.O.S leader Georgios Karatzaferis led his press conference opposing the bill with a reference to Christodoulos as if to say that he would have loudly opposed the bill as well and to summon his populist legacy.

All together we will descend on all the squares and kafeneia. And on Sunday morning outside the parishes. Almost the whole hierarchy fall in behind the good, the holy struggle we set out on, defenders to guard the Thermopylae of Hellenism.<sup>143</sup>

Karatzaferis' appeal to populism neither stopped the measure from passing nor lead to mass demonstrations on a par with the "Identity Card Crisis."

The Holy Synod – chaired by Ieronymos –as a whole did not oppose the immigration measure but cited what it considered deficiencies.

The citizenship bill does not directly respond to the immigration problem, so the state has to carefully study the conditions under which citizenship will be granted ...At the same time, though, it has to approach the immigration issue with seriousness, taking into account the sensitivities and particularities of certain parts of our homeland and the possible effect it will have on the general population.<sup>144</sup>

In this way, the Synod simultaneously encapsulated the views of its sixteen different members and represented local interests while toning down its nationalist or 'ethnarchal' rhetoric. Clergy perspectives below the hierarchy voiced similar concerns and offered cautious support. A number of priests asked had no opinion or felt that immigrants' issues were only partly a matter of legality. The Archdiocese's Chancellor Gavril Papanicolaou greeted PM Papandreou's announcement of the legislation at a forum of migration at the Megaro Moussikis warmly but was skeptical

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<sup>142</sup> Solidarity.gr (2010)

<sup>143</sup> Karatzaferis (2010). See also ekathimerini.com, "The Church is with us on citizenship, says Laos", 25/1/2010

<sup>144</sup> Ekathimerini.com "Citizenship bill made stricter" 5/2/2010

the State had the will to push the measure through.<sup>145</sup> Fr. Athanasios Pappas, the priest in Faliro, felt that if Isocrates – a 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE Greek philosopher – equated Greek education with Hellenism that a similar measure was appropriate today.<sup>146</sup> The Synod’s Secretary of Inter-Christian and Inter-Orthodox relations, Fr. Stefanos Avramides, did not oppose the bill but felt that it lacked the civic knowledge requirements found in places like the United States.<sup>147</sup>

In sum, the Archbishop and the Holy Synod did not directly support or oppose the migrant citizenship bill. They avoided confrontation and showed engagement with the issue while emphasizing the Church’s philanthropic role in Greek society in cooperation with the State. To that end, Ieronymos tacked full use of Church land for philanthropic use to his support, or lack of opposition.<sup>148</sup> Since his enthronement, Ieronymos and his surrogates have insinuated that they are open to separation between Church and State, including being taken off the state payroll, if it includes the Church gaining full access to its land.<sup>149</sup> As Evangelos Karagiannis and Effie Fokas have posed, the land question and several others call into debate, who would benefit more from separation; Church or State?<sup>150</sup>

The Church’s philanthropic programs on its land tend to draw more funds from the State coffers, which is one reason the outgoing New Democracy government rejected proposals from the Church of Greece in August 2009.<sup>151</sup> Ieronymos renewed proposals for the Church to receive its land for philanthropic use. In other words, immigrants had become potential leverage for both cooperation and separation of Church and State. For the moment, the relatively smooth passage of the immigrant

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<sup>145</sup> Interview, Papanicolaou, 4/11/2009

<sup>146</sup> Interview, Pappas, 19/3/2010

<sup>147</sup> Interview, Avramides, 27/4/2010

<sup>148</sup> Ekathimerini.com, “Immigrants to get citizenship”, 23/12/2009

<sup>149</sup> Gilson (2008b)

<sup>150</sup> Karagiannis (2009), Fokas (2009)

<sup>151</sup> Ekathimerini.com, “Charity Boost from Church” 21/8/2009



citizenship bill seems to have reinforced the old relationship in its 21<sup>st</sup> century context.

*VId: Suggestions for further study and future investigation*

There are a number of issues related to the integration of all migrants and SEE migrants in particular that merit future attention and study. The implementation of the citizenship bill and the participation of ‘new’ Greeks in local and national elections are likely flashpoints but based on the Church’s ambivalent response to the bill’s passage will likely be muted. Two interrelated areas that are worth further study are the role of religion in education and the future of religious symbols in public spaces.

Due to its international obligations, Greece must provide public education to all children within its borders regardless of nationality or legal status but there is debate as to whether public education can include religious instruction for an increasingly diverse student body.<sup>152</sup> The Greek constitution stipulates that education should cultivate religious feeling and a law passed in 1985 provided for explicitly Orthodox education.<sup>153</sup> Greece’s education system not only includes religious instruction but places it at a position of honor – first among all subjects taught – and at nearly two hours of instruction per week rivals Middle Eastern countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia.<sup>154</sup> Furthermore, the fact that both education and religious affairs are grouped within the same ministry alludes at the symbiotic relationship the two fields have on each other. For the Church, religious education is crucial to maintaining influence because voluntary Sunday School attendance has been dropping.<sup>155</sup> The hiring structure of both the education system and the Church are integrated so that religious instruction is a viable place for the Church to ‘store’

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<sup>152</sup> Efstathiou, Georgiadis, Zisimos (2008) 330

<sup>153</sup> Law 1566/1985

<sup>154</sup> Interview, Zambeta, 24/10/2009. While Zambeta favors the removal of religious education from the Greek system she expressed concern that migrants are used as leverage to that end.

<sup>155</sup> Anastassiadis (2004) 17-18

theology school graduates while they await ordination.<sup>156</sup> Non-Orthodox parents are afforded the right to “opt-out” their children from religious instruction if the school cannot provide them with their own religious instructor but parents fear their children will be ostracized with.<sup>157</sup> Thus the Church is loath to lose its privileged, regenerative place within the education system but at the moment public religious education constructs divides among students.

Finally, there is the question of the place of religious symbols in public spaces brought about by the *Lautsi v. Italy* case in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Italy is currently appealing the ECHR’s decision that crucifixes cannot be displayed in public classrooms, a provision that dates back to the Mussolini era. Greece’s Justice Minister, responding to a LAOS MP’s question, said that if the ruling stands the country might have to remove religious symbols such as icons from public spaces.<sup>158</sup> The veneration of icons is a crucial, grass roots element of religious expression in Greece with its use ranging from display in court rooms and public buildings, to shrines in homes to a good-luck charm kept on office desks, in persons and even stuck to the roofs of police squad cars. Church leaders across the ideological spectrum reacted across two principal lines a) that the European institutions promised the protection of religious expression b) that the youth would be ‘deprived’ of protective symbols crucial to their identity.<sup>159</sup> The slowly unfolding cross episode has presented Ieronymos with an unusual place to find common ground with the rest of the hierarchy as he gave statements on the rights “of the majority.”<sup>160</sup>

Certainly, the Church is opposed, but we should note that in Europe the presence of religious symbols was ensured by law - the Concordats and such. In Greece, it emerges from everyday life and practice. The question is what is

<sup>156</sup> Ekathimerini.com, “Church seeks school posts for jobless priests”, 4/1/2009

<sup>157</sup> Zambeta (2000) 149

<sup>158</sup> Ekathimerini.com, “Religious Icons May Have to Go”, 25/11/2009

<sup>159</sup> Ekathimerini.com, “Church slams ruling on classroom crucifix”, 12/11/2009

<sup>160</sup> *Eleftherotypia*, “Ιερώνυμος κατά του «εξοστρακισμού» των Θρησκευτικών”, 10/11/2009

more important - the ruling, or the national right to our tradition and history?... As we pursued our European [Union] course, they often told us that the identity and traditions of peoples will be respected. Is the ruling stronger than the identity of a people? ...

The people can express their will through a referendum.<sup>161</sup>

This statement with its references to identity and potential political action seems uncharacteristically Christodoulos-like for Ieronymos. Even advocates for a more secular state and society admit that the Church will have grounds for action. Nicos Alivizatos called removing icons, “*casus belli* with the Church.”<sup>162</sup>

The temptation would be to say that the Church has set a red line on pluralism and its accommodation of migrants at education. An alternative view would argue that the Church remains skeptical of forced multi-culturalism instead of a practice of harmony and cohesion in which the majority tolerates but does not change for the minority, the majority of which are from SEE countries. Further analysis will require taking into account both the Church of Greece’s historic role and its ongoing support of immigrant integration within the framework of close Church-State relations.

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<sup>161</sup> Gilson (2009). In the same interview, Ieronymos argued that minorities should have equal rights as Greeks but that the majority of citizens, who are Orthodox, should not have to change their ways.

<sup>162</sup> Interview, Alivizatos, 7/12/2009

## **PART C: Conclusion**

Church-State relations in Greece are as close, if not closer, in 2010 as they were in 1990 when immigration, primarily from SEE countries, began in earnest. To remain so close the two sides had to evolve over the course of three archbishops with this evolution mirroring what was happening in Greek society. By and large, the Church under Seraphim (1974-1998) joined with the shocked Greek State to oppose and deny, yet take advantage of immigration, primarily from Albania, for nationalist ends. “Conservative modernization” under the Christodoulos administration (1998-2008) adapted scriptural precedent in his rhetoric to justify outreach to migrants through 21<sup>st</sup> century methods, which required state funding and cooperation. The current Archbishop Ieronymos (2008-present) has been reforming the Church’s newfound methods, emphasizing pastoral work throughout all of Greek society and muted nationalist critics within the Church’s ranks all while defending certain key points of his social institution’s strength; its land assets and its primacy within Greek education and iconography. The Church leans on the State for financial support and the State leans on the Church as a symbol of national unity with the latest example being Ieronymos’ presence at a cabinet meeting announcing a bill providing easier access to citizenship for migrants.

Throughout this thesis there has been an underlying question of how a once homogenous society can maintain non-secular institutions when it becomes more pluralistic. The answer rests in Greece’s “Prevailing Faith” model. Orthodoxy is not the official religion of Greece but well over 90 percent of the citizenry and over 80 percent of the society (citizens and resident migrants) identify themselves as Orthodox Christians. The largest voting bloc in Greece is Orthodox but the State must also maintain societal cohesion and honor its international responsibilities. The

Church feels directly responsible to Greece's overwhelmingly Orthodox population but also views the parish as its responsibility no matter its demographic makeup. Church and State then have found common ground as benefactors for immigrants with the State providing the resources and the Church offering a broad, diffuse network of clergymen, volunteers and charities. In other words Church and State found common ground for functional objectives. When it comes to policy, the Church can still fulfill its traditional role as a symbol of national unity, this time for the benefit of migrants. As a result, the Church remains relevant in a more diverse state and society.

This cooperation may not seem so apparent based on the available literature from academic and journalistic sources. The highly mediatized "identity crisis" became conflated with an opposition to immigrants due to a selective reading of Archbishop Christodoulos' rhetoric. Much of this conflation has come from articles published years after the "crisis" itself. Analysis of several high profile encounters with migrants revealed that the Church's idea of *oikonomia*, or a diversity of opinions, within its ranks leads to conflicting statements but the overall direction has been support for migrants (especially from SEE countries) from the lowest philanthropic priest to the Archbishop himself. While the literature over the last two years has shifted in this direction, this thesis also incorporated media reports, interviews and materials gathered from the Church to reach its conclusion that immigrant integration and close Church-State relations are not exclusive.

These methods, however, are not exhaustive. A more thorough analysis would include a thorough discourse analysis of the last two years like the one conducted in Molokotos-Liederman (2003), a statistical study akin to Karyotis and Patrikios (2010) a scientific survey of Church-produced material (sermons, pamphlets, websites, etc.)

and a much larger number of interviews with a coherent set of questions. This thesis aimed to establish the narrative and put the relationship between Church, State and immigrant into perspective. Further research should not only include more thorough methods but also delve into *how* attitudes toward migration shift over time and *how much* institutional actors like Church and State have to do with this change.

The answer may be that societies who experience immigration become acculturated naturally over time and the institutions follow. One of the greatest challenges of this research was that what seemed like a huge question (to integrate immigrants or not) in 2001, 2003 or even 2008 had become a fact of life by 2010, resulting in a great deal of ambivalence from subjects across the spectrum. Did the relatively smooth passage of the citizenship bill (amid an international crisis) in 2010 indicate the power of Church-State cooperation or that the *populus* no longer took issue with the idea like they would have in 1991 or 2001? Subsequent research should look at the lived experience of a society emerging into pluralism when there is no crisis.

There may be crises to study in the not-so-distant future; particularly race and religious symbols. Immigration from SEE countries caused national blood to boil but most of those migrants were Caucasian. What role will race play now that the ‘new’ migration is from the Middle East and Africa? This thesis focused on the SEE dimension but there is a question of whether the Church became more philanthropic (or less) when the migrants in need were not from rival nationalities. This thesis also focused on “low politics” and “functional” ways in which Church and State cooperated on immigrant integration. If a recent ruling in the ECHR forces Greece to remove religious icons from public spaces it will raise questions of “high politics” and Christian identity within Greek society. Ieronymos, known for his pastoral emphasis,

has made it clear that he will use methods of religious populism such as referenda (or the highly publicized campaign for one) if there is a threat to the Church's usually lofty perch in society. Issues like these will raise new questions about the Church's commitment to immigrant integration but the evolution of Church-State relations in order to accommodate immigrants from SEE countries over the last twenty years ought not be lost.

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29/11/2009 Ο ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΟΣ ΔΕΣΜΟΣ ΘΕΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΝ

7/2/2010 ΑΓΑΠΗ: ΤΟ ΚΤΗΡΙΟ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ

18/4/2010 ΤΟ ΘΑΡΡΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΓΑΠΗΣ



*Interviews*

| <b>SUBJECT</b>                   | <b>TITLE</b>  | <b>DATE</b> |
|----------------------------------|---|-------------|
| Alivizatos, Nicos                | University of Athens Law Professor  | 7/12/2010   |
| Avramides, Fr. Stephanos,        | Secretary of the Synodal Committee for Inter-Orthodox and Inter-Christian Relations | 27/4/2010   |
| Antoniou, Dimitris               | PhD. Candidate, University of Oxford.   | 23/3/2010   |
| Colombani, Jean-Daniel           | President, Immigration Union of Greece  | 26/4/2010   |
| Kapplani, Gazi,                  | Albanian Journalist, <i>Ta Nea</i>  | 23/4/2010   |
| Kasimis, Charalambos             | Agricultural University of Athens, Professor of Sociology                           | 29/4/2010   |
| Kontogiannis, Fr. Vasilios       | Director of <i>Diaconia</i> at Ippokrateion Hospital                                | 20/3/2010   |
| Lazaris, Amb. Christodoulos      | Director Ministry of Foreign Affairs Religious Affairs Division (E2)                | 20/4/2010   |
| Martzouchos, Fr. Theodosios      | Chancellor of the Metropolis of Preveza   | 18/4/2010   |
| Papanicoloau, Fr. Gavril,        | Chancellor, Archdiocese of Athens   | 4/11/2009   |
| Papantoniou, Antonios            | Director, KSPM  | 4/12/2009   |
| Pappas, Fr. Athanasios,          | Priest in Palaio Faliro   | 19/3/2010   |
| Saliveros, Fr. Peter Charalambos | Priest in Grammenitsa, Arta, Greece   | 18/4/2010   |
| Triandafyllidou Dr. Anna         | Senior Research Fellow, ELIAMEP   | 21/10/2010  |
| Vayas, Christina, TEI            | Professor of Social Work  | 16/3/2010   |
| Zambeta, Evie,                   | University of Athens Professor of Education   | 28/10/2008  |
| Zoe, Nineta                      | Social Worker, Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity                             | 18/3/2010   |
|                                  |   |             |