

The Monastic Magnet

Roads to and from Mount Athos

Edited by René Gothóni and Graham Speake

Mount Athos has been exercising its magnetic attraction on monks and pilgrims for over a thousand years. As the papers collected in this volume show (many of them delivered at a conference convened in Helsinki in 2006 to mark the opening of an exhibition of treasures of Mount Athos), monks have been drawn to its forests, cliffs, and caves in search of tranquillity and the inspiring teaching of charismatic elders since the ninth century. Through the Hesychastic renewal which began on Athos in the late Middle Ages the Holy Mountain acquired unprecedented importance throughout the Balkans, Eastern Europe, and Russia and rapidly extended its spiritual influence from the Mediterranean to the White Sea. Many of the papers are concerned with aspects of pilgrimage to Athos and the effect that a visit to the Mountain has on pilgrims' lives. Today the magnetism has lost none of its force and, despite threats to its environment and its unique way of life, Athos continues to operate as a spiritual powerhouse offering refreshment to all who turn to it.

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