L’autore ha il diritto di stampare o diffondere copie di questo PDF esclusivamente per uso scientifico o didattico. Edipuglia si riserva di mettere in vendita il PDF, oltre alla versione cartacea. L’autore ha diritto di pubblicare in internet il PDF originale allo scadere di 24 mesi.

The author has the right to print or distribute copies of this PDF exclusively for scientific or educational purposes. Edipuglia reserves the right to sell the PDF, in addition to the paper version. The author has the right to publish the original PDF on the internet at the end of 24 months.
The church “Panagia ton Chalkeon in Thessaloniki”:\n\nA different approach of a monastic institution and its founder*\n\ndi Melina Paissidou*\n
* Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Abstract

This paper concerns the most prominent church of the Middle Byzantine period in Thessaloniki (Greece), which is dated to 1028 and is known by the modern name «Panagia ton Chalkeon». It is located in the middle of the lower part of the Byzantine city, near the main road, very close to the ancient forum and the Byzantine “Megalophoros” and integrated in the famous region of “Katafygi.” Our study focuses on two main topics: A. On the comparative examination of the information from historical sources and archaeological data about the founder of the church, the “glorious imperial protospatharios and katepano Lagouvardias” Christophoros and his family, his connection to Thessaloniki and the South of Italy and the reason for his donation. B. On the mission of the church as part of an urban monastery complex, contrary to the prevalent theory, according to which the church was erected as a personal ecclesiastic and funeral institution of its founders. The argumentation supporting the new interpretation is based on historical, topographic, architectural, iconographical and functional elements. The analyses lead to the conclusion that the Middle Byzantine church of Christophoros, dedicated to the Mother of God, is the result of a substantial donation on behalf of an imperial official, who imitated the imperial dignitaries of Constantinople, during an epoch of prosperity. The stable status-quo lead to the realization of big public works in Thessaloniki, such as the renovation of the fortifications and the erection of private monasteries founded by illustrious donors. Panagia ton Chalkeon, as part of the so-called “Macedonian Renaissance,” functioned without interruption for four centuries and enjoyed renovations that only a large independent monastery, in a predominant position in the city, could have had.

Location - History - Topography

The byzantine church that is today known by the modern name «Panagia ton Chalkeon» is registered among the most prominent and well preserved monuments of the middle byzantine period in Thessaloniki 1 (fig. 1). It is the most important architectural building of the so-called Macedonian Renaissance in the second city of Byzantium and it bears the date 1028. Its location on a central area of the lower part of the byzantine city, in the vicinity of the main horizontal road -the “Leoforos” 2 according to sources- and very close to the site of the Forum (Agora) and the Byzantine Megalophoros 3, indicates its important and central position (fig. 2). The previous place of the protobyzantine “Megaloforos” 4, a space free of any buildings, seems to be integrated within the neighborhood of “Katafygi”, one of the biggest byzantine regions of Thessaloniki during the middle and late byzantine period: the most ancient written references of “Katafygi” date from 1110 and 1117 and its name seems to be associated to a significant ecclesiastical foundation of the area 5 probably close to Panagia ton Chalkeon. During the middle byzantine period the area southwards of the “Megaloforos” was transformed into a row of stores and markets built lengthwise to the right and left of the “Leoforos”, as the salvage excavation during the Metro construction has shown 6. The erection of Panagia ton Chalkeon changed the use and function of the specific place without intervening and altering the general urban planning. Otherwise, the purpose of the “byzantine


2 Ioannes Caminiates 1973, p. 11; Chronika Aloseon 2010, pp. 82-83.


5 Xyngopoulos 1949, pp. 7-20; «Ἐν τῇ γειτονίᾳ τῆς Καταφυγῆς» (Actes de Lavra I, 1970, 308); «Κατὰ τὸν ρεγεῶνα τῆς Καταφυγῆς» (Actes de Docheiariou 1984, pp. 73-88; Paissidou et alii 2014a).

6 Paissidou et alii 2014, pp. 242-246.
“renovation” of the Macedonian renaissance didn’t aim to the alteration or distortion of the pre-existed plan but to the change of functions and structures within the scope of continuation. Excavation data have indicated that the church of the 11th century has been erected on the ruins of a previous building of the late Roman period probably of profane use.

The building represents the new type that evolved at the time of the Macedonian dynasty, the tetrastyle cross-in-square plan with dome. The wall decoration points to three different phases, during the 11th, the 12th and the 14th centuries and prove the uninterrupted function up to the fifteenth century.

The historical and liturgical process of the church changed shortly after Thessaloniki fell to the Ottomans in 1430 and the prominent Byzantine church in the middle of the city was converted into a mosque either in 1434 by the sultan Murad II, or in the middle of 15th century by Balaban Aga and

---

7 Makropoulou 1987, 397.
9 Paisidou 2012, pp. 131-133.
it was named Kazancilar Camii, that is to say the mosque of the coppersmiths or the kettlemakers’ who traditionally had their workshops installed in that part of the city, that are still functioning in modern Thessaloniki. The mosque was abandoned in a semi-ruinous condition in the middle of the 19th century and it was restored to Orthodox Christian worship in 1912. The modern surname of “Panagia ton Chalkeon” was given by the Greek historian Michail Chadjioannou, who translated in Greek the turkish word “Kazancilar” 11.

Between 1934 and 1940, after a catastrophic earthquake, restoration works were carried out and the monument regained its original form 12. For the history of byzantine architecture Panagia ton Chalkeon constitutes a monument of international appeal and from 1989 onwards it is inscribed in the UNESCO’s catalogue of the worldwide heritage monuments.

Though the church of Panagia ton Chalkeon holds an eminent place in the research it hasn’t been the subject of an integrate publication yet and many problems are still open, as the two topics that we examine: a. the founder and its family and b. whether it was a monastic church or not.

The donor’s inscriptions

Up to now according to the main theory, it is supported that the church was erected as a personal ecclesiastical institution determined to be the burial place of its founders 13, thanks to the two donor inscriptions and to the double tomb in the middle of the north wall. This theory has been adopted by most of the scholars. Yet, some among them have expressed the opinion of having been a monastic church as well 14. Trying to strengthen this theory, we shall put forward some arguments supporting that it has been the catholicon of an urban monastery complex.

A critical point for this matter concerns the owner of the building. The church reveals its identity in the donor inscription on the marble lintel over the west entrance (fig. 3). The text informs us that “The previous profane place was sanctified to the prominent church of Theotokos by the imperial protospatharios and katepano of Lagouvardia Christophoros, his wife Maria and their children Nikephoros, Anna and Katakali in honor of the Mother of God, in September of 1028 15.”

The inscription characterizes the church of Theotokos as “perivlepton naon” (=outstanding, prominent church) either due to the central place that occupies or due to the illustrious and renown establishment 16. The place that occupies is indicated as “privevilos”, that is to say a previously profane and sacrilegious site or a site accessible to anyone 17. Obviously the church has succeeded a previous non-ecclesiastical use, which possibly alludes to a secular building, or a place of public use according to different lexico-logical interpretations 18. The inscription doesn’t give any information of its mission, whether it was a parish public church, a private, or a monastic catholicon.

11 Chadjioannou 1880, p. 95.
15 ΑΦΗΕΡΟΘΗ Ο ΠΡΗΝ ΒΕΒΗΛΟΣ ΤΟΠΟΣ ΕΙΣ ΝΑΟΝ ΠΕΡΙΒΛΕΠΤΟΝ ΤΗΣ Θ(ΕΟΤΟ)ΚΟΥ ΠΑΡΑ ΧΡΙΣΤΩΦΟ(ΡΟΥ) ΤΟΥ ΕΝΔΟΞΟΤΑΤΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΟΥ Α(ΠΡΩΤΟ)ΣΠΑΘΑΡΗΟΥ Κ(ΑΙ) ΚΑΤ(Ε)ΠΑΝΟ ΛΑΓΟΥΒΑΡ-
16 For the meaning of the word “perivleptos” see: Kriaras 2006, pp. 367-368.
18 For the meaning of the word “vevilos” see: Suidae Lexicon 1928-38, p. 218; Chantraine 1977; Montanari 2013.
The founder Christophoros belonged to the high ranked military aristocracy as a “vasilikos protospatharios”, that is to say the first sword-keeper and was the governor -“katepano”- of the byzantine territory in South Italy, an area that was called by the Byzantines Lagouvardia or Longovardia. Therefore he held both the political and military administration. Concerning the 10th and the 11th centuries, the dignity of “protospatharii” kept a high place in the rank of the officers 19 – the eighth grade among the imperial officers according to the Treat of Philotheos and the Taktika 20. In addition to that, the dignity of “katepano” was of high importance for the byzantine administration from the second half of the 10th until the first half of the 11th century 21 and according to the Taktikon of Escorial the “katepano” of Italy kept a high position in the administrative ranking 22, as the domination in the south Italian peninsula was of decisive significance for the byzantine policy during the 11th century until the lost of Bari in 1071 by the Normans 23.

When the church was erected in September 1028, the byzantine emperor was Constantine the VIII. Two months later, after Constantine’s death, Romanos Argyros and Zoe born-in-purple were enthroned 24. In the same year the officer Christophoros Vurgaris accepted his dignity and became a “katepano” in the byzantine territory of South Italy, Lagouvardia, during a very difficult period for the Empire in the Italian peninsula. According to historical sources he succeeded his predecessor governor in Calabria Vasilieos Voioannis (1018-1028) in 1028 25. The Chronicles Siculo-Saracena testifies that a correspondent of the Emperor named Eustathios “gave the insignia to Christophoros Vurgaris, who turned back to Reggio” 26. Christophoros maintained the dignity of the governor -“katepano” until July of 1029. From then, after a defeat of his army in Calabria, he was substituted by Pothos Argyros 27. We ignore if he was killed or if he just withdrew after his defeat but he disappears from the historical scene, leaving behind the church, two donor’s inscriptions with the names of his familiar persons and a double tomb in Thessaloniki. Concerning the history of the career of Christophoros before his nomination in Italy and searching for his relation to Thessaloniki, we believe that the answer can be found if we identify him with Christophoros “protospatharios epi-tou-koitonos and katepano of Thessaloniki and Bulgaria”, whose name is found on a seal dated between 1018 and 1028 (fig. 4). In such a way the donation of the church in Thessaloniki can be interpreted supposing that the city could be his native or the place where he spent much of his previous career. Moreover, the relation of the founder with Thessaloniki can be proved by the double tomb inside the church. The surname Vourgaris is unknown in the middle byzantine prosopography, 28.

20 De cerimoniis II 1829, pp. 708-709; Oikonomides 1972, pp. 89-93, 292, 297.
22 Oikonomides 1972, pp. 263, 344; Laurent 1933.
23 Gay 1904, pp. 343-349, 520; Ostrogorsky II, 1979, p. 236.
24 Ostrogorsky II 1979, pp. 207-208.
28 Zacos et alii 1972-85, n. 969.
but it is found in the Palaiologan period as the family name of a landowner at Kassandraea in Chalkidiki. During the last Byzantine period many families of the Thessalonian aristocracy kept territories in Chalkidiki.

On the donor’s inscription there isn’t any mention of the Byzantine Emperor neither of the bishop of Thessaloniki. From the Synodicon of the church of Thessaloniki and from the Acts of the Patriarchate it is proved that Theophanes was the Archbishop from 1027-1038, who kept close relations to the imperial couple Romanos and Zoe. The absence of any reference to any political or ecclesiastical authority strengthens the private character of the building and alludes to relevant burial and monastic institutions in Constantinople, founded by supreme officials, used from their owners as private places for burial and monastic purposes, deprived of any public or parish use.

In correlation to this interpretation we examine the text of the second inscription of the donors, on the arc of the barrel-vault of the sanctuary (fig. 5): “+ ΕΠΙ ΟΝΟΜΑΤΟΣ ΤΟΥ Π(ΑΤ)Ρ(Ο)Σ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΥΙΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΦΟΡΟΣ ΠΡΩΤΟΣΠΑΘΑΡΙΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΤΕΠΑΝΩ ΑΜΑ ΤΗ ΣΥΜΒΙΩ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΜΑΡΙΑ ΑΝΕΣΤΗΣΑΝ ΕΥΚΤΗΡΙΟΝ ΤΟΔΕ ΤΗΣ ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ ΥΠΕΡ ΛΥΤΡΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΑΦΕΣΕΩΣ ΤΩΝ ΕΓΚΛΗΜΑΤΩΝ ΑΥΤΩΝ + (Spieser 1973, p. 164).”

We regard the phrases “the place of pray (eukteirion)” and “for mercy and forgiveness of their crimes” as the key words for our interpretation. The “places of pray” or the “euktiria” were private religious foundations, which were functioning throughout the Byzantine period, receiving different connotation. Thus, from the early Christian period the “places of pray” belonged to illustrious families, having either closed and private character or being opened to the society in absence of other churches. During the iconoclastic period numerous private religious foundations were functioning as monasteries under private management independent of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, a status quo that continued also in the period of renovation.

In addition to that, the sepulchral use of Panagia ton Chalkeon accentuates the eschatological supplication for personal redemption “for mercy and forgiveness”. The burial place in the north conch of the nave is formed by two grave pits, probably destined for Christophoros and Maria; in such a practice the soteriological epiclesis of the donor’s inscription in the sanctuary would be accomplished. The right of the donor to be buried into his church is widely known in Byzantium and corresponds to the «κτητορικὸν δίκαιον ἐνσορίας θεσόμενο».

The most common place of burial is the narthex; therefore the selection of a place in the main church is connected to illustrious donors. Apart from the graves of the donors, in the examined church, other graves were also excavated in the external part of the church, to the north and to the west of the narthex dated to the Palaiologan period, thus indicating the continuous sepulchral use of it probably for the needs of a monastic community.

![Fig. 5. - The donor inscription in the sanctuary.](image-url)
In the monasteries thanks to the strong position of the donors, his family and his descendants kept the right of the eternal memorial service as a recompense for the donation of mobile and immobile furniture. Progressively, during the last decades of the Empire the right of the propriety – “ktitoria- for the private ecclesiastical buildings was transformed into the right of the public service – “leitourgia”. Such a modification shows the incorporation of the urban monasteries and of the private establishments in the every day life and co-exists with the transformation of the parish churches into monastic ones by the initiative of the bishops, with the main scope to be undertaken under the protection of bigger and rich monasteries so as to be saved.

The architectural features

In addition to the aforementioned, the basic architectural characteristics of the building lead to the hypothesis that the church could have been erected as a monastic catholicon from the beginning. The cross-in-square plan with dome and the small dimensions doesn’t provide enough space for many people neither help the separation of the two sexes during the services. The cruciform type with dome is of monastic origin and it mirrors the needs of the small monastic communities that had been developed during the last decades of the Iconoclasm. The similarities of Panagia ton Chalkeon, either in plan and type or in forms and details with relevant middle byzantine monastic churches of Constantinople is revealing, as indicates the comparison with establishments of the imperial family or of high ranking officials as the monastery tou Libos (907), the Myrelaion (c. 920), the monastery of Christ Pantepoptis (1081-1087) and the Kilisse Camii. Especially, in the case of the monastery tou Libos and the Myrelaion plan and type or in forms and details with relevant middle byzantine monastic churches of Constantinople is revealing, as indicates the comparison with establishments of the imperial family or of high ranking officials as the monastery tou Libos (907), the Myrelaion (c. 920), the monastery of Christ Pantepoptis (1081-1087) and the Kilisse Camii. Especially, in the case of the monastery tou Libos and the Myrelaion...
the similarities are also focused on the practice of the burial inside the main church 44. The practice that dates from the 10th century will soon expand to all middle Byzantine churches of Constantinople 45.

The particular architectural feature of the examined church is the two storey narthex (fig. 7). In 1918 Andreas Xyngopoulos claimed that the two storey narthex alludes to the narthexes of the monastic churches in Mount Athos and to the monastic libraries that were situated in the galleries of the narthexes 46. In 1954 Otto Volk proposed the identification of Panagia ton Chalkeon with the famous monastery of Panagia Periopleos and argued that the upper storey of the narthex was its library 47. Father Janin supported also the function of a monastic library over the narthex of the church 48. In 2001 George Velenis specified the identification of the gallery to a monastic scriptorium and supported that the church "surpasses the borders of a simple sepulchral donation of the pious founder" 49.

In the recent research it has been supported that the gallery of Panagia ton Chalkeon assimilates to the Carolingian "westworks" or "Westwerke" 50, a feature that is combined to the presence of an archon in the church and alludes to donors that bear such titles 51. We believe that in the examining case the donation and presence of the imperial protospatharios and katepano Christophoros, who belonged to the social milieu of the archons was the decisive factor for the application of the "westwork" in Panagia ton Chalkeon. To the other hand such a type of narthex with gallery is connected mainly – though not absolutely – with the monastic patronage during the middle Byzantine period and echoes influences from Constantinople 52, as indicate significant Constantinopolitan monastic churches, like the monasteries of Libos, of Christ Pantepoptis, of Christ Pantocrator and of Pammakaristos, provided with tribunes, the so-called "katechoumenia" 53. On the contrary, in the

Fig. 7. - The gallery of the narthex and the twin domes.

45 Marinis 2009, pp. 151-152, 165-166.
46 Xyngopoulos 1918, pp. 562-567.
50 Curcic 2010, p. 372.
51 Tantsis 2008, p. 14; For the "westwork" see Fuchs 1957.
52 For the Constantinopolitan paradigms see Velenis 2001, 6; for relative problematic see Tantsis 2008, pp. 184-198.
53 Ebersolt 1913, p. 255. For the lateral chapels and tribunes in the Constantinopolitan middle Byzantine architecture see: Theis 2005.
byzantine architecture of Thessaloniki the gallery of the narthex constitutes a rare element: besides Panagia ton Chalkeon, only the cathedral of Hagia Sophia and the paleologan monastic church of Prophet Elijah are provided with galleries 54, not to mention the early Christian paradigms that surpass our study and follow different purposes and types.

Although we don’t disagree with the proposed use of the gallery as a library or a scriptorium, we believe that the two domes underline also the liturgical service of the space. The gallery of the narthex generally is correlated to specific liturgical practices and memorial services in the monasteries. Small chapels or private places for pray exist in relevant examples in Constantinople and in Mount Athos as in the Monastery of Great Lavra and the Monastery of Chilandar 55. A relevant function is indicated for the tribune and the chapel in Saint Stefanos at Castoria, a church that has been identified to a monastery by the recent research 56. The preference of the upper storey chapels and galleries instead of lateral in the urban monasteries is obvious and the reason is, probably, due to the space limit. In Panagia ton Chalkeon the accessibility of the gallery could have been possible by a flanking building 57 or by an external stairway that doesn’t exist through the big windows that could serve as doors as in the case of the monastery tou Libos 58. Such a peculiar accessibility of the tribunes characterizes also other paradigms of monastic churches in Constantinople as the monastery of Panteopontis and of Pammakaristos 59.

The building has four entrances, one in each side of the narthex and one in the south side of the main church. Their existence can be interpreted as serving doors for flanking buildings, a main feature of the monastic churches. Moreover, the oral testimony of a priest, according to Evangelidis 60, and the finding of two bases of columns in front of the western door point to the probable existence of a portico, an element, which only by excavation could be proved. The hypothetical existence of a portico can be combined to the four entrances.

The topographic elements

With the help of a research project that we elaborated in the Department of History and Archaeology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki concerning the development of the topography of Middle Byzantine Thessaloniki, we managed to locate within the centre of the city 53 churches and urban monasteries respectively: 29 of them are still maintained, either in integral form or in ruinous condition as a result of excavations, although 24 are known only from the written sources. Consequently the middle byzantine urban scenery of the city gives

---

54 For the Prophet Elijah and its gallery see Tantsis 2012, pp. 184-195.
55 Curcic 1971, pp. 333-344.
57 Curcic 2010, p. 372.
58 Megaw 1964, pp. 286-291.
59 Curcic 2010, pp. 361, 536.
60 Evangelidis 1954, p. 7.
a very dense covering with ecclesiastical establishments and monasteries incorporated to the urban life either in the low or in the upper city (fig. 8).

Very revealing is the same picture that we gain from the medieval Constantinople as well, where new monastic establishments of the middle byzantine period occupy central sites correlated to the administrative and commercial life of the city. As a matter of fact the combination and the parallel development of the two big byzantine cities are obvious.

**The contribution of the mural decoration**

In accordance to the high quality of the architecture equals the quality of the wall paintings. The church was integrally decorated and the study of the wall paintings points to three different phases, during the 11th, the 12th and the 14th centuries, proving the uninterrupted functioning through renovations up to its conversion to a mosque. Each new phase of iconographic renovation seems to follow, respect and maintain the previous and to apply the new artistic tendencies. Due to the conversion of the church into a mosque a considerable part of the frescoes has been destroyed or suffered a serious damage.

The first and main iconographical program coincides with the phase of the erection in 1028. From this program a few Christological scenes survive as the Nativity, the Adoration of the Magi, the Presentation, the Ascension and the Pentecost in the central part and in the sanctuary, where the Virgin Platytera, the Communion of the Apostles and some hierarchs. The Last Judgment in the narthex is also attributed to this period. The wall paintings of this phase are compared to other ensembles of the first half of the 11th century such as in Hosios Lucas, in Hagia Sophia in Achris and in some monuments of Cappadocia.

The depiction of the standing and praying Virgin of Blachernae in the conch of the sanctuary is presented for the first time in monumental painting in Thessaloniki. It is compared to the marble icons of the Virgin from Constantinople and Thessaloniki and correlates to their prototype in the Blachernae monastery of Constantinople. This purely Constantinopolitan type will be adapted during the 14th century for the thessalonian type of the Virgin “Acheiropoietos”.

The rare placing of the Ascension of Jesus in the central dome instead of the depiction of Christ Pantocrator is connected to a local iconographic tradition in Thessaloniki as well as to the burial function of the church. The prototype was formatted in the burial church of the Holy Apostles during the 9th century and in the church of the Virgin Foun-

---

61 Paissidou et alii 2014.
63 For the marble icons of the Virgin see Lange 1964 (pas-sim); Acheimastou-Potamianou 1995, pp. 9-14.
tain of Life in Constantinople. The subject in the dome is also met to numerous examples of monastic churches, as the chapel n. 6 in Goreme, the Ayvali Kilisse (913-920) and other Cappadocia monasteries that apply the tradition of the capital.

Relatively the depiction of the Last Judgment in the vault of the narthex (fig. 9), although it has been correlated to the sepulchral use of the church, is mainly connected to the monastic liturgy of the “mesonyktikon” (midnight service), a memorial service for the dead and especially for the commemoration of the donors that takes part into the nartexes of the monasteries at night. The eschatological theme has been represented also in the monasteries of Cappadocia as in Yilanli and Ayvali Kilisse and in the monastic church of Saint Stepanos in Castoria.

In the narthex, below the Last Judgment, the lost representation of the Baptism was depicted. The Baptism in the narthex is known from the iconography of byzantine and post byzantine monasteries or private churches, as in Saint Stefanos, in Saint Nicholas of Kasnitzi and in Panagia Mavriotissa at Castoria, in the monastery of Vlatadon in Thessaloniki, in monastic churches of Mount Athos and Meteora and in a couple of other cases in the byzantine and post byzantine period. The choice of this place is dictated by specific services that took part in the narthexes of the monasteries, as the rite of the Holy Water.

The wall paintings of the second layer, attributed to the middle of the 12th century, represent the evolution of the new comnenian style in its classical expression and reveal the central position of Thessaloniki as an artistic centre. Part of them in the narthex has been destroyed since the repairing works of 1933. The position of the lost depiction of the Lamentation over the entrance of the narthex towards the main church is unique and should be connected to the burial use of the church, with eschatological connotation combined to the soteriological epiclesis of the two founders over the sanctuary. The subject and its dominant position are also found in monastic chapels or burial chambers of middle byzantine monasteries as in Nerezi, in Backovo and in the Crypt of Hosios Loukas.

Another lost depiction over the entrance of the main church westwards is the representation of the Prophet Elijah fed by the bird in the desert. It is regarded as characteristic for the iconographic program of a monastery, particularly propagated in the late byzantine and post byzantine paradigms.

To the same period belong a few female figures that have been recently discovered in the north wall of the main church, thanks to conservation works led by the Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessaloniki. The style shows coherence to the art of the third quarter of the 12th century alluding to paradigms from Kastoria.

In the beginning of the 14th century the decoration of the main church was renovated following the modern artistic currents, by the cycle of the Acatist Hymn and some isolated figures of saints. The cycle of the Acatist Hymn is dedicated to the Virgin and constitutes one of the new cycles that were introduced in the Palaiologan iconography tightly correlated to a monastic iconographic program.

Only four depictions are conserved from the integral cycle and they represent the 11th, the 12th, the 13th and the 14th strophes of the Hymn (fig. 10). According to scholars they can be attributed either in the first decades of the 14th c. or in 1330-40. The stylistic trends are compared to those in Saint Nicolas Orfanos in Thessaloniki and in the church of Christos in Veroia, both private monasteries of the Palaiologan renaissance.

Specifically, the 12th strophe of the Acatist is almost identified to the depiction of the Presentation of Jesus in the temple in Saint Nicolas Orfanos and in the Church of Christos in Veroia, even in...
The church “Panagia ton Chalkeon in Thessaloniki”: a different approach of a monastic institution and its founder

The architectural details. Another common characteristic detail is the depiction of long texts of the Acathist Hymn, as shows the comparison of the 13th strophe of Panagia ton Chalkeon with the 14th and the 15th strophe of Saint Nicolas Orphanos. From the stylistic point of view they represent the classical style of the Palaiologan renaissance that dominates among the artistic cycles of Thessaloniki and its most renowned representatives.

Studying the different phases of decoration that thematically complete each other using new subjects, in accordance to the development of iconography, we conclude that the church was functioned continuously for four centuries, as an establishment under continuous care, an element that surpasses the needs and the mission of a simple and private mausoleum. As the archaeological and monumental evidence shows, it was one of the most significant ecclesiastical establishments in Thessaloniki through the middle and late Byzantine period.

As far as the question of its original name is concerned, the proposal of Otto Volk for the identification of the church with the monastery of Panagia Perivleptos, thanks to the mention of the word “perivlepton” in the inscription, should be re-examined though the problems that presents. Historical sources inform us that “the Monastery of Perivleptos was in the middle of the glorious city of Thessaloniki” (ἠν ἐν μέσῃ τῃ περιφανῇ πόλει Θεσσαλονικῆ) and that it had property in the neighborhood of Saint Menas and in the “Forum tou Stavriou”. According to topographical reasons both properties seem to have been close enough to the environment of Panagia ton Chalkeon.

Another possible identification that can be discussed is with the “Nea Ekklesia” (the New Church) of Thessaloniki, that appears in the sources from 1097 onwards. His officials are referred to have had close relation with Hagia Sophia, the cathedral of Thessaloniki. The epithet “Nea” (New) alludes to the “Nea Ekklesia” that has been erected in Constantinople nearby the Palace under the first emperor of the Macedonian dynasty, Basil the 1st, as a mark of the new epoch. Relatively, the church Panagia ton Chalkeon can be interpreted as a mark of the beginning of the new period in Thessaloniki, mirroring Constantinopolitan practices.

The middle Byzantine church of the Mother of God with its special features is the result of a high standard donation from the part of an imperial official, who imitated the imperial dignitaries of Constantinople, during an epoch of prosperity. The stable status-quo leaded to the realization of big public works in Thessaloniki, as the renovation of the fortifications and the erection of private monasteries founded by illustrious donors. Panagia ton Chalkeon, as a part of the so-called “Macedonian renaissance” functioned without interruption during four centuries and enjoyed renovations that only a great independent monastery, which enjoys a predominant position in the institutional church could have had.

Abbreviations

ACIEB = Actes de congrès international des études byzantines
KBE = Centre of Byzantine Researches
PLP = Prosopographisches Lexicon der Palaiologenzeit
ZRVI = Zbornik radova vizantolskog instituta

(For journal abbreviations, see Archäologische Bibliographie)

91 Tsitouridou 1986, pp. 149-151, pl. 57-58.
96 Paissidou et alii 2010.
98 A study is being elaborated by the author concerning the identification of Panagia ton Chalkeon.
Bibliography


Bakirtzis, Ch. 1977. Περί του συγκρότημα της Αρχαίας Αγοράς της Θεσσαλονίκης, in Ancient Macedonia II (Papers read at the second International Symposium held in Thessaloniki, 19-24 August 1973), Thessaloniki, 257-269.


Bouras, Ch. 2001. Βυζαντινή και μεταβυζαντινή ιστορικοτηνική στην Ελλάδα, Athens.


Chadjiioannou, M. 1880. Αγοράς της Θεσσαλονίκης, Ιωάννης Ανακοινώσεως τοπογραφικὴ περιγραφή τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης, Thessaloniki.

Ćurčić, Sl. 1971. «DOP» 57, 133-151.

Cyriakos Olympiotissa at Elasson in Northern Thessaly, «ADelt» 42, 270 (n. 57).

Dialčetian to Silceyman the Magnificent, Princeton N.J.


Ćurčić, Sl. 2010. Architecture in the Balkans, from Dio-

cletian to Suleyman the Magnificent, Princeton N.J.


Dimitriadis, V. 1983. Τοπογραφία της Θεσσαλονίκης κατά την εποχή της Τουρκοκρατίας 1430-1912, Thessaloniki.

Ebersolt, J., Thiers, A. 1913. Les églises de Constantin-

ope, Paris.


Falkenhauzen, V. von. 1967. Untersuchungen über die by-


Fuchs, A. 1957. Zum Problem der Westwerke, Karolingi-


Gioles, N. 1981. Η Άναληψη του Χριστού βάσει των μνη-

μιάτων της Α’ θιαστηρίου (unpublished PhD dissertation), Athens.

Gioles, N. 1987. Βυζαντινή Ναοδομία (600-1204), Athens.


Hlepa, E.-A. 2011. Τα Βυζαντινά μνημεία της νεότερης Ελ-

λαδά. Ιστορία και πρακτική των αποκαταστάσεων, 1833-1939, Athens.

Ioannes Caminiates 1973. Ioannes Caminiates De expu-

ginatione Thessalonice, recensuit G. Böhling, Berlin - New York 1973 («Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzant-

inae» IV).


Kambouri-Vamvoukou, M., Papazotos, Th. 2002. Η πα-

λαμολογία ζωγραφική στη Θεσσαλονίκη, Thessaloniki.

Kouklélès, Ph. 1951. Βυζαντινον λοις και πολιτισμος, vol. IV, Athens.

Krauheimer, R. 1986. Early Christian and Byzantine Ar-

chitecture (revised by R. Krauheimer and Sl. Curcic), Kingsport Tennesse, 373-374.

Kriaras, E. 2006. Αείου μνημονικής ελληνικής η-

μοδός γραμματείας 1100-1669, Ι, X, Thessaloniki.

Lange, R. 1964. Die byzantinischen Reliefkone, Reck-

lingenhaus.

Laurent, V. 1933. Liste épiscopale de Synodicon de Thes-

salonique, «EChOr» 32, 301-310.

Lazarev, V. 1967. La restauration de l’église de Thessalonique, «DOP» 18, 270 (n. 57).


Marinis, V. 2005. The Monastery tou Libos: Architecture, Sculpture, and Liturgical Planning in Middle and Late Byzantine Constantinople (PhD Diss.), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.


Martini, E. 1911. Textgeschichte der Bibliothek des Pa-

triarchen Photios von Konstantinopel. I. Teil: Die Handschriften, Ausgaben und Übertragungen. Ab-

handlungen der Philologisch-historischen Klasse der Königlich Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissens-

chafen, Leipzig.


Montanari, F. 2013. Vocabolario della lingua Greca, To-

rino.

Necipoglu, N. 2003. The Aristocracy in Late Byzantine

Architecture and History, «REByz» 13, 228-229.

Ostrogorsky, G. 1979. Geschichte des byzantinischen

Staates, II, München.

Paissidou, M. 2002. Οι τοιχογραφίες του 17ου αιώνα στους ναούς της Καστοριάς. Συμβολή στη μελέτη της μνημειο-

κας ζωγραφικής της δυτικής Μακεδονίας, Athens.
Paissidou, M., Vasileiadou, S., Konstantinidou, K. 2010. The church "Panagia ton Chalkeon in Thessaloniki": a different approach of a monastic institution and its founder


Tantsis, A. 2012.


Ralli G.A., Potli, M. 1854.


Papadopoulos, K. 1966.

Die Wandmalereien des 11 Jh. in

Theis, L. 2005.


Striker, C. 1981.


Theis, L. 2005.


Tsigaridas, E.N. 1986. Οι τοιχογραφίες της μονής Λατόμου Θεσσαλονίκης και η βυζαντινή ζωγραφική του 12ου αιώνα, Thessaloniki.


Tsitouridou, A. 1986.


Vocotopoulos, P. 1980. Οι μεσαιωνικοί ναοί της Θεσσαλονίκης και η θέση τους στα πλαίσια της βυζαντινής ναοδομίας, in Η Θεσσαλονίκη μεταξύ Ανατολής και Δύσεως (Πρακτικά Συμποσίου Τεσσαρακονταετηρίδος της Εταιρείας Μακεδονικών Σπουδών 30 Οκτωβρίου – 1 Νοεμβρίου 1980), Thessaloniki, 97-110.


Xyngopoulos, A. 1918. Ο Ναός της Θεοτόκου του Χαλκέων, in Γρηγόριος ο Παλαμάς Άριστος Θετταλίας, Α. Η Καταφυγή, Θessaloniki.


Xyngopoulos, A. 1960. Αι απωλεσθείσαι τοιχογραφίαι της Παναγία των Χαλκέων, in Η βυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική της Θεσσαλονίκης, Α. Η Καταφυγή, Thessaloniki.


Xyngopoulos, A. 1973-74. Αι τοιχογραφίαι του Ακαθίστου εις την Παναγίαν των Χαλκέων Θεσσαλονίκης, «Delt-Chr» D 7, 61-77.
