

MONASTERIAL MANUSCRIPTS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE IN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

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Abstract

Monasterial manuscripts are part of the cultural heritage of our country. Reading and studying makes the readers travel, among other things, and helps them enrich their knowledge and ideas, while also creating potential visitors. The manuscripts are a cultural legacy that survives over the centuries, related both to religion and its doctrine while, at the same time, having other implications, such as, for example its contribution to the sustainable development of a destination. Monasterial tourism could experience a special flourishing in these areas and is a type of tourism that can be easily developed in Greece, as it is overflowing with many and important points of interest regarding cultural importance and heritage of the aforementioned manuscripts and the relics of Monasteries in general. With the development of tourism, residents care for and seek local development through the cultural history of the area, consumers who use products, internal/external tourists, who are interested to discover religious/cultural routes with experiential activities through travel, as well as the local professionals area looking for ways and knowledge to promote innovative solutions for their businesses. This paper deals with the educational practices, the contribution of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism that could contribute to the promotion and utilization of manuscripts, so that they could become a contributing factor to the development of local society. The paper is also a bibliographic review with a case study of the monastic libraries of Greece.

Keywords: *monasterial manuscripts, local development, tourism, cultural heritage.*

1. Introduction

The contribution of the Monasteries to the local development is very important because through the promotion of the libraries and the collections of monasterial manuscripts, with the means of modern technology, the organization of conferences and cultural events, they give the possibility of employment to a large number of professionals, while, simultaneously, visitors become consumers of various touristic products and services; therefore, the benefits for the region are multiple. Tourism contributes to the development of other areas (outside the touristic perimeter), through the strengthening of other productive branches. As an example, we could illustrate the manufacturing industry of religious consumption items, in the form of souvenirs.

The monasteries' libraries in Greece contain a priceless collection of ancient Greek manuscripts. The samples of religious literature are the main point of interest for both

pilgrims and religious tourists, as well as any cultured visitor, who looks for knowledge, history and culture. Most of the pilgrimage sites do not have easy access to such manuscripts, a fact that could increase tourist traffic. (Manola & others, 2020). In the libraries of the Monasteries, unique archives of knowledge and information are kept, as they refer to a very wide spectrum of the history of the human intellect. Manuscripts or manuscript codices, antiquities, and musical manuscripts contain classical, religious, scientific, social texts and are unique samples of culture.

2. Historical Manuscript Archives and Monasteries' libraries

During the Middle Ages, when religious fanaticism and obscurantism reigned, certain monasteries, defying the established theocratic worldview, functioned as "arks of knowledge" by utilizing and preserving manuscripts. In the dim light of the monasterial workshops, the legendary calligraphers-monks copied these manuscripts. The multiple copies created by a few bold monks are the source of most of the ancient Greek manuscripts that exist and survive today. Monks risked their lives to preserve old information that some zealous Christians believed to be "heretical". In a period when literacy was at historically low levels, the monks of Mount Athos prioritized the written word because they believed it was a tool for spiritual development (Karamanidou, 2007). Thus, they copied and preserved hundreds of manuscripts, not only religious texts, but also "secular wisdom" passed down from generation to generation by the ancient Greek community of philosophers.

The treasures of the manuscripts kept in the Monasteries make them "an arc of cultural treasures". Being, essentially, rescue centers for knowledge and art, monasteries are hives of museum and scientific centers with lots of visitors.

The libraries of the Monasteries of Greece are a bibliographic and archival treasure unique in the world, available for research and study by specialist scientists and researchers, since they host, apart from Greek, Ottoman, Slavic and Romanian documents, Greek and Slavic archetypes, as well as seals of monasteries (Yatrakou, 2002).

The library of the Monastery of Great Lavra on Mount Athos is considered the richest of all the monasteries, since it includes 10,000 printed volumes and more than 2,000 miniatures.

Monasteries faced embezzlement of valuable documents by collectors of ancient manuscript; a characteristic example is the Monastery of Karakalos, where a large number of pages with the "Acts of the Apostles" were embezzled from. The number of manuscripts of the Monasteries of Mount Athos is estimated at 15,000 and they constitute the largest collection of Greek manuscripts in the world (Gitrakou, 2002). Many of the manuscripts are miniatures, i.e. they carry images of small dimensions. Miniatures combine written word and visual image.

The Monasteries also safekeep important old publications, the so-called antiquities collections. Characteristic are the Collected Works of Homer, the Great Etymological Dictionary, the Portolanos, an edition with instructions for nautical voyages, codes concerning positive sciences, such as medicine, astronomy, mathematics, etc.

There are thousands of musical manuscripts with Byzantine notation, i.e. hymnographic texts marked with Byzantine musical texts. It is estimated that there are 5,000 manuscripts of Byzantine and post-Byzantine modern Greek music, which have been recorded in detail and published, contributing to the promotion of Byzantine music and Greek culture (Gitrakou, 2002).

The monks of Mount Athos placed great emphasis on Greek writing. Once a monastery was founded, one of the first things its founders did was build a library to serve the spiritual as well as practical needs of the monks. A librarian was chosen by the abbot, to be responsible for the preservation and care of the manuscripts. Each library had a large number of books

provided by the person who founded it. Important manuscripts were kept in the vestibule above the outer narthex of the Monastery, as in the Monastery of Esphigmenou. The Great Lavra is an example of a structure that was used when the attic space was insufficient under other circumstances. "This book is a sacred and heavenly treasure, and whoever takes it bears the burden .." was written on the manuscripts before they were deposited in the library's collection. The goal of a library has always been to house as much information as possible, regardless of whether it is religious or not. The creation of manuscripts in the monastery, the purchase and ordering of books to meet a specific demand or shortage and, of course, the enormous and extraordinary contributions of emperors, monarchs, patriarchs, priests, monks and people were the main sources of enrichment of the monastic library, combined with donations from personal libraries (in the 16th century the professor of the patriarchal school Theofanis E. Notaras donated all of his books to the Holy Monastery of Iberon). Monks' personal libraries were often passed down through their monastery. Large numbers of manuscripts were often ordered. "The present Book of Hours was produced by the cruel and cunning Cyril of Nafpaktos, with the support and output of the venerable monastery..." is a characteristic remark for a manuscript commissioned at the expense of a monastery. Most of the monasteries of Mount Athos were in possession of structured manuscript collections and bibliographic workshops, where the monk-scribes copied the originals not randomly, but strictly, according to rigid regulations they carefully observed. Capital letters were used in Greek texts until the 9th century. However, miniatures began to dominate in the 9th century, and all earlier manuscripts were "recharacterized" throughout the copying process. The heyday of bibliographic activity is in the 14th and 15th centuries, when the first monasterial Offices were founded and a significant number of manuscripts were produced. It wasn't until the 17th century that the creation of manuscripts took off, with the appearance of "Xeropotamian script" (also known as "Agiorite"), a characteristic type of writing that flourished at that time. The clergy's contribution to the preservation of cultural heritage in difficult times for Christianity is also important. (Manola, & Trikalitis, 2020a).

3. Classification and utilization of monasterial manuscripts in Greece

Monasterial manuscripts are a kind of cultural heritage for Greece and for every country that has them in possession. They promote economic development at the local level and are considered cultural and religious relics. They can contribute to the development of religious, monastic, cultural and museum tourism. They are a basis for the development of various forms of tourism and strengthen the economy of the region if they are presented correctly.

In the monastic libraries of Mount Athos today there are about 15,000 or more manuscripts, based on various estimates. These may be classified by morphological and linguistic criteria, but their substance is the most important element. Manuscripts are divided into scrolls or staves (so called because they are wrapped around a small piece of wood) and codices (books) of various shapes and sizes based on their structure. The papyrus scroll began to be replaced by bound book pages (codex, Latin codex) in the second and third centuries AD. Both text and artwork were printed on sturdy, user-friendly stock. Codes quickly replaced manuscripts as the primary source of communication. Most codices are bound and decorated with heavy ornaments, carved metals and jewels, and the covers are often ornate. Parchments (from animal skin), papers and cotton balls are the three main types of book materials used in their production (from cotton). A linguistic analysis shows that 90% of them speak Greek, while the remaining 10% speak other languages. In the previous century, foreign-language Orthodox monks on Mount Athos used manuscripts in Slavic, Latin, Romanian, and Georgian, which make up about a tenth of the total. According to Manola & Tsatalbassoglou (2020), Russian tourists showed great interest. Most of them are translations

from Greek theological and liturgical material. Last words about the antiquity of Mount Athos: the oldest piece of parchment in Latin writing dates from the 4th century AD. and eight pages of the Euthanasia Codex (6th century AD), which contains excerpts from St. Paul's writings to the Galatians and Corinthians, is exhibited in the monastery. The Apostle Paul had as a starting point written texts (Schnelle, 2005) He was the author of about half of the books of the New Testament, but he was also the one who wrote letters in the context of his travels with the aim of spreading the Gospel and the work of Jesus (Porter , 2016).

3.1 Educational practices

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism has developed programs for the utilization and promotion of Byzantine manuscripts, in order to promote this form of culture. The Directorate of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments created the program "In the world of Byzantine texts". (Culture Gov, n.d.). The aim is to introduce students to an aspect of Byzantine culture through the manuscripts. Doukas & Vardopoulos (2023) argue that a rational selection of good practices provides a logical framework to understand a change, which justifies a change in educational policy to include manuscript programs. Byzantine society, the book, the authors and its readers, as well as the presentation of rich supervisory material with the participation of students in creative workshops, are considered in this course. The main purpose of the initiative is to integrate the manuscripts into the social fabric and to recognize their relevance for both the Byzantine and the modern world, which requires respect and protection. Students are expected to know and learn about the art of manuscript writing. As a result of questions and answers, discussions of the dialectical method, as well as discussion in general, students' interests are stimulated and the old ones come alive again (Liveri, et al. 2009).

Participation in the Byzantine manuscript workshop encourages students to build cognitive and aesthetic abilities, cultivates imagination and creativity, helps socialization and allows them to express their own thoughts. From February 2001 to February 2004, the teaching program "In the sphere of Byzantine manuscripts" took place. Approximately 920 children from the public schools of Thessaloniki participated. A letter is sent each time to the students of the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grade (up to 25 students). Two museum educators and archaeologists provide the instruction, which lasts about two hours in total. First, manuscripts are discussed and then students participate in workshops, where they create their own manuscripts. It was found that the students gained a lot of information, which they used, developed a variety of talents in the workshops, and learned, while having fun, how to integrate their new knowledge into storytelling, think interdisciplinary, and use a different style of storytelling.

A similar program is also being developed at the Byzantine Museum of Ioannina. The main objectives of the program are:

- Knowledge of a relatively obscure element of Byzantine culture, manuscripts, through the course of this program. Byzantine culture began to recognize the importance of manuscripts as a result of their introduction.
- Understanding the importance of manuscripts in today's society and the consequent necessity of their preservation
- Understanding the role that Byzantine manuscripts played in the preservation and dissemination of classical Greek literature.
- Assessment of the role played by Byzantine literature in the development of the Greek language, from antiquity to the present day

- Familiarity with the production of texts, a skill and technology previously unknown in temples

It is important to illustrate that the above-mentioned educational initiatives emphasize observation, critical thinking, creativity and socialization.

In the Byzantine museum of Ioannina there is also a guided tour for children. The initial phase of the program begins with the development of writing tools, writing materials and book items. Books, readers, and writing seminars are also listed. Dialectical and visual material is used to convey all the elements (tables with pictures and miniatures) just like the process of writing a book draft.

3.2 Local development and manuscripts

Orthodox Christianity has been an important part of Greek culture for two thousand years, during which they used to express their deep religious beliefs, devotion and awe to God. (Lagos and Christogiannis, 2007). Churches and monasteries are a part of cultural tourism and in this light the exhibition of monastic manuscripts could be a pole of attraction for all those tourists who are engaged in literary tourism. According to the research of Lachlali & others (2019), visitors to monasteries no longer have only pilgrimage as their main reason for visiting, but they are also driven by other cultural interests. Tourism could be developed in areas, where there are only those manuscripts available to the public, so that they can come into contact with the cultural and religious heritage. The development of this type of tourism in areas where other models of tourism development are not traditionally developed, could provide multiple benefits to the destination, on the one hand, with the influx of income from cultural tourists and the creation of a brand name of tourist interest for the destinations, something that would favor the local community and the economy in general. Moreover, monastic tourism could experience a special flourishing in these areas and is a type of tourism that can be easily developed in Greece, as it is overwhelmed by many and important, in terms of their religious importance and cultural heritage, monasteries (Liveri et al., 2009). Monasterial manuscripts can be a tourist attraction, since the cultural capital of monastic manuscripts highlights the cultural heritage by being displayed as exhibits in museums. The development of museum tourism in the context of a more general cultural tourism plan, according to Liveris et al. (2009), can benefit, not only the local community, but also its economy, while, according to Vagianni (2008), the high performance of a touristic product exists, as long as the tourism market is organized at the local level.

According to the above, the digitization of books and manuscripts could be a way of development at the local and regional level. A characteristic example is the digitization of the archives of the Vlatades Monastery in Mount Athos, where the monasterial manuscripts were digitized, giving scientists access to a variety of writings of the Byzantine and post-Byzantine periods, which could also form a nucleus for the development of thematic tourism of digital museums. (Culture Gov, nd). Thus, combined with the parallel development of both digital media and social media, Byzantine manuscripts could become available to an increasing number of people, something that would have a significant impact on the brand name of Greece or of the specific area that hosts them, as a place of cultural heritage.

The development of tourism through manuscripts has a positive effect on the local community, both in terms of employment and generated income, as well as in terms of mobilizing actions regarding cultural heritage. (Kokkosis & Chartas, 2019) Tourism as a responsibility is exercised by the state and the local government; therefore, for its orderly operation, both the state and the local government should adopt policies defining their roles, for the best formation and development of the tourist product and solving issues of spatial organization and modernization. (Barvaresos, 1999) According to Manola, & Trikalitis

(2020b), the historical holy monasteries of Boeotia, for example, need more publicity, as they have some excellent souvenirs of religious, artistic and literary value, while the manuscripts they possess can be used as a cultural product for tourist purposes.

4. Research methodology

The methodology that will be used in this paper is the literature review. Therefore, through the overview of the sources, the ways in which the exploitation of the monastic manuscripts can be a driver of development for the local societies will be sought.

5. Conclusions

The monasterial manuscripts are part of the cultural capital of Greece, which is easily utilized and can contribute to the economic development and tourism profile of the country. The program for the utilization and promotion of Byzantine manuscripts, under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, is a very important initiative that strengthens mainly student tourism, while contributing to knowledge and local development. It has been developed in order to promote this form of culture. The development of tourism brings economic effects, through the creation of jobs and increases income in the local economy. The monasterial manuscripts also contribute to highlighting the spiritual, cultural and scientific presence of the holy Monasteries and make the wider area a pole of strong tourist attraction, both within the sacred space and the wider urban area.

Therefore, the national tourism policy should focus on and support the local government, which, as a place of reception of tourists, represents the basis of tourism production.

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