

THE SPIRIT IN THE FLESH:

Lives of Greek Mystics

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c 1990

THIMIUS-MIMIUS AND THE ARCHON OF THE UNIVERSE

According to an ancient Mycenean myth, the first mystic of the Grecian peninsula was the folk hero Thimius-Mimius, also known as the Holy Savior of Kalamata. Thimius-Mimius was the first-born son of Dark Mother Sophia, whose second and more famous son was, of course, Archon, the King and Ruler of the Universe.

Now, unlike Archon, who perfected the art of ruling, Thimius-Mimius perfected the art of un-ruling the universe, which may well explain why he finally ended up as a poor carpenter in the Peloponesian village of Kalamata. And yet, he was blessed with the gift of compassionate wisdom, while his brother Archon, though residing in Heaven and surrounded by the souls of the most pious of humans, was cursed to live in eternal discontent, attributed by some to his unrequitted love for the legendary nymph Adalais.

Thimius-Mimius' life was peaceful and contemplative despite a serious physical handicap which incurred the scorn of his fellow Kalamatans. For, due to his divine birth, or for some other unknown reason, he was endowed with an enormous penis, unequaled in size among humans. And since the custom of the day was to live in total nudity, he was treated not unlike a misfit or even a madman, whom the most mischiveous of village children would pester incessantly by throwing stones at his member and calling

him "the three-legged beast" or "talking prick," and similar vulgarities. It was only through his good nature that he would tolerate such treatment, responding always with his favorite mystical words, "This, too. This, too. And this, also."

There were, of course, a few exceptions, like the beautiful maiden Vashilou, who could appreciate both his inner beauty and his peculiar physique, but she could never have admitted it to herself, let alone her parents, relatives and friends. And this was a great pity indeed, for Thimius-Mimius also felt a certain reciprocal attraction, which he kept a secret for fear of social outcry.

Now it came to pass that the world gradually lost all sense of piety, awe and respect for the heavenly Archon. People started neglecting the prescribed sacrifices due him, and even began to use his holy temples for commercial transactions, Sunday picnics or places of copulation and defecation. Prophets of doom rose and fell without any popular appeal, while Archon's wrath kept on building year after year, finally turning to a pure menace when he discovered that two of his most luxurious temples were converted to the worship of the false god Zaxtapalos Hamourabee. Thus, he started planning the destruction of the world with a final deluge; and of all humans, only Thimius-Mimius was able to foresee the catastrophe while sitting in meditation by the overflowing river of Kalamata.

Realizing what lay ahead, he prayed for seven days and nights to

Lord Archon to reconsider his decision. He tried to reason with him, calling for mercy, tolerance and forgiveness. But Archon's uncontrollable fury made him totally relentless; his only response was a sinister laughter that rang like an earthquake through the deep canyons and ravines of the Peloponese. After seven days and nights had passed in this fashion, the desparate Thimius-Mimius fell asleep from exhaustion, and it was then that Dark Mother Sophia transported him in a dream to his early childhood, when he and his brother Archon used to entertain themselves by competing with each other for the length of their respective penises.

As soon as he awakened from this dream, Thimius-Mimius knew exactly what had to be done. "Be a poet to a poet, and a child to a child!" he proclaimed, thanking the holy Mother for a most revealing vision. Then he looked up to the sky and called his brother, speaking thus: "Oh, Lord of the Universe and Ruler of All! I know that your decision is now irreversible. But I have one last plea to make unto you. I may be a human and you may be a god, yet let us now compare the length of our penises. And if you win the competition, proceed according to your plans. But if it is me who wins, then spare at least the Kalamatans from the impending devastation." Having heard this, the great Archon was seized by uncontrollable laughter, reverberating through the universe in the form of thunderstorms, hurricanes and volcanic eruptions. Then he looked down to Kalamata to see only a

miniscule dot of a villager, not realizing, of course, that the humble and insignificant carpenter was in fact his long-forgotten brother Thimius-Mimius. "This may be rather entertaining," he thought to himself, and his childish brain was immediately overtaken by competitive delirium. "Onward! Onward!" the Archon roared with a mocking voice, feeling entirely confident in his god-like dimensions and in an easy victory against a tiny human. But when the competition began, none of the pious women surrounding him in Heaven could serve as an appropriate source of inspiration. Thimius-Mimius, on the other hand, turning his eyes unto the village, exchanged a long, lustful look with his beloved Vashilou, as a result of which his reproductive organ grew to an enormous length, reaching to the very top of nearby mountain Taygetos. In the meantime, Archon, despite his valiant attempts and superhuman powers, could not create a match for such a legendary feat. Embarrassed by his unexpected loss and total ridicule, he sobbed and cried with endless tears of jealousy, which drowned the earth and nearly all of humankind. But not the Kalamatans. For, having climbed on the lengthy penis of their savior, the Kalamatans managed to migrate swiftly, along with their furniture and goats and chickens, unto the highest peak of mount Taygetos, the only mountain on earth destined to survive Archon's doom and destruction.

Needless to say, Thimius-Mimius became the folk hero of the Kalamatans overnight and lived happily ever after with his wife

Vashilou and their several children. But he did not abandon carpentry in favor of politics, as Vashilou would have wanted. So, this was the only remaining little cloud in their otherwise clear and beatific horizon.

EFTYHIOS VELOUDIOS (931-988 A.D.)

The third National Teacher of Buddhism in Nepal, Eftyhios Veloudios was born of unknown Greek parents presumably residing in the outskirts of Kathmandu. Only a few weeks old, Eftyhios was found abandoned in a basket on the front steps of the Buddhist monastery Karuna Vihar, along with a letter of introduction revealing the Greek origin and intended name of the infant. Thus, he was adopted by the holy brothers and was raised as a Buddhist monk under the auspices of the reverend abbot Suhita Dharma. Young Eftyhios' physical beauty was reportedly matched by his profound understanding of the ancient sutras, so much so that he joined the Council of the Wise at the tender age of thirteen. From his eloquent diaries we can deduce that he achieved his first satori at twelve, while being penetrated by a local shepherd boy named Bassam Kuzum, who made his home on the hills surrounding Karuna Vihar. On that occasion, Eftyhios wrote, "Today the male ego was totally shattered, and with it was gone the ego-at-large. Rejoice! Rejoice!"

But in the following five or six years he became so enamoured of the good-natured though simple Bassam, that he revealed his secret to the rest of the monastic community, and moreover proclaimed that Bassam Kuzum was in fact a preincarnation of the future Buddha Milarepa, especially because

the boy had no knowledge of Buddhist doctrine, reincarnation or Milarepa whatsoever. This display of eccentricity and outright arrogance was so distasteful to abbot Suhita Dharma that he banished Eftyhios from the monastery only hours before his ordination as a full member of the Holy Order. And yet, due to his unquestionable abilities, Eftyhios Veloudios, though never formally ordained as a priest, nevertheless became third National Teacher of Buddhism during the reign of the effeminate King Chattaranga (938-989 A.D.), and led thousands of students on their way to full enlightenment. His controversial essays "Bassam and the Beyond" (936 A.D.) and "Bassam IS the Beyond" (937 A.D.) were his only contributions to literature. But he continued to teach throughout the country of Nepal until his unexpected death in 988 A.D.

If we are to believe the "Oriental Journals" of a certain Theophrastos of Nicomedia, Eftyhios Veloudios died in the early spring of 988 A.D. during a suicide ceremony attended by his closest students and personal friends at an abandoned pagan temple just outside of Kathmandu. The rather impressionable Theophrastos wonders if Master Eftyhios had decided to join the spirit of the already deceased Bassam Kuzum in the ghost city of Zvatala, but recent scholars have raised serious doubts about that hypothesis, underlining the Master's indisputable agnosticism on spiritualist matters. The competing theory, led primarily by Prof. Arnheim of Cornell University, refers to his

well-known distaste for the pain, illness and physical misery that frequently accompany old age, and his decision therefore to take his own life at a most brilliant moment in his career, with his health still unailing and his beloved companions by his side.

Whatever the actual reason may be, it is reported that a heavily opiated rice pudding was prepared for the Master, and a small circle of guests was invited to the semi-ruined temple of Dionysus, where he addressed them as follows: "Honorable Seekers of the Way! The holy Buddha Sakyamuni, in all his transcendental glory, preferred to stop at eighty years of age. I shall stop at fifty seven. If you must grieve for my departure, consider it your own responsibility and not mine. I personally feel thankful for not being forced to die by the will of others, as in the wretched case of Socrates the Athenian or Jesus of Nazareth and countless other barbarians. As for the life beyond and the possibility of our future meeting on cosmic spheres, I know naught. I only hope that you shall all attain Perfect Liberation and none of you shall meet his death by means of torture."

Having said that, the Master joined in the songs of the inebriated temple dancers until the effects of the aforementioned rice pudding enveloped him for ever in the eternal peace of Paranirvana. As soon as he passed away, the music ceased, and the guests wailed in mourning while showering his smiling face with tears, wine and wildflowers.

Upon the announcement of such horrible and unexpected news in Kathmandu, a deep sadness fell over the city for the loss of the third National Teacher Eftyhios Veludios. Theophrastos reports that total silence was observed in public for a full moon cycle, a silence broken only by his old rivals among the Buddhist and the Christian clergy. As would have been expected, the Buddhists complained that his action showed a serious inability of acceptance and therefore a lack of wisdom; the Christians, on the other hand, cried out against his arrogant belief that one's body is one's own and not the property of our Father in Heaven. According to Theophrastos, however, neither argument reached the aching hearts of courtiers and common folk for some time to come.

Only eleven months later, the devastating earthquake of 989 A.D. hit Kathmandu and brought about the tragic death of almost all of its inhabitants.

THE BEARDED LADY MAGDALENA (1714-1788)

Was she really a reincarnation of Mary Magdalene, the apostle of Christ, as she often used to claim under the influence of cannabis? Or was she in fact an evil sorceress, head priestess of the rites of Lilith, as charged by his Grace the bishop Gregory of Thessalonica?

But let us start from the beginning. It so appears that young Magdalena Arpazoglou was raised in the obscure city of Katerini by wealthy and educated parents, who valued greatly the study of religion and even held regular evening gatherings where dervishes conversed with Gnostic masters and Kabbalist mystics with Christian Hesychasts, while sipping subtle Syrian liquors and listening to the sound of the oud.

Needless to say, the young Magdalena was trained from very early childhood in sufi dancing as well as omphaloscopy (i.e., belly-button gazing) for her spiritual development. Her more specifically occultist powers, however, were probably attributed to her secret contacts with the infamous Marcella di Firenze during a brief summer vacation of the Arpazoglou family on the Italian peninsula. These powers became manifest in public about three and a half years later when, at the age of only sixteen, she joined the French traveling circus "L' Etoile deux Balkans" with the full consent of her open-minded parents. It was there

that she started performing the unforgettable "gulping act," during which she literally swallowed a variety of objects such as whole pineapples, combs, hairpins, books, razors, daggers, flagpoles, and so on.

This was, of course, an instant outrage for the Greek Orthodox Church, representatives of which condemned the obvious sorcery as sinful servitude to the devil, and many an overjealous priest started attacking the maiden from the pulpit. In fact, a few of them proceeded quite as far as to claim that they could actually discern the presence of the Evil One in her countenance, all stemming from a tiny reddish beard which was just beginning to appear on her girlish chin. The circus audience, however, ignored these accusations, and numerous admirers continued as before to frequent and applaud her nightly performances.

It was then, we can presume, in spiteful response to her antagonists, that she began delivering, after her gulping act, and under the influence of Persian hashish, a series of public lectures on religion; lectures which the bishop Gregory describes in his Memoirs either as totally incomprehensible or downright evil. His Grace seems to be particularly offended by the Bearded Lady's repeated claim to having lived before as Mary Magdalene, the Christ's favorite disciple, a lifetime in which she hadn't given up her most beloved occupation of harlotry all through her stormy love affair with the Nazarene. As for the members of her audience who strongly doubted the superhuman origin of Jesus due

to his inability to save himself from crucifixion, she is believed to have defended him with considerable tenacity, proposing that her beloved could have quite easily avoided the cross and lived much longer, but he decided instead to die there, at Golgotha, so that he would be remembered not as an old and undesirable though wise sage, but as a young and virile man of thirty-three -- a great asset, he believed, for the subsequent development of Christianity.

Thus, as one would have expected, the gap between her and the church continued to widen, reaching quite dangerous proportions during her curious relationship with a younger maiden by the name of Myriam Bahar, reportedly a Jewish girl of only eleven years of age when she first set eyes on lady Magdalena, already forty-one by that time, during one of her performances at "L'Etoile des Balkans". The passionate friendship ignited between them at once that same night was often criticized by a number of Katerinian gossipers as a purely physical affair. Now, the actual details still remain unknown about their days together, after the young Myriam abandoned the luxurious Bahar estate to live with her bearded friend in a humble tent of the traveling circus. But it appears quite certain that a large part of their time was devoted to little Myriam's spiritual initiation, for soon thereafter the two of them, Myriam and Magdalena, began transmitting the so-called holy wisdom of Higher Gnosis for only a nominal fee to a number of interested circus

customers immediately after the completion of the late evening show. Their method soon became known as Fotisis Ditti (translated as Dual Illumination) and consisted roughly of Magdalena's convincing revelation of the Five Cosmic Truths, which were then disproven one by one and in an equally convincing fashion by her mate Myriam Bahar.

This highly confusing performance was met with a variety of audience responses ranging from minor headaches to hearty laughs, vulgar remarks or spiritual awakenings. But be that as it may, its popularity quickly grew to such remarkable proportions that Fotisis Ditti was included in a number of Sight-Seeing Guides to the Grecian peninsula for several decades to come; in fact, it must have been the very first tourist attraction to ever put that most obscure city of Katerini on the Greek map, so to speak. Thus, despite frequent protests from the furious Bahars and bishop Gregory himself to the authorities for the supposed abduction of the Jewish maiden by the so-called "bearded crook", the Katerinian Tourist Police, acting on the behalf of economic development, repeatedly refused to carry out the demand to capture, torture and exile the bearded Lady Magdalena.

As a result, Myriam and Magdalena were left in peace, and, to the bitterness of their fierce opponents, they amassed sufficient wealth, which permitted them to finally move out of the overcrowded circus tent and purchase a most comfortable

apartment in a respectable section of Upper Katerini. There they lived till the end of their days, surrounded by homeless cats and unwanted dogs.

Of course, the popularity of Fotisis Ditti, like all popularities in general, did bring its own negative effects. For whatever the intended original meaning of the name might be, by the early part of the nineteenth century, "fotisis ditti" came to mean nothing but "evasion," "doubletalk" or even "horse manure" in the Katerinian vernacular. But Magdalena didn't seem to take offense. And when Myriam Bahar, who outlived her by twenty years, was asked to share her memories as to the true significance of Fotisis Ditti, she is reported to have totally forgotten everything about it, no doubt on account of advanced senility.

This is indeed unfortunate for the historians of Greek philosophy, given that the only written text on the subject, "Five Truths and Untruths", composed by the Lady Magdalena circa 1757, was stolen and probably destroyed by her ever-spiteful enemies. Was it then a priceless document of ontological profundity, or merely an inferior set of generalities? We shall never know for sure, which may just turn out to be preferable in the long run.

ELPINOR O SPERMATICOS (33-66 A.D.)

It has now been well-documented beyond any reasonable doubt that the renowned Elpinor Totokotsis, also known as Elpinor o Spermaticos, began his curious career as an insignificant Greek accountant for an import-export souvenir business in his native Antioch during the reign of the Roman emperor Nero. Although quite capable in matters of accounting, the young Elpinor must have had different aspirations from the very beginning, for he became quickly overwhelmed by the tedium of his profession, and sought weekend diversions in the practice of Kundalini yoga and the esoteric cults of Hermes Trismegistos, which were gaining prominence at that most tumultuous time of religious syncretism. It is, in fact, related that the Kundalinic concept of preserving vital forces through gradually redirecting them from lower/biological to higher/spiritual chakras thoroughly obsessed the idealistic accountant, and what had once begun as a mere, innocent hobby, soon became his most cherished if not exclusive preoccupation. The spectacular result of these attempts, admittedly unequaled in the history of clinical psychopathology, is known as "theios orgas^mos" (translated as "divine orgasm"), which consisted of repeatedly foaming at the mouth with considerable amounts of sperm.

Needless to say, this peculiar condition resulted in the

eventual loss of his position at the import-export business, though it simultaneously earned him a singular notoriety among the esoterically inclined Antiocheans. For only five days after these rather unusual occurrences, Elpinor o Spermaticos, as he was now being called by already growing crowds of admirers, received, presumably from Hermes or possibly another transcendental source, certain miraculous abilities to heal the ailing, resurrect the dead, multiply food for the hungry, and provide housing for the destitute. Though most of these claims remain undocumented, it is not at all surprising that he soon attained the status of a major avatar or at least a saint. As a matter of fact, he would have probably been canonized as such by one of the competing religions of the period, were it not for his most controversial so-called "Sacred Litanies," which cost him much of his popularity and, finally, even his own life.

Now, these Litanies were supposedly dictated to him by divine Hermes Himself, and had to be enacted in the mysterious olive groves of Faklan-Ordu, a famous Hermetic sanctuary not far from the northeastern outskirts of Antioch. Accordingly, on each and every night of the full moon, Elpinor would retreat into the darkness of the grove to meditate for hours under an ancient olive tree, while listening to the omniscient and omnipresent spirits of the Wise Ancestors. Then, around midnight, he would commence his infamous wanderings as if hypnotized by unearthly powers, walking in absolute nudity through the Faklan-Ordu, and

making himself readily available for all conceivable debaucheries to anyone present who felt desirous of his favors. These Litanies would go on until the break of dawn, at which point Elpinor o Spermaticos would fall into a blissful coma and remain motionless for the rest of the day. It is believed that while he remained in this state, an exquisite fragrance began to emanate from his youthful body, a most delicate aroma indeed, which enchanted the participants, and brought higher knowledge and tranquility to the suffering souls of the ignorant.

It is thus a great misunderstanding on the part of some historians, such as Zenon o Megarefs or the late John Foufotos, that his eventual crucifixion along with a group of Christian martyrs circa 66 A.D. reveals a later conversion of Elpinor o Spermaticos to Christianity. As has been recently revealed by the Syracusean Codices A and B, Elpinor had remained an exceptionally faithful pagan and a humanist (in the Hellenic sense of the term) until the end of his life. And he would have most probably continued to benefit humanity for many years to come, had it not been for countess Maria Flavia Pelegrina, that beautiful but arrogantly sentimental cousin of the Caesar, who, having secretly enjoyed the Litanies of the Faklan-Ordu, developed such a possessive passion for the endowed Greek that she demanded their immediate wedding and a permanent abolition of the nocturnal rituals. Elpinor's valiant refusal of her proposition, and his defense of the Sacred Litanies as a "divine mission" left the

humiliated countess thoroughly untouched. Writhing with revengeful fury, she managed to arrange his quick arrest and death by crucifixion through her various connections in the imperial court.

There are some indications that the martyrdom of Elpinor o Spermaticos inspired the creation of several local cults devoted to his memory, all of which were, of course, abolished when Christianity became the state religion during the fourth century A.D.

As for Maria Flavia Pelegrina, the same codices reveal that she continued to be the consummate noble socialite inside the Roman palace to the ripe old age of one hundred and three, and even earned herself a certain reputation as a minor writer of two romance novels and innumerable sonnets.

EPAMINONDAS NEGREPONDIS (448-347 B.C.)

Reputedly a most compassionate tax collector, Epaminondas Negrepondis served King Megasthenes of Evia during the later part of the fifth and the early part of the fourth century B.C. As a young man, Negrepondis is said to have befriended the famous Myron the Immaculate, who initiated him into the mysteries of contemplation. But unlike Myron and his followers, who lived ascetic lives, Epaminondas was always surrounded by numerous concubines, for which he admittedly squandered a considerable family inheritance. Myron, on the other hand, also a descendant of a noble family, had given up his status and personal treasure in the name of spiritual progress early on in life.

Epaminondas was frequently quoted as being derisive of such ascetic practices, and in opposition to Myron's doctrine of Total Detachment, he held the doctrine of Total Attachment to both the Earth and the Sky. His famous saying in the "Prolegomena to Gnosis" was often quoted by mystics of subsequent generations: "Ourano tin yin enangalizomenos taftin elafrini," translated as, "He who embraces the earth with sky, makes the earth lighter."

In his biography, the historian Zachariah indicates that when Epaminondas Negrepondis was somewhat advanced in years, he became enamoured of Gizela of Larissa, an enchanting concubine less than half his own age, who not only treated him abusively in public, but also vainly consumed his wealth in lavish

extravagance, as witnessed by the still standing ruins of her personal mansion, the Larisseum. Epaminondas apparently continued to enjoy Gizela's abuses until 383 B.C., when, with the death of his close friend Megasthenes of Evia, he was divested of his noble status and official function by powerful members of the new democratic Senate on account of his scandalous life style. There are indications that Gizela, who then took refuge in the Larisseum with her own family, refused to assist the impoverished Epaminondas in any manner whatsoever, and he was thus reduced to a homeless beggar wandering the northern meadows of Thessaly. According to Zachariah, however, it was during this tragic period of his life that Epaminondas Negrepondis attained to Perfect Liberation. When he eventually happened to come upon the Rock of Meteora, where Myron and his disciples lived in seclusion, the two aging men recognized each other at once, and despite their philosophical differences, behaved quite amicably to each other. In fact, Myron is reported by one of his disciples as proclaiming that Gizela of Larissa and the Rock of Meteora were the two greatest spiritual teachers of the century.

After a few months in Myron's hermitage, Epaminondas took leave of his friend and continued his way to the north, making a living as a spiritual advisor to a number of wealthy merchants in Macedonia. It is doubtful whether he continued to teach on his favorite subject of Total Attachment, however, given that wealthy Macedonians were much more interested in questions of life after

death. According to his biographer, Epaminondas spent the last years of his life traveling through Macedonia and Thrace, where, under a variety of pseudonyms, he argued in favor of Hades, Reincarnation, the Law of Eternal Return, or even Paradise and Hell, depending on the particular inclinations of his audience. Zachariah, who met him then for the first time on the island of Samothrace, relates that during his days of poverty, Epaminondas had come to respect the great merits of celibacy as purported by Myron, but once his financial status was somewhat improved, he began to pay occasional visits to the brothels of Thessalonica and Philippoupolis, euphemistically also known as the "temples of Aphrodite." Yet he did refrain from further derisive remarks regarding Myron's doctrine, and when confronted on the issue of celibacy by Zachariah, he only gazed at the clear blue sky, and, smiling mysteriously, responded with the ancient laconic proverb "Penia technas katergazi," which can best be translated as "Poverty maketh one resourceful."

Epaminondas Negrepondis died peacefully in his sleep after a night of overindulgence in one such ill-reputed "temple" during the late summer of 347 B.C. He was approximately ninety-nine years old.

THE OLD WOMAN

(From the collection "Chronicles and Tales of Macedonia", by unknown author, circa 1230 A.D.)

In the misty lands of Outer Florina, hidden in an ancient cave just outside of town, lives a very old woman feeding on fruits and nuts and live insects. Due to her curious violet aura, she is believed to be a very holy woman, though she refuses to worship our Lord Jesus Christ. Instead, she burns incense to a drawing she has made of herself on the wall of the cavern, a drawing that she keeps on changing to reflect the passage of time. Sometimes the old woman erases the drawing completely and goes on for weeks or even months without any drawing at all, just the incense and the empty wall. Then she sits and stares at the wall and intones a hypnotic chant calling the wall a God or a Goddess, the Divine Destroyer of Dreams.

A curious worship indeed, if one considers that this same old woman guiltlessly makes her living by selling all kinds of dreams to those who are willing to buy them. For it is no secret that she prepares love potions out of pahoumia, stofades and other carnivorous plants from the nearby forest, potions for the ladies of Florina, who pay dearly in hopes of attracting the men of their dreams to their secret chambers.

Occasionally some male youths also arrive at her door, seeking the famous potions to use on their sweethearts. If these young men excite her fancy, the old woman will demand no monies whatsoever for the potions. She just has them disrobe and ejaculate in her presence, as she lights crimson candles at their feet; then she sprinkles their bodies with rosewater, while playing with herself vigorously at the same time. Finally, as they leave, she may offer them an extra gift along with the potions: perhaps a talisman or heads of Mongolian garlic, to guard against the evil eye of jealous men or jealous gods. She is a happy woman and a wise woman and her name is Loula Hatziparaskevá.