The Dormition of the Virgin Mary on the Island of Tinos: A Performance of Gendered Values in Greece

On the Greek island of Tinos, the Dormition of the Virgin Mary is celebrated on 15 August. This death, fertility, and healing festival is important for several reasons: the church of the “Annunciation” owes its fame to a miraculous holy icon; the miracles worked by this icon have made Tinos a centre of pan-Orthodox worship; and pilgrimages are particularly made to the shrine during the Dormition. The celebration is also an important ideological festival for the Greek nation-state, as illustrated through several ceremonies, particularly the procession when the icon is carried from the church to the harbour. The date 15 August is a special one for Hellenism; it combines religion with patriotism, and the Dormition is a profound social event. There are several meanings and values connected to the festival — female and male, popular and official — the pilgrimage site on Tinos presents an interrelationship of history, ritual, and gender.

Introduction
Religious festivals reinforce the bonds between members of a community and their supernatural patrons, celebrating the exchange of gifts that seal their relationship: the devotees bestow honours and offerings to their patrons who in their turn are expected to renew the protection they provide to the community. This means that the festival in general is an important means of communication, an offering or a gift, most often dedicated to a deceased guardian of society, for instance to the Panagia (the Virgin Mary). In the Orthodox faith Mary’s primary appellation is not “the Virgin,” as in the Catholic world, but the Panagia, “the All-Holy One” (Pan: all; Agia: holy). The Panagia has a very important role in Eastern orthodox Christianity, and especially the feast of her “Dormition,” Koime¯sis (i.e., “falling asleep”).

This article is based on several periods of fieldwork, carried out since 1990, involving research into the festival dedicated to the Dormition of the Panagia

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on the Greek island of Tinos. It aims to explore some of the main elements of this festival within a socio-economic and political framework.¹

In the Orthodox faith we meet the central miracle of childbirth, since the Panagia above all is worshipped as a mother, and in modern Greece the festival dedicated to the “Dormition” or “falling asleep” of the Panagia, the Bearer, or Mother of God (ΕΚοιμήσις τῆς Υπέραγιας Θεοτοκού, cf. Υπέραγιας — the saint who is over (yper — more, over) all the others; Θεοτόκος — God-bearer or the One who gives birth to God; Μήτηρ Θεοτοκού — Mother of God), is celebrated on 15 August, marking the end of the fifteen-day fast in honour of the Panagia. The Feast of the Dormition began around 600 CE and its celebration was fixed on 15 August by the Byzantine emperor Maurice; in Greek Orthodoxy it still retains the name.²

**Summer-Festival Wishing a “Happy Winter” (kalos cheimônas)³**

August and particularly 1 August is considered the beginning of a new season in Greece, and since the festival dedicated to the Dormition takes place after harvest and the threshing of the grain in a period of holiday and leisure, it also announces the passage from summer to winter and the new agricultural

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2. See Håland, *Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient*, 342, for references and discussion of earlier festivals. There are also differences in the way in which Mary is viewed in the Orthodox and Catholic churches. In the Orthodox church, Mary is not seen as immaculately conceived. In Orthodoxy, the virgin remains a human intercessor and a mother, see article for discussion of this aspect. Cf. J. Dubisch, *In a Different Place: Pilgrimage, Gender, and Politics at a Greek Island Shrine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 236; M. Alexiou, *After Antiquity: Greek Language, Myth, and Metaphor* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 354. See also I. Economides, *Differences between the Orthodox Church and Roman Catholicism* (Athens, 1986). According to T. Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 264 n.1, there are also differences within the Orthodox Church, and the Assumption has never been proclaimed as a dogma. On Tinos the celebration on 15 August is followed by the burial of the Panagia nine days after her death/sleep; see infra.

3. Literally kalos means good, but I have provided a translation that sounds better in English. The transliteration of Greek follows the rules of the Nordic Library, Athens.
season. The Dormition may also be regarded as a festival where the first fruits of the grain are offered, presented as the first loaf of bread made from the harvest.

The cyclical perspective is central to the festivals of the agricultural year, and the official ideological rituals are adapted to the agricultural calendar. The orthodox liturgical year is established through the Panagia’s biography. It begins around autumn, and several important moments in the life of the Panagia are celebrated during this period of the year. This is the time before and around sowing and during the germination and growth of the corn crops, when the “female,” wet and fertile period in the agricultural year’s cycle, replaces the “male,” and dry period (the woman is looked upon as the productive partner in a relationship in the Mediterranean area). The Panagia’s death or “Dormition” on 15 August is celebrated during the “dead period” of the grains’ cycle, after harvest. The festival marks a turning point towards autumn, by the end of the “dog days,” by the end of August, when the transitional period towards the “productive part” of the year is about to begin and the 15 August cycle ends by the memorial service nine days after her death, since Panagia’s “Dormition”

4. Although many people on Tinos today derive their income from tourism (pilgrimage tourism), the ritual year on Tinos follows the agricultural calendar as is generally the case within the Orthodox Church, see Håland, *Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient*, and E. A. Phlòraké, *Téños: Laikós politismós* (Athens: Ellènko biblio, 1971); G. A. Megas, *Ellènikes Giortes kai Ethisma tês Laikês Latreias* (Athens: Odysseas, 1992, orig. 1956/1957); A. Kyriakidou-Nestoros, *Oi 12 Mènes: Ta Laographika* (Athens: Malliarés-Padeia, 1986, orig. 1982). Many Tinotes are still involved in agriculture and grow, for example, fruit, vegetables, or grapes (wine); some also have sheep or goats in addition to their other income. There have been many changes in the twenty years in which I have conducted fieldwork on the island; however, on a general level, the agricultural aspect is still present in the main gifts to the church — wine, bread, and olive oil — and for an historian working with both modern and ancient Greek culture, this agricultural aspect might be seen as a long lasting mentality (mentalité) connected with la longue durée in a Braudelian sense, cf. Håland, *Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient*; Håland, “Rituals of Magical Rain-Making in Modern and Ancient Greece: A Comparative Approach,” *Cosmos: The Journal of the Traditional Cosmology Society* 17 (2005): 197–251. See also infra for a discussion of time, for example n. 24. J. Eade and M. J. Sallnow, eds., *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (London: Routledge, 1991), also illustrate that the annual round of fairs and festivals of miraculous shrines might be closely related to the ecology of an area and to the cycles of agricultural and pastoral production, marketing, and consumption.

5. Cf. P. Bourdieu, *Le Sens Pratique* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1980). According to official male or androcentric ancient and later Greek traditions, women were simply the hosts, the earth that receives the semen, as illustrated, for example, by Aristotle and Plutarch. These sources, however, are full of contradictions and need to be studied from new approaches, see Håland, *Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient*, ch. 6, for a discussion of the contradictions in the male sources and comparisons with a female approach also demonstrating women’s importance in history. For shorter versions, see also E. J. Håland, “Greek Women, Power and the Body: From Fieldwork on Cults Connected with the Female Sphere Towards a Deconstruction of Male Ideologies, Modern and Ancient,” *Mediterranean Review* 3, no. 1 (2010): 31–57; and E. J. Håland, “Greek Women and Religion, Modern and Ancient: Festivals and Cults Connected with the Female Sphere, a Comparison,” *Medelhavsmuseet: Focus on the Mediterranean* 4 (2009): 101–20; Håland, “Rituals of Magical Rain-Making in Modern and Ancient Greece”; Håland, “The Ritual Year as a Woman’s Life.”

6. The period after the grain is collected is identified as the dead period within the agricultural cycle, and the new productive period starts again when the grain is sowed back into the soil, see Bourdieu, *Le Sens Pratique*, 361, for the periods of work, gestation, and death, the latter running from the harvest until the new period of ploughing/sowing starts, also discussed in Håland, *Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient*, ch. 6. See also D. S. Loukatos, *Ta Kalokairina, Laographia — Paradosi 3* (Athens: Ekd. Philippotè, 1981); J. Du Boulay, *Cosmos, Life, and Liturgy in a Greek Orthodox Village* (Limni, Greece: Denise Harvey, 2009), ch. 2.
is followed by her burial or the “9th day’s ritual of the Panagia” on 23 August, thus reflecting ordinary death rituals and the following memorial service. In Greece, the transition to the fertile and healing period starts when, according to popular belief, the Panagia descended into the underworld, and consequently ensures the future fertility in agreement with the divine underworld. One might also say that she falls asleep before she is reborn in September, paralleling the earth that sinks to rest after harvest and is renewed in the autumn, since there is a correspondence between the earth and the Panagia as shown in her biography and the important phases of the agricultural year, from the sowing to the harvest.

The day of 15 August is celebrated with special reverence all over Greece and pilgrimages are made to the greatest shrine of Greek Orthodoxy, the Aegean island of Tinos. This is the most important festival on Tinos today for several reasons.

The Sanctuary on Tinos
In 1823 the inhabitants of Tinos found the miraculous holy icon (image) of the Annunciation (Euangelismos) of the Panagia (Megalochare, megalo: great, charé: grace, i.e., the Blessed Virgin). According to tradition, an islander — the nun Pelagia — had repeated visions of the Panagia, who ordered her to inform the elders to start excavations for her icon in an uncultivated field, and to build her “house” (church) on that site. On 30 January 1823, the icon was unearthed in that field where it had been buried 850 years earlier in the 10th century CE, when a church built on the ruins of the pagan temple of Dionysos was destroyed and burned down by the Saracens. Two years before the icon was found, the great Greek War of Independence (1821) broke out. The finding of the icon, the construction of the church of the Panagia Euangelistria, the

7. This might be problematic from a theological point of view; however, as an historian, not as a theologian, I am merely pointing out that the survival of values and beliefs, even though new normative religions have been introduced, and the close relationship between the official Orthodox religion and popular religion (particularly in rural parts of Greece) is a well-known fact which is also embedded in the practical celebration of Orthodox festivals (see n. 45 also). This has been illustrated by several other researchers, see Kyriakidou-Nestoros, Oi 12 Mènes; E. Psychogiou, “Maurégē” kai Elenē: Teletourgies THANATOU kai ANAGENNESĒS, Dēmosieumata tou Kentrou Ereunēs tēs Ellēnikēs Laographias 24 (Athens: Academy of Athens, 2008); Håland, “Rituals of Magical Rain-Making in Modern and Ancient Greece”; Håland, Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient, ch. 3; Håland, “The Ritual Year as a Woman’s Life,” C. Stewart, Demons and the Devil: Moral Imagination in Modern Greek Culture (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), argues against the conceptual separation of church doctrine and folk practice; see also Du Boulay, Cosmos, Life, and Liturgy, for continuities.

8. According to D. N. Stavropолос, Oxford Greek—English Learner’s Dictionary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 532. However, literally, the word “virgin” is not included in Megalocharē, so perhaps “greatly blessed” or “exceedingly graced” might be better translations. Other inconsistencies in the translation of the Panagia, etc. are found in the official English translation of the pamphlet distributed to the pilgrims at Tinos, E. A. Foskoulos, Perīgraphē tēs Thanatourγous Ayias Eikonas tēs Euangelistrías stēn Tēn kata to etos 1823. Skopoi kai drastēriotētes tou Ierou Idrymatos (Tinos: Panellēnion Ierou Idrymatos Euangelistrías Tēnou, 1996, orig. 1968) (English version from 1991, tr. C. Meinanetsidis). The English version(s) of the pamphlet, for example, never translate Euangelistria with the Panagia of the Annunciation or the annunciated, but clearly states, “The Church of the Annunciation (Euangelistria)” on page 11 (by T. D. Silvestros) of the 2004 version; cf. also infra. In general, Greek scholars recommend Euangelistria not be translated.
enormous crowds of pilgrims who visited this place, and all the miracles worked by the icon, meant that in 1971 the island was declared sacred by governmental decree. Pelagia became sanctified on 11 September 1970 and her feast is celebrated on 23 July.9

Below the main church on Tinos are several minor churches or chapels that take the form of caves. In the first chapel is a holy spring, where the pilgrims fetch water, which is believed to have fertile powers and to cure sickness (Fig. 1). According to tradition, the well was found during the excavations made in search of the icon, but was completely dry and useless. On the day of the laying of the cornerstone of the Church, however, the formerly dry well became filled to the brim with water. This is seen as one of the most important miracles of the Panagia of Tinos, and the chapel of holy water is called Zōodochos Pēgē (the “Life-Giving Spring”).10 Since the discovery of water in

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10. That means the source of life, according to Stavropoulos, Oxford Greek—English Learner’s Dictionary, 359. Another translation is the “Life-Giving Well,” cf. Dubisch, In a Different Place, 135.
this well, pilgrims regard the water as sacred. Accordingly, small or bigger bottles of this precious water are taken home by pilgrims from all over the world to keep at home as a talisman.

The sanctuary is a great complex. “The Holy Foundation of the Evangelistria of Tinos,” is a multifaceted institution of national and international dimensions, being the island’s most important source of income. The different parts of the sanctuary, such as doors and benches, are gifts, and the names of the donors are written on nameplates affixed to the dedications. Among the most famous gifts given as tokens of gratitude, is the marble fountain donated by a Muslim official who was cured of syphilis. Much of what is given to the church as offerings is retained, but some items are sold: most of the jewellery is auctioned in Athens, and gifts like livestock and olive oil are sold. The Church of the Annunciation as an organization is a powerful force in local politics, a philanthropic institution that controls a vast amount of wealth. It is an organization with considerable money, and it is an organization of priests. Generally, local people have an ambivalent attitude towards the Church of the Annunciation: it is a source of pride but is also considered to be “too rich.” People working in the church’s office emphasize that the church is not engaged in “business”; however, after the festival, along with the priests, they spend several hours counting the money the pilgrims have left. This money is an important resource for the prosperity of the island. So I would say that the health business on modern Tinos is illustrated in many ways, for example, by the church sending talismans all over the world on request from people who are not able to go to Tinos as pilgrims.

The miraculous holy icon on Tinos is attributed to the apostle and evangelist, Luke, who is believed to have painted it during Mary’s lifetime, with her as a living model. It is, therefore, tied to the very origins of Christianity. It shows Gabriel appearing to Mary with the announcement of Christ’s birth — the icon depicts an announcement of fertility. Today, the icon is covered with offerings of gold and precious stones, and it is not possible to see what it portrays. Although the offerings have been dedicated since the icon was found and most of the jewellery is auctioned as already mentioned, there are different stories about the jewellery. According to some of my Athenian informants, “the king’s family bestowed all the gold and precious stones that cover the icon, when King Paul became ill.”11 The miracles worked by the holy icon — some more famous than others — have made Tinos a centre of Pan-Orthodox worship.12

“A Kilometre on my Knees for Mary”

Pilgrims visit Tinos all year; however, the enormous crowd of devotees increases dramatically during the days around the August festival, particularly

11. See also E. J. Håland, “From Water in Greek Religion, Ancient and Modern, to the Wider Mediterranean and Beyond,” Comparative Civilizations Review 56, no. 1 (2007): 56–75. According to Foskolos, Perigraphè tês Eureseòs tês Thaumatourgou Agías Eikonàs tês Evangelistrias stén Téno kata to etós 1823, much of the precious offerings have come from the royal family.

12. Cf. also Foskolos, Perigraphè tês Eureseòs tês Thaumatourgou Agías Eikonàs tês Evangelistrias stén Téno kata to etós 1823, for the most famous miracles.
after 1 August (Fig. 2). They come to the shrine for their “tama (pl. tamata)” or ex-voto (a dedication sealing a vow). Their pledge is to offer something to the Panagia for her help with problems, often health problems. Many of the pilgrims are fulfilling a vow they have made after having a dream in which the Panagia has ordered them to go to Tinos, bringing with them particular offerings in exchange for a cure. Before leaving for Tinos a mother may say: “save my child, my Panagia, and I will crawl on my knees, all the way towards your icon” (Fig. 3). Childless couples also invoke the Panagia when coming as pilgrims. People, mostly women, make their way up to the church barefoot, on their bare and bleeding knees, or on their stomachs, bringing with them various offerings that are sometimes tied on their backs: candles as tall as the donor, icons, wax. They may also bring incense, silver candlesticks, censers, bread, wine, flowers, or sheep (particularly the gypsies). The most common offering is a silver- or gold-plated ex-voto (tama) representing the person who has been miraculously cured by the icon, the cured limb itself, or the person or limb wanting to be cured, or a ship. The avenue, named leôphoros Megalocharês, leads directly from the harbour to the church. This is a wide stretch, about a

13. My use of the word, “gypsies” is not meant to be pejorative, but a translation of the word used by Greek people. The “gypsies” never use the word but call themselves “Romani.”

Figure 2 Pilgrims on their knees make their way up to the sanctuary on the top of the hill. (Author’s photograph.)
kilometre in length, lined with shops and booths, particularly at its lower end. These booths multiply during August as several sellers travel from festival to festival as do beggars. As soon as the pilgrims disembark from the ships, and begin to make their way up the hill, they are assailed with the cries of the shopkeepers who stand outside their stores, hawking the items necessary for a successful pilgrimage: “Lampades! Tamata! Mpoukalakia gia agiasma! Edō Lampades!” (“Large candles! Tamata! Little bottles for holy water! Here [are] large candles!”).

At the top of the hill, arriving at the doorway of the church, the pilgrims offer their large candles. Afterwards, they line up on the steps at the Church of the Annunciation, waiting their turn to enter the main chapel, to proskynēma — to perform the set of devotions a pilgrim does upon entering the church, particularly those in front of the miraculous icon. The most important of these is the kissing of the icon itself (Fig. 4). The black pilgrim clothes are often left as dedications either to the icon or to the ruins of the foundations of the Byzantine church, in the chapel dedicated to Agia (Saint) Pelagia, which is situated next to the “Life-Giving Spring.” Most of the pilgrims stay for a service, but even during services many pilgrims continue to move around, engaging in their own rituals. Most pilgrims, however, confine their attentions to the main sanctuary and to the chapel of holy water below the church: “where do we go for holy water (agiasma)?” pilgrims ask each other, and the more knowledgeable pilgrims direct them downstairs, to the chapel beneath the main church where they will find the holy water font. The pilgrims drop some money in a carved wooden counter with a slot, pick up candles to be lighted, and inside the first chapel they kiss the icons, before they take some earth from the hole where the miraculous icon was found (Fig. 5). Afterwards, they queue up to obtain holy water.
water in small bottles or they drink directly from the tap. Many pilgrims only carry out the most important rituals and obtain the holy symbols before they return to the harbour. Most pilgrims descend by the street, which is named Euangelistrias. It is lined with shops and booths, and is labelled Epistrophe (“the Return”), by the shopkeepers.

Figure 4 A mother who has ascended the way wearing kneepads lifts her daughter up to kiss the icon. (Author’s photograph.)

Figure 5 A pilgrim takes some holy earth from the hole where the miraculous icon was found. (Author’s photograph.)
When a miracle takes place in the church, it is publicly broadcast by the ringing of the church bells, and everybody immediately knows what has happened. The sanctuary’s archive contains many letters and newspaper articles describing the miracles. We find letters from several categories of believers, and many letters speak of both white and black magic.14

In 2007 one of my informants on Tinos, an Athenian woman in her fifties, told me that her left leg was healed on 7 August 2000, after the Panagia had appeared to her in a dream and demanded that she go to Tinos and light a candle. Since then she had gone to Tinos annually during the Dormition. The same woman had graduated in mathematics but had been unemployed for a long period of time until the Panagia answered her prayers and she found employment. This, she told me on a later occasion, was another reason for making the annual pilgrimage.

In 1993 I met Christos from Athens, who was 30 years old and was studying engineering in the UK. He told me that he had visited the festival annually all his life with his parents and his older brother who also had been a student in the UK. The reason for their annual pilgrimage was that when his father was a little boy he had been healed by the Panagia. After that, his father had made the pilgrimage annually, and once he married he continued to make the vow with his wife and children (Christos and his older brother). In 2009, Christos’s father and mother were very old, but were still making the annual pilgrimage with their two sons.

When I visited the festival in 1990, a young female student working towards her degree in economics in the USA came back to Tinos to spend her holidays at home. She knew that I was carrying out fieldwork and was eager to give me the latest news. One morning she asked me if I had heard about the miracle that had happened on 1 August. This miracle had been granted to a little boy whose eyes were wounded by someone when he was playing. Doctors had said that he was — and would continue to be — completely blind. His grandmother, however, did not accept the medical judgment and said “let’s go to the Panagia.” His mother did not agree, saying it would be completely absurd to do that. “As you know, the old people are the believers,” the girl explained to me. Nevertheless, the grandmother took the boy along to Tinos, and after prayers in front of the icon, the boy said: “Grandmother you don’t need to lead me by your hand, I can see where I am going myself.” According to the young student, the faithful will be healed in the church of the Panagia as long as their faith is strong enough. This is the same reason why so many come to the sanctuary with hope in their eyes.

Tinos, 15 August: The Day the Greeks Combine Religion and Patriotism
In addition to the thousands of pilgrims coming to Tinos on their own, several pilgrimages are organized by representatives of the Orthodox Church in Athens or Larissa, particularly around 15 August. Many people with physical

14. I have gone through the archive with the help of the archivist, Eleutherios Kornaros. Some of the letters and articles are presented in Håland, Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient, ch. 4, where several of my interviews with informants are also presented.
disabilities also participate in these pilgrimages. In 1993 thirty thousand pilgrims arrived within the 48 hours before the climax of the festival — the procession.

The Dormition festival culminates in the olonymchitia, “the all-night service,” of 14—15 August and the following procession. On the eve of the feast, the church is richly decorated and the icon placed on a blue and golden embroidered carpet. Many pilgrims sleep in the court, others spend the night inside the church while the priests and cantors sing invocations. Simultaneously, many are occupied by fetching earth and water — which are seen as being very powerful fertility and healing remedies, particularly when the Panagia is so near — from the chapel below. During her panēgyrikos (panegyric), many children are baptized in the baptistry, which is located off the chapel of the “Life-Giving Spring” in holy water from that very spring. Young single women and newly married women fetch earth and holy water to assure their own fertility and health.

When the formal liturgy has finished, several women perform their own liturgy in the church, singing hymns in front of the iconostasis (the church icon screen). In fact, many of the female pilgrims (particularly those who are younger) do not enter the church until the priests have finished their liturgy. Many local women also rush to the church carrying with them chairs and other items necessary for spending the night in the church.

The Dormition of the Panagia is also an important ideological festival for the “New Greek nation-state of 1821,” combining the celebration of the Dormition with the day of the armed forces. This is illustrated through several ceremonies during the festival, particularly the procession when the icon is carried from the church to the harbor.

On 15 August, Tinos becomes the centre of Greece. The service is followed by a solemn official procession at 11 AM when the miraculous icon is carried down the main street of the town, leōphoros Megalocharēs. Senior government cabinet members and the head of the Greek Orthodox Church, followed by the clergy and notables, are present at the liturgy and particularly at the following procession. A military escort and lesser officials accompany them. Following the tradition, several important persons are present, for example the last survivors of the crew of the Greek destroyer Elle, which was sunk by a submerged Italian submarine as it was anchored off the Tinos harbour on 15 August 1940. A detachment of sailors marches at the tail of the procession; the national Hellenic Navy always sends warships to Tinos on 15 August, acknowledging the belief that the Panagia oversees the intimate and perilous relationship of the

15. During the opening hours of the church, the miraculous icon is housed in an elaborate icon stand closer to the main entrance door, cf. supra. When the church is closed the icon is housed in a purple velvet-covered safe next to the icon stand, in which a copy of the icon is displayed.
16. Many female pilgrims also stay at their hotels or rooms until the official liturgy has finished. This is the case for my informant, Dēmetra, who annually makes her pilgrimage from Peloponnesos. Some years ago when I returned from the church for some minutes she asked me if the priests had finished, so that she could “go up” (i.e., to the church). Most people say that they “go to the Panagia” (as she resides in the icon), instead of saying “the church,” cf. also supra for discussion of the “Grandmother” from 1990.
Greeks towards the sea. The Hellenic Navy is honoured because it is “under the protection of the Virgin,” and “the salvation of Greece always comes from the sea”. The national ideology is further manifested through the speeches given by the authorities and by the posters hanging around in the town announcing the festival (Fig. 6). One poster shows the Panagia hovering over the national symbol, the Acropolis of Athens. Another poster may depict a mixing of modern and ancient symbols, or a jet flying over Tinos, or the front page of a newspaper from 15 August 1940. The message is always the same: 15 August is proclaimed as the “Day of the Armed Forces,” and the symbols of the navy, the air force, and the army are illustrated. We see the double nature of the occasion as both a patriotic and a religious holiday, reflecting the traditional close connection between the official Orthodox Church and the nation-state.

The icon is carried in a procession over the sick and women who want to conceive (Fig. 7). Several hours before the service is finished, a long queue of

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18. Cf. also Håland, “The Ritual Year of the Icon of the Annunciation on the Island of Tinos, Greece.”

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pilgrims lines up in the main street waiting for the icon to pass over them, and as the icon is carried down the street they stand in its path so that it may pass over them. It is important for them to touch and kiss the icon. In addition to the crowd of followers, thousands of onlookers watch the procession, several on their knees, some holding sticks of burning incense, incense burners, or lighted candles. Several sick pilgrims lie down, as is the custom, but in more recent times they are in danger of being trampled on. During the procession, jets from the air force regularly fly over the island, accompanied by the salutes fired by the warships and the cannon at the memorial in the harbour which was inaugurated in 2002.

When the procession arrives at the harbor, a service is followed by a speech by the attending member of the government; for example, in 1993 this was the foreign affairs minister. The ceremony officially ends when the clergy and the officials go aboard a warship carrying them half a mile outside the harbour to the point where Elle was sunk. Here, a service is held, and the priest and the attending government representative, for example in 1995, the new president, throw laurel wreaths on the watery tomb of the ship and its crew. Meanwhile, the ships blow their horns, the jets pass over, and people line across the coastline. “We came to pay honour to the Panagia who helped us beat the fascists,” said one of the survivors of the Elle crew in 1993. “We are once again faced with an hour of danger, as the clouds of war in the Balkans have increased and threaten to spread further,” said the foreign affairs minister that same year.19 The importance of the Panagia for the Greek nation is also

19. In 1996 the crisis involving the Turks in Cyprus was the main theme for the speech given to the crowd of pilgrims by the minister of defence, rousing the audience to thunderous applause. He was repeating the prayers of the priests, praying the Panagia to resolve the situation on Cyprus.
emphasized during the service; she is prayed to take care of the Greek nation as she has always done.

After the patriotic ceremony, the procession returns to the Church at 1 PM. Mothers try to defy the police lines to bring their sick children as close as possible to the icon. After lunching at the most fashionable hotel of the island, the president leaves by helicopter for Athens. At 7.30 PM the battleships fire salutes, followed by fireworks, and the last battleship leaves at 10 PM.

The aim of the procession is for the miraculous icon to pass over the pilgrims and to purify them for another year; however, the Greek nation is also purified. This day is a very special one for Hellenism, combining religion with patriotism. The Dormition on Tinos is a profound social event.

Gendered Times and Values in Greece
The festival is also an excellent occasion to study the relationship between the female and male world (Fig. 8); the differences between female and male values in Greece, and the various identities and statuses displayed in the

festival. I would, however, like to emphasize that, as always when trying to classify different parts or categories, the two opposing worlds and value-systems, the female and male, are nevertheless both complementary and interdependent.

Is the identity of the Greek nation a male as opposed to female domestic identity? Partly yes, partly no. Yes, because, the Greek nation strongly identifies with a male, linear history. My study of the Greek nation and its identity is influenced by Julia Kristeva’s and Jill Dubisch’s distinction between two kinds of time: female and male. According to Kristeva, male time is linear: time as project, teleology, perspective unfolding; time as departure, progression, and arrival. In other words it is the time of history. Female time, by contrast, is repetitive and cyclical; beyond time in its ordinary sense. It is eternal, monumental time. Kristeva states that the most recent elaboration of the maternal cult is demonstrated by the body of the Virgin Mother: her body — according to the Orthodox or Catholic faiths — does not die but moves from one spatiality to another within the same time by Dormition or Assumption. Female time is cyclical and monumental, characterized by repetition and eternity.

On the other hand, there is also evident a combination of a linear, male history and a cyclical and monumental female history characterized by repetition and eternity, as the Panagia announced the resurrection of “Greekness” to a nun in 1822. The Panagia is, therefore, the first and most important saint of the new Greek nation-state. In many ways she represents Greece, and might be seen to embody Greece in her eternal aspect. While embedded in history, the

21. Håland, *Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient*; J. Kristeva, “Women’s Time,” in *The Kristeva Reader* edited by T. Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 187–213; J. Dubisch, “Men’s Time and Women’s Time: History, Myth, and Ritual at a Modern Greek Shrine,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 5, no. 1 (1991): 1–26. She also discusses the emphasizing of *communitas* by V. W. Turner, “Pilgrimages as Social Processes,” in *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), 166–230, cf. E. Turner and V. W. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, orig Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), i.e., their argument that the spirit of *communitas* is a key element in pilgrimage concerning “time out of time,” or the spontaneous, “primitive” tied in a direct fashion to the sacred world through vows, miracles, and visions. Based on her fieldwork on Tinos, Dubisch, “Men’s Time and Women’s Time,” 16, alternatively (and I think, rightly) suggests that pilgrimage is feminine. Cf. also Håland, *Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient*, ch. 6, n.126. Several studies have discussed the functionalist Turnerian approaches and their claim that the *communitas* (or unmediated and egalitarian association between individuals who are temporarily freed from the hierarchical secular roles and statuses) is central to pilgrimage, see for example Eade and Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred*, who argue that the practice of pilgrimage and the sacred powers of a shrine are constructed as varied and possibly conflicting representations by the different sectors of the cultic constituency, and indeed by those outside it as well. They see pilgrimage as a ritual process and its meanings as multiple, mutable, and often contested. Eade’s account from Lourdes shows that tension and conflict are integral to the interplay of diverse practices, as large numbers of pilgrims move around and through the various sacred locales of the domain. This is very similar to the situation on Tinos whether it be the Greek pilgrims and the gypsies, men and women, or the official and the popular. See also Håland, *Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient*, chs 4 and 6, for a comprehensive discussion.

22. Kristeva, “Women’s Time,” 191. Both traditions believe in her Assumption (see also Ware, *The Orthodox Church*), but the Orthodox Church celebrates her Dormition rather than her Assumption.

Panagia represents the never-dying spirit of nationhood (unearthed in a field), as contrasted to a specific political entity (the current state of Greece) existing in limited and delimited historical time. The account of the finding of the icon and the building of the church also represents women’s time because the miracles and visions (forces generally excluded from official male history),24 are embedded in men’s historical time. The Panagia represents the domestic realm, but she also stands as a national and local political representation beyond the domestic realm.25

Male World, Values, Identity and Status

Of all the orthodox icons, those depicting the Panagia are most venerated. The cult has been important since the early Byzantine period when, according to legend, the Panagia revealed herself, carrying a sword, on the walls of Constantinople and Athens and saved her cities. Since then, the vision of the Panagia has accompanied the armed forces of the Greeks in the same way as the ancient goddess Athena. The victory belongs to the Panagia as the commander-in-chief.26

According to some, the banner of Greek resistance was first raised on 25 March 1821, the day of the Annunciation. This date is now celebrated as a day of double import: the Greek Independence Day and the day of the angel’s announcement to Mary that she would bear the son of God. In other words, two rebirths of humankind and of the Greeks are combined. This double rebirth is implicit in much of the shrine’s iconography, ritual, and history; for example the scene on the icon, and the name of the church housing the icon.

The finding of the icon in 1823 was considered a divine sign, indicating the support of the fight and confirmation of the liberation of the country from the Turks. So its history is intimately bound to the history of modern Greece. Accordingly, and as already indicated, senior military, administrative, and political dignitaries officially represent the government at the celebration of the great feasts of the Church, thus making these days appropriate occasions for articulating the relationship between nationalism and religion, and between church and state.

Below the main sanctuary of the church is a mausoleum commemorating the sinking of the Ellê. Annually, the heroes of the Ellê are wreathed, and a service is given in front of the mausoleum on 13 August. People identify different values with the festival; according to one islander, a young man, the most significant aspect of the festival is the celebration of the heroes of the Ellê, which attracts these important government representatives to Tinos.

24. This does not mean that history only is represented by linear time. History is also characterized by stability and might also be cyclical (as in agricultural societies), cf. Håland, Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient, ch. 2; F. Braudel, Écrits sur l’histoire (Paris: Flammarion, 1969), 41–83. See also n.4 supra.
25. Cf. Dubisch, “Men’s Time and Women’s Time”; Dubisch, In a Different Place.
26. Håland, Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient, ch. 6; also A. Papamanoli-Guest, Grèce. Fêtes et Rites (Paris: Denoël Planete, 1991); Dubisch, In a Different Place, 237. See also B. V. Pentcheva, Icons and Power: the Mother of God in Byzantium (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), ch. 2f. on “The Avar Siege: Memory and Change” and “In the Context of War” concerning the veneration of the Panagia as protector of the army and the state in the Byzantine period.
Other national ideas are also reflected in connection with the sanctuary. In front of the icon is a votive offering depicting Cyprus in gold; this bears witness to many pilgrims’ requests that the Panagia will grant Cyprus liberation from Turkey. This is also reflected by the pilgrim ships from Cyprus that arrive once a week throughout the year, and up to three times a week during the summer season, particularly in August (cf. also n.19 supra). In the mid-1990s, I often witnessed a travelling teacher teaching the children from Bosnia and in 1994 and 1995 the church invested several sums of money to help children from the devastated neighbouring area further north on the Balkans to a month’s holiday on Tinos. One reason for this act was to encourage the children to keep their Christian faith.

The sanctuary on Tinos is both a religious pilgrimage centre and an important national symbol, paralleling the resurrection of Greece, after “2000 years of sleep” (the ancient) or “850 years of burial” (Byzantine period). This is demonstrated by the display of ancient and Byzantine symbols, such as a marble lion (placed at the foot of one of the stairways of the church) from the neighbouring ancient sacred pilgrimage island of Delos and the rests from the Byzantine church that had once housed the icon (found in the chapel which today is dedicated to Pelagia below the main church). This church rested on the foundations of an ancient Panhellenic temple of Dionysos, and marbles and columns from the ancient temples of Delos and Poseidon at Kionia, Tinos, were used in the construction of the church according to the church pamphlets distributed to pilgrims. According to Jill Dubisch, the temple of Dionysos was “itself a site of pilgrimage and healing.” These symbols also reflect the dual Greek identities — the ancient and the Byzantine; the “Hellenic” (outward-facing) and the “Romeic” (inward-facing). As already indicated, certain representations of the Church of the Annunciation seek to merge this “Romeic” past with classical “Hellenic” Greece. The church and its history assert an evolution from pagan traditions to Christianity. The church stands on

27. The Byzantine period lasted until 1453, so here I am referring to the years the icon (and former Byzantine church) was buried (i.e., from the tenth century CE until it was discovered), cf. supra.
28. Foskolos, Perigraphe tês Eureseis tês Thaumatourgou Agias Eikonas tês Evangelistrías stén Tëno kata to etos 1823.
29. Dubisch, In a Different Place, 169. I agree with her statement as Dionysos also functioned as a healing god, cf. Håland, Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient, ch. 5, although the ancient pilgrimages to Apollon on Delos may have had more obvious curative reasons. G. K. Alexopoulos, Tënos: To mikro odoporiko (Athens: Erinne, 1993), 18–21, 35–46, also discusses the ancient healing and pilgrimage sanctuary dedicated to Poseidon and Amphitrite at Kionia (two kilometres from the central town).
30. Cf. M. Herzfeld, Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology, and the Making of Modern Greece (New York: Pella, 1986); Herzfeld, Anthropology Through the Looking-Glass: Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), for the “Greek Romeic thesis,” i.e., the inward-facing identity, the “Romeic” image of Greece, an identity that “echoes” the Byzantine Empire and hence the Orthodox Christian tradition to which the overwhelming majority of Greeks still adhere, versus the “Hellenic,” which is “outward-directed,” presenting the contemporary Greeks as direct cultural descendants of the ancient Hellenes, ignoring the heritage of the Byzantine Empire and the traditions of the Greek Orthodox Christianity. Cf. the term, disemia, a two-way-facing system of meanings that can be part of a public discourse. See also Håland, “From Water in Greek Religion.”
and is built from the past, it transcends the past but does not reject it. The Greeks are neither Hellenes nor Byzantines. They are both.

While political discourse makes use of religion and religious symbolism and finds an opportunity for its expression in religious occasions such as those celebrated on 15 August, religious discourse also makes use of politics and political symbolism; they are both complementary and interdependent. This intermingling is particularly manifested in the aforementioned posters announcing the festival on Tinos, which reflect Byzantine manifestations, as well as paintings and newspapers from the war period. One of these depicts a battleground filled with soldiers during the Greek-Italian war in 1940–1941. The Panagia and the child are hovering in the clouds above, accompanied by angels, one of which carries a Greek flag. According to some, the church also dedicated the whole collection of votive offerings to assist the Allies during the war, thus paralleling the Panagia’s participation as illustrated in several pictures from the period. Despite this maternal participation, all the official rituals performed by representatives of the nation state and the church may be classified as belonging to a male world, representing male values, identity, and status. So what about the female?

Female World, Values, Identity, and Status
For Greeks, the events of 15 August are an expression of faith, and particularly of women’s faith and their identification with the Panagia. Generally, the Greek woman’s identity and status belong to female values, and in this connection the Panagia has a key role. Nevertheless, during the ritual chaos, which particularly is apparent in the procession, we see a female world contra — and often in conflict with — a male official world represented by the Church and the police.

The festival is dedicated to the most important mother, the Panagia. Further, in family life, women are the central performers of the ritual actions performed to secure the family’s life and health. Accordingly, on Tinos, we see a tension between the official priesthood and the representative of the individual family. Generally, women are associated with birth, nurture, and care: they are nurturing mothers, and by their activities as care-takers they manage and control the fundamental course of life. Many symbols and rituals in the festival illustrate this and are regarded as belonging to the female domain. By analysing some of these, it is possible to gain further insight into the meaning and importance of the customs and values related to fundamental principles within the “ideological entirety” that constitutes the festival. Women are the guardians of their family’s spiritual health, which cannot be separated from physical health, given the role of prayers and vows in healing and protection. Women are also the most frequent pilgrims arriving at Tinos. It is women who most

32. Cf. I. Mazarakêς-Ainian, To Epos tou ‘40. Laikê eikonographia (Athens, 1987), plate (Eik.) 11, see also plates 4, 13, 48.
34. Dubisch, In a Different Place, 210 f.
often undertake the most difficult acts of pilgrimage, such as crawling to the church on their knees. This is also illustrated by the female bronze figure at the top of the hill: the figure, or rather statue, is named “The Pilgrim Mother” (Ə Mana Prosýnêtria). It was set up some time between August 1990 and August 1993. This personification of the arrival of a female pilgrim mother in the burning summer sun is situated at the end of the municipal park; she half lifts herself and raises her left hand to shade her eyes, or perhaps rather to greet the sanctuary which is in front of her: she only has to cross the wide paved expanse. Some pilgrims pause here, taking advantage of the cool shade of trees, to rest for a moment beyond the park. In 2011 several of them also decorated the figure with their red pilgrim bands. In fact, someone is always sitting next to the figure (Fig. 9). One needs to see pilgrimage in the context of Greek gender roles, particularly female roles. Women come to honour a female holy person who dies annually on 15 August, is reborn, and gives birth again, in the same way as mother earth and the (cyclical) agricultural year.35 Women’s

35. Mary is the closest equivalent to a female divinity that Christianity offers, but she is not divine in the strict theological sense. As already mentioned (nn. 4, 6, 24 supra), the cyclical perspective is central to the festivals of the agricultural year, and as the agricultural year (obviously) follows a cyclical rhythm, cyclical time is, of course, not only connected to women, see Háland, Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient, chs 2 and 6, also for discussion of how Christ and pre-Christian vegetation gods/goddesses like Kore/Demeter, Dionysus, Adonis, and Osiris fit into this gendered perception of eternity and cyclicality. See also the Preface and Acknowledgments, Part 1: The Text and Translation, Commentary, and Background, and Part 2: Interpretive Essay on the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, in H. P. Foley, ed., The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), xi–xvi, 1–178; cf. also n.7 supra. The bronze statue is created by the sculptor, Theodoros Pokamisas, a local artist. It resulted from a contest launched by the municipality/major of Tinos. The Church provided a piece of land to the municipality, which initiated a contest with the theme of “The Pilgrim Mother.” The fifteen participants were local artists from Tinos. The winning statue is the one at the top of the hill. In a way it is a gift from the municipality on the territory of the church.
time is non-linear and is repeated; in the context of daily life women give birth, raise children, prepare food, and tend the dead in an endless cycle, and it is they who come to the shrine as pilgrims to offer themselves that this cycle might continue. The holy female force we see through the Panagia makes, in this instance, history female, embodying cyclicity and resurrection. We see this in the activities performed by female pilgrims — vows, prayers, and offerings, accompanied by oral sharing of stories of miracles. These are determined by, and conform to, the shape of events and problems of everyday lives and, hence, are both gendered, continuous, and in a constant flux. Women’s tasks, roles, and natures, supposedly, vary little through time. They are related to an eternal Mother Goddess, female domestic sphere, and history. So, women come to the Panagia with prayers related to timeless or eternal issues of health, children, death, and birth. They pray and make offerings to conceive or to be healed for a sickness; but most often, they make vows and requests on behalf of others, particularly children or a family member who just has died. These requests, which women make to the Holy Mother, are related to fertility, health, and death. They belong to repetition, having a cyclical nature. Accordingly, in the festival, fertility and healing rituals performed by women are of focal importance. Many women dedicate their handmade, often woven, offerings as well as bread, olive oil, flowers, and other items produced by women as part of their domestic role. Women also perform an important ritual, the crawling, which is central to assure the well-being of the family.

Greek women have their own values in addition to, or running contrary to, the male view, depending on how the male view suits their own thinking. Women display their “poetics of womanhood,” the point of which is to show how to be good at being a woman, for example when performing fertility rituals in agricultural or procreation settings, using magic such as in healing contexts, nursing children, or performing death rituals. Several elements of the festival, such as the importance of and meanings related to the female body, motherhood, women’s general activities in the religious sphere, are important ways of manifesting a “poetics of womanhood.”

The female body provides a significant source for social symbolism: it plays an important role in the “poetics of womanhood,” because bodies have social meanings that may be used in public performances. In Greece, the female body both creates and represents the family and social relations in a variety of contexts. By wearing black when a family member dies, women become highly visible symbols of mourning, and, thus, of the kinship relations between the

36. Dubisch, *In a Different Place*, 12.
39. For revisions of the traditional anthropological examinations of the female sphere, see also Håland, *Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient*, chs 1 and 6; Håland, “Greek Women and Death, Ancient and Modern”; Håland, “Greek Women and Religion, Modern and Ancient.”
deceased and the living. Complaints about suffering are expressed particularly by women lamenting their dead. They also suffer in pilgrimage. But we encounter the same complaints in relation to problems of everyday life: these call attention to what women must endure in order to carry out their roles as wives and mothers. These examples are part of the available “cultural material” upon which women may draw for the creation of the “poetics of womanhood.” Suffering as expressed through verbal complaint, the body, ritual actions, is an expression of social identity among women.

The idiom of suffering is particularly important in the context of women’s roles. For many women, both tension and fulfillment centres around motherhood and familial responsibilities. The body plays an important role in these expressions of suffering, especially in the process of reproduction. In contemporary Greece, a woman makes a public performance when crawling on her knees to the church with a sick child on her back in the hope of healing that child (cf. Fig. 3), but the action takes validity through the sacrifice and suffering of the self on behalf of others. Through her maternal role, the mother’s own body is repeatedly offered as a sacrifice, and this sacrifice may be dramatized in women’s pilgrimage to the shrine dedicated to the Annunciation of the Panagia at Tinos.

In Greece, a suffering mother may give public performances of “being good at being a woman.” Her public audience are usually other women, who share her public space, interests, and value-system, and therefore are interested in competing with her performance of “being good at being a woman”. A nursing mother demonstrates particularly how to “be good at being a woman.” The festival is dedicated to the nurturing, healing, and suffering Mother Goddess, the Panagia, the “All Holy One,” the one who dominates all the others, the most holy. She is the most important and powerful saint in the Orthodox church. She is at the head of the entire church because she was the vessel of Christ. The mother’s two festivals (her Dormition and her Annunciation) are the most important official festivals in Greece and they have a double religious and political connotation (Fig. 10).

40. Dubisch, In a Different Place, ch. 10.
41. For male and female spheres and interests, see Håland, Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient; Håland, “Greek Women and Death, Ancient and Modern”; Håland, “Take Skamandros, my Virginity”; and Håland, “Greek Women and Religion, Modern and Ancient.”
42. Christ is at the centre of the Orthodox cult, in accordance with the official dogma of the gospels, and Mary’s lament is hardly mentioned in the ideological and androcentric gospels, but it is very important in the popular cult, see M. Alexiou, “The Lament of the Virgin in Byzantine Literature and Modern Greek Folk-Song,” Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies 1, no. 2 (1975/1976): 111–40. That she in the Orthodox ecclesiastical literature is called Ε̄ Πρότε (The First), cf. E. K. Styliou, Ε̄ Πρότε. Theométriko émerologio (Athens, 1987), might indicate that as with the very name, Panagia, Christ does not have the same importance for people in practical life (actually God is seen as a remote abstraction), and one may wonder if the official Orthodox ideology in its own way has taken the consequence of this relation. At least the same belief is illustrated by the importance of her life and its connection with the agricultural cycle in the official religion, cf. supra for illustrations of the Panagia and the ritual year. See also Håland, Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient, 456, for discussion.
43. The most important religious festival in Greece is the Orthodox Easter festival, dedicated to the “Death and Resurrection of Christ,” Håland, Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient; Håland, “Greek Women and Death, Ancient and Modern,” but this celebration has its own local traditions all over Greece, while the Dormition and Annunciation put Tinos into the (national) focus.
of the important mediating position of a mother. The Panagia is also called Mesitria, the mediator. She is essentially a human intercessor and a mother, and her maternal role is emphasized within the Orthodox tradition, as well as her power within the heavenly and earthly world.

There are several rituals that women only can carry out. By focusing on these we move from a man’s world to a woman’s world and consider values and cults that are important to women. In a broader perspective we realize that these cults also have importance for the official ideology.

According to Dubisch: “we must move away from such terms as ‘mother worship,’ to which Marian devotion is sometimes reduced, and toward a more general exploration of issues both of political ritual and symbol and of the symbolism of the feminine.” Generally, Mary presents a dilemma for American and Western-European feminists, a fact Dubisch recognizes. Although one may claim that Dubisch argues for a contextualization of Marian devotion, thereby moving beyond describing this devotion in terms of mere “mother worship,” which results in an enrichment instead of a reduction of terms like these, I do not agree with her critique, since “mother worship” generally and

44. Dubisch, In a Different Place, 246.
the cult of the Panagia particularly does not seem to be a reduction. By this claim Dubisch contradicts herself and her magnificent analysis of the “poetics of womanhood” following up her analysis of time among Greek women, to which I am very indebted, since her analysis is an excellent way to demonstrate the importance of mother worship, the female and the female sphere within political rituals and symbolism. Unfortunately, her claim therefore demonstrates an androcentric position that considers “mother worship” as subordinate to politics. Conversely, the point is that the official male political ideological ritual is dependent on the “mother worship” to manifest itself. Traditionally, the official political sphere has been the arena for male activity. Yet, by changing one’s approach from a male to a female sphere, one realizes that there have always been other arenas for power as well, and that the social and political underpinnings of the society have traditionally been in the hands of women who are strong and active persons in their own right, thus paralleling the Holy Panagia. Greek women are strong personalities and are active participants in social life; indeed they are often stronger and more assured than the women Dubisch and I know from our own societies. They run their households with a firm hand and exhibit self-confidence. Several other female researchers have documented similar fieldwork experiences among Greek and other Mediterranean women. I have discussed the historical dimension of this pattern in the Greek cultural area in other connections, drawing on ancient and modern material, demonstrating that the boundaries between a male and female sphere have never been static as women traditionally have intruded in the male sphere, on behalf of their own interests, if needed. As Dubisch also makes clear, the story of the icon at Tinos illustrates that the Panagia is capable of making her own will known to humans. This is also illustrated by her ordering pilgrims to go to Tinos. She is, therefore, a strong and active figure in her own right and not only an intercessor with a higher power. Other similar representations of the Panagia have already been mentioned, and another parallel is the heroine during the Greek War of Independence, Bouboulina.

45. Håland, *Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient*, chs 1 and 6 (cf. Håland, “Greek Women and Death, Ancient and Modern,”), presents an alternative view concerning the traditional assertions that the male ideology makes use of the mother worship for its own purposes. I will, rather, argue that the male ideology depends on the mother worship, cf. also n. 42 supra. As already mentioned, this article is not a theological study, I therefore stress that Christian devotees might choose to relate to the Panagia through the social, cultural, and psychological avenues rather than the theological ones, cf. Dubisch, *In a Different Place*, 246. With this in mind it is also important to note that people in general, even many priests, have not been well informed about theology until quite recently, see for example Håland, *Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient*, ch. 2; Håland, “Competing Ideologies in Greek Religion, Ancient and Modern” (Bodø: Licentia Press, forthcoming), ch. 2; M. G. Meraklès, *Ellënikë Laographia: Ethê kai Ethima* (Athens: Odysseas, 1986), ch. 5.

46. Cf. Dubisch, *In a Different Place*.


49. Dubisch, *In a Different Place*, 240.

50. Cf. supra. See also Mazarakès-Ainian, *To Epos tou ’40. Laikë eikonographia*, pl. 16, where women and children are also assisting her, throwing stones.
Apart from a brief comment on the similarity between the Panagia and the ancient goddess Athena, I have not discussed the parallels between modern and ancient festivals in this context; but as a final remark on the female dimension in the festival, I would like to mention that the festival on Tinos may illustrate that the official political ideologies are adapted to deep-rooted rules or mentalities connected with the necessity of celebrating a festival dedicated to a Mother Goddess at the same time within the agricultural year, as in ancient Greece, when we also meet the same climatic imbalance of dry and wet due to climatic meteorological reasons at this hottest time of the year. It may indicate that the modern festival dedicated to a Mother Goddess has supplanted the role of one or more earlier goddesses. The similarities between the festival dedicated to the Panagia and that of Panathenaia may be connected to the protecting city goddess’s chthonic aspect as virgin and foster mother of the mythical king of Athens, Erichthonios/Erechtheus. He was the divine child after whom the temple of Athena Polias (“of the city”), the Erechtheum, was named. The Panagia protects the present-day Greeks, as the Greek nation is celebrated on the “Day of the Armed Forces,” which coincides with the Dormition. The idea of female protectors of cities is very ancient and widespread and often uses virginity to symbolize the impenetrability of the walls of cities. The modern festival then, might suggest common patterns of thought concerning female deities as protectors of communities, patterns that find expression both in the cult of Athena and the Panagia. The cult of a protecting virginal Mother Goddess in relation to political-ideological festivals in the Greek cultural area is not necessarily new.

Both Male and Female, or Popular Identities?
My description of female pilgrims does not mean that men do not crawl. In fact more men have started to crawl lately, particularly younger men. A reason for this may be that the worlds of men and women have become more intermingled. Here we see another merging of female and male values. The aforementioned tension and conflict between a female and official male world, or gendered spheres, is paralleled by the tension we see between an official and

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51. See, however, Håland, Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient; cf. particularly Håland, “Greek Women and Religion, Modern and Ancient”; and Håland, “The Ritual Year as a Woman’s Life.”
54. It is not my intention to claim that the one festival is a direct continuation of the other, see Håland, Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient, chs 5 f. for discussion; cf. Håland, “Greek Women, Power and the Body,” and also n.52 f. supra.
popular world, the latter most often connected with women; for instance, the church authorities have tried to stop several popular rituals such as the dedications of the black pilgrimage cloths, hair and money offerings to the stones from earlier sanctuaries, but the rituals continue anyway.

The tension between the female and male worlds is also reflected in the tension between the official society and a marginal group of people in Greek society, the gypsies, who play a difficult, but important role in the festival, identities, and statuses. In the early 1990s there were many gypsies; however, later there were fewer. According to Dubisch, they are welcomed to the festival, but this is not correct. One reason that the church does not welcome them is that other Greeks started to arrive before or after the festival instead of coming on the actual days of the festival, and most people who actually attend the festival are gypsies. This particularly was the case in 2011 when many were not able to attend because of the economic crisis in Greece, or they arrived on the eve of the festival, stayed in the church during the night and left right after the procession. The gypsies, however, could afford to stay for several days as most of them sleep in the streets or in the parks and don’t need money for hotels. Generally, the local Tinotes have an ambivalent relation to the gypsies, describing them as “bad people” (“kakos kosmos”). On the one hand, they are thought to be “more religious than us,” “but their religion is strange, since they only worship the mother.” Although the gypsies are marginalized in Greece as in the rest of Europe, they perform all the rituals in the same way as other pilgrims. The two different groups of pilgrims are united as one society during the rituals, particularly during the holy night between 14 and 15 August and during the procession, and might illustrate an instance of the Turnerian communitas (cf. n.21 supra). But, paradoxically, the gypsies are further marginalized by their daily tasks and their offerings (i.e. sheep), and clothing. However, though some of their practices at the festival are looked upon with disapproval, they are recognized for showing great enthusiasm when carrying out the rituals, and are often admired for this by the other Greek pilgrims.

Some General Perspectives on the Festival, its Rituals, Symbols, and Meanings

In the festival dedicated to the Panagia, religion unites both economic and religious activities. The festival demonstrates communication between several parts, and may be regarded as a ceremony that is performed to renew and confirm networks that constitute local village and national solidarity. This is illustrated by the general pilgrims who arrive at the island, but also the Tinotes


56. This claim may, however, be used against (the Tinotes) themselves, cf. supra for discussion of the importance of the Mother’s festivals.
residing in Athens, USA, or around the Mediterranean, coming home for summer. The festival expresses the relationship within the human world by emphasizing solidarity and it symbolizes the relationship with both local “ancestors” (i.e., the builders of the church, whose tombs are situated at the east side of the church in the courtyard), national (i.e., the aforementioned heroes of the Elle¯ particularly illustrated by their memorial on the church’s territory) equivalents, and the history of the nation.

The importance of 15 August in people’s memory of specific events was illustrated when one of my informants, a young Athenian, said: “some years ago . . . the year I was on Tinos during the Panagia (i.e., 15 August 1989) . . .” His words give a clear illustration of the importance of 15 August for Greek people. My informant used the festival as his reference point when trying to identify a particular year although our discussion had a completely different context.57

The cult of the Panagia that is manifested through the festival joins many functions and meanings in a complex cultural-personal metaphor that relates expressions of reciprocity as instances of the underlying form of the society. This is particularly illustrated through the votive offerings or gifts dedicated to the Panagia, and they have to be periodically renewed, also through an annual festival. The cult of the Panagia is the key element that joins all the other activities. The religious aspect of the cult is that around which all other activities circulate, and under the religious “umbrella” we find economic, social, and political meanings.58

One may claim that the festival is important because of the wishes of a power-elite combining religious and political ideologies, but there are also basic factors in the cult that are important for people generally, having strong roots in traditional popular cult; for example, popular customs related to the importance of fetching holy water as well as other symbols (such as earth, flower buds, or pieces of candles after the liturgies).59 The festival demonstrates a blending of different factors such as political ideology and fertility.

In the tradition of pilgrimage and relic use, earth that has come into contact with a holy person or object is considered holy as well, and is collected for its miraculous properties. When people collect holy earth at Tinos, it is because the earth from where the icon was found is believed to have curative properties. When I pose the question of the significance of the earth to the pilgrims, most reply that they collect the earth because of its curative properties. Next, as already mentioned, they line up to fetch water for the same reason. But I have also met visitors who collect earth simply because all the others do. The primary reason for collecting earth then, is most probably the proximity of the earth to the icon found in it. That is also why earth is one of the ingredients in the small amulets made by the nuns and sold in several places on Tinos, particularly in the monastery’s shop. These amulets also contain cotton that has

57. Håland, “From Water in Greek Religion.”
been in contact with the holy head of Pelagia, dried flowers from the *Epitaphios* (death bed/funeral) of Christ, along with the earth from the hole where the miraculous icon was found. As people relate many meanings to the festival, and indeed a symbol, this earth might perhaps also be connected to national ideals. Perhaps people also believe that the earth purifies the Greek nation symbolically? None of my individual informants actually said that, but it might seem that this thinking lies behind (consciously or unconsciously) another important ceremony during the ritual year of the holy icon on Tinos. The chapel dedicated to the “Life-Giving Spring,” where the earth is found, is most often called *Euresēs* (the “Finding”) by the local inhabitants, and during the festival dedicated to *Euresēs*, on 30 January, the finding of the icon is re-enacted. The icon is carried from the main church to the chapel below. Here, it is placed at the site where it laid buried for hundreds of years. A special service is held, dedicated to the finding of the Holy Icon. Accordingly, the place and the earth also have an important national significance, and a secondary factor activated through the general national significance of the sanctuary might be that people collect earth because Greece became liberated. In this context it is also worth mentioning that the chapel is next to the mausoleum commemorating the sinking of the *Ellē*. In other words, a genuine “social meaning” (the celebration of the Greek nation-state) does not exist independent of an implied social or individual meaning.

The festival is celebrated during a period of holiday and leisure, after harvest and the threshing of the grain. It also commemorates an important life-cycle passage, the death or rather the falling asleep of the Panagia. Other life-cycle passages are also important in connection with the festival, such as baptism. Women are the practical performers of the rituals that relate to life-cycle passages. Men are the performers of the public rituals, but the latter cannot take place before the “women-dominated” rituals have finished or the women have done the preliminary work, and thus manifested their “poetics of womanhood.” Women have primary control of the processes of production and reproduction, and women enjoy relative independence from male performance in these basic life processes. Although a male-dominated religious hierarchy controls the church, women most frequently attend church and domesticate its interior as seen through all their offerings and its regular ritual practice.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, how important is the popular aspect of the festival connected with fertility and healing to the manifestation of the national ideology? Do peoples’ beliefs and customs reflect one or several value-systems, and how do these relate to men and women? How are the value-systems expressed through the relationship between official religion and popular belief?

Women’s rituals connected with fertility-cult and healing play an important role in the festival and accordingly within the official male and national
value-system. This is the value-system from which the festival and the society which it reflects, traditionally have been considered. The absence of the female value-system leaves previous analyses one-sided and incomplete. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis requires the female point of view to be included. I have argued the importance of changing our approach when working with the material. Taking account of the female sphere in Greece provides us with a basis for considering the female part of society.61 But by so doing the official male perspective, which is similar to the Western male perspective generally applied within Greek studies, has to be deconstructed. By analysing the festival, we may locate two contradictory views, one connected with the female sphere and the other connected with the male sphere. This means that there is not a one-way power or male dominance in the Greek cultural area, but rather competing powers related to men and women and their respective spheres. The two opposing value-systems are nevertheless both complementary and interdependent. One may perhaps argue that the distinction between popular and official is more useful than the distinction between female and male since women have become more involved in the male sphere and vice versa. From an historical perspective, however, this is a recent occurrence, just as the mingling of official and popular rituals also is a later occurrence. Still it is possible to generalize about female and male values in Greece, although it might seem strange from a northwest-European point of view, which is generally very similar to the official male perspective in Greece. I have argued this elsewhere and there is no space for me to discuss this here.62 Accordingly, I have found that the gendered values are more fruitful when trying to write women into the history, and thereby also question the ways in which history has been written through the ages, trying to supplement a male with a female perspective. Although male pilgrims become more and more active in the festival, and most female pilgrims pray for their families that, of course, include male members, and in that sense male participants are indirectly included in the female sphere of the festival, this does not make it male. It rather shows that the active male participants adapt to the female value system and that concerning the latter (i.e., female values), we see the importance of female actions (i.e., prayers) to

61. In this way we also realize that that which from the male sphere, ideology, and value-system seems to be at the margin, in fact becomes the centre, since marginalization is a spatial metaphor and depends on where you are standing, cf. Håland, “Greek Women and Death, Ancient and Modern” for discussion.

62. Håland, Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient. For the following argument, see also Håland, “Greek Women and Death, Ancient and Modern”. One of my male informants from Tinos is in the navy and one of my female informants is also in the armed forces. Like the abbess in the Monastery of Kekhrovouno (where Pelagia lived), and the late prime minister Andreas Papandreou’s wife, Démétra, they all regard the Panagia as a protective mother. One of the reasons that Papandreou’s former wife, the American-born Margaret was very unpopular among Greek women, was that she did not share their female values, cf. Håland, Greek Festivals, Modern and Ancient, ch. 6; Dubisch, In a Different Place, ch. 11. In a Greek Orthodox contra American or Western context then, female values absorb the male and become Greek versus American or Western. This is also discussed by Håland in Competing Ideologies in Greek Religion, Ancient and Modern, cf. Dubisch, In a Different Place. Cf, for example, Alexiou, After Antiquity, for the gendered values in Greece and how they differ from Northwestern Europe and the USA. Concerning competing and simultaneously intersecting values, cf. Eade and Sallnow, Contesting the Sacred, versus Turner, “Pilgrimage as Social Process.”
the benefit of their men-folk. In other words, there are different ideologies or values at work, that intersect, rather than one dominant ideology or value. But, and as already mentioned, as the female Panagia is at the head of the sanctuary, in connection with the Dormition festival at Tinos as well as the pilgrimage to the island in general, here we are presented with the importance of female values in Greece.

There are several meanings and values connected to the festival and its rituals, popular and official, female and male. The pilgrimage site on Tinos presents an interrelationship of history, ritual, and gender. Here, different interests — sacred and secular, local and national, personal and official — all come together and there is an intersection of social, economic, religious, and political life, demonstrating that a political explanation can never entirely account for cultic arrangements.