

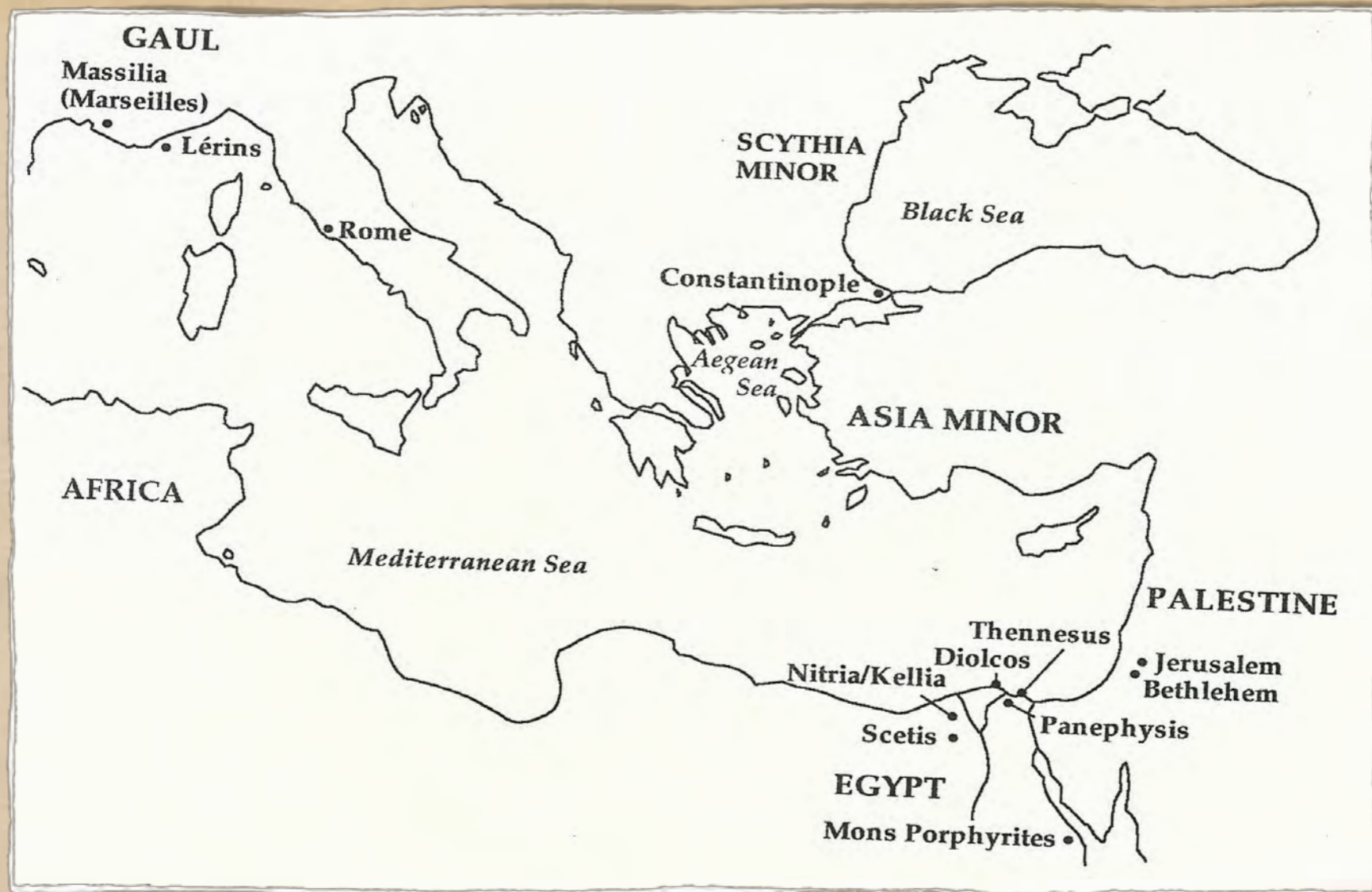
Short Prayers

The Desert Tradition: Praying Scripture Continually

Or . . .

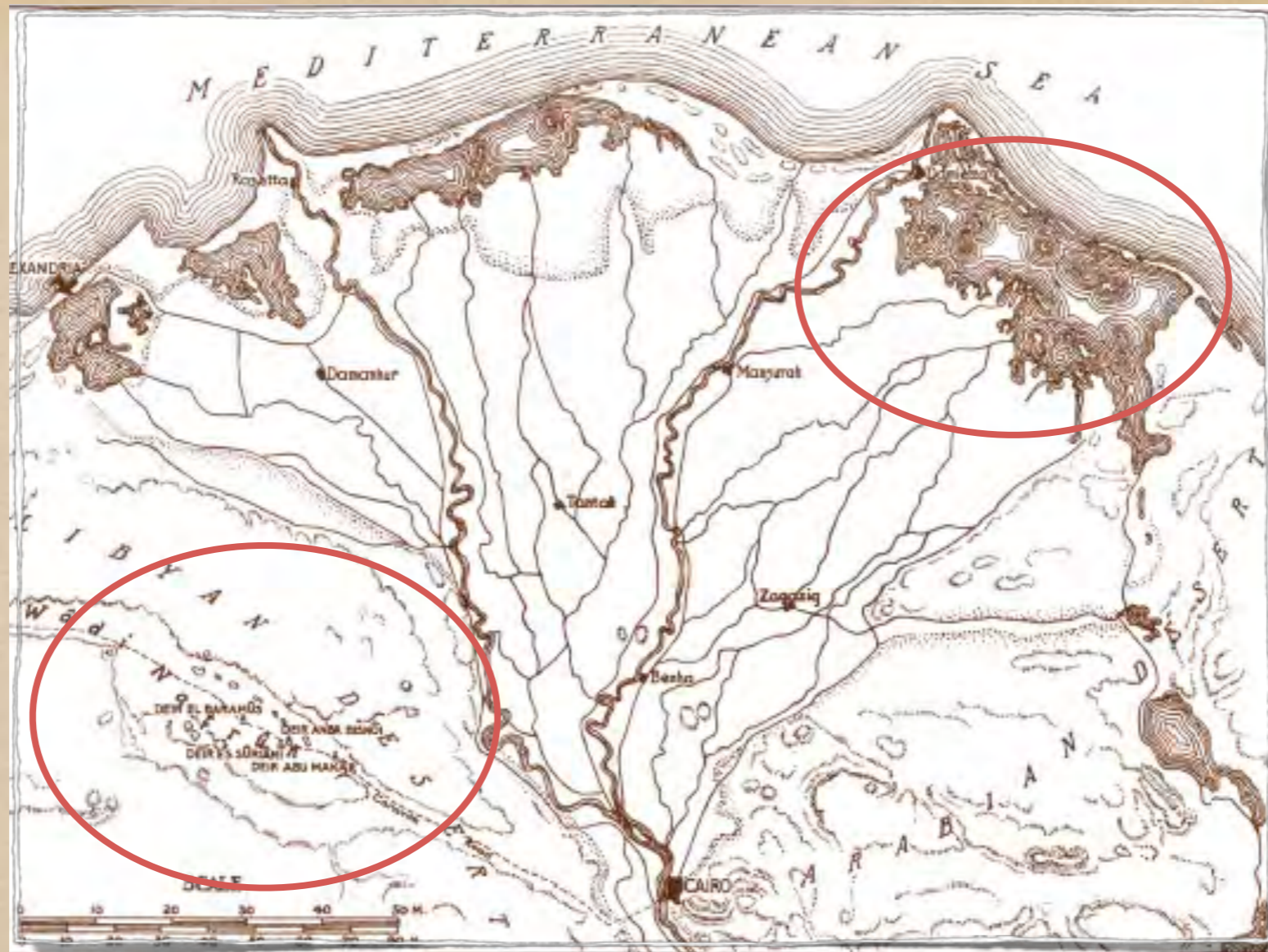
Habits of Highly Effective Hermits

Cassian's World



The Travels of Cassian

Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (1998), 2



Monastic Sites Visited by Cassian
The Nile Delta (Panephysis) and the Wadi Natrun

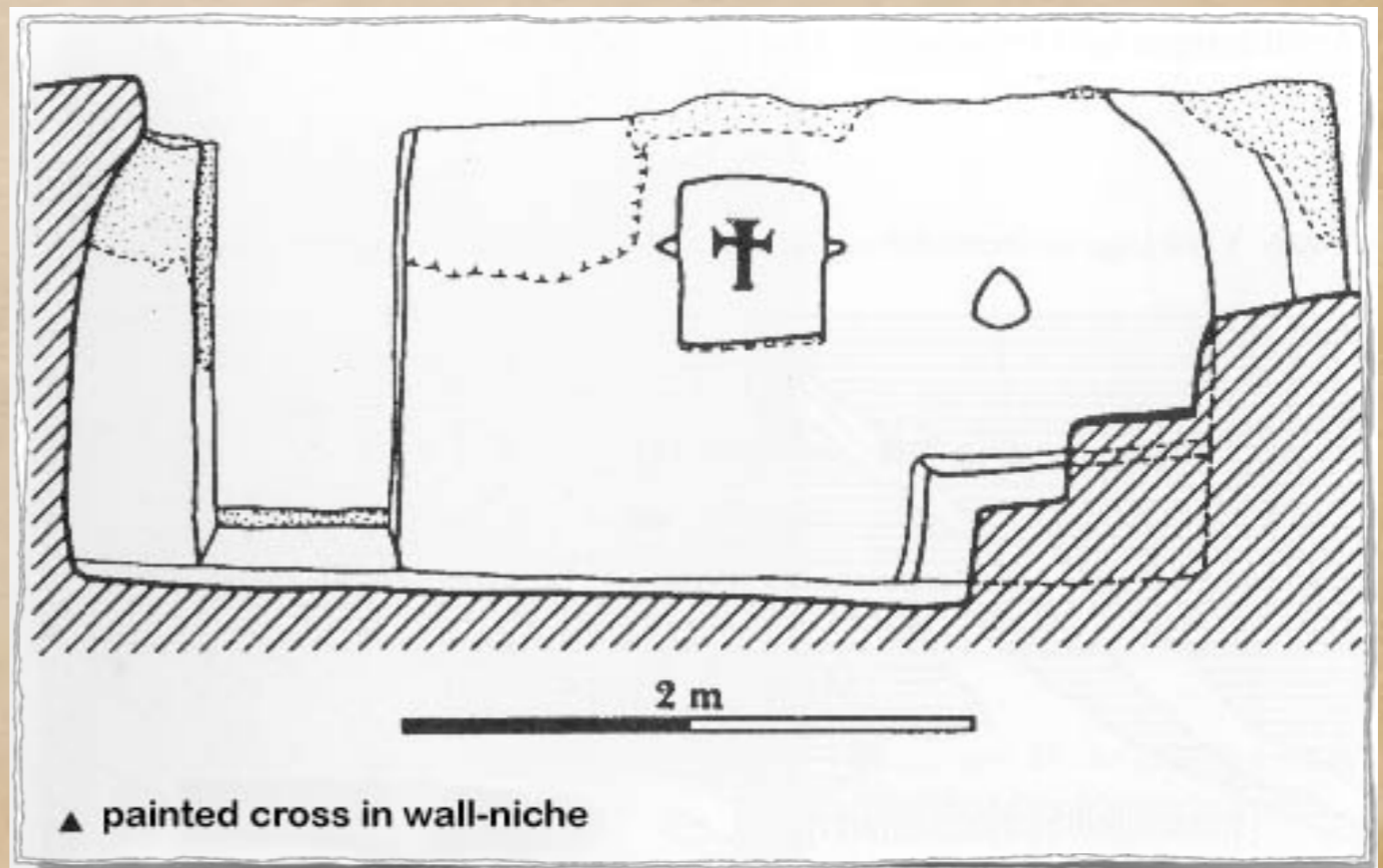


Location of Conferences 9-10

Abba Isaac on Prayer



4th-Century Hermit's Cell



Cassian's Goal

Abba Moses: The Goal Outlined

“Our objective is purity of heart . . . for without this the goal cannot be reached. . . . You have purity of heart for an objective and eternal life as the goal. . . . Everything we do, our every objective, must be undertaken for the sake of this purity of heart. This is why we take on loneliness, fasting, vigils, work, nakedness. For this we must practice the reading of Scripture, together with all the other virtuous activities, and we do so to trap and to hold our hearts free from the harm of every dangerous passion and in order to rise step by step to the high point of love.” Cassian, Conf. 1.5, 7

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Abba Isaac: the Goal Attained

“He will be all that we are zealous for, all that we strive for. He will be all that we think about, all our living, all that we talk about, our very breath. And that union of Father and Son, of Son and Father, will fill our senses and our minds. As God loves us with a love that is true and pure, a love that never breaks, we too will be joined to Him in a never-ending unshakable love, and it will be such a union that our breathing and our thinking and our talking will be ‘God.’”

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And we will come at last to that . . . goal which the Lord prayed to be fulfilled in us: 'That they may all be one as we are one, as I am in them and you in me so that they are utterly one' (Jn 17:22-23). 'Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am' (Jn 17:24).

This, then, is the goal of the monk. All his striving must be for this . . . a foretaste in this body of the life and glory of heaven. . . . to have the soul rise each day to the things of the spirit, until all its living and all its wishing become one unending prayer." Cassian, Conf. 10.7

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Cassian's Practice

Come to my help, O God;
Lord, hurry to my rescue.

—Psalm 70: 1

“To keep the thought of God always in your mind you must cling totally to this formula for piety: ‘Come to my help, O God; Lord, hurry to my rescue’ [Ps. 70:1].

It is not without good reason that this verse has been chosen from the whole of Scripture as a device. It carries with it all the feelings of which human nature is capable. It can be adapted to every condition and can be usefully deployed against every danger. It expresses the humility of a pious confession. It conveys the watchfulness born of unending worry and fear. It conveys a sense of our frailty, the assurance of being heard, the confidence in help that is always and everywhere present. Someone who is forever calling out to his protector is indeed very sure of having him close by. This is the voice filled with the ardor of love and charity. This is the terrified cry of someone who sees the snares of the enemy, the cry of someone besieged day and night and exclaiming that he cannot escape unless his protector comes to the rescue.”

-Cassian, Conf. 10.10

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The Method of Unceasing Prayer

“Come to my help, O God;
Lord, hurry to my rescue” (Ps. 70:1)

- ◆ **Biblical prayers**
a pattern of memorization & recitation (meleté or meditatio)
- ◆ **Arrow prayers**
a weapon against temptation (gluttony, lust, anger, greed, despair, accidie, vanity, and pride)
- ◆ **Concentrated prayers**
a means of recollection to the presence of God

Cassian's Influence

Influence on Eastern Church

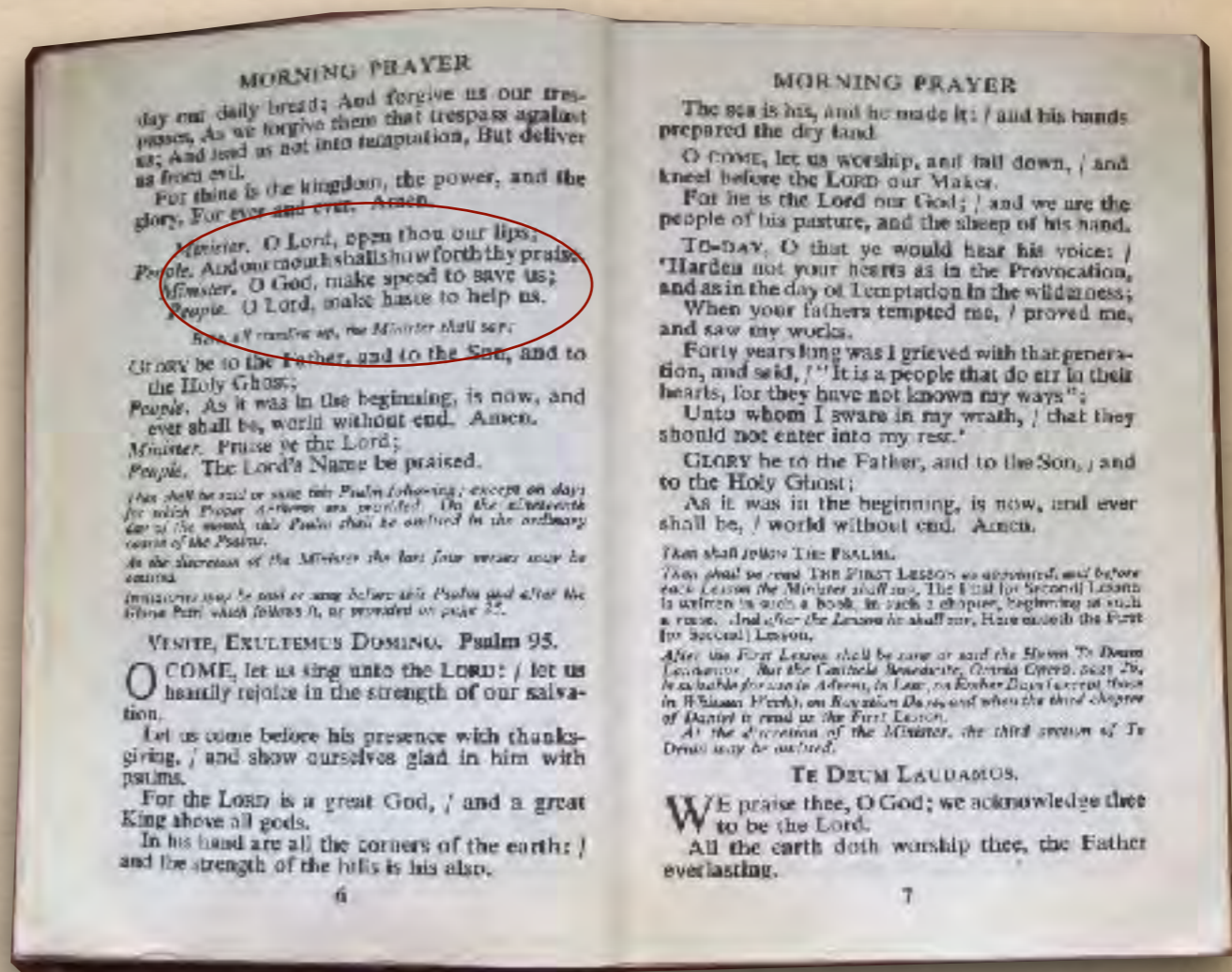
- The “Jesus Prayer” in Diadochus of Photiki (5th c.) and the Philokalia
- The Sinai tradition of John Climacus (6th c.) and later Hesychasm
- The Russian Pilgrim (19th c.)

Κύριε Ιησού Χριστέ
Υιέ του Θεού
Ελέησον με
τον αματωλό

“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,
have mercy upon me, a sinner.”

Influence on Western Liturgy

- adopted into Daily Office
- Present in Anglican Prayer Book
- and in the Roman Catholic Liturgy of the Hours



Book of Common Prayer (Canada, 1962)
Service of Morning Prayer

Cassian's Critique

Thinking Critically

- ◆ How is Cassian's method of unceasing prayer Christian and not simply the repetition of a mantra in the way of Hinduism or Buddhism, or simply a psychological focusing technique or mindfulness practice?

Thinking Critically

Cassian's practice of this prayer formula remains:

- ◆ Biblical - in form and content
- ◆ Christ-directed and Christ-centred
- ◆ Communal - United to other practices of Christian prayer and to life in Christian community
- ◆ Theological - not primarily psychological or technical

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Lord, hurry to my rescue.

—Psalm 70: 1