ARCHITECTURE AND STATEHOOD IN LATE BYZANTIUM:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EPIROS AND TREBIZOND

BY

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DISSERTATION

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This study examines the architectural patronage of the Komnenodoukai in Epiros and the Grand Komnenoi in Trebizond during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The main focus is on churches and monasteries constructed, rebuilt or renovated by the ruling families and aristocracy in the capitals, Arta and Trebizond, and in the periphery of their dominions. Analysis of the buildings—their architectural design, construction, decoration, function and symbolism—and the available literary sources aim at defining the political and historical context of the architectural projects considered. Focusing on patrons’ intentions, pursuits and cultural background, this study seeks to determine major turning points in the cultural orientation of Epiros and Trebizond.

This study proposes revised dates for a number of architectural projects. In the case of Epiros, these concern particular historical periods within the thirteenth century and the patronage of specific rulers. The traditional view of Michael II Komnenos Doukas (1231-1267/1268) and his wife Theodora as great patrons of religious foundations is questioned. I point out that some of Michael’s most celebrated projects—such as the remodeling of the Blacherna church into a royal mausoleum, the first phase of the Pantanassa church and the Paregoretissa church—might have been constructed later than the mid-thirteenth century and not necessarily during his reign. Likewise, Theodora’s contribution in the remodeling of her future burial place, the church of Hagia Theodora, is not self-evident and requires additional documentation. On the contrary, the reign of Nikephoros I (1267/8-1296/8) and Anna Kantakouzene Palaiologina (d. after 1313) emerges from this study as the most important period of building activity in Arta and Epiros due to intensified royal and aristocratic patronage.
The revision of dates proposed for Trebizond significantly affects the picture of the thirteenth-century city as it is known to us from previous studies and the architectural patronage under the Grand Komnenoi. I argue that the Chrysokephalos and St. Eugenios were probably rebuilt by 1291, and that the construction of Hagia Sophia could also be placed in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. Accordingly, the reign of John II (1280-1297) and Eudokia Palaiologina (d. December 1301) appears as a most important period of building activity for the city and the “empire”—a claim supported by a number of related projects attributed to them.

My dissertation stresses the contribution of members of the Palaiologan dynasty as royal consorts and regent queens in shaping the cultural landscape of Epiros and Trebizond, which seems to have been greater than previously recognized.
To the loving memory of my grandparents,

Αναστάσιος Ζαζόπουλος and Χρυσή Συμεωνίδη
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This is a study on the architectural production of two Byzantine provinces, that of Epiros in the West and Trebizond in the East, during the thirteenth and the first decades of the fourteenth centuries. The main focus is on the religious buildings constructed, rebuilt or renovated by the local ruling families, within the territory of their respective realms. The discussion is confined to a select number of buildings. I explore the character of these projects, the concerns and priorities of their patrons, and the circumstances under which building activity in Epiros and Trebizond flourished. By treating different buildings within each chapter, and by varying the approaches applied, my main concern is to situate these buildings within their historical—political and cultural—context. By shifting the focus of research from individual buildings to the city, from the capital to the periphery, from royal to aristocratic patrons, from patrons to masons, artists and audiences, from the regional to the international context, I wish to highlight the wealth of information these buildings provide us with and their importance as historical records for thirteenth-century Byzantium.

The buildings of Epiros and Trebizond are integral components of the Byzantine culture and have been variously explored within their separate regional contexts. This dissertation draws the two provinces together, aiming at moving beyond the apparent differences determined by local realities. As Epiros and Trebizond had practically no direct artistic interchange, patronage provides the thread to account for the family likeness of their projects. As my vantage point is that of Byzantium, patronage also provides the key to integrating the cultural activity of Epiros
and Trebizond into the broader context of Byzantine culture, as central rather than peripheral components.

During the long history of the Byzantine Empire the periphery could rarely make such a bold claim. Why this is so is part of a complex story that we can only briefly outline here. For Byzantium, the thirteenth century was an age of two major reversals of fortune. The first occurred in the year 1204. The Latins of the Fourth Crusade sacked and captured the ancient capital of the Byzantine Empire, Constantinople, and brought about the dissolution of the empire. The second occurred in 1261 when the Byzantines reestablished their rule over Constantinople and started a prolonged attempt to restore their empire to its pre-1204 status. For the Byzantines, the thirteenth century was an age of misfortunes and regains, an age of exile and return, an age of despair and renewed hopes. More than this, it was an age of confusion. We can understand some of the various repercussions of these events, drawing from contemporary experiences. Political uncertainty, human and material losses, economic collapse, social unrest, waves of refugees, are among the many commonplaces to follow the loss of the capital and the change of regime in any centralized modern state; a sense of order, and security would require several years, if not decades, to restore. But if by a modern analogy we can begin to understand the chaos the Latin Occupation of 1204-1261 brought about, there was an additional existential dimension that we find more difficult to grasp today.

The Byzantine Empire was a highly centralized state ruled by an absolute monarch from his capital in Constantinople, the political, administrative, commercial and religious center of the empire. From the Byzantine point of view, their empire was nothing more than the continuation of the Roman Empire, a claim based predominantly on the foundation of Constantinople by the
Roman emperor Constantine the Great as the New Rome. The emperor was perceived to be appointed by God to rule over His earthly dominion, and therefore the capital and empire was under God’s protection. Over the years, Constantinople was regarded as the New Jerusalem, and by extension, the empire as the New Promised Land, its rulers and subjects as God’s chosen people. Since the day of its foundation, Constantinople had withstood many attacks but was never captured by a foreign power. In the eyes of the Byzantines, this would mark the end of the world. We can thus begin to appreciate the profound effect the loss of the capital had on the Byzantines. Their self-identity as Romans and all their religious convictions as God’s chosen people were put to test.

On the eve of the Fourth Crusade, the Byzantine Empire was still vast, extending from Epiros in the West to Trebizond in the East, but it would soon after turn into a conglomeration of a series of Latin and Byzantine political entities (figs. 1–2). For at least the first six decades of the thirteenth century, the fragmented empire would become a battlefield of competing interests. The Latins wished to extend their conquests, while the Byzantines sought to preserve whatever they could. To these major competitors, we should add old and familiar foes (such as the Bulgarians, Serbs and Seljuks), always eager to profit in various ways; and some newcomers, like the Mongols of Genghis Khan who were, based on hearsay, so atrocious and bloodthirsty that they filled the pious Christian and Muslim hearts with despair. Against all odds, Byzantium fought back.

With the loss of the capital, Byzantine resistance centered on three major peripheral areas that remained free from Latin control. The one closest to Constantinople was Nicaea, in northwestern Asia Minor, where members of the Constantinopolitan nobility found refuge.
Theodore I Laskaris (1208-1221), a son-in-law of the former runaway emperor Alexios III Angelos (1195-1203), assumed leadership and a few years later, in 1208, was crowned emperor of the Romans, thus setting the foundations of a new ruling dynasty and a Byzantine “empire in exile.” The Laskarid dynasty ruled the so-called “Empire of Nicaea” until 1261, preserved the Byzantine legacy and the empire’s major institutions, and ultimately recovered Constantinople, if only nominally. The restoration of Constantinople and the usurpation of power by Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259-1282) would establish the Palaiologan dynasty, which ruled the empire until the final fall of the city to the Ottomans in 1453.

The other Byzantine center of resistance was set in Epiros, the former westernmost province of the empire. Here Michael Komnenos Doukas, a cousin of the former emperors Isaac II (1185-1195) and Alexios III, set up an independent regime and the foundations of a competing dynasty to the Laskarids. The Komnenodoukai would rule Epiros until 1318. Conventionally, we refer to this political entity as the “Despotate of Epiros,” a term that it is problematic in many respects. In any event, the Komnenodoukai effectively managed to consolidate Byzantine power in the area and to expand their territory at the expense of the Latins. Michael’s successor, Theodore Komnenos Doukas (1215-1230) recovered Thessaloniki (1224) and Adrianople (1225) and had himself crowned emperor of the Romans, thus proclaiming a competing Byzantine empire in exile. Customarily we refer to this development as the “Empire of Thessaloniki,” which showcases how problematic all these terms are. Theodore Komnenos Doukas came very close to realizing his ultimate ambition to recover Constantinople, but he was defeated by the Bulgarians who subsequently annexed most of his recently recovered territory. Ultimately, the Nicaeans were to profit from this precarious situation, recovering much of Macedonia and the city of Thessaloniki (1246) for themselves. Unwillingly the rulers of Epiros/Thessaloniki had to
acknowledge the new status quo and give up their imperial pretensions. This was by no means the end to their separatist rule in Epiros, but from the mid-thirteenth century onwards they were forced to recognize the supremacy of the Byzantine emperor and maintain marital alliances, initially with the Laskarids and later with the Palaiologoi, until the fall of their dynasty in 1318.

The third center of Byzantine resistance was formed around Trebizond, by the Black Sea, the former easternmost province of the Byzantine Empire. The so-called “Empire of Trebizond” was founded by two brothers, Alexios and David Komnenos, descendants of the Komnenian imperial family, who had ruled Byzantium for more than a century. Just as the rulers of Nicaea and Epiros, their immediate aim was to consolidate Byzantine power locally and expand territorially. Their ambitions were soon curbed by the joint opposition of the Seljuks and the Nicaeans, but nonetheless they established a successful ruling dynasty, known as the “Grand Komnenoi,” who would preserve Byzantine rule and culture in the area until 1461. For the larger part of the thirteenth century, the political history of this entity is rather obscure. The rulers of Trebizond might have had themselves crowned emperors of the Romans, thus proclaiming a third Byzantine government in exile, but this remains largely undocumented. What seems certain is that they ruled quite independently, and by 1350, they proclaimed an independent empire of “all East.” Just as the rulers of Epiros, the Grand Komnenoi maintained marriage alliances with the imperial families of Byzantium, the Palaiologoi and the Kantakouzenoi.

The importance of Epiros and Trebizond does not wane after the recovery of Constantinople. The restoration of the empire to its pre-1204 status proved to be an impossible challenge, and remained a major preoccupation, at least for the first two Palaiologoi. Issues of legitimacy provided both Epiros and Trebizond with the rationale to continue their separate
ways. After all, Michael VIII was technically a usurper, who had sidelined his minor co-emperor and lawful ruler of the Laskarid dynasty, John IV Doukas (1258-61), and had him blinded and imprisoned. Another layer of discontent would be added, when the Byzantine emperor decided to ally with the Papacy and accept the Union of the churches (Second Council of Lyons, July 1274)—a diplomatic maneuver, which provided the rulers of Epiros and Trebizond with an additional *raison d’être* as bastions of Orthodoxy and legitimacy. In spite of Michael VIII’s many military and diplomatic successes, the unification of the empire will remain a pressing issue during the reign of his son and successor Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282-1328).

The political fragmentation of the Byzantine Empire provides considerable justification for examining each political entity separately. All the more so as the status of Epiros and Trebizond changes during the thirteenth century from “successor states” (after 1204) into “splinter states” (after 1261). This study focuses on the defeated side—the Komnenodoukai of Epiros and the Grand Komnenoi of Trebizond—which requires some justification. The victorious competitors in the battle for supremacy—i.e. the Laskarid and the Palaiologan dynasties—were quite outspoken in providing their version of the story. Byzantine historians, collectively apologists for Laskarid and Palaiologan Byzantium, documented the political events, military campaigns and the ideological battles of the thirteenth century. Epiros and, in particular, Trebizond represent the more silent side; their rulers seemed to be indifferent in advancing their own historiography. We are told about them, but we hardly hear the story on their own terms.

Does this mean that their contribution in the making of the last phase of Byzantine history was less important? When trying to assess the profound change Byzantine society underwent during the thirteenth century, are their experiences irrelevant?
“Buildings provide the most tangible and concrete legacy of a past civilization. They are historical ‘documents,’ no less so than the written documents; in some cases they even speak with a clearer voice than the written word.”¹ So wrote Cyril Mango several decades ago, when advocating the historical approach to architecture and the need to complement text-based histories with the study of the architectural production. This provides us with the main argument that the buildings of Epiros and Trebizond can contribute in complementing the history of thirteenth-century Byzantium. All the more so, when we take into consideration their good state of preservation, by far better than that of Laskarid Nicaea, Latin-held and early Palaiologan Constantinople.

I resorted to Cyril Mango’s words, by no means the only advocate of a historical approach to architecture, with the intention to point to a paradox and raise a question. If the need for a historical interpretation of architecture is acknowledged and so convincingly theorized, why do our narratives remain predominantly dominated by typological, formal, and aesthetic considerations? After briefly examining the Epirote buildings, Mango concludes that “they deserve the epithet ‘provincial,’ for there is something about them that is ‘home-made.’”² While the paradox is quite obvious, the question is whether it is possible or even desirable to integrate these buildings into the history of Byzantine architecture and culture in another way, other than asserting their character as regional manifestations of Byzantine architecture.

In my view, acknowledging their “homemade” quality points to two important considerations. First, the need to pay attention to the process, not only the final product. Building activity is fundamentally a social process that takes place within a constantly changing political,

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cultural, economic, religious, and ideological context and involves all strata of society from patrons, masons and artists to respective audiences. Secondly, “homemade” as opposed to what? With a few exceptions, the whole of the Byzantine architectural production can fall within this category. If this is particularly true for Epiros’ and Trebizond’s building activity, it needs to be accounted for, as it could possibly indicate a deeper, broader and more integral change.

Research in Epiros and Trebizond was shaped by three key factors: a) material preservation, b) historical reasons, and c) twentieth-century methodological approaches to Byzantine architecture. The first two parameters are closely related. With the creation of national states out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, Epiros and Trebizond formed part of the Modern Greek and Turkish states respectively. Modern Greek national identity was built on the cultural heritage of ancient Greece and Orthodoxy. Thus, the preservation of the Byzantine legacy has been, and still is, a priority for the Modern Greek state. Research, informed by restoration and excavation projects, started early in the twentieth century and continues to this day predominantly by national scholars, whereas a greater engagement by the international community is still wanting.³

Trebizond is a rather different story. The initial multi-cultural ethnic composition of Pontos, the legacy of its Byzantine and Ottoman past, created political tensions for a good part of the twentieth century. The Byzantine heritage could not be easily adapted to a national agenda, especially since the Greek and Armenian communities cast themselves as the true heirs to the Byzantine past. Twentieth-century politics are too complicated to be accounted for here, but it is interesting how they are reflected in scholarship. From the pioneer studies by the French scholar

Gabriel Millet, to the Russian archaeological mission to Trebizond (1916-1917) during World War I and the later publications of individual buildings by Russian scholars, to the major studies by British scholars (Talbot Rice, the Russell Trust Expedition, Bryer and Winfield), the documentation of the buildings of Trebizond was done predominantly by foreign scholars. And this seems to be the case to this day, with national scholars less engaged in exploring that part of their cultural heritage.

These considerations bring us to the state of research. After more than a century of excellent scholarship, all the buildings examined in this study have, at the very least, an article or two written about them. At the very best, as for example the Paregoretissa church in Arta or Hagia Sophia in Trebizond, there are two monographs and a couple of articles. Research followed the main trends of twentieth-century scholarship, as they were described by Cyril Mango in 1991. The focus was, and still is, on documentation.

For Epiros, in particular, short studies or exhaustive monographs on individual buildings—often supported by ongoing archaeological investigations, and/or restorations of

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8 This approach was established with a number of studies by the major architectural historian of the Despotate, Anastasios Orlandos (see bibliography section). The many important contributions in this direction have been cited by Panagiotis Vocotopoulos (as in note above), the major scholar to continue Orlandos’ work in Epiros. For that matter—turning the task less redundant—the examples cited below refer predominantly to more recent studies.
buildings\textsuperscript{10}—dominate the field. Surprisingly, there was less interest in compiling regional surveys.\textsuperscript{11} Two doctoral theses, different in frame and scope, tackling the question of masonry decoration of the Byzantine churches, included an analysis of the buildings of Epiros.\textsuperscript{12} Beyond the stage of documentation, short essays on the architecture of Epiros seek predominantly to define the specific characteristics of the “regional school.”\textsuperscript{13} The marked preference for typological, stylistic and formal analysis to be observed in a number of studies prevails to this day.\textsuperscript{14} At the same time, the persisting efforts of the Archaeological Service to clean, restore, and document the wall paintings of a number of buildings have already led to a number of recent studies,\textsuperscript{15} which will eventually refresh our narratives on the architectural production of the Despotate.


\textsuperscript{10} As in the most recent monograph by P. Vocotopoulos, The monastery of Saint Demetrios at Phanari: A Contribution to the Study of the Architecture of the Despotate of Epiros (Athens, 2012), in Greek with an extensive summary in English.


\textsuperscript{12} G. Velenis, “Ερμηνεία του εξωτερικού διακόσμου στη Βυζαντινή Αρχιτεκτονική” (PhD diss., Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 1984). K. Tsoures, Ο κεραμοπλαστικός διάκοσμος των υπερβυζαντινών μνημείων της βυζαντινής Ελλάδας (Kavala, 1988).


\textsuperscript{14} Best exemplified by the latest dissertation on the church architecture of the Despotate by N. Kaponis, “Η ναοδομική αρχιτεκτονική του Δεσποτάτου κατά την διάρκεια της δυναστείας των Κομνηνών Αγγέλων” (PhD diss., University of Ioannina, 2005).

\textsuperscript{15} Recent publications, with an emphasis on documentation, include: the monograph on the Blacherna church by M. Acheimastou-Potamianou, Η Βλαχέρνα της Αρτας: Τοιχογραφίες (Athens, 2009); and the survey of the wall paintings of the Byzantine monuments of Arta during the period of the Despotate by D. Giannoulis, Οι Τοιχογραφίες των Βυζαντινών Μνημείων της Άρτας κατά την περίοδο του Δεσποτάτου της Υπείρου (Ioannina, 2010)—a thorough study based on his doctoral thesis. The monumental painting of the same period has been examined by L. Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Υπείρου την περίοδο της δυναστείας των Κομνηνών Αγγέλων (1204-1318)” (PhD diss., Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2013)—a thesis broader in frame (extends beyond the geographical limits of Epiros to include Thessaloniki) and interpretative in nature (with an emphasis on the political and ideological context of the artistic production under the Komnenodoukai).
In sharp contrast to Epiros, interest in Trebizond’s Byzantine heritage has waned after the 1980s. The magisterial survey of Pontos by Bryer and Winfield of 1985—the culmination of their life-long engagement in fieldwork and research—is unlikely to be surpassed. Very little in terms of documentation has been added and many of the buildings have since deteriorated or disappeared altogether. The most notable study thereafter was Antony Eastmond’s work on Hagia Sophia—a thought-provoking and inspiring monograph, interpretative in nature.  

Building on previous scholarship, the main intention behind this project is to discuss broader issues of continuity and change in thirteenth-century Byzantium. What sorts of implications were involved in the process of the dissolution of the empire? Can we define the circumstances under which building activity in Epiros and Trebizond flourished? How did life change for the Byzantine nobility when forced to relocate to the provinces, and what was their contribution in defining the cultural landscape of their new homelands? What were the concerns of the patrons and how did these determine the character and appearance of their projects? Can we trace major turning points in each region’s building history? Did the fall and restoration of Constantinople have an impact on the provinces, and to what extent was their importance marginalized after the restoration of 1261? Did the rulers of Epiros and Trebizond increasingly detach themselves from Palaiologan Byzantium? How did they respond to the ever changing circumstances of the thirteenth century?

This study attempts to address some of these questions by examining Epiros and Trebizond together. While still in its core a regional study, the parallel examination of the two former provinces is favored for three reasons. First, the intention is to move beyond what was

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determined by local realities, towards their shared characteristics. For example, as soon as we recognize that Epiros and Trebizond used different materials or different construction techniques, how do we explain the remodeling of older basilicas into domed churches in both regions—a practice that has little or no relation to the local architectural tradition in either case? Second, the hypothesis is that the understanding of one province can benefit the other. Both regions are celebrated for, or looked down upon, their eclectic architecture. As soon as we acknowledge that Epiros looked to the West and Trebizond to the East, did the shared principle in this process, i.e. the blending of distinct cultural traditions, follow a similar path? Finally, the assumption is that the combined evidence of these regions can promote our understanding of the developments in the heartland of Byzantium, i.e. the Laskarid and Palaiologan empire. As was predominantly the case, the initial dissemination of Constantinopolitan traditions in Epiros and Trebizond, involved masons, artists, intellectuals, or patrons that were not natives of these lands. The very presence, or absence, of Constantinopolitan features in these most disparate parts of the Byzantine world is perhaps a way to measure the central authority’s political power and prestige.

Architecture lends itself to a number of readings, analyses, and interpretations. This study proposes patronage as the way to reintegrate these buildings into the broader history of Byzantine architecture and culture. This is not to deny their “eclectic” character—a term coined to describe buildings that do not immediately fit into a neat category according to the typological and stylistic methods of analysis—but to recognize the limits of these approaches and inquire instead into the circumstances and the sources of this “eclecticism” from the Byzantine perspective. Without a doubt, the patrons of Epiros and Trebizond considered themselves to be among the most prominent members of the Byzantine society and by all standards—family pedigree, elevated social status, cultural background and so on—they were. We would hardly
expect them to describe their projects as something other than models of Byzantine architecture and patronage. It is more fruitful therefore to accept their attitudes towards themselves and their projects and ask in turn whether this “eclecticism” was not instead an inherent characteristic of the court culture of Byzantium, a manifestation of its ability to adapt.

From the wide range of churches and monasteries constructed in this period, my focus remains exclusively on those of the highest level of patronage. In essence, this becomes an inquiry into the court culture of Byzantium, and if this seems at first an exclusive approach to follow, we need to consider that this sort of expenditure was then, just as it is today, a costly undertaking, reserved predominantly for individuals in position of power and wealth. If the history of Byzantium is to a great extent the history of its ruling families, their religious and political ideology shaped Byzantine architecture and public space over centuries and set up the model for others to follow. This sort of inquiry then becomes an obvious starting point but not an end to itself.

There are, however, more practical considerations for such a choice. There is much speculation concerning the patronage and date of construction for the majority of the Byzantine churches. For the purpose of this study, it is essential to discuss buildings so that their placement in the thirteenth century will not raise serious objections; buildings that provide some, even if basic, information about their patrons. Most of the churches in this study include an inscription carved in stone, a monogram made up by bricks, a painted portrait or a date set in the mosaic floor that helps to identify the patron or the date of construction, decoration, renovation and so on. Others fit in on the basis of their special characteristics (for example, large scale, costly construction and decoration, function as royal burial places and so on) or some scant information
provided by texts. As will become clear in the following chapters, even within this restricted category of buildings, there is still much uncertainty. Issues of patronage and date could not be avoided altogether if we are to treat buildings as historical records. For that matter, I often go to extreme lengths in discussing the sources of our information, questioning our certainties and arguing for alternative suggestions.

My approach and treatment of the subject has been largely eclectic and reflects limitations and personal preferences. To continue with the pragmatic limitations, the material evidence of the two provinces is uneven. Epiros provides us with a series of well-preserved buildings, firmly situated within the thirteenth century. Although the attribution of buildings to the initiatives of a specific patron is not always possible, there is still an impressive body of royal and aristocratic foundations to trace patterns of patronage, not only in the capital city but also in the periphery of Epiros. On the other hand, the buildings of Trebizond, without a doubt once equally numerous as those of Epiros, mostly preserve their foundations only. As a consequence, there is much uncertainty as to whom might have built them and when. For the scope of this study, I thought it more rewarding to limit my discussion to the city of Trebizond and its best preserved royal foundations, as their complicated building histories and unspecified patronage looked more promising.

Granted that the scholarship on the two provinces followed different paths, and in order to avoid unnecessary repetition, the treatment of the buildings in this thesis would be best understood as complementary or responsive to previous works. In the case of Epiros, for instance, where research continues on the path of documentation with a marked preference for exhaustive monographs and/or typological or formalistic approaches, I place more emphasis on
the need for interpretation. In the treatment of Trebizond, on the other hand, I highlight how much there is still to be done in terms of documentation. In both cases, however, a considerable effort is made in explaining why older tentative dates can be rethought, if not revised, if following a different approach, and why this is crucial for understanding what happened in the two provinces during the thirteenth century.

The fascination with a specific building often leads me to take a closer look than initially intended. This can be observed in a number of examples (St. Nicholas at Mesopotamon, the churches at Mokista and so on), and most clearly in my treatment of Hagia Sophia in Trebizond. This preference is based not only on the need to balance breadth of research with in-depth analysis but also on the estimation that some buildings are of key importance for the amount of information they provide. In the case of Hagia Sophia in Trebizond, in particular, a recent development (the church has now turned from a museum into a mosque) makes me have no regrets for restating how important this building is for our understanding of thirteenth-century Byzantium.

Finally, as the attempt is to situate buildings in their political and ideological contexts, I do not limit myself exclusively to the evidence provided by their architecture and decoration. Discussing the written sources for their possible use in defining the problematic phases of a building, often dominates my analysis. This is particularly noticeable in the cases of the Chrysokephalos church and St. Eugenios in Trebizond, where defining the time of their reconstruction is crucial, but the architectural evidence remains concealed underneath layers of whitewash. In the case of Trebizond, resorting to texts, for whatever information could be teased out for that purpose, is a way to counterbalance the lack of new investigations on the buildings’
fabric. On the contrary, in the case of Epiros, the emphasis is on whether the relevant hagiographic texts are trustworthy sources in determining patronage. As patronage studies work across a number of highly specialized fields (history, art history, archaeology, history of architecture, philology, theology, numismatics, and many others), I try to engage in this art historical study the work of scholars from varied disciplines, and often to give my own interpretation. I do so with the intention to direct further research towards more diverse sources of information.

The overall structure of this study takes the form of eight chapters, including this introductory chapter. For convenience and clarity, the main body of this thesis is organized in two distinct parts: chapter two to four examine the building activity in Epiros; chapter five to seven, that of Trebizond. Chapter eight offers some concluding remarks. Individual chapters on Epiros evolve around a certain topic (royal patronage in the city of Arta; royal patronage in the periphery; aristocratic patronage in the periphery); those on Trebizond examine the three major buildings of the capital, each focusing exclusively on a single building.

Chapter two looks at Arta’s transformation into the capital city of Epiros during the thirteenth century under the patronage of the royal family in residence, the Komnenodoukai. This chapter uses, as its primary evidence, the few extant buildings securely attributed to the initiatives of the ruling family—the Blacherna church, Hagia Theodora, the Kato Panagia, the Pantanassa church and the Paregoretissa church—to determine the character of royal patronage, and trace the circumstances and motives that inform the building activity. With the exception of the Kato Panagia, these buildings have more than one phase of construction and document
changes that occurred within the thirteenth or early fourteenth century. The aim is to provide context for each stage and organize the narrative according to the reign of consecutive rulers.

Chapter three treats the patronage of the ruling family in the periphery of their dominion. Its first part builds upon previous scholarship and offers a critical overview of what is known regarding royal endowments of local bishoprics and monasteries across the thirteenth century. Wherever possible (for instance the church of the Transfiguration of Christ near Galaxidi, or the cave church of Osios Andreas the Hermit at Chalkiopoulos Baltou), I discuss the information provided by the written sources, against the evidence provided by the buildings themselves (architecture, wall paintings, inscriptions and so on) to highlight uncertainties concerning their patronage. The second part of the chapter takes a different approach. It examines a well-preserved, thirteenth-century building, St. Nicholas at Mesopotammon (modern Albania). In spite of the two major articles written about the church (a preliminary report in Greek, and a closer study in Albanian), it still occupies a marginal place in the history of Epiros, and remains relatively little known to the English speaking scholarly community. In discussing the complicated building history of the church and its unclear patronage, I explain its importance as a historical record and suggest the rulers of Epiros as potential patrons.

Chapter four explores the patronage of the local aristocracy—civil, military and ecclesiastical officials. The contribution of the aristocracy in the shaping of the countryside is better documented than in many other contemporaneous provincial regions and may serve as a model of what is to be expected elsewhere (i.e. in Nicaea and Trebizond). I examine these buildings in terms of scale, architectural layout, building techniques and decorative brickwork, to investigate the tastes of the aristocracy, their status and financial means. Individually, they
provide an insight into the most prominent members of the Epirote society (for instance Michael Zorianos and Kosmas Andritsopoulos) and the motives behind their patronage; collectively, they illustrate the narrative about the social organization under the Komnenodoukai.

The second part of this thesis takes a different direction. Having established a clear and rounded picture of the building activity in Epiros during the thirteenth century, the focus shifts to the capital city of Trebizond. Seeking to sketch the general pattern of developments in Trebizond, which could ultimately be checked against the evidence of Arta, I explore the building history of the three major royal foundations of the city—St. Eugenios, the Chrysokephalos, and Hagia Sophia. Thus, while the second part of this thesis is articulated as an independent section, with a brief introduction preceding the relevant chapters as a frame of reference, none of the questions, let alone the suggestions, would have been possible without the insight gained from the architectural patronage of Epiros. Since this part was not intended as a general survey of the buildings of Trebizond, each chapter takes the form of a case study. Collectively, they seek to demonstrate that the last quarter of the thirteenth century was for Trebizond, just as in the case of Epiros and other places of the Byzantine world, a very intense period of building activity with explicit dynastic overtones.

Chapter five examines the cathedral church of the Virgin Chrysokephalos situated within the walled city of Trebizond. The Chrysokephalos was the seat and burial place of the metropolitans of Trebizond; the coronation and royal mausoleum of the Grand Komnenoi. I explore the status of the church during the thirteenth century, through the examination of later written sources (from the fourteenth century) and the archaeology of the church to define the complicated architectural stages of the building. By offering a critical overview of past
In chapter six I turn to the monastic church of St. Eugenios, the patron saint of Trebizond and the royal dynastic house of the Grand Komnenoi. The monastery, located to the east of the walled city, was the major pilgrimage center of Trebizond and received continuous royal patronage. Literary sources (hagiographic texts, Panaretos’ chronicle, and Libadenos’ Periegesis) and archaeological evidence help us reconstruct the monastery’s history. The church, the only preserved part of the monastery, has a rather confused building history, closely related to that of the Chrysokephalos. I propose that the church’s rebuilding, the reformation of the saint’s cult and its association with St. John the Forerunner are developments that should be examined together, and within John II’s and Eudokia Palaiologina’s dynastic policies. By privileging the year 1291 for St. Eugenios’ remodeling, I venture to define the time of the church’s initial construction as well as its later benefactors. The chapter concludes with the suggestion that the building and rebuilding of the Chrysokephalos and St. Eugenios inform two different moments in the history of Trebizond, the early and the late thirteenth century respectively, and that whatever insight is to be gained by looking closely at these two buildings, should be complemented by the evidence provided by the third major royal foundation of the city, the church of Hagia Sophia.
Chapter seven on Hagia Sophia takes an unexpected turn. This is the most celebrated royal foundation of Trebizond and the only one in Trebizond where issues of date, patronage and function have long been resolved. It has been suggested, and recently established, that the church was built by Manuel Grand Komnenos around the mid-thirteenth century as his royal mausoleum. In addition, the church’s political, religious and cultural contexts have been thoroughly discussed already. In response to previous interpretations, this chapter poses a simple question: is the building’s date, patronage and function as secure as we would like it to be? The answer, neither straightforward nor easy, is part of a long chapter that, in a sense, inquires whether it is possible to miss something you never had, to articulate in cultural terms a second-hand experience.

Chapter eight concludes my research on the architectural patronage of Epiros and Trebizond by discussing the major implications of this study.

I consider this study as a work in progress, in what seems in retrospect, an enduring fascination with thirteenth-century Byzantium. Questions raised are often left unanswered, in the hope that they will encourage further research on Epiros and Trebizond. For that matter, I often overstate their links to metropolitan developments at the expense of their local or foreign appropriations. Those who are interested in situating Epiros and Trebizond more firmly within the regional contexts, the cultures of the East or West, Christian and Muslim alike, might feel disappointed but they can always refer to the main publications of the buildings or pursue their own research interests from a different perspective. As viewpoints vary and interpretations are constantly open to revision, part of the reward is the chance to entertain our own questions.
PART I. ARCHITECTURE AND PATRONAGE IN EPIROS (1204-1318)
The city of Arta in northwest Greece, founded on the ruins of ancient Ambrakia, remained a provincial town of only moderate development throughout the middle Byzantine period. With the fall of Constantinople and the loss of many territories of the Byzantine Empire to the Latin Crusaders in 1204, however, Arta became the seat of the ruling family, the Komnenodoukai (1204-1318). With a court in residence, new fortifications, and new secular and religious structures, the city gradually evolved into the capital of the so-called “Despotate” of Epiros. This chapter traces the transformation of the city from a mere power base in the

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beginning of the thirteenth century to an important political and artistic centre towards the end of the Komnenodoukai rule in 1318. Decisive in this process seems to have been the patronage of the royal family who can be associated with most of the remaining foundations within or in close proximity to the city. Since royal patronage remains for the most part undocumented in the written sources, the reconstruction of the city’s transformation into a royal capital relies heavily on a close examination of the buildings that can safely be attributed to the royal family. These provide us with the material record to trace changes in the political and cultural orientation of the court whose activities in turn left their imprint on the city’s fabric. Analysis of the monuments indicates that building activity in thirteenth-century Arta was inextricably related to contemporaneous political events, dynastic intermarriages, and the rulers’ desire to assert their authority and legitimacy over their subjects and opponents.

2.1. The reign of Michael I Doukas (1204-1215) and Theodore Komnenos Doukas (1215-1230).

The Blacherna monastery as a nunnery.

The building activities of the first two rulers of Epiros, Michael I Doukas (1204-1215) and his half-brother Theodore Komnenos Doukas (1215-1230) in Arta and its surroundings remain for the most part undocumented. The only exception is the conversion of the male monastery of the Blacherna to a nunnery. The synodal act issued during the reign of Theodore Komnenos Doukas by John Apokaukos, the metropolitan of Naupaktos (1199/1200-1232), documents the conversion of the monastery to a female convent and informs us about the conditions prevailing in Arta during the first decades of the thirteenth century. According to Apokaukos, the conversion of the Blacherna was initiated by the rulers of Epiros (ἡ καθ᾽ ἡµᾶς ἐξουσία, ἡ εὐσεβὴς καὶ φιλόθεος) as a response to the contemporaneous political conditions, in particular the presence of many refugees in Arta who had fled Constantinople, following the events of the Fourth Crusade. Apokaukos further highlights the provincial status of the city and

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22 For the Greek edition, see A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, “Συνοδικά Γράµµατα Ιωάννου του Απόκαυκου, µητροπολίτου Ναυπάκτου,” Βυζαντίς 1 (1909): 14-20 (no. 3), esp. 17; and for an English translation, Talbot, “Affirmative Action,” 405: “But the power that rules over us [i.e., the rulers of Epiros], which is pious and God-loving…has added this great and soul-saving concern to its good deeds as a crowning <achievement>.”

23 Talbot, “Affirmative Action,” 406: “And indeed those women, distinguished in family and manners, who had departed from their spiritual abodes in the City [i.e. Constantinople], on account of the divine (one might say) fire and scourge which holds fast our Imperial <City> were brought to and installed in this other salvific ark…so that the women from faraway lands, <who have been deprived of> their own establishment, might settle here near these rulers and have the aforesaid monastery as a salvific abode and abundant storehouse of life.”
the absence of female monasteries\textsuperscript{24} to accommodate the noble women who settled in Arta through a comparison to Constantinople’s numerous and beautiful monasteries and the long-established tradition of female monasticism.\textsuperscript{25}

The act is dated between 1224/5 and 1230 but the metropolitan Apokaukos does not mention the exact time of the conversion and curiously omits the names of the rulers responsible.\textsuperscript{26} Most scholars infer from the text’s title—which attributes the initiatives to a “powerful Komnene” (τῆς κραταίας Κομνηνῆς)\textsuperscript{27}—to be an indirect reference to Maria Doukaina Komnene, the wife of Theodore Doukas.\textsuperscript{28} Consequently, they attribute the conversion to her initiatives and suggest that this is one of the earliest manifestations that the rulers of Epirus consciously reproduced in exile Constantinopolitan foundations with explicit imperial connotations as a means to underline their Komnenian and imperial ancestry and to build a connection with the former capital of Byzantium. On the other hand, A.M. Talbot has argued that

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Talbot, “Affirmative Action,” 405: “…female convents were rare or non-existent, so that nuns were dwelling in the forecourts of churches in dilapidated shacks which had space only for broken-down beds…”
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 404-405: “And so some of the inhabitants of that city (i.e. Constantinople), in whom there was a long-standing concern for the human souls, poured out their fortunes on the construction of monasteries, and through the rather lengthy duration of these holy buildings they accomplished the salvation of souls over a long period of time, and generation after generation…” “In any case that imperial city had many of these monasteries for men and women alike, beautifully constructed and teeming with monks and nuns, both in the middle of the city and in its eastern and western sections, beautifully constructed both long ago and at the present time, receiving both noble women and those of the lesser fortunes.” “But the inhabitants of the provinces and of our region, both old and now….provided for the salvation of one sex alone, that of men. And they made no provision for the female sex, either with regard to the construction of female convents, or the enclosure of <women>in such monasteries.”
  \item \textsuperscript{26} On the date of the act, see ibid., 399-400; and M. Acheimastou-Potamianou, Η Βλαχέρνα της Άρτας: Τοιχογραφίες (Athens, 2009), 63 (with relevant literature).
  \item \textsuperscript{27} Papadopoulos-Kerameus, “Συνοδικά Γράμματα,” 14. According to this edition, the title reads: “Πραξις ἐκχὼρουσα εἰς τὸ τὴν ἐν τῇ Ἀρτῃ τῆς Ἐπιρῶς Ἐπίσκοπου Κομνηνῆς ἄνδριδος Τάφου καὶ τὴν ἐν τῇ Βλαχερνίτισσης ἀνδρὶ διαμειφθῆναι εἰς γυναικείου, τοῦτο οὕτω θελήσισθαι τῆς κραταίας Κομνηνῆς.” In his introductory comments, Papadopoulos-Kerameus considered the unnamed powerful Komnene to be Theodora Doukaina Komnene (ibid., 4-5); this identification is repeated in Osswald, “L’Épire,” 750.
  \item \textsuperscript{28} See most recently D. Giannoulis, Οἱ Τοιχογραφίες τῶν Βυζαντινῶν Μνημείων τῆς Άρτας κατά τὴν περίοδο τοῦ Δεσποτάτου τῆς Ηπείρου (Ioannina, 2010), 227-228 and L. Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου την περίοδο της δυναστείας των Κομνηνῶν Αγγέλων (1204-1318)” (PhD diss., Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2013), esp. 16-17 and 33-34. Similarly Katsaros, “Πνευματικός βίος,” 34, not only attributes the initiatives for the conversion of the Blacherna to a female monastery to Maria Doukaina, but also the fresco decoration of the litany, without explaining his reasoning. For Maria Doukaina Komnene (Petralipha), see D. Polemis, The Doukai: A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography (London, 1968), 165 (no. 160).
\end{itemize}
the heading of the text is most probably a later addition by a scribe or editor due to a misunderstanding of the text’s phrasing; and that, while there is no such reference to a “powerful Komnene” in the body of the text, the involvement of Maria Doukaina is still a possibility as several passages refer to the rulers in plural.\(^{(29)}\) Still, though, we cannot explain why the metropolitan chose vague expressions to refer to the patrons of this project, thus missing such a good opportunity to praise specifically Theodore Doukas and/or his wife Maria Doukaina, with whom he maintained cordial relations.\(^{(30)}\) Was he simply omitting information considered to be common knowledge for his local synod? Or rather was the vague wording a deliberate choice, i.e. a manipulation aiming to conceal the actual events in order to give credit to the current rulers (and his overlords) for something that was not originally their initiative?\(^{(31)}\)

The text’s character makes it fairly reasonable to make an alternative proposal, assuming instead that the text might reflect earlier developments for which a retrospective, official action is taken. The monastery of Dalmatou in Constantinople seems to be a similar case, which Apokaukos cites in the very act as a precedent in order to back up the legitimacy of such conversions. According to Apokaukos, the monastery of Dalmatou was converted from a male monastery to a female convent at the request of Alexios III’s sister and received a formal affirmation by the patriarch of Constantinople George II Xiphilinos (1191-1198) and the holy synod of the time. In this case at least, we have indications that the official confirmation by the

\(^{(29)}\) Talbot, “Affirmative Action,” 399-400.
\(^{(30)}\) For Apokaukos’ relation to Maria Doukaina as inferred from his letters addressed to her, see K. Lambropoulos, Ioannis Apokaukos: A Contribution to the Study of his Life and Work (Athens, 1988), 75 and passim (in Greek). Katsaros, “Πνευµατικός βίος,” 34, considers Maria Doukaina as an intellectual patron (in contrast to her almost illiterate husband) who entrusted the metropolitan Apokaukos with the official documents of their chancery.
\(^{(31)}\) On another occasion—a letter of the metropolitan Apokaukos addressed to an unnamed patriarch concerning the foundation of a new monastery by the bishop of Chimara—Apokaukos not only refers to Michael I’s and Theodore Doukas’ patronage explicitly, but specifically clarifies that the church was built on the initiatives of Michael I (see chapter 3).
patriarch followed the actual conversion by several years, since from 1182 the empress Maria, widow of Manuel I Komnenos, was already confined at Dalmatou.32

This precedent leads us to consider whether the official conversion of the Blacherna church in Arta was a similar case, i.e. an act legitimizing events that took place several years before by turning a provisional solution into a permanent situation. This is a possibility since the post-1204 events described in the act provide the main argumentation and reasoning for the Blacherna’s conversion into a nunnery. Refugees from Constantinople must have settled in Arta shortly after 1204. Among the most illustrious refugees were the ex-emperor Alexios III Angelos (1195-1203) and his wife Euphrosyne Doukaina.33 Euphrosyne’s presence in Epiros does not seem coincidental as she held extensive imperial property there.34 According to Akropolites, “Euphrosyne ended her life in the land of Arta and her corpse was buried there.”35 Admittedly, the monastery’s dedication to the Blacherna has explicit Constantinopolitan and imperial connotations and therefore renders the exile from Constantinople and her palace, ex-empress Euphrosyne as the most likely candidate for the monastery’s conversion into a royal convent. Unfortunately, the building itself does not preserve any conclusive evidence that could prove or disprove this suggestion.

The church of the Blacherna, part of a larger monastic complex that no longer survives, is situated two kilometers northeast of Arta, on the right bank of the Arachthos river (figs. 3–8). The church in its present form is the result of three distinct construction phases, undertaken during the course of the thirteenth century. The early thirteenth-century church—usually placed between 1224 and 1230, at the time of the monastery’s conversion to a nunnery—was a three-aisled barrel-vaulted basilica of a relatively small scale, later remodeled to a domed church (fig. 9). The church was built on the site of a pre-existing timber-roofed basilica of an even smaller scale, retaining the central apse of the previous building as its diakonikon. The simplicity of the basilican plan, the masonry of roughly hewn stones, alternating with single brick courses and horizontally-placed bricks inserted into the vertical joints—a technique found at this time almost exclusively in Epiros—and the modest presence of brick decoration, all point towards local masons. Very few fragments of the Blacherna’s sculptural decoration can be ascribed to the twelfth or early thirteenth century. Similarly, there seems to be an agreement in modern scholarship that none of the church’s earliest preserved fresco layers date prior to its subsequent

remodeling into a domed building. All this brings testimony for both the available work force and the money that the rulers invested in their early architectural projects in Arta.

Apokaukos praises the “pious and God-loving” rulers of Epiros for adding “this great and soul-saving concern” to their good deeds as a “crowning achievement” and the monastery for its good location and abundance of provisions. Yet, despite Apokaukos’ praise, the examination of the actual building hardly lives up to our expectations of a royal foundation. The lack of monumentality reinforces instead Apokaukos’ description of Arta as a provincial town during the first decades of the thirteenth century.

The limited building activity in Arta under the first two rulers of Epiros hardly comes as a surprise. Both Michael I and Theodore Doukas aimed to consolidate and expand their dominion by undertaking numerous and costly expeditions. To that end, they relied on the existing ecclesiastical infrastructure of the area under their control. The written sources and the fragmentary inscriptive evidence indicate that much of the activity during the first decades of the thirteenth century took place away from Arta, mainly in and around the existing ecclesiastical

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41 The frescoes of the Blacherna church have been examined in detail on various occasions by Acheimastou-Potamianou. The results of her research culminated in her recent monograph (2009), see relatively Acheimastou-Potamianou, Βλαχέρνα. Additionally, the frescoes have been examined and described again in detail by Giannoulis in his recent work on the paintings of Arta; see Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 227-276. Both Acheimastou-Potamianou and Giannoulis argue that the earliest preserved fresco layer of the church followed its remodelling into a domed building. Most recently, this view has been also accepted by Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 134-139. Yet, contrary to all previous scholars who place the remodeling and decoration of the church in the mid-thirteenth century and under the patronage of Michael II, Fundić argues that the remodeling of the church could have started earlier in the third decade of the thirteenth century, i.e. under the reign of Theodore Doukas (ibid., 135). Consequently, she dates the fresco decoration of the church to between 1230 and 1250 (ibid., 138). As I will discuss later, the indications provided by the architecture of the building and the funerary inscriptions of the tombs suggest a much later date for both remodeling and decoration.


centers under Epirote rule, often on the initiatives of the metropolitans and bishops in charge.\textsuperscript{44} This was an obvious starting point and a most reasonable choice aiming to secure the loyalties of the local inhabitants during these years of instability, confusion and political turmoil. Most importantly, such policy aimed to secure the much needed support of the local ecclesiastical hierarchy, men of astonishing intellect and vigor, well experienced beyond their pastoral duties in the more earthly tasks of administration and propaganda. For all its importance as a royal residence, Arta remained throughout the thirteenth century a bishopric of the metropolis of Naupaktos.

Despite the safety its geographical location provided, Arta was too isolated from the rest of the empire to be considered as a potential permanent center or capital.\textsuperscript{45} Dyrrachion and Thessaloniki were far more important cities for the long-term ambitions of the Epirote rulers, whose ultimate goal was the recovery of Constantinople and the restoration of the Byzantine Empire under their rule.\textsuperscript{46} Theodore’s conquest of Thessaloniki, late in 1224, his proclamation as emperor of the Romans (1225/1226) and his subsequent coronation in the city of Thessaloniki (1227) moved the center of gravity—albeit for a short time—away from Arta.\textsuperscript{47} The importance

\textsuperscript{44} For a discussion on this topic, see chapters 3 and 4.
\textsuperscript{45} Cf. Katsaros, “Πνευματικός βίος,” esp. 30, who argues otherwise.
\textsuperscript{47} For the date of Theodore’s proclamation and coronation in the city of Thessaloniki, see A. Stavridou-Zafraka, “Συμβολή στο ζήτημα της Αναγέννησης του Θεόδωρου Δούκα,” in Αφιέρωμα στον Εμμανουήλ Κριαρά. Πρακτικά Επιστημονικού Συμποσίου, 3 Απριλίου 1987 (Thessaloniki, 1988), 39-62; and eadem, “The Empire of Thessaloniki
of the conquest of the second city of the empire is best illustrated by the coinage issued before and after Theodore’s coronation, on which the ruler is portrayed along with St. Demetrios, the patron saint of Thessaloniki.

(1224-1242): Political Ideology and Reality,” Byzantiaka 19 (1999): 213-222. Concerning the transference of both political and ecclesiastical jurisdictions from Arta to Thessaloniki, see eadem, Νίκαια καὶ Ήπειρος, 75-77; and eadem, “The Political Ideology of the State of Epiros,” in Urbs Capta: The Fourth Crusade and its Consequences, ed. A. Laiou (Paris, 2005), 311-323, esp. 314: “Thessalonike was promoted to the status of capital, βασιλεύουσα, and there was a strong suspicion that plans were afoot to create a patriarchate.”

On the coinage of Theodore after the conquest of Thessaloniki, see M. Hendy, Alexius I to Michael VIII, 1081-1261: The Emperors of Nicaea and Their Contemporaries (1204-1261), Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection, ed. A. Bellinger and Ph. Grierson, v. 4, pt. 2 (Washington, DC, 1999), 543-565. Also V. Penna, “Η απεικόνιση του αγίου Δημητρίου σε νομισματικές εκδόσεις της Θεσσαλονίκης: Μεσοβυζαντινή και ύστερη βυζαντινή περίοδο,” in Το Νόμισμα στο Μακεδονικό Χώρο. Πρακτικά Β’ Επιστημονικής Συνάντησης, Θεσσαλονίκη, 15-17 Μαΐου 1998, ed. P. Adam-Veleni, Οβολός 4 (Thessaloniki, 2000), 195-210. C. Morrisson, “The Emperor, the Saint, and the City: Coinage and Money in Thessalonike from the Thirteenth to the Fifteenth Century,” DOP 57 (2003): 173-203. Additionally, see the discussion on the type of the Virgin Hagiosoritissa represented in the coinage of Theodore Doukas after his coronation in Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ήπειρος,” 36-39. Fundić (following a suggestion by Morrison, ibid., 183) argues that the choice of this iconographic type of the Virgin with its specific Constantinopolitan connotations might have additional references to the city of Thessaloniki, and the church of the Panagia Acheiropoietos in particular. This is an interesting view that adds another possible layer of interpretation to the importance of the city of Thessaloniki in Theodore’s propaganda, but it is for the moment hampered by lack of substantial evidence. For this reason, it seems safer to recognize in this particular iconographic choice the need to appeal well beyond the borders of Thessaloniki and make Theodore’s imperial aspirations to the throne of Constantinople clearer.
2.2. The patronage of Michael II Doukas (1231-1267/1268) and Theodora Petralipha.

Theodore’s defeat in 1230 at the battle of Klokotnitsa by the Bulgarians under the rule of Ivan II Asen and the subsequent collapse of Theodore’s short-lived “Empire of Thessaloniki” had significant implications for the future of Arta. Under Michael II (1231-1267/1268)—natural son of Michael I—Arta became again the seat of power for the ruling family but this time of a much reduced state. Significantly, Michael II’s activities seem to have left a more permanent imprint on the city’s fabric. The rebuilding of the city walls and the funding of three new monastic foundations in Arta—the Kato Panagia, the Pantanassa and the Paregoretissa—have been attributed to his initiatives, while his wife Theodora is credited with the foundation or refoundation of the monastery of Hagia Theodora, originally dedicated to St. George.

The written sources concerning the patronage of Michael II and his wife, Theodora Petralipha, are scarce and generally unreliable. The only source dating from the late thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century is the Vita of St. Theodora—wife of Michael II, posthumously elevated to sanctity. This is a hagiographic text mainly concerned with exalting the saintly status of the basilissa Theodora and legitimating the rule of the Komnenodoukai

49 For Theodore’s rule as emperor in Thessaloniki, his defeat in Klokotnitsa, his imprisonment in Bulgaria and blinding, see Nicol, The Despotate, 103-112. Theodore ended his life in Nicaea as a prisoner of John III Vatatzes (ibid., 152-153). For the future of the Empire of Thessaloniki under Theodore’s successors—initially his brother Manuel Doukas (1230-1237) and later his son John Doukas (1237-1242)—see most recently Stavridou-Zafraka, “The Empire of Thessaloniki (1224-1242),” 213-222 with previous bibliography.

50 Michael I’s dominion extended from Naupaktos to Dyrrachion, while Theodore’s empire extended from Dyrrachion to Adrianople and from Ochrida to the Gulf of Corinth. Under Michael II, the Epirote state was gradually confined to Old Epiros and Thessaly. Thessaloniki was annexed to the Empire of Nicaea in 1246 and the northern territories (south of Dyrrachion) were a contested territory between the Epirotes, the Hohenstaufen, and the Byzantines: See Nicol, The Despotate (1267-1479), 1-8.

family. The text’s numerous inconsistencies have been already pointed out by many scholars, and questions about its authorship have been raised. Concerning the patronage of the despot we find but one vague mention: “When the celebrated Theodora saw the despotes, her husband, establish two very beautiful and sacred monasteries, called the Pantanassa and the Panagia, she erected a holy monastery to the great martyr George and established it as a female <convent>.”

The text helps us to attribute existing foundations to the reign of Michael II and Theodora but as will be discussed, not without raising some questions.

The monastery of St. George/Hagia Theodora.

According to her Vita, the basilissa Theodora Petralipha, was the founder of a female monastery dedicated to St. George. Upon her widowhood, Theodora took the monastic habit, spent the rest of her life and was eventually buried in the same monastery she erected. The Vita mentions that Theodora “adorned the church in various ways and beautified it with offerings and <liturgical>vessels and vestments” and that towards the end of her life, she asked for an “<additional> six months in order to complete the church.”

The monastery of St. George, renamed after St. Theodora upon her death, is located in the centre of the city. Today only the katholikon and part of the monumental entrance

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54 Ibid., 332.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid., 333.

(gateway) to the monastic complex survive (figs. 20–21). In its present form the katholikon is the result of three successive construction stages: an initial three-aisled, wooden-roofed basilica, a vaulted narthex, and an open portico enveloping the church on three sides (fig. 22). Although the dating of the various construction phases presents some difficulties, it has been suggested that the basilica built with irregular masonry predates the thirteenth century (fig. 23). Only the narthex of the church (figs. 24, 26–28), built with cloisonné masonry and lavishly decorated with brickwork is attributed to Theodora’s patronage towards the end of her life in the late 1270s or early 1280s. Thus, Theodora is considered to be the second founder rather than the original founder of the monastery. This view, which to a great extent discredits the account of the Vita, is based exclusively on the examination of the building’s plan, masonry, and decoration. As it renders the church of Hagia Theodora the only standing building in Arta that dates from the middle Byzantine era, the supportive arguments are worth revisiting.

The first argument concerns the typology of the church. The initial building is a three-aisled basilica with a clerestory, ending in three projecting three-sided apses (fig. 25). The interior of the church is divided in three aisles by a triple arcade supported on two pairs of columns, the elongated walls of the sanctuary and the two piers of the western wall (figs. 22, 33). Comparisons with the churches of Kastoria, with which Hagia Theodora presents some typological similarities but also significant differences, has been considered as an indication of a

58 Orlandos, “Αγία Θεοδώρα,” 96. Orlandos’ view has been accepted, for instance, by Vocotopoulou, “Art under the Despotate of Epirus,” 226; and Papadopoulou, Βυζαντινή Αρχιτεκτονική, 47. G. Velenis, “Ερμηνεία του εξωτερικού διακόσµου στη Βυζαντινή Αρχιτεκτονική” (PhD diss., Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 1984), 120 also disassociates the first phase of the basilica from Theodora’s patronage, and considers that it might antedate the construction of the Panagia Bryoni (1238). On the contrary Kaponis, “Ναοδοµική Αρχιτεκτονική,” 106, assigns a mid-thirteenth-century date for the basilica.

59 See infra, note 311.

60 Orlandos, “Αγία Θεοδώρα,” 88, and 96, considered the Vita of St. Theodora a seventeenth-century text, therefore he was more eager to dismiss it as inaccurate.
pre-thirteenth century date.\textsuperscript{61} However, the use of the specific building type during the middle Byzantine period is not in itself a proof of its abandonment in the thirteenth century. On the contrary, basilicas with clerestories continued to be constructed into the thirteenth century, as for instance in the case of the Blacherna in Elis (Peloponnesos).\textsuperscript{62}

The second line of arguments concerns the masonry of the church, the articulation of the exterior façades and most importantly the absence of any brick decorative patterns.\textsuperscript{63} Admittedly, the picture we get is that of considerably poor quality and irregularity. For the most part the main church is built with stone and brick rubble. Occasionally, the irregular stones are placed in horizontal rows—not always continuous—with fragments of bricks set horizontally in the vertical joints, again without any consistency (fig. 23). Elsewhere, for instance the east façade of the clerestory, cloisonné masonry appears (fig. 29). The building technique with piles of horizontally placed bricks in the vertical joints prevails in Epiros and continues in use throughout the thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{64} Comparisons with other thirteenth-century buildings of Arta, such as the first phase of the Blacherna or the Kato Panagia, demonstrate a difference in quality rather than in spirit. The flat and plain articulation of the exterior façades of the Hagia Theodora, on the other hand, also makes a strong argument for an early date. Yet, a quick look at the north and

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{61} Orlandos, “Άγια Θεοδώρα,” 94. Most of the typological differences have already been observed by Orlandos. For the churches of Kastoria see idem, Τα βυζαντινά μνημεία της Καστοριάς, ABME 4 (1938).

\textsuperscript{62} This is considered to be a late twelfth-century basilica, which was not finished until the early Frankish period; see relatively Ch. Bouras, “The Impact of Frankish Architecture on Thirteenth-Century Byzantine Architecture,” in The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World, ed. A Laiou and R. Mottahedeh (Washington, DC, 2002), 249, with previous bibliography. However, recent work on the so-called Franco-Byzantine monuments of the Peloponnesos (Merbakas, Gastouni) suggests that the Blacherna could reasonably be placed well into the thirteenth century. On the Merbaka church, see M. L. Coulson, “The Church of Merbaka: Cultural Diversity and Integration in the 13th-Century Peloponnesia” (PhD diss., University of London, 2002). On the church at Gastouni, see D. Athanasoulis, “Η αναχρονολόγηση του ναού της Παναγίας της Καθολικής στη Γαστούνη,” DChAE 24 (2003): 63-78.

\textsuperscript{63} Orlandos, “Άγια Θεοδώρα,” 96.

\end{footnotesize}
south façades of the Blacherna church similarly displays minimum articulation—limited basically to the rows of windows and the entrances opening up to the otherwise plain façades (figs. 7–8). Although it seems reasonable that the combination of poor masonry, the absence of façade articulation and brick decoration is not fitting to a royal foundation and inevitably lead to an early date, the masonry of the narthex of the Blacherna church (fig. 5)—added in the last quarter of the thirteenth century to the mausoleum of the Komnenodoukai—indicates that these are not strong criteria for judging either the date or the patronage of a foundation.

A third argument concerns the sculptural decoration of the church and more specifically its templon screen for which several differing opinions have been expressed (fig. 32). As its most recent and complete reconstruction demonstrates, the templon consists of two groups of sculptures. The first group includes the epistyle, pieced together by many fragments mostly carved in low relief. The second group comprises the remaining parts of the templon such as marbles slabs and colonettes, all of them executed in the champlévé technique. Orlandos, revising his earlier views, treated the templon of Hagia Theodora as a sculptural unit of thirteenth-century date, considering the combination of more than one technique as not an unusual practice in Byzantium. Most recently, Papadopoulou proposed that the epistyle belongs to an earlier templon—probably the initial templon of the church—which was remodeled during the second half of the thirteenth century. By assigning an eleventh-century date for the epistyle,

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66 See Papadopoulou, “Τέμπλο Αγίας Θεοδώρας,” 233-246, fig. 12.

67 Orlandos, “Τέμπλον Αγίας Θεοδώρας,” 492; and idem, “Επιπεδόγλυφον,” 125. On the contrary, Vanderheyde, La sculpture architecturale, 37-41, considers even the sculptures in the champlévé technique as of eleventh or twelfth-century date, which I feel is highly improbable.

68 Papadopoulou, “Τέμπλο Αγίας Θεοδώρας,” 244-246.
she also suggested—although with some reservations—an eleventh-century date for the construction of the church.  

For all the above reasons, it seems that the patronage of the katholikon of Hagia Theodora has not been settled yet. Whether this is a foundation of the basilissa Theodora or not remains open to investigation and interpretation. What is certain is that the katholikon’s modest dimensions—smaller than the Blacherna church—and the low quality construction do not make any pretensions to monumentality. Only the reuse of ancient columns with their impressive and oversized early Christian capitals (figs. 33–34), probably transferred from far away Nikopolis, betrays a conscious effort to create a lavish interior.

The monastery of the Kato Panagia.

The church of the Kato Panagia, two kilometers south of Arta (fig. 3), preserves above its south entrance a cross monogram of Michael Doukas (figs. 47–48). It has been identified unanimously with one of the two monasteries mentioned in the Vita of St. Theodora as constructed by the despot Michael II. The church—the only building that survives from the Byzantine monastery—is a three-aisled cross barrel-vaulted basilica, measuring 11.45 X 15.10 m (figs. 44–46). Albeit the moderate scale of the church and the simplicity of its plan, a sort of

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69 Papadopoulou, “Τέμπλο Αγίας Θεοδώρας,” 244 note 45.
70 Orlandos, “Αγία Θεοδώρα,” 96-98, figs. 7-9; and W. Bowden, Epirus Vetus: The Archaeology of a Late Antique Province (London, 2003), 116, figs. 6.9-6.10 (note, however, that the capital of fig. 6.9 is reused in the porch of the church, and not in the narthex as mentioned in the caption). Idem, “Christian Archaeology and the Archaeology of Medieval Greece,” in Medieval and Post-Medieval Greece: The Corfu Papers, BAR International Series 2023, ed. J. Bintliff and H. Stöger (Oxford, 2009), 98, fig. 5.
monumentality is achieved through its design, construction, and decoration. A lofty transversal vault defines the transept area between the main church and the sanctuary and appears on the exterior walls in the form of projecting elevated arches ending in gables (figs. 45, 53). These frame the south and north entrances to the church and the elegant trilobed windows placed higher up.\footnote{These entrances are now blocked.} Large irregular blocks from ancient sites—some of them 1.80 m long—have been reused in the construction of the exterior façades. The reuse of spolia led inevitably to a sort of irregularity: while stones are set generally in horizontal rows separated by a single horizontal row of bricks, the vertical joints are either filled in by vertically placed bricks in a way that resembles the cloisonné masonry or by piles of fragments of bricks, stacked one above the other. Brickwork of a great variety—such as meanders, twisted cords, \textit{disepsilon}, key-shaped tiles, clay disks, sunbursts and leafy branches—has been applied mainly on the aψes of the sanctuary and on the walls above the north and south entrances (figs. 47, 49–52).\footnote{Orlandos, “Κάτω Παναγιά,” 77-79, fig. 10.}


Similarly only fragments, possibly from the initial marble templon, survive: a piece of a marble epistyle depicting birds, heart-shaped motifs and scrolls;\footnote{Orlandos, “Κάτω Παναγιά,” 81-82, fig. 13.} a capital carved with birds drinking from a fountain\footnote{Orlandos, “Κάτω Παναγιά,” 83, fig. 14.} and some fragments from the marble templon slabs.\footnote{Papadopoulou, \textit{Βυζαντινή Άρτα}, 99.} What still remains in situ from the initial
sculptural decoration of the church are the capitals and the bases of the interior colonnades, all of them reused spolia from late Roman buildings of ancient Ambrakia.\textsuperscript{78}

Questions regarding the first introduction, diffusion and particularly the origins of the cross barrel-vaulted church, such as the Kato Panagia, remain open to interpretation and it is highly unlikely that they will ever be answered with any certainty.\textsuperscript{79} The cross barrel-vaulted church becomes widespread in Epiros and the Latin-ruled domains (Peloponnnesos, Euboea, Attica, Crete and the Aegean islands) from the thirteenth century onwards, while it is conspicuously absent from Constantinople and its sphere of influence. The arguments supporting the origin of the type from the West—an interpretation mainly advocated by Bouras\textsuperscript{80} and embraced since by many scholars\textsuperscript{81}—are overwhelming, although not unanimously accepted.\textsuperscript{82} The best and earliest examples of the type are to be found in Epiros and have been associated with the reign of Michael II.\textsuperscript{83} One of them, the church of the Transfiguration of Christ in Galaxidi, has allegedly been attributed to a famous Italian engineer and to the patronage of

\textsuperscript{78} Orlandos, “Κάτω Παναγιά,” 81, fig. 12.
\textsuperscript{79} For this specific type of church, see the study by H. Küpper, Der Bautypus der griechischen Dachtranseptkirche, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1990). For the Iconographic programs of the cross barrel-vaulted churches, see G. Fousteris, “Εικονογραφικά προγράμματα σε βυζαντινούς σταυρεπίστεγους ναούς” (PhD diss., Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2006).
\textsuperscript{82} The indigenous development of the type has been suggested by G. Demetrokalles, “Η καταγωγή των Σταυρεπίστεγων Ναών,” in Χαριστήριον εἰς Α. Κ. Ορλάνδον (Athens, 1966), vol. 2, 187-211; and idem, Άγιος Βιοταντινός Ναός Ι. Μητροπόλεως Μεσσηνίας 2 (Athens, 1998), 383. See also A. Alpago Novello, “Tipologia delle Chiese Bizantine della Grecia,” CorsiRav 22 (1975): 37, who considers the comparison between the Apulian cathedrals with transept and the cross barrel-vaulted churches as superficial.
\textsuperscript{83} Vocotopoulos, “Church Architecture in Epirus,” 82-83. According to Velenis, “Thirteenth-Century Architecture in Epirus,” 279-280, the earliest known example is considered to be the church of the Panagia Bryoni in Arta (1238).
Michael II. Thus it is tempting to assign to the Kato Panagia a more cosmopolitan character but there is no tangible evidence to suggest that this was the work of a westerner who had found employment in the court of Michael II. The evidence of the masonry, the decorative brickwork, and the sculptural and fresco decoration testifies instead to the employment of Byzantine craftsmen and artisans.

The motives behind the foundation of the Kato Panagia are more elusive to decipher. If we rely on the *Vita* of St. Theodora, Michael II founded this monastery as an act of repentance for deserting his wife, Theodora, for another woman. The *Vita* also implies that Theodora enjoyed the support of the local aristocracy. If this is the case we might detect political motives in the foundation of the Kato Panagia: Michael II’s desire to restore the bonds with the local aristocracy, his subjects and potential rivals by publicly demonstrating his piety and beneficence through the sponsorship of religious foundations. However, the text’s reliability is questionable and postdates the construction of the church. In spite of the certainty expressed that the *Vita* and the evidence of the building are in accordance, there is always the possibility that the text was crafted around the few inscriptional data preserved.

Alternative, and not necessarily contradictory, information concerning the foundation of the Kato Panagia is provided by the learned metropolitan of Arta, Serapheim Xenopoulos (1864-

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85 Talbot, “Life of St. Theodora of Arta,” 331-332: “Then the magnates and leading officials of Michael Doukas suddenly seized that malicious woman [Gangrene] and after they suspended her in the air, the whole wicked affair came to light. And when Michael came to his senses, he was thoroughly shaken, and he took the blessed <Theodora> again <into his house>.”
Serapheim records that under the Komnenodoukai the city of Arta expanded southwards up to the gates of the Paregoretissa church. In their quest for solitude, the monks of the Paregoretissa approached the basilissa Theodora and requested that she interceded on their behalf with Michael II for the foundation of a new monastery, in close proximity to the Paregoretissa but away from the noise of the city. Their request was granted by Michael II and hence the Kato Panagia was founded.

Whether reliable or not, this information builds a connection between the monastery of the Kato Panagia and the Paregoretissa based on a reasonable model. The Paregoretissa’s founding in a previously remote and sparsely populated area, away from the city center in the southernmost limit of the city, acted as a new focal point around which a neighborhood gradually developed. As a consequence, the expansion of the city southwards created the need for a new monastery away from the city life where monks could live in relative peace and quiet but at the same time enjoy the convenience of the city’s proximity. Similar arguments have been marshaled by Apokaukos for the suitability of the Blacherna as an ideal monastic location. The location of the Kato Panagia, two kilometers south of the Paregoretissa further supports such an interpretation and justifies the name of the Kato (=low) Panagia in connection with the Paregoretissa which is standing on a higher level.

Whether the account of Serapheim Xenopoulos is based on information available to him that no longer survives or it is a reconstruction of events aiming at justifying developments that...
occurred during the Ottoman period is difficult to say. The first reliable information concerning the two monasteries comes from a patriarchal letter (sigilliodes gramma) issued by the patriarch Jeremias II in the sixteenth century (1578?). With this letter the then poor and decayed monastery of the Paregoretissa was attached to the thriving “royal and stravropeign” monastery of the Kato Panagia as its metochion. Whether this action was grounded on a potential relation between the two monasteries at the time of their foundations remains hypothetical and cannot be proved on the basis of the available sources.

Whereas the literary sources are in agreement concerning the patronage of Michael II, the time of the foundation of the Kato Panagia is nowhere clearly stated. The Vita of St. Theodora provides us only with the general context: the patronage of the monasteries took place after the reconciliation of the couple and after Michael II was invested with the title of despot that elevated the couple to “a height of great glory.” As none of the buildings attributed to Michael II by the Vita can be dated with any precision, a generic date around the mid-thirteenth century has been assigned to all of them, which does not permit us to discern developments within his reign. Equally vague, Serapheim Xenopoulos’ account implies a time when Arta outgrew its

89 Orlandos, “Κάτω Παναγιά,” 70, gives the date 1591. Cf. A. Orlandos, Η Παρηγορήτισσα της Αρτης (Athens, 1963), 6-7, and 161-162, where he mentions that Jeremias II visited Arta in 1578, and leaves the date of the sigillion open (1572-1595). At the same time Orlandos, Παρηγορήτισσα, 161 (note 2), and 163, associates the sigilion with patriarch Jeremias I (1522-1545), who also visited Arta in 1530; cf. G. Ladas, Συνοπτική Ιστορία της Ιερᾶς Μονῆς Κάτω Παναγιάς, ed. L. Kostakiotis (Athens, 1982), 10-12, and 16 (note 1). Jeremias II was patriarch for three terms: 1572-1579, 1580-1584, and 1587-1595. Küpper, Dachtranseptkirche, vol. 2, 71, gives the date 1591. Theis, Paregoretissa, 19 (and note 87), gives the date 1578. Papadopoulou, Βυζαντινή Αρτα, 92-93, gives the date 1578, but elsewhere associates the sigillion with patriarch Jeremias I, who hailed from Epiros (ibid., 132-133). It is not clear to me whether the sigillion was issued by the patriarch Jeremias I or Jeremias II.
90 Orlandos, “Κάτω Παναγιά,” 70; idem, Παρηγορήτισσα, 6-7. Actually the monastery is mentioned in the letter as “Πασάγια Μ…” located on the road named tes Bryseos, which has been identified with the Kato Panagia.
91 This is at least the narrative sequence in the Vita. See Talbot, “Life of St. Theodora of Arta,” 332.
92 The time of the couple’s “reconciliation” is not known. According to Akropolites, Theodora traveled to Anatolia to negotiate the betrothal of their son Nikephoros to Maria, granddaughter of the emperor John III Vatatzes in 1248-50. The bestowal of the title of despot on Michael II, although usually associated with this marriage alliance—see for instance Polemis, The Doukai, 93-94 (no. 48); Hendy, Byzantine Coins, 116-118 and 624-626—seems to have been bestowed as early as 1246: Macrides, George Akropolites, 97. Some scholars also entertained the idea that
trivial limits. Nonetheless, Serapheim appears to be the first to assign the specific date of 1250 to the church of the Kato Panagia, as an inscription of his own time records.\(^{93}\)

If the Kato Panagia could be dated towards the end of Michael II’s reign, then it would come closer in time to its almost identical twin, the church of the Porta-Panagia in Thessaly, a foundation of his natural son John Doukas, erected around 1283.\(^{94}\) This would indeed be a most convenient reconciliation of the written record with the architectural evidence of the church.

Taking into account the mid-thirteenth-century date of the Kato Panagia and its resemblance to the Porta-Panagia, Velenis suggested that the latter should be attributed to a “student” of the master mason of the Kato Panagia.\(^{95}\) The noted similarities between the two buildings and the secure date of the Porta-Panagia in the 1280s embed the question whether the Kato Panagia is contrary to all textual evidence an even later building.

Epigraphic evidence preserved in the Kato Panagia can only indirectly confirm the evidence of the *Vita*. There are currently two sets of inscriptions placed above the south and the

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93 The inscription bears the date 1876 and commemorates work undertaken during Serapheim’s term. It includes the information that the church was constructed in 1250 by the “Grand Duke (or Doukas) of Epiros, Thessaly and Macedonia, Michael II, the despot.” The wording of the inscription permits us to say with certainty that it does not copy an original inscription. The inscription is published in G. Lampakis, “Μελέται, Εργασίαι και Περιηγήσεις του 1898,” *DChAE* 3 (1903): 89-90.


95 Velenis, “Πολύστιχες πλάθνες επιγραφές,” 268.
north entrance of the church respectively. The inscription set above the south entrance is made of bricks (figs. 47–48). It records the construction (εκ βάθρων) and the dedication to the Virgin without providing us with the date.96 Below the inscription is placed a cross monogram also made of bricks. It consists of four letters (M, X, Δ, K) and has been deciphered as Michael Doukas.97 Based on the Vita of St. Theodora, he is identified with the despot Michael II, although the monogram is quite laconic, mentioning only the initials of his first and family name, without attributing a specific title.

The second inscription carved on a stone high above the original north entrance to the church refers to the Virgin as the “gate of light and repentance” (figs. 53–54).98 This inscription is similarly accompanied by a carved cross monogram. According to Orlandos, it consists again of four letters, identified from left to right and from top to bottom as Π, Ρ, Δ, Μ. Taking into consideration the context of the inscription referring to repentance, Orlandos deciphered the cross monogram as an appeal by the despot Michael II for absolution of sins.99 This reading reinforces the attribution of the church to the despot Michael II and has been accepted even if silently. An alternative reading, in accordance with Orlandos’ identification of letters but from left to right and from top to bottom, would be ΠΡ(Ο)ΔΡ(Ο)Μ(ΟΣ). In this case, the cross monogram would expand and complete the content of the inscription with a simultaneous appeal to Prodromos, and would read as a codified form of appeal (deesis) to the two most important intercessors, the Virgin and St. John the Forerunner. There is however an ambiguity in the letter Π, which is not clearly carved. As pointed out recently by Velenis, this Π could read as T, which

97 Reads from top to bottom and left to right as Μ(ΑΘΑ) Ά(ΟΥ)Κ(ΑΣ).
98 +Πύλας ἡµῖν ἀνοίξον, ὦ θ(ε)οδ(ο) μ(ητέρα), τῆς μετανοίας, τοῦ φωτὸς οὐσα πύλη: Orlandos, “Κάτω Παναγιά,” 87; Cf. Kalopissi-Verti, Dedicatory Inscriptions, 51.
would result largely in the following reading (from top to bottom and left to right):
\[
\Delta(H)M(H)\Theta\Pi(\text{IO}\Sigma), \text{ i.e. Demetrios.}^{100}
\]

In the light of the epigraphic and textual data, the attribution of the church to Michael II cannot be easily contested nor can it be fully supported. He certainly makes the strongest candidate but we should keep in mind that other members of the imperial family were also called Michael Doukas. The first ruler of Epiros, Michael Doukas, could be ruled out as in this case the construction of the Kato Panagia and the Porta-Panagia would be further apart in time. On the other hand, the Michael Doukas mentioned in the inscription should not necessarily be identified with a ruler of Epiros. In this case alternative candidates would include Michael II’s, younger son, Demetrios, renamed Michael after his father’s death.\(^{101}\) Although Demetrios/Michael made most of his career in Constantinople as Michael VIII’s son-in-law and despot, he was not disinherited by his father and was given some land holdings in Epiros. Founding a church in Arta is not unthinkable but not that possible either. Another candidate is Nikephoros’ son also named Michael.\(^{102}\) Very few things about his life are known. Following his father’s decision to accept Angevin suzerainty in 1279, Michael was sent as a hostage to Clarentza in the Morea at the court of his aunt, Nikephoros’ sister Anna.\(^{103}\) He remained there to secure his father’s submission to

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100 G. Velenis, “Προσθήκες και Διορθώσεις σε επιγραφές τριών σταυρεπίστεγων ναών του 13ον αιώνα,” SChAE 34 (2014): 31-32. In fact, in place of the letter Π, Velenis sees two Τ (Τ, Τ), and an additional Χ. Accordingly he deciphers the initials as belonging to Demetrios Chomatenos (ΧΩΜΑΤΗΝΟΣ), i.e. the archbishop of Ohrid and assigns an early date to the Kato Panagia, circa 1236. I cannot verify this reading and therefore we must wait for his forthcoming publication.

101 On Demetrios/Michael, see Pachymeres 1, 314-317 (III.27); 2, 558-561 (VI.6); 2, 610-621 (VI.24); 2, 640-649 (VI.32); 3, 18-21 (VII.1); 4, 332-335 (X.13); 4, 344-347 (X.19); 4, 350-353 (X.22); 4, 434-437 (XI.13); 4, 444-449 (XI.18-19). Polemis, The Doukai, 96 (no. 51); PLP no. 193. Nicol, The Despotate (1267-1479), 9, 21-22, 26, 240, and passim. Lappas, “Πολιτική Ιστορία,” 293ff, esp. 295 (note1386) and 303. Osswald, “L’Épire,” 108.


103 Nicol, The Despotate (1267-1479), 22-23. In May 1278 William II of Villehardouin, prince of Achaia, died. Charles I of Anjou became the new prince of Achaia, and the principality of Achaia passed under the direct rule of the Angevin king. Anna—Villehardouin’s widow, and Nikephoros’ sister—took as her second husband Nicholas of Saint-Omer, the baillie of Achaia appointed by Charles.
Charles I of Anjou. Michael returned to Arta more than two years later, following the treaty of Orvieto in 1281. The time of his death is not known but occurred most certainly in the 1280s.

Whereas textual, epigraphic and architectural data place the Kato Panagia within the local context and patronage of the royal family of Epiros, the iconography of the church offers additional insight to its character. As we have mentioned, most of the church is still covered with later frescoes. For the moment, the original iconographic program appears coherent only in the diakonikon and has been presented recently in two separate publications. In combination, they offer substantial documentation, especially since their rigorous restoration prevents any in situ observations. Based on the unanimous attribution of the church’s construction to Michael II, and with the reasonable assumption that the decoration must have followed shortly after, the decoration of the church is equally attributed to his initiatives. The fragmented nature of the iconographic program was obviously the main hindrance that prevented suggestions as to how this relates to the political, ecclesiastical and social conditions of the time. Yet, as long as the chronology of the building remains unsettled, even within the long reign of Michael II, the iconography of the diakonikon permits some observations.

In contrast to the possible western origins of the church's typology, the iconography and style of the preserved frescoes follow in general the Byzantine tradition. Notwithstanding partial damage causing a few problems of attribution, the iconography of the diakonikon has been

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105 Nicol, *The Despotate (1267-1479)*, 29 (note 76): “No more is heard of Nikephoros’s son Michael and it must be presumed that he died soon afterwards.” Nicol’s suggestion is reinforced by Pachymeres’ account, which makes clear that there was a problem of succession in the Despotate as early as the 1290s.

reconstructed in its entirety. The vault is divided longitudinally through a red band in two parts. The south part depicts in a unified synthesis two consecutive episodes (fig. 55): 107 Joachim’s Offerings Rejected (Ὁ ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ ΖΑΧΑΡΙΑΣ ΑΠΟΔΙΟΚΩΝ ΤΑ ΔΩΡΑ ΤΩΝ ΔΙΚΑΙΩΝ); and the Return of Anne and Joachim (ΦΕΡΟΝΤΕ ΤΑ ΔΩΡΑ ...ΔΙΑ ΑΤΕΚΝΙΑ). 108 The north part of the vault (fig. 56), visually closer to the bema, depicts Christ Teaching in the Temple (ΕΝ ΤΟ ΙΕΡΩ ΔΙΑΔΙΑΚΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΛΕΓΧΩΝ ΤΟΥΚΑΙΤΕΚΝΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΟΙ). 109 In the conch of the apse is Christ, the Ancient of days, identified by the inscription as Ὁ ΠΑΛΑΙΟΤΩΝ ΗΜΕΡ (ΩΝ) (fig. 57). In his hand he holds a codex with a passage from the Book of Revelation (Revelation 1:8). 110

The walls are covered with portraits of saints/bishops as understood through a combination of their clothing and inscriptions. They all wear the characteristic vestments of the eastern bishops (polystaurion), 112 and are identified by inscriptions as saints (ΑΓΙΟΣ). In the apse three hierarchs are represented on either side of the window (fig. 57): to the north, St. Meletios (bishop of Antioch); and to the south, St. Nikephoros (patriarch of Constantinople). 114

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109 Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 216-218; Papadopoulou, “Κάτω Παναγά,” 374-376. Both authors stress the fact that the iconography comes from the gospel of Luke, but the inscription is derived from the hymn of Mid-Pentecost, based on John’s gospel (with further bibliography on the merging of the two separate episodes in Byzantine art).
111 Again this inscription has been transcribed differently. According to Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 218: [ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ Ο ΩΝ Ο ΗΝ] ΚΑΙ ΠΑΛΙΝ ΕΡΧΟΜΕΝΟΣ. According to Papadopoulou, “Κάτω Παναγά,” 372: [ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ Ο ΩΝ/ Ο ΗΝ/ ΕΛΘΩ/ ΚΑΙ/ ΠΑΛΙΝ/ ΕΡΧΟ/ ΜΕ/ ΝΟΣ. According to J. Irmscher, A. Weyl Carr, and A. Kazhdan, “Apocalypse,” ODB 1: 131-132: “Though read […] John’s Revelation was not accepted as canonical until the 14th C. and left no imprint on the Byzantine liturgy.”
113 Papadopoulou, “Κάτω Παναγά,” 373; Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 220.
along with St. Eleutherios (bishop of Illyricum).\textsuperscript{115} The representation of hierarchs continues on the south wall of the diakonikon. Starting from east to west: St Modestos (bishop of Jerusalem)\textsuperscript{116} followed by St. Antipas (bishop of Pergamon),\textsuperscript{117} and St. Hypatios (bishop of Gangra)\textsuperscript{118}—the latter two damaged after the opening of the south entrance. Finally to the extreme west is St. Oikoumenios, identified with the obscure bishop of Trikki (fig. 60).\textsuperscript{119} On the north wall of the diakonikon, due to the original opening that led to the sanctuary bema, only two hierarchs are depicted (figs. 58–59). The easternmost is identified by inscription as St Gregory of Great Armenia (Gregory the Illuminator, founder of the Armenian Church and its first bishop)\textsuperscript{120} followed by St. Anthimos (bishop of Nikomedea).\textsuperscript{121}

The iconographic program is well organized around the two major focal points, the vault and the apse, and has a pronounced theological, liturgical and didactic character. Narrative scenes are confined to the vault, framed by the portraits of the saints/bishops, who converge in Christ, the Ancient of Days. The pairing of the scenes of the vault is not that apparent, as

\textsuperscript{115} Papadopoulou, “Κάτω Παναγιά,” 373-4; Giannoulis, \textit{Τοιχογραφίες Ἀρτας}, 220 and 194.

\textsuperscript{116} Papadopoulou, “Κάτω Παναγιά,” 378; Giannoulis, \textit{Τοιχογραφίες Ἀρτας}, 221.

\textsuperscript{117} Giannoulis, \textit{Τοιχογραφίες Ἀρτας}, 221. I accept Giannoulis’ identification since the name of Antipas can be read in the pictures attached (his figures 188-189). Cf. Papadopoulou, “Κάτω Παναγιά,” 378, who considers the hierarch unidentified, and following Orlandos, she proposes the identification with martyr Akepsimas (Papadopoulou, ibid., note 53). The representation of Antipas is meaningful when seen in relation to the Apocalyptic Christ in the apse.


\textsuperscript{119} Papadopoulou, “Κάτω Παναγιά,” 378-379 and note 55; Giannoulis, \textit{Τοιχογραφίες Ἀρτας}, 221-222.


Joachim’s Offerings Rejected and Christ Teaching in the Temple do not fall into a clear narrative. Their juxtaposition underlines the continuation from the Temple of Solomon to a Christian church—a familiar theological concept emphasized here both epigraphically (ΕΝ ΤΟΙΩ ΙΕΡΩ, ΕΝ ΤΟ ΙΕΡΩ) and iconographically (with the painted architectural setting alluding to the Temple). The arrangement betrays also a sequence in time: from the prophet Zacharias/priest of the Temple, to the young Christ teaching in the Temple, to the Apocalyptic Christ, the Ancient of days. Within a frame that defines the beginning and end of time are placed the portraits of the historical bishops, all of them defenders of the orthodox faith, either martyrs or confessors. Accordingly, the officiating priests of any given time find their place within this frame, representing the here and now. As historical bishops and any officiating priest are placed underneath the representation of Christ Teaching in the Temple, the iconography proclaims that they derive their wisdom directly from Christ, follow in his footsteps, and continue his work through their teaching and office. The iconographic program expresses the familiar Byzantine mentality, yet appears exuberant for a monastic church with its emphasis on the ideal models of bishops/priests/teachers.

The iconographic program has a pronounced ecumenical character with an emphasis on the local church’s participation. Its ecumenicity is demonstrated, for instance, through the Temple associations and it is further demonstrated by the representation of bishops with little relevance for the specific geographical location, as in the case of Gregory the Illuminator. Notable omissions include the lack of representatives from the churches of Alexandria and Rome, both puzzling and difficult to account for. At the same time, this gallery of portraits

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122 This suggestion is encouraged by the way the two scenes are framed in relation to each other and to the iconography of the diakonikon. Cf. Papadopoulou, “Κάτω Παναγία,” 377-378; and Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 215 (note 1329). The representation of St. Modestos of Jerusalem reinforces the link.
includes Eleutherios of Illiricum and Oikoumenios of Trikki (modern Trikala, Thessaly), bishops with particular resonance for the wider geographical area.

The selection and grouping of the saints/bishops is not random but betray an ecclesiastical and political agenda. The most prominent place, the apse, is taken up by three hierarchs: Meletios of Antioch, Nikephoros of Constantinople and Eleutherios of Illiricum. There is not an obvious historical connection between the persons depicted: they lived in different time periods; their arrangement does not follow the liturgical calendar, neither records the historical hierarchy of their ecclesiastical sees. The placement of the bishop of Constantinople in the most prominent place is certainly expected from a Byzantine point of view but acquires additional weight when considering the ecclesiastical controversy between Epiros and Nicaea in 1220s-1230s, the separatist tendencies of the church of Epiros, and the reconciliation of the churches (actually the subordination of the church of Epiros) that followed. As Nikephoros of Constantinople is flanked by Meletios and Eleutherios there are more reasons to suspect that a statement was intended here. Meletios of Antioch presided over the second ecumenical council held in Constantinople in 381, which settled the status of Constantinople as the first of the eastern sees, second only to Rome.\(^{123}\) Meletios’ juxtaposition with Nikephoros testifies to the prominence of the see of Constantinople.

Nikephoros’ pairing with Eleutherios is equally significant as it seems to promote the Constantinopolitan ecclesiastical and political viewpoint. Eleutherios of Illiricum was consecrated deacon by Pope Anecitus (Ἀνίκητος, “Invincible”), but he is paired with patriarch

\(^{123}\) A. Papadakis, “Constantinople, Councils of,” *ODB* 1: 512; “…the council proclaimed Constantinople as the second see of Christendom with honorary precedence over all other sees, except the elder Rome (canon 3).”
Nikephoros (“Victorious”). This might not have been an intended word play but seems to reinforce the Constantinopolitan thesis about the ecclesiastical status of Illiricum, the object of a bitter struggle between the sees of Rome and Constantinople. Despite Rome’s objections the matter was resolved in favor of Constantinople during the iconoclast era. By associating Nikephoros with Eleutherios, they did not strive for historical accuracy. The fact that western Illiricum was subordinated ecclesiastically to Constantinople during the iconoclast era is iconographically downplayed. Selecting Nikephoros—the defenders of icons, twice exiled for his orthodox beliefs—aimed at associating this act with an iconophile patriarch.

Pairing Nikephoros with Eleutherios visually demonstrates the Constantinopolitan stand in relation to the old controversy with Rome and can have additional resonance for the thirteenth century. By this time Illiricum had lost its precise definition as a clearly defined ecclesiastical and administrative area, and gradually came to denote the region of Dyrrachion. From a Constantinopolitan point of view, these were the westernmost lands under the emperor’s and patriarch’s jurisdiction, whereas from the local perspective these lands were claimed by the Epirote rulers. The pairing of Nikephoros with Eleutherios declares the loyalty of the local church to Constantinople. Within the context of a royal foundation, this iconography reads as recognition of the status quo, the patriarch’s jurisdiction extending to the lands of Epiros.

Within the ecumenical character of this iconographic program, the local church appears to claim more than its fair share with the inclusion of St. Oikoumenios. He is the last bishop to

124 The Vita of St. Eleutherios of Illiricum is confusing as there is considerable overlapping with the Vita of St. Eleuther(i)us, bishop of Rome. Both lived in the second century and are associated with Pope Anecitus. Whereas St. Eleutherios of Illiricum (feast, December 15) is considered a native of Rome, Pope Eleuther(i)us is considered a native of Nikopolis, Greece (feast, May 26). Moreover, St. Eleutherios of Illiricum is considered by the Latin Church bishop of Puglia (especially Rieti): see Fr. Halkin, “Ελευθέριος,” ΘΗΕ 5 (1964): 563-564; and R. Janin, “Ελευθέρος,” ΘΗΕ 5 (1964): 570, with further references. Therefore, it is possible that the iconography of the apse could be understood in a completely different way by a western audience.

be represented on the south wall and thereby the first seen when entering the area of the
diakonikon. Although it is totally legitimate to include a local bishop saint in this gallery of
portraits as a role model of Orthodoxy, Oikoumenios’ obscure history and name (Οικουμένιος,
lit. “Ecumenical”) leads us to consider whether his inclusion involved more than a spontaneous
act. Oikoumenios is not celebrated as a saint in the calendar of the Orthodox Church and
therefore his representation becomes meaningful only within the wider local context. There is an
additional problem surrounding the identification of the saint. There are three persons named
Oikoumenios, two of them bishops of Trikki. The first is a legendary fourth-century bishop, who
supposedly participated in the First Ecumenical Council. The earliest written information about
him comes from the fourteenth-century *enkomion*, authored and publicly recited by Antony, the
metropolitan of Larissa (1340-1363), on the occasion of the saint’s feast, most probably on 3
May 1363. 126 The second Oikoumenios is a sixth-century layman, philosopher and rhetor, and
author of the earliest Greek commentary on the Apocalypse. 127 Finally, there is the tenth-century
bishop of Trikki, who is considered to be the author of a *synopsis* on John’s Apocalypse used for
educational purposes (σύνοψις σχολική). 128 The tenth-century synopsis is preserved in two
eleventh-century manuscripts and from this point there is additional confusion between the
philosopher of the sixth century and the tenth-century bishop of Trikki, at least in a local context.
As far as the person depicted in Kato Panagia is concerned, Papadopoulou identified him with
the fourth-century bishop of Trikki, whereas Giannoulis with the tenth-century bishop of Trikki.

It is impossible to say who is the bishop of Trikki represented here, but there are reasons
to believe that the iconographic program is the earliest recorded merging all three (?) persons

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named Oikoumenios. The iconographic program includes mainly bishops of the early church, martyrs or confessors of Orthodoxy. As Oikoumenios is placed next to St. Hypatios of Gangra, the bishop who allegedly participated in the First Ecumenical Council, the identification with the fourth-century bishop is encouraged.\textsuperscript{129} Yet when seen in relation to the Apocalyptic Christ, the Ancient of days in the apse, the associations with the tenth-century bishop of Trikki (and through him with the sixth-century \textit{exegete}) are equally possible. This is the only recorded representation of St. Oikoumenios in Arta from the Byzantine era;\textsuperscript{130} one of the earliest recorded representations of the saint in general;\textsuperscript{131} and the earliest systematic iconographic attempt to synthesize the profile of the saint.\textsuperscript{132} In addition, this is a clear indication of the interest in the Book of Revelation and its commentaries. Independently, there is substantial information that eschatological expectations of the end of the world preoccupied the clergy of Epiros, at least towards the end of the thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{133}

The polyvalence of meanings in Byzantine imagery and the specific ambivalence of St. Oikoumenios permitted later interventions according to one’s educational background or agenda. A later inscription placed below the original one identifies St. Oikoumenios with Pope Silvester.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Over time a number of church fathers came to be associated with the First Ecumenical Council—among them Hypatios of Gangra, and Gregory the Illuminator depicted here; see E. Honigmann, “La liste originale des Pères de Nicée,” \textit{Byzantion} 14 (1939): 17-76, esp. 58-61; and C. Mango, “The Meeting-Place of the First Ecumenical Council and the Church of the Holy Fathers at Nicaea,” \textit{DChAE} 26 (2005): 27-34, esp. 27.
\item Giannoulis, \textit{Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας}, 221-222.
\item According to Agoritsas, “Ο επίσκοπος Τρίκκης Οικουµένιος,” 436-437 (note 21), St. Oikoumenios is represented in a number of churches in the area of Trikala from the fourteenth century onwards, together with other local saints. This seems to indicate a different context. He also mentions that the only thirteenth-century representations of the saint occur in the basilica of Servia and the Kato Panagia in Arta.
\item The earliest known recorded representation of the saint is in the basilica of Servia, where St. Oikoumenios is portrayed with St. Achilleios, St. Blasios, and a third unidentified saint on the south wall of the sanctuary: see A. Xyggopoulos, \textit{Τα μνημεία των Σερβίων} (Athens, 1957), 41, 43, pls. 7 and 10.1. Here the pairing with St. Achilleios of Larissa, who allegedly also took part in the First Ecumenical Council, encourages the identification with the fourth-century Oikoumenios, but the iconographic program is too fragmented to say whether there are additional implications. Xyggopoulos dated this second layer of frescoes to around 1200, before the Frankish occupation. This early date seems unlikely given the continuing importance of the area during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.
\item See chapter 4.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Based on the handwriting, carefully painted in Greek, it reads as an explanation rather than a misunderstanding of the original inscription. We do not know when this second inscription was painted, and therefore we cannot define the time, when Oikoumenios’ meaning and importance was lost to the author of the second inscription. Separately, the identification of Oikoumenios with Pope Silvester is surprising. From the Byzantine point of view, ecumenicity was a prerogative of the patriarch of Constantinople. The omission of Pope Silvester was noticed and might have caused concern as he is revered by the Orthodox Church (feast, January 2). His portrait is included in another church in Arta, St. Nicholas tes Rodias,134 and in the Porta-Panagia in Thessaly.135

The omission of pope Silvester from the gallery of saints/bishops of the Kato Panagia touches the most elusive aspect of the iconographic program, i.e. whether there was an expressed anti-Catholic agenda. There would be no substantial reasons to suspect this, if it was not for the portrait of Anthimos of Nikomedea, placed on the north wall of the diakonikon, and underneath the representation of Christ Teaching in the Temple, facing the portrait of Oikoumenios. As pointed out already by Orlandos, the bishop wears a “calotte” and this iconographic peculiarity does not match with any of Anthimos’ known portraits.136 At the time of Orlandos’ study, only the portraits of Oikoumenios and Anthimos were visible, and therefore he did not pursue the matter. This still remains the most puzzling aspect of the iconographic program as currently there are no further suggestions. In accordance with the standard Byzantine iconography, Anthimos wears the polystaurion, but his head cover differentiates him from all other eastern bishops of the

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134 On St. Nicholas Rodias, see A. Orlandos, “Ο Άγιος Νικόλαος της Ροδιάς,” ΑΒΜΕ 2 (1936): 131-147; Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 27-110, fig. 64; and Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” esp. 57ff, 64, 139ff, and passim. The chronology of the building and its fresco decoration is disputed.
135 Tsitouridou “Porta-Panaghia,” 863-878, figs. 3, and 5.
136 Orlandos, “Κάτω Παναγιά,” 85-86.
diakonikon. The inscription identifying the bishop is considered authentic, but the iconography raises the question whether the person portrayed here is not Anthimos, but someone else. As it is known from the later tradition of the Roman church, the white calotte (pileolus, submittrale) is worn by the pope only. Anthimos’ facial features resemble that of Pope Silvester as represented, for instance, in the roughly contemporaneous frescoes of the oratory of Quattro Coronati in Rome. If Silvester was represented here, this would be one of the earliest representations of a pope with a submittrale. On the other hand, this characteristic head cover seems to be a prerogative of the Alexandrian bishops/popes, associated initially with St. Athanasios and later with St. Cyril. However, their facial features do not resemble the portrait of Anthimos. From this point of view only Peter of Alexandria seems to make a strong alternative candidate. But on the rare occasions he is portrayed with a head cover, as known from later portraits, it usually bears crosses. There are too many options to account for this

137 In the two publications there is no mention of this inscription as a later repainting. Judging by the published pictures, there is not an obvious difference from the authentic inscriptions of the other portraits.
139 On the iconography of Pope Silvester, see “Silvester I,” LCI 8 (1976): 353-358 (by J. Traeger); Tsitouridou, “Porta-Panaghia,” esp. 868, and 872, figs. 3 and 5; eadem, Ο ζωγραφικός διάκοσμος του Αγίου Νικολάου Ορφανού στη Θεσσαλονίκη: Συμβολή στη μελέτη της παλαιολόγιας ζωγραφικής κατά τον πρώιμο 14ου αι. (Thessaloniki, 1986), 69, pl. 6; and E. Rizos, “Η εξέλιξη της μορφής της λειτουργικής αμφίεσης του κλήρου στην Ανατολική και τη Δυτική Εκκλησία από την παλαιοχριστιανική εποχή” (Master Thesis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2005), 105-115. I owe this reference to Professor Athanasios Semoglou
141 In conventional portraits, the facial types of Pope Silvester and St. Peter of Alexandria are often modeled on the iconography of the apostle Peter, although not consistently. In Byzantine art, in particular, there are many variations on the way Silvester is portrayed (see Hosios Loukas, Daphni, Porta-Panagia, St. Nicholas tes Rodias, St. Nicholas Orphanos, etc.). For different reasons, both Silvester and Peter of Alexandria came to be associated with the First Ecumenical Council, see Chr. Walter, “Icons of the First Council of Nicaea,” DChAE 16 (1991-1992): 209-218, esp. 210.
142 On the iconography of St. Peter of Alexandria, see “Petrus I. von Alexandrien,” LCI 8 (1976): 175-176 (by K. G. Kaster). Tsitouridou, “Porta-Panaghia,” 869-870 (note 8), fig. 7; eadem, Ο ζωγραφικός διάκοσμος του Αγίου Νικολάου
peculiarity, whether an intentional modification of a preexisting iconographic model or a misunderstanding, which require a closer examination of the inscription and the iconography of the saint.

The fragmentary picture of the iconographic program and the conservative character of the Byzantine tradition cannot lead to indisputable suggestions about the time of the church’s decoration. It is within the nature of Byzantine iconography to express fundamental and universal truths that defy time and place. Unorthodox as it appears, our stance is radically different. There is a certain confidence that iconography expresses and records momentarily what was possible and desirable at a given time, in a given place. Accordingly, we can argue for instance that the pairing of Nikephoros with Eleutherios or the inclusion of St. Oikoumenios would have little resonance outside the local context. In the same vein, a juxtaposition of the iconographic program of St. Nicholas Rodias at Arta, which includes representations of Roman bishops, would reflect the mindset of another era, another patron, or another artistic workshop. We also rely on style and pass more or less subjective judgments on what we perceive as progressive or backward representation. Accordingly we assign a date that seems most suitable, although we are well aware that style is based on a number of factors, such as training of artists, available models, patronage, and so on.

Despite the professed certainty that this iconographic program was realized during the reign of Michael II, there are reasons to consider a later date, around the 1280s, as an alternative option for the church’s decoration. The following considerations lead to this estimation. The iconographic program indicates a time when the local church came to terms with the patriarch of Ὄρφανοι, 53, and 71, pl. 4; and Rizos, “Η εξέλιξη της μορφής της λειτουργικής αμφίεσης,” 105-107. His standard iconography does not include a cap.
Constantinople, and a time when its prominence as defender of Orthodoxy was particularly highlighted. Whereas these ideas might have resonance for anytime after the 1230s, the most glorious moments of the local clergy as confessors and defenders of Orthodoxy were in the late 1270s and 1280s. While the church of Constantinople and the Byzantine emperor proclaimed the Union of the Roman and Eastern churches, the clergy of Epiros and Thessaly convened an anti-synod in 1277 to condemn the official unionist policies.¹⁴³ The rulers of Epiros and Thessaly held to their anti-unionist beliefs against the will of the emperor, Michael VIII Palaiologos. As a result, both Nikephoros and his half-brother John Doukas were excommunicated by the unionist patriarch and his synod.¹⁴⁴ Despite this temporary clash, the church of Epiros received its recognition as a defender of Orthodoxy shortly after, when Andronikos II decided to renounce the Union. The clergy of Epiros had the privilege to be involved in the election of the new patriarch, Gregory II (George of Cyprus), who reversed the Unionist policies of his predecessor.¹⁴⁵ Significantly, Gregory II (1283-1289), the new patriarch of Constantinople, was a close friend of the basilissa Anna’s family.¹⁴⁶

The examination of the architecture and iconography of the church in relation to the textual and epigraphic data aimed primarily at piecing together varied sources of information. The complementary or seemingly contradictory aspects of the church and the implications involved have been emphasized. The patronage of Michael II is generally based on a series of reasonable assumptions and interpretations. We have highlighted the limits of our knowledge. As will be discussed below, the same level of uncertainty involves all of his remaining projects.

The monastery of the Pantanassa at Philippias.

The second foundation attributed to Michael II by the *Vita* of St. Theodora has been identified with the church known today as the Pantanassa Philippiados, located some thirteen kilometers northwest of Arta (fig. 3). The building is today in ruins and has been excavated since 1971 by the Archaeological Society of Athens (fig. 61). Vocotopoulos, who was in charge of the excavations, published several archaeological reports, and presented, in two recent more extensive publications, the most important aspects of the building’s architecture and decoration. While a detailed, comprehensive study of the material excavated will clarify the building’s history, there is no doubt today that the Pantanassa Philippiados was one of the most important churches of the thirteenth century. There are no historical records for this monastery, which seems to have been partially abandoned in the late fifteenth century, if not earlier. The church has two distinct building phases within the thirteenth century. According to the prevailing view, its construction, associated with Michael II, is placed in the 1250s, whereas its enlargement and remodeling dates from the 1290s, the last years of Nikephoros’ reign, as documented by the founders’ portrait.

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149 Prior to the excavations, the Pantanassa was thought to be a middle Byzantine church. Past literature is summarized and cited in Vocotopoulos, “Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” 269.
150 To my knowledge the earliest mention and very brief description of the monastery is given by Th. Smart Hughes, *Travels in Sicily, Greece and Albania* (London, 1820), vol. 2: 333-334, without any indication of who might have built it or when it was built. He was only informed by the local inhabitants that the monastery once housed a hundred monks. According to Vocotopoulos, “Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” 296, the monastery was already abandoned in the fifteenth century. Spolia from the Pantanassa church were reused in the mosque of Faik-Bey near Arta, which was built in the late fifteenth century.
The Pantanassa Philippiados had a typical composite cross-in-square church plan (fig. 62). According to this standard Constantinopolitan type, the tripartite sanctuary has a fully developed bay, added to the east of the central naos. The usual four columns supported the vaults of the naos, but in this case all four columns were later incorporated into masonry piers, obviously for structural stability. A tripartite narthex preceded the naos with three openings, on the axes of the nave and side aisles, connecting the two spaces. Doors led from the exterior into the narthex from the west, north, and south; and into the nave from the north and south. The exterior dimensions of the main church and narthex are approximately 25.10m X 14.80m (without including the apses). An open vaulted portico surrounded the church from the south, west and north, ending in two eastern domed chapels, flanking with their apses the tripartite sanctuary of the main church. The ruins of a bell tower (measuring 6.50 X 5.90m) are preserved to the southwest of the portico. Including the portico and the apses, but not the belfry, the Pantanassa measures approximately 31.75 X 24.60m. According to the excavator of the church, the main church and narthex represent the original building of the mid-thirteenth century, whereas the open portico with its side chapels and the belfry are additions of the late thirteenth century.

While the vaulting system of the church did not survive, the study of the preserved walls and the numerous masonry fragments found in the church debris permitted its partial reconstruction with relative confidence. According to its excavator, the major dome of the church was flanked by four smaller domes, set over the corner bays. Of these domes only a small fragment of a smaller polygonal dome was found among the ruins (fig. 78), while no

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151 Vocotopoulos, "Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος," 271.
152 Ibid., 272, and 279-280.
153 Ibid., 272.
A fragment of the major dome has been unearthed thus far. The vaulting system of the tripartite narthex could not be determined on the basis of the available evidence. Nonetheless, the Pantanassa Philippiados is classified as a five domed church, a rare variation of the composite four-columned church, similar to the Church E at Sardis. The vaulting system of the open portico is better documented, consisting of barrel vaults and groin-vaults. The west wing of the portico was covered with western-style groin vaults with ogives (figs. 79–80).

The façades of the main church and narthex were articulated by blind arcades with three-stepped profiles (figs. 68–69), which do not correspond to the interior organization, and therefore the façade articulation does not reflect the structural system of the building. The blind arcades corresponding to the open portico were later walled in by bricks to create a uniform surface in order to receive fresco decoration (see fig. 69). Some of them are partly or completely covered by the pilasters supporting the vaults of the open portico.

The main church and the narthex are built with mortared rubble, faced with bricks or with roughly hewn limestone and bricks in a variety of techniques. A lower course of the façades (north, south, east, and west) was built of roughly executed cloisonné masonry (fig. 67). The upper parts of the north, south, and west façades were faced with courses of bricks alternating with courses of roughly hewn limestone (figs. 64, 68–69), while the upper part of the east façade’s rubble core was faced entirely with brick (figs. 63, 67). Additionally, it has been observed that parts of the east and south façades (for instance, the south wall of the southwest

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154 Here a most obvious question is why this small fragment belongs to one of the smaller domes of the main church, see P. Vocotopoulos, “Fouille de Pantanassa (Épire) 1972,” AAA 6, no. 3 (1973): 402-414, esp. 405-407 (in Greek with French summary).

155 Vocotopoulos, Παντάνασσα Φιλιππιάδος, 12; idem, “Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” 272-273.
corner bay) were constructed with the concealed course technique.\textsuperscript{156} The better preserved piers of the north wing of the portico were constructed of alternating single courses of bricks and stones, with horizontally or vertically placed bricks between the stones.\textsuperscript{157} The masonry of the domed chapels of the portico is equally varied. The southeast chapel, known to have been repaired in the nineteenth century, is constructed of flat stones and small fragments of bricks in the horizontal and vertical joints—with the exception of its apse, which is relatively more elaborate (figs. 65–66).\textsuperscript{158} On the contrary, the ruined northeast chapel is constructed of roughly executed cloisonné (fig. 63).

A great variety of brick decoration, made of plain and cut bricks or tiles, has been found in the church debris during excavations.\textsuperscript{159} These include square tiles of reticulate revetments; plain bricks forming superimposed angles (figs. 81–82); cut bricks shaped to form \textit{disepsilons},\textsuperscript{160} astragals (fig. 83),\textsuperscript{161} continuous lozenges, undulating lines\textsuperscript{162} or dentils; tiles with two curved recesses forming an inverted S,\textsuperscript{163} or with champlevé patterns on their faces (fig. 84);\textsuperscript{164} clay disks, where a Greek cross has been carved out to be filled, most probably, with some sort of colored wax (\textit{κηρομαστίχη}) (fig. 85).\textsuperscript{165} Among the most important findings are several pieces of bricks with inscriptions—either in majuscule or miniscule lettering, incised or in relief—most of

\textsuperscript{156} Vocotopoulos, “Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” 273; idem, \textit{Παντάνασσα Φιλιππιάδος}, fig. 12.
\textsuperscript{157} Vocotopoulos, “Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” figs. 46-47; idem, \textit{Παντάνασσα Φιλιππιάδος}, figs. 7-8.
\textsuperscript{158} This is the only part of the church were cornices with brick dentil courses have been preserved: Vocotopoulos, “Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” 274, and 279.
\textsuperscript{159} Vocotopoulos, “Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” 278-279; also idem, “Church Architecture in Epirus,” 87-90.
\textsuperscript{160} Vocotopoulos, \textit{Παντάνασσα Φιλιππιάδος}, figs. 15-16.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., fig. 17.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., fig. 18.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., fig. 20.
\textsuperscript{164} P. Vocotopoulos, “Nouvelles données sur l’église de Pantanassa, près de Philippias,” AAA 5, no. 1 (1972): 87-98, esp. 92, fig. 5; idem, “Fouille de Pantanassa (Épire) 1976,” AAA 10, no. 2 (1977): 149-168, esp. 157, fig. 8.
\textsuperscript{165} Vocotopoulos, \textit{Παντάνασσα Φιλιππιάδος}, fig. 19; idem, “Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” fig. 10.
them running in a single row framed on top and bottom by a horizontal line (fig. 86).\textsuperscript{166} One of
them bears the name Nikephoros (fig. 87).\textsuperscript{167} For the most part there are no suggestions as to the
original location of the brick decoration due to the complete destruction of the upper parts of the
church and its portico.

Numerous sculptural fragments of a great variety were found in the church debris and in
the wider area.\textsuperscript{168} Following the destruction of the church, a number of them were pillaged or
reused in tombs and buildings.\textsuperscript{169} They have been divided into three categories according to their
decoration: a) reused ancient sculptures, mainly column capitals and bases from the naos as well
as the open portico (fig. 65). An early Christian ambo, found within close proximity to the
monastery, might also have been reused in the church; b) Byzantine sculptures, mainly from the
interior furnishings—templon and proskynetaria (figs. 89–90)\textsuperscript{170}; and c) sculptures of the
Western tradition, including architectural sculpture (marble door frames of the five entrances
leading from the exterior to the naos and narthex, and cornices), but also figural sculpture (figs.
74, 79–80).\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{166} See Vocotopoulos’ archaeological reports in AAA 5, no. 1 (1972), fig. 4; and AAA 6, no. 3 (1973), fig. 5. P.
Also Vocotopoulos, \textit{Παντάνασσα Φιλιππιάδος}, fig. 22; idem, “Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,”
fig. 11.
\textsuperscript{167} P. Vocotopoulos, “Ανασκαφή του καθολικού της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” \textit{PAE} (1988): 94-98, esp. 98,
pl. 68c.
\textsuperscript{168} Vocotopoulos, “Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” 287-290.
\textsuperscript{169} Marble fragments from the Pantanassa have been reused in the later tombs surrounding the church and in the
cemetery of the nearby village. Additionally, fragments of the marble door frames of the Pantanassa have been
found in the mosque of Faik-Bey. The marble columns of the prostoyn of the mosque probably also come from the
Pantanassa; see relatively Vocotopoulos, \textit{Παντάνασσα Φιλιππιάδος}, 40-42; idem, “Το καθολικό της μονής
Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” 287ff.
\textsuperscript{170} This seems to be the most problematic category; here I follow Vocotopoulos’ classification. As he sporadically
notices, the division between Byzantine and “Frankish” is not always clear. Therefore we must wait for a more
detailed study.
\textsuperscript{171} See Vocotopoulos, \textit{Παντάνασσα Φιλιππιάδος}, figs. 37, 44, 53, 55, etc.
Parts of the original floor of the Pantanassa were found in situ in the naos, narthex, and portico.\textsuperscript{172} For the most part, the floor was made of large slabs of stone of unequal dimensions (fig. 70).\textsuperscript{173} The central bay of the narthex preserved in situ its opus sectile floor, representing a variation of the *pentomphalion* (fig. 75). It was framed with white marble slabs (measuring 53 X 25cm) carved in champlevé technique and filled with slices of cut dark green and porphyry marble. Those found in situ represent birds and animals within interlacing circles with foliated branches (fig. 76).\textsuperscript{174} Four additional marble slabs from the same ensemble, representing animals and humans, have been found out context (fig. 77).\textsuperscript{175} Besides the narthex, several pieces of opus sectile floor were found in the main church. Given that a large quantity was unearthed in the area framed by the four columns of the naos, where additionally there is no evidence for marble slabs, it is very likely that the central dome bay of the naos also had an opus sectile floor.

Given that no mosaic tesserae have been found in the church debris, the implication is that the Pantanassa was decorated entirely with frescoes.\textsuperscript{176} Of the interior wall paintings, only traces survive today in the central apse (six co-officiating hierarchs) and on the north and the south walls of the naos (standing saints, only their feet are preserved). The lower zone of the north and south walls was decorated with painted panels imitating opus sectile marble revetments (figs. 71–72). In addition to the late thirteenth-century founders’ portrait—unearthed

\textsuperscript{172} Vocotopoulos, “Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” 281-283.
\textsuperscript{173} Most of the floor slabs were found broken. Their depth is unequal and ranges from 2, 5cm to 17 cm: see relatively Vocotopoulos, “Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” 281.
\textsuperscript{174} Vocotopoulos, “Some Opus Sectile Floor Panels from Pantanassa near Philippias (Epirus),” in *Mélanges Jean-Pierre Sodini, Travaux Et Mémoires* 15 (Paris, 2005), 221-227. As the decoration from one slab to the other is not continuous, Vocotopoulos has suggested that the slabs were reused and that they were imported from Constantinople. The opus sectile floor of the Pantanassa with its exquisite character and precision of execution finds no close parallels in the extant buildings of the Despotate. Most likely, both materials and artists came from a metropolitan artistic center. In this case, damage done to the material during transportation is also a possibility.
\textsuperscript{175} The suggestion that they come from the same ensemble is supported by their matching widths and depths, see relatively Vocotopoulos, “Opus Sectile,” 223-224.
\textsuperscript{176} Vocotopoulos, “Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” 290-292.
in the southwest part of the open portico—paintings have been traced elsewhere in the portico, in particular on the blind arcades of the north and west exterior walls of the church, on the piers of the north wing, and in the domed chapels. Due to poor preservation, the fresco decoration does not permit stylistic analysis. Nonetheless, the extensive use of gold, also applied on the sculptural decoration (mainly column capitals), is indicative of a costly project.\footnote{Vocotopoulos, “Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” 290-291.}

As has been observed, the main church has a number of Constantinopolitan features, evident in its plan, masonry, façade articulation and decoration, rarely encountered in Epiros.\footnote{Ibid., esp. 275ff.} These include the Constantinopolitan church plan; the masonry with alternating courses of roughly cut stones and bricks, and the brick faced masonry; the concealed course technique; the wall articulation with blind arcades; and the opus sectile marble slabs with champlevé decoration against a background of marble intarsia.\footnote{Vocotopoulos, “Opus Sectile,” esp. 227.} This indicates that the masons and artists responsible for the construction and decoration of the main church and narthex were predominately trained in the Constantinopolitan tradition.

Additional observations suggest an even more specific context for the Pantanassa church. Typological similarities with the Church E at Sardis have been stressed to argue that the immediate models for the Pantanassa were provided by Laskarid architecture, as developed in Asia Minor during the years of exile, rather than the architecture of the Latin-held Constantinople.\footnote{Velenis, “Thirteenth-Century Architecture in Epirus,” 280-281; and Vocotopoulos, “Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” 296.} Backed up with references to the historical context and the known political rapprochement between Epiros and Nicaea during the reign of Michael II in the 1250s, this observation reinforces the accepted mid-thirteenth-century date for the Pantanassa’s
construction—of which the sole evidence is the identification of the building with Michael II’s foundation, recorded in the *Vita* of St. Theodora. While practically no one questions the proposed date and patronage, the importance of the Pantanassa within the given context permits the following observations.  

The proclaimed similarities between the Pantanassa church and the Church E at Sardis are based predominantly on typological considerations. Both are considered to be the only five-domed examples of the composite cross-in-square church. At least in the case of the Pantanassa, additional evidence would reinforce this reconstruction, presently based on a single fragment of a small dome. Even so, the closest parallels for the Pantanassa’s dome can be found, as has been observed already by Vocotopoulo, in the domes of the Blacherna and the Paregoretissa. Of these only the domes of the Paregoretissa are securely dated to the late thirteenth century.

Separately, the apparent similarities between the Pantanassa and the Church E at Sardis veil a number of differences attested in their wall construction, façade articulation, and decoration, pointing out the varied principles of the two workshops. According to Buchwald’s reconstruction, the façade articulation of the Church E at Sardis reflects the interior organization and the structural system of the building. Likewise, the varied profiles of the blind arcades articulating the façades—stepped once, twice, or three times in the case of Sardis—were devised to emphasize the importance of the respective bays “according to a rhythmic ‘hierarchical’ system of importance.”

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181 Vocotopoulo,, “Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” 269, 294, and 296, considers the identification certain. Theis, *Paregoretissa*, 122-123, questions the identification of the churches mentioned in the *Vita*, but mainly the identification of the Kato Panagia with the church referred to in the *Vita* as “Panagia.”


seem to permeate every aspect of the church at Sardis, from planning to wall articulation to brick decoration, in spite of the usual inconsistencies that occur during construction. As we have seen, the Pantanassa most likely departed from these principles, adopting a more relaxed approach in relation to its alleged model.

In contrast to the Church E at Sardis, the masonry of the main church and narthex of the Pantanassa is neither uniform, nor of a high quality in all four façades exposed to view. Only the eastern façade, certainly planned to be visible, is faced entirely with bricks, except for its lower zone. In all remaining walls, facing with bricks and stones is poorly executed without an apparent consistency or care for precision. Regardless of the techniques applied (whether cloisonné or alternating courses of bricks and stones), stones were throughout roughly cut, if at all. Aesthetically, this less pleasing solution is quite unexpected for a costly project and comes in contrast to all aspects of the exterior and interior decoration of the church (whether brick, sculptural, fresco or opus sectile). Whereas this disregard for smooth exterior surfaces might be explained in a number of ways, it embeds the idea whether the church was actually planned to receive a portico of some sort. In any event, there was no provision of supports for a portico, and if envisioned from the outset, it was left to be constructed as a separate unit by different masons.

There is no doubt that the portico followed the construction of the church or that it was constructed by a workshop with a different background. The addition of the portico and the remodeling of the church in the 1290s provide only a terminus ante quem, but not the date of the main church’s construction, which could be placed anytime after 1250. As the portico was realized by a workshop trained mostly in the Western and local traditions, their priorities and principles were different. This might explain the walling in of the blind arcades of the main
church, as well as the position of the supports for the portico’s vaults, which showed little
collection for the existing building’s façade articulation. However, this practice does not
necessarily indicate a lapse of some forty years from the original construction.

The suggested patronage of Michael II claimed by the *Vita* cannot be verified
epigraphically. On the contrary, substantial evidence documents the patronage of his son.
Nikephoros and his family were commemorated in the late thirteenth-century portrait found in
the portico (figs. 91–93). Additionally, a brick inscription in relief preserves the name
Nikephoros (fig. 87). Whereas it is reasonable to identify this Nikephoros with the ruler depicted
in the founders’ portrait, the brick is found out of context, in a later tomb, and therefore its
original location is not known.¹⁸⁴ Two more extant inscriptions come from an even later date.¹⁸⁵
The first, inscribed on the southwest column of the south portico (fig. 88), commemorates the
Albanian despot of Arta, John (Gjin Boua) Spata (1374-1399).¹⁸⁶ The second, inscribed on the
northwest column of the south portico, reads: ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΜΠΟΥΝΙΛασ.¹⁸⁷

Likewise, a number of burials found within and around the church testify to its
continuous use as a cemetery from the early fourteenth century up until the early nineteenth
century.¹⁸⁸ The earliest evidence for the use of the Pantanassa as burial place comes from a tomb
to the east of the church, which contained a Frankish coin dated to the late thirteenth or early
fourteenth century. Another tomb, located in the west wing of the open portico to the north of the
entrance leading to the narthex, contained tornesia of the despot of Epiros John II Orsini (1323-

¹⁸⁶ Inscribed in Greek: Ιω(άννης) Δεσπότ(ης) Σπάτας; see Vocotopoulos’ report in *AAA* 10, no. 2 (1977), esp. 162-
¹⁸⁷ According to Vocotopoulos’ report in *AAA* 10, no. 2 (1977), esp. 163, this is carelessly carved and the person’s
identity is not known.
1335) and the doge Giovanni Dolfin (1356-1361).\textsuperscript{189} Just like the inscriptional evidence, numismatic evidence from the Pantanassa documents the history of the monastery from the late thirteenth century onwards, and although it can be explained in terms of chance survival, there is no concrete evidence dating back to the mid-thirteenth century.

The identification of the church with the Pantanassa, mentioned in the \textit{Vita} of St. Theodora, was suggested by the metropolitan Serapheim in the late nineteenth century (1884), without additional documentation. Although Serapheim recorded the connection between the Paregoretissa and the Kato Panagia, he considered the Paregoretissa to be a much earlier building, due to a forged inscription placed in the church, claiming its construction in 796.\textsuperscript{190} Consequently, he dismissed the Paregoretissa as a possible candidate for the second monastery mentioned in the \textit{Vita} and identified it instead with the ruined monastery of the Pantanassa Philippiados.\textsuperscript{191} This identification has been accepted, although both the Paregoretissa and the Pantanassa are currently considered to be Michael II’s foundations. Serapheim’s identification cannot be rejected but neither can it be confirmed as there are no topographical references in the \textit{Vita} of St. Theodora, and a great number of churches in Epiros are dedicated to the Virgin. Although it is tempting to suggest that he was describing monasteries within or in close proximity to the city—and therefore there was no need to be more precise—the nature of our sources and the lack of any reliable records concerning the foundation of these two monasteries leave this question open.

\textsuperscript{189} Vocotopoulos, “Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” 292.
\textsuperscript{190} Xenopoulos, \textit{Δοκίμιον}, 146. Orlandos, \textit{Παρηγορήτισσα}, 159.
\textsuperscript{191} Xenopoulos, \textit{Δοκίμιον}, 54-56.
The Paregoretissa church.

Related to the question of the patronage of the Pan tanassa Philippiados, is the patronage of the first phase of the Paregoretissa church in Arta. The Paregoretissa is the best preserved and the most impressive building erected by the Komnenodoukai family (figs. 94–95). Located in the south part of the city, the church in its present form was rebuilt by Nikephoros and Anna in the end of the thirteenth century, as indicated by the founders’ inscription in the interior of the main church, over the central door leading from the naos to the narthex (figs. 106–107). Yet, it has been shown that this church incorporated substantial parts of a pre-existing building, whose foundation is attributed to Michael II. Just as in the case of the Pantanassa church, there is no epigraphic evidence to confirm this attribution.

The pre-existing building forms the core of today’s main church (fig. 103). Its vaulting system has not been preserved, but its exterior walls have been retained to great height. Its tripartite sanctuary was incorporated in the late thirteenth-century east façade up to the level that includes the decorative frieze with continuous lozenges of the central apse (figs. 96–97). The

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192 Orlandos’ published the first extensive study on the Paregoretissa church in 1919, see A. Orlandos, “Η Παρηγορήτισσα της Αρτης,” Α∆ 5 (1919): 1-82. Orlandos was in charge of the consolidation and restoration work on the building, which brought to light new architectural and epigraphic evidence. These were incorporated and presented in his final monograph on the church, which appeared in 1963, see Orlandos, Παρηγορήτισσα. In addition to Orlandos’ standard publication of 1963, a monograph in German (with the emphasis on the architecture of the building, and the existence of two distinct building phases) was published by Theis in 1991: Theis, Paregoretissa, esp. 33-34, where the aims of her new study are stated.


194 Besides the founders’ inscription, there is a later written inscription in the south upper gallery (on the impost block of the column of the interior window opening up to the main church). This bears the date of 1530 and commemorates the visit of the patriarch Jeremias I (1522-1545): Orlandos, Παρηγορήτισσα, 160-161, fig. 154; and Theis, Paregoretissa, 23 (note 108). Another inscription—placed in the narthex over the central door leading to the naos—claiming the construction of the church in the year 796, was an early nineteenth-century forgery (: Orlandos, ibid., 159, fig. 153). Additionally, there are inscriptions dating the post-Byzantine wall paintings and icons of the church: Orlandos, ibid., 128-152; Papadopoulou, Βυζαντινή Άρτα, 154-159.

195 Velenis, “Thirteenth-Century Architecture in Epirus,” 280; Theis, Paregoretissa, 72-75. According to Theis (ibid., 124), the north, south, and west façades are retained to a height of ca. 5 m, whereas the east façade up to ca. 7.50-8.00m.
north façade is preserved from the level of the krepidoma up to the decorative frieze with lozenges, similar to that of the eastern façade (fig. 105). The partial destruction of its frieze and masonry is visible in the area where column shafts/ consoles were inserted to support the interior columns of the remodeled church. The south façade is plastered over and therefore provides fewer indications for its state of preservation.\textsuperscript{196} Its west façade, forming today the interior wall separating the main church from the narthex, is preserved up to the level of the vaulted ceiling of the ambulatory.\textsuperscript{197}

As can be seen in the extant portions of the north and west façades where later plaster has been removed, the walls were faced with bricks and stones following the regular cloisonné technique. Their façade decoration is quite restricted (frieze with lozenges made by plain bricks and dentil course around the outer arch of the door opening, extending horizontally along the length of the north façade; plain bricks forming radial angles above the blind niche over the central door opening of the west façade). Only the eastern façade of the church with its three projecting apses—all of them three sided—appears to be richly articulated and decorated. Between the krepidoma and the level of windows, two projecting marble cornices run along its entire width, framing cloisonné, dentil, plain brick and cut-brick (disepsilon) courses (figs. 95–98).\textsuperscript{198} The wider central apse has a trilobed window framed by brick arches stepped three times,

\textsuperscript{196}Theis, \textit{Paregoretissa}, 74.
\textsuperscript{198}For the disepsilon, see Orlandos, \textit{Παρηγορήτισσα}, 35; Theis, \textit{Paregoretissa}, 113-114. In the context of the earlier building, the disepsilon frieze is the only decoration made by cut bricks, instead of plain bricks. According to Vocotopoulos, “Church Architecture in Epirus,” 88: “Cut bricks were first introduced by the ateliers of southern Greece and were extensively used during the Middle Byzantine Period in the Helladic school, from which they were adopted in the Despotate...They are unknown in the school of Constantinople and in Asia Minor, while they are extremely rare in Macedonia and Thessaly, where they were used mainly in buildings influenced by the architecture of the Despotate.”
a dentil course and an outer course with glazed quatrefoils (phialostomia), while its lateral façades have two superimposed blind arcades, decorated with double meander brick patterns (figs. 96, 99). The apses corresponding to the prothesis and the diakonikon have a similar two tier articulation on their east facet, with a window on the lower level and a blind niche above also framed by brick arches, dentils and quatrefoils. In addition to the frieze of lozenges above the window of the central apse, a second herringbone (closer to chevron) frieze, is set between the central and the flanking apses and extends to their lateral facets (see fig. 96).

In contrast to the present day Paregoretissa, the initial church was according to Velenis’ suggestion a composite cross-in-square church, similar to the Pantanassa, but on a smaller scale. This suggestion was later verified through trial trenches in the floor of the church, which unearthed the foundations of the four columns. According to Theis the main church was surrounded by an open portico ending in eastern chapels. Building on Orlandos’ remarks, both Velenis and Theis significantly modified his initial theory that a change occurred during construction, which mainly involved the addition of the two-storied ambulatory. Contrary to Orlandos, Velenis and Theis documented the partial demolition of the extant walls of the main

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199 For the phialostomia, see Orlandos, Παρηγορήτισσα, 36; Theis, Paregoretissa, 114-115; and Buchwald, “Sards Church E,” 268.
200 For the brick meander, see Orlandos, Παρηγορήτισσα, 34; Theis, Paregoretissa, 112 (with a list of churches with similar motifs); and Buchwald, “Sardis Church E,” 269, and 283-289.
201 Theis, Paregoretissa, 116.
202 For the frieze with lozenges, see Orlandos, Παρηγορήτισσα, 34-35; Theis, Paregoretissa, 111-112 (Rautenfriese).
203 For the herringbone and chevron frieze and related brick patterns, see Theis, Paregoretissa, 112-113 (Fischgrätfries); and Buchwald, “Sards Church E,” 268-269, and 289-293.
204 Velenis, “Thirteenth-Century Architecture in Epirus,” 280-281. Theis, Paregoretissa, 76-77, 79-89, 106-108, and 124 considered two possible reconstructions for the initial building, that of the composite cross-in-square and of the octagonal church, arguing ultimately in favor of the latter. As this theory was later rejected, the reconstructed late thirteenth-century building is less indebted to its predecessor.
205 Papadopoulou, Βυζαντινή Αρχιτεκτονική, 136-137; Vocotopoulos, “Church Architecture in Epirus,” 81 (note 33); idem, Παναγία Φιλιππιάδος, 81 (note 15).
206 Theis, Paregoretissa, 90-105, and 124. According to her reconstruction, the Paregoretissa becomes the first example in Epiros of a church enveloped by a portico and side chapels.
207 Orlandos, Παρηγορήτισσα, 55, and 165-167.
church and advanced the now accepted theory of a pre-existing church. This complete earlier church had been partly destroyed for some reason and served as the nucleus for the late thirteenth-century remodeling.

Like the Pantanassa church, the Paregoretissa had a number of Constantinopolitan features evident in its plan, wall articulation and decoration. In addition to its composite cross-in-square plan, the most characteristic Constantinopolitan features include the articulation of the apses with windows and blind arcades or niches in two superimposed tiers,\textsuperscript{208} and the decoration with phialostomia, quite widespread in other parts of the Byzantine world but not in Epiros.\textsuperscript{209} At the same time the unarticulated north and western façades with their cloisonné masonry,\textsuperscript{210} and a number of decorative patterns (such as meanders, herringbone and chevron patterns, dentil and disepsilon friezes) are commonly encountered in the local architectural tradition of Epiros, southern Greece, or Macedonia regardless of their ultimate origin.\textsuperscript{211} The integration of Constantinopolitan and local traditions in the Paregoretissa demonstrates a degree of collaboration with local masons, at least as far as the preserved walls indicate. This is a rather stark difference with the Pantanassa church, where masonry, wall articulation, and to a certain extent some brick or tile decoration, are of a type rarely encountered in Epiros.

\textsuperscript{208} Vocotopoulos, “Church Architecture in Epirus,” 85.
\textsuperscript{209} Theis, \textit{Paregoretissa}, 114-115. Vocotopoulos, “Church Architecture in Epirus,” 88, cites Tsoures’ suggestion that the phialostomia were “probably adopted in the Despotate from southern Greek models.” If this was the case, then we would expect the phialostomia to be more widespread in Epiros, but they are not. Apart from the Paregoretissa, the only known church with phialostomia is St. George at Angelokastron in Aitolia (dated on stylistic grounds to the end of the thirteenth or early fourteenth century: see Kaponis, “\textit{Παραδοσιακή Αρχιτεκτονική},” 136-138, for a short description and relevant bibliography).
\textsuperscript{210} Theis, \textit{Paregoretissa}, 110-111; also Vocotopoulos, “Church Architecture in Epirus,” 84-85 (who considers cloisonné “a hallmark of the Helladic school”).
In contrast to the Pantanassa church, the initial Paregoretissa shows great coherence with its late thirteenth-century rebuilding. This is best illustrated by the unified cloisonné masonry, the unifying appearance of the east façade with superimposed blind arcades and niches throughout, and to some extent, by shared brick patterns (such as herringbone, meander, and disepsilon) or the use of phialostomia in both stages (see fig. 100). Even the reticulate revetments of the rebuilt Paregoretissa seem to echo the frieze with lozenges made by plain bricks of the initial building. It is not surprising that Orlandos considered the final building as the result of a change during construction rather than two distinct phases further apart in time. Whereas the present Paregorissa is securely dated to the 1290s, the assigned mid-thirteenth-century date and association of the earlier church with Michael II is ambiguous.

The Paregoretissa is not mentioned in any Byzantine source. The earliest document at our disposal is the aforementioned sixteenth-century patriarchal sigillion. It regulates the attachment of the Paregoretissa as a dependency to the monastery of the Kato Panagia, as the former was already impoverished and abandoned by its monastic community. In addition the sigillion informs us that the Paregoretissa was, at least in the sixteenth century, a nunnery and a stavropegion, but provides no indications for the date of construction, the original status of the monastery or its thirteenth-century founders.

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212 In the late thirteenth-century remodeling, phialostomia have been used in the two middle windows of the north façade’s lower zone (Orlandos, Παρηγορήτισσα, 38, fig. 20). According to Theis, Paregoretissa, 149, these phialostomia are identical with those of the first phase. As they are rarely encountered in Epiros and because their use is very limited in the late thirteenth-century Paregoretissa, Theis suggested that they are reused here: “Da sich sonst am gesamten Bau keine weiteren Phialostomoi befinden, liegt die Vermutung nahe, die in den Fensterzwickeln befindlichen Phialostomoi seien wiederverwendet.” It is not clear to me whether she considers them leftovers or actually reused. Phialostomia once inserted in the masonry can hardly be reused; in case they are leftovers, doesn’t this reinforce the idea that the rebuilding cannot be that many years apart from the original building?

213 See supra, note 89.
The belief that the Paregoretissa was a foundation of Michael Doukas is recorded for the first time in the seventeenth century, and it is repeated thereafter by a number of western travelers and scholars.\(^{214}\) Indicative is the first account by Wheler and Spon, who traveled to Preveza in 1675. They were informed by a wealthy local merchant that “an inscription over the door sheweth, that it was built by Duke Michael Commeno.”\(^{215}\) The founders’ inscription commemorating Nikephoros and Anna must have been largely intact at the time.\(^{216}\) It seems that the inscription was either illegible to the local inhabitants or simply ignored under the strong influence of oral tradition. Thereafter the association of the Paregoretissa with Michael Doukas appears in a number of accounts: Le Quien (1740); Foucherot (1780); Pouqueville (1820);\(^{217}\) Leake (1835);\(^{218}\) and in a most confused way in Aravantinos’ history (1856-1857).\(^{219}\) The Russian archimandrite Antonin (1886) and the French scholar Millet (1916) were the first to publish a more accurate reading of the inscription, establishing Nikephoros and Anna as the patrons of the church.\(^{220}\)

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\(^{214}\) Review of these accounts in Orlandos, *Παρηγορήτισσα*, 7-12, and 153ff; and Theis, *Paregoretissa*, 19ff.


\(^{216}\) The inscription consisted of a total of eleven vousoirs—of which four are still missing. The preserved seven were still in the church (but not in situ?) at the time of Antonin’s visit (1865, according to Theis, *Paregoretissa*, 24; or 1878 according to Orlandos, *Παρηγορήτισσα*, 97, note 1), as documented by the transcription he provided (Orlandos, ibid., 155, fig. 151). Two vousoirs went missing at some point—after Antonin’s and before Millet’s visit (early twentieth century)—and were found again at the time of Orlandos’ restoration (ibid., 97, and 155-156). During the Greek War of Independence, the church was used as a bastion by the Ottoman Turks and Albanians (1821-1824, and again in 1854). According to the metropolitan Serapheim (1863-1894), when the church was restored to the Greeks in 1865, repairs and a partial restoration occurred. But he seems to ignore the existence of the inscription: Xenopoulos, *Δοκίμιον*, 146; also Orlandos, ibid., 11-12, and 164.

\(^{217}\) Pouqueville believed that the Paregoretissa was built in the eleventh century by Michael VII Doukas, see relatively: Orlandos, *Παρηγορήτισσα*, 9-10; and Theis, *Paregoretissa*, 21.

\(^{218}\) Leake was the first to give a transcription of the founders’ inscription. At the suggestion of the local bishop, Leake identified Michael Doukas with Michael I, see relatively: Orlandos, *Παρηγορήτισσα*, 10, and 153; and Theis, *Paregoretissa*, 21.

\(^{219}\) Aravantinos believed that the Paregoretissa was built in 819. In the first volume of his history, he stated that the church was restored by John Komnenos Doukas, due to a misreading of the founders’ inscription. On the contrary in the second volume of his history, Aravantinos suggested Michael II as the restorer of the Paregoretissa, see relatively Orlandos, *Παρηγορήτισσα*, 11, 153-154, and 159; and Theis, *Paregoretissa*, 22.

Given the long held belief that the Paregoretissa was constructed by Michael Doukas, and the presence of a pre-existing building suggested by the study of its architecture, it is not surprising that this earlier foundation is associated with Michael II.\textsuperscript{221} To my knowledge, Theis is the only one to offer an extensive argumentation to support its mid-thirteenth-century date.\textsuperscript{222} By taking into consideration typological and stylistic aspects, written accounts, and the historical context, she concluded that Michael II built the church shortly after 1250, and preferably before 1259.\textsuperscript{223} The following remarks aim to highlight the inconclusive nature of the evidence, which Theis has already acknowledged on many instances.

The strongest argument is provided indirectly by typological observations. The Pantanassa Philippiados and the Paregoretissa are the only examples of the composite cross-in-square church plan in Epiros. In spite of ultimately favoring the reconstruction of the initial Paregoretissa as an octagonal church, Theis considered its reconstruction as a composite cross-in-square church, and discussed possible parallels.\textsuperscript{224} Although she acknowledged that comparisons of church plans cannot provide a date for the Paregoretissa, she pointed out differences with the churches of Thessaloniki (Panagia Chalkeon, St. Aikaterini, St. Panteleimon, and the Holy Apostles) and possible similarities with the Pantanassa Philippiados, the Church E

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{222} Theis, \textit{Paregoretissa}, 106-123.
\item \textsuperscript{224} Theis, \textit{Paregoretissa}, 79-85, and 106-107.
\end{itemize}
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at Sardis, and Hagia Sophia in Trebizond. According to Theis, the Paregoretissa’s affiliation with the latter group, and in particular with the Pantanassa church, supports a date in the reign of Michael II. However, one might ask how similar these churches are. While they all reproduce the most common Constantinopolitan church plan, there are stark differences. Other than documenting the diffusion of the Constantinopolitan tradition in the periphery during the thirteenth century (Nicaea, Epiros, and Trebizond) can they possibly suggest a narrower time frame for their construction?

When considering the type of masonry and brick decoration of the Paregoretissa, Theis acknowledged the limits of the stylistic approach, noting that they cannot offer any conclusive answer regarding the date of the building as they are too widespread in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. At same time, she placed more confidence in a formal analysis and pointed out similarities with the Kato Panagia, St. Demetrios at Kypseli, and the Palaiokatouna church. Theis considered the first two churches securely associated with Michael II, and this reinforced her proposed chronology for the Paregoretissa to the 1250s. As St. Demetrios at Kypseli is now unanimously considered a late thirteenth-century building, and the

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227 Theis, Paregoretissa, 116-120.
228 Theis, Paregoretissa, 120.
Palaiokatouna’s date is unknown (opinions range from the mid-thirteenth to the early fourteenth century), this illustrates the limits of this sort of approach as a tool for dating.\textsuperscript{229}

Theis stressed the lack of epigraphic and reliable information that could document the status of the church in the mid-thirteenth century and Michael II’s patronage in particular.\textsuperscript{230} Nonetheless she placed much emphasis on later accounts, which invariably mention Michael Doukas as the patron of the church.\textsuperscript{231} As mentioned above, the first record of the sort, by Wheler and Spon, makes clear that their information was provided by a local inhabitant. There is little doubt that all later accounts were based directly on local tradition or indirectly by repeating information provided by earlier travelers and scholars.

Theis also relied on the traditional view of Michael II and Theodora as prolific patrons: they are associated with at least eight foundations, some of them the most important churches of Arta.\textsuperscript{232} In this light, the attribution of the first phase of the Paregoretissa to Michael II is a reasonable suggestion. Yet, of the suggested eight churches listed,\textsuperscript{233} two at least (St. Demetrios Katsouri\textsuperscript{234} and St. Demetrios at Kypseli\textsuperscript{235}) are no longer associated with Michael II; and only the church of Panagia Bryoni, a stavropegion, was certainly built during his reign, but not

\textsuperscript{229} On the Palaiokatouna church, review of the bibliography in Kaponis, “ναοδομική Αρχιτεκτονική,” 93-97.
\textsuperscript{230} Theis, \textit{Paregoretissa}, 121: “Über den Status von Bau I ist nichts bekannt.” Also ibid., 122: “Es fehlen auch jegliche Hinweise auf einen Stifter für Bau I.”
\textsuperscript{233} The list of churches is given in Theis, ibid., 122 (note 632).
\textsuperscript{234} For an up-to-date bibliography on St. Demetrios Katsouri, see Giannoulis, \textit{Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας}, 111-179.
\textsuperscript{235} St. Demetrios Kypseli (Tourkopaloukon) is now considered a foundation of Michael Zorianos (see chapter 4).
necessarily by him. Of the remaining five, three—Kato Panagia, St. Theodora, and the Pantanassa—are attributed to Michael II or to Theodora by the Vita; while the church at Galaxidi by an even more questionable source. Finally there is the Blacherna church, whose association with Michael II is even more problematic than was thought at the time she was writing. In short, when we look closely at each building supposedly founded by Michael II, we often encounter circular arguments based on the traditional view of him as a great patron, ultimately based on the Vita of St. Theodora. In contrast, the patronage of Nikephoros, by far better documented epigraphically, has sunk into oblivion.

A final argument needs to be addressed as it applies not only to the Paregoretissa but to the Pantanassa as well. The proposed mid-thirteenth-century date for both buildings is reinforced with references to the historical context. It is well known that Michael II of Epiros and the Byzantine emperor John III Vatatzes (1221-1254) agreed to a peace treaty and a marriage alliance between the two ruling houses. Michael II’s son, Nikephoros, was to marry Vatatzes’ granddaughter, Maria, daughter of the future emperor Theodore II Laskaris (1254-1258). The prolonged negotiations involving their engagement (ca. 1250) and marriage (1256) and the various peace treaties arranged are considered to signify a decade of closer rapport between the two ruling houses, which came to an end with the Battle of Pelagonia (1259). The rapprochement of Nicaea and Epiros in the 1250s provides the possible context for the diffusion of Constantinopolitan tradition in Epiros, which both the Paregoretissa and the Pantanassa

236 On Panagia Bryoni, see P. Vocotopoulos, “Παρατηρήσεις επί της Παναγίας του Μπρυώνη,” ΑΔ 28 (1973), fasc. 1: 159-168.
237 On the church of the Transfiguration of Christ in Galaxidi, see chapter 3.
238 The Blacherna church is discussed in the following section of this chapter, within the context of Nikephoros’ patronage.
239 Nicol, The Despotate, 149ff. Lappas, “Πολιτική Ιστορία,” 182ff, esp. 184-186. Osswald, “L’Épire,” 81ff. Estimations on the date of the negotiations and engagement range between 1249 and 1252 according to Lappas, ibid., 185 (note 813), who suggests that the negotiations might have started as early as 1246.
240 Theis, Paregoretissa, 122.
document, and reinforces the proposed chronology of those buildings. Yet, modern historians stress the superficial nature of the peace imposed, which makes the 1250s a less likely time for their construction.

It seems that the rapprochement of Nicaea and Epirus in the 1250s amounted to no more than a few months of peace within years of hostility. Political and marriage alliances solidified by oaths, proved to be precarious and ephemeral. Soon after the engagement of Nikephoros to Maria was celebrated at the emperor’s camp at Pegai in Asia Minor in the presence of Vatatzes and Theodora, Michael II attacked Nicaean possessions in Macedonia (1251 or 1252). The imperial army was victorious and Michael II had to accept a new peace treaty on the emperor’s terms (winter 1252/53). This was again a temporary submission. Whatever ambitions he might have entertained following Vatatzes death in 1254, Michael II eventually pursued the conclusion of the marriage alliance. Theodora and Nikephoros met the Byzantine emperor at his camp in Thrace (September 1256). Maria’s father, the ruling emperor Theodore II Laskaris, demanded for this honorable alliance further concessions from the Epirote side. Under pressure, Theodora and eventually Michael II were forced to accept once again the emperor’s terms and

242 Nicol, The Despotate, 151-153. Lappas, “Πολιτική Ιστορία,” 188-194. The imperial army captured Vodena and Kastoria and secured the loyalty of the Albanian chieftain of Kroia and Elbassan, a former Epirote ally. Michael II found himself deserted even by his closest relatives and hastily sought an agreement with the emperor, by which all his recently conquered Macedonian territory was placed under imperial control. In addition, Nikephoros went to Vatatzes’ camp at Vodena to do homage to the emperor; whereas the former mighty Theodore Komnenos Doukas was taken as a prisoner to Nicaea, where he eventually died.
243 Nicol, The Despotate, 157ff. According to Nicol, ibid., 159, Michael II attempted to profit from Vatatzes’ death and “began a campaign of intrigue in Albania, and planned a campaign of conquest against Nicaea.” Cf. Lappas, “Πολιτική Ιστορία,” 199-200 (note 905), who places these events after the marriage of Nikephoros as a result of the humiliating terms imposed on Epiros; and Osswald, “L’Épire,” 83-84.
restore the towns of Dyrrachion and Servia to imperial control. By modern accounts, the very
terms of the marriage alliance shattered any prospect of a peaceful co-existence.245

Nikephoros’ marriage to Maria Laskarina finally took place in October 1256.246 The
wedding ceremony, performed by the patriarch Arsenios in Thessaloniki in the presence of
Theodore II and Theodora, officially joined the two ruling houses, but brought little peace.
Barely months after (February 1257), Michael II rebelled against the emperor and recaptured the
towns of Kastoria, Berroia, and eventually Prilep.247 The Byzantine historian Akropolites, who
had been recently appointed praetor over the western provinces of the empire, was captured in
Prilep and was taken as a prisoner to Arta.248 Within the context of Michael II’s widespread
rebellion and victorious advances on imperial territory, it is hardly surprising that the emperor
pressed the patriarch and his synod “to lay the whole of the Despotate of Epiros under the ban of
excommunication from the Church.”249

With Theodore II’s sudden death in August 1258, Michael II had even fewer reasons to
honor the agreements imposed.250 The legitimate emperor John IV Laskaris, Maria’s brother,
was still a minor. Soon his ability to rule effectively was questioned and eventually led to the
usurpation of power by Michael VIII Palaiologos. The long standing rivalry between Epiros and
Nicaea would be resolved in the Battle of Pelagonia (1259), where Michael II and his allies
suffered a severe defeat. Michael II not only deserted the battlefield,251 but as the imperial army

249 Nicol, The Despotate, 169. According to Nicol “a synodical decree was drawn up and published to this effect”
but it was later withdrawn due to Nikephoros Blemmydes’ intervention. Lappas, “Πολιτική Ιστορία,” 211 (cites the
advanced victoriously on Arta, he and his family deserted their capital as well and fled to the Ionian Islands (Leukas and Kephalonia).\textsuperscript{252}

Given the recorded military campaigns and the diplomatic maneuvers of the 1250s, it is surprising to find Michael II engaging in the construction of his two most exuberant foundations—the Pantanassa Philippiados and the Paregoretissa—especially since he was constantly displeased with the concessions made to the Nicaean emperors and almost constantly at war with them. At the same time, we cannot exclude the possibility of Nicaeans working in their construction, especially since Vatatzes himself was an active builder and a benefactor of religious foundations. Unfortunately, Akropolites, who spent almost two years in captivity there, says nothing about Arta’s cultural and religious life.

Thus, the Paregoretissa and the Pantanassa remain the main evidence that the rapprochement between the Laskarids and the Komnenodoukai might have had some impact on the cultural life of Epiros. But, as in the case of the Pantanassa Philippiados, the surviving epigraphic evidence of the Paregoretissa documents only the patronage of Nikephoros and Anna in the late thirteenth century, and to some extent, the patronage of the Albanian ruling family of Spata, in the late fourteenth or early fifteen centuries.\textsuperscript{253} This curious state of affairs is difficult to account for. Just like the Pantanassa, there is nothing substantial to confirm that the Paregoretissa’s two phases of construction are some forty years apart. There is always the possibility that both might have been constructed later on and not necessarily within the reign of Michael II. Therefore, we might consider the rapprochement between the new ruling houses of

the Palaiologoi and the Komnenodoukai of Epiros as the alternative context for the initial construction of both the Pantanassa and the Paregoritissa. The peace treaty agreed between Michael II and the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos after the reconquest of Constantinople and the marriage of Nikephoros to the emperor’s niece, Anna Kantakouzene Palaiologina (1265), left in the long run a more concrete imprint on Epiros’ cultural life.\(^{254}\) Michael II died some two years later (1267/1268).\(^{255}\)

The Pantanassa and the Paregoretissa testify to the diffusion of the Constantinopolitan traditions in the court culture of Epiros. The way and circumstances of this transmission are not known. Their immediate models could have been provided either by the architecture of the Laskarids or the architecture of Constantinople. Whether we prefer to place their construction in a Laskarid context or, as I have implied, in a Palaiologan context, it is clear that the appropriation of Constantinopolitan traditions was possible through a web of interrelated patrons, rather than a free movement of artists and builders. Nothing illustrates the point more clearly than their remodeling in the late thirteenth century.

The overall legacy of Michael II’s reign is difficult to estimate. According to the prevailing view, his reign coincides with “the most productive period of architecture in the Despotate of Epirus”—a time when “clear artistic trends developed, and the conditions were created for an autonomous and original school of architecture in Epirus.”\(^{256}\) As discussed above this suggestion is based on several concessions: a) the meager information provided by the \textit{Vita} of St. Theodora, attributing three churches to the initiatives of Michael II and his wife; b) the

\(^{254}\) The last years of Michael II’s reign are discussed in detail by Lappas, “Πολιτική Ιστορία,” 250-268; and briefly by Nicol, \textit{The Despotate}, 186-195; idem, \textit{The Despotate (1267-1479)}, 8; and Osswald, “L’Épire,” 98-101. The time Maria Laskarina died is unknown: see Lappas, ibid., 239-240, note 1118; and Osswald, ibid., 100, note 342.

\(^{255}\) Nicol, \textit{The Despotate (1267-1479)}, 9, note 1.

lack of precisely dated monuments from the period 1204-1261; c) the relative chronology established for a number of buildings on the basis of their formal and stylistic characteristics; and d) the belief that Michael II can be associated directly or indirectly with the construction of a large number of churches, some of them the most important foundations of the thirteenth century. By focusing exclusively on the few buildings of Arta more firmly associated with the patronage of Michael II and his wife Theodora—an association claimed either by inscriptive evidence or the written sources—the emphasis was on the degree of uncertainty involved in all projects attributed to him. The same degree of ambivalence extends to several of his other projects, as will be discussed in the following sections.
2.3. The patronage of Nikephoros Komnenos Doukas (1267/8-1296/8) and Anna Palaiologina.

Nikephoros Komnenos Doukas, the son of Michael II Komnenos Doukas and Theodora Petralipha, inherited part of his father’s dominion, confined to Old Epiros, centered on Arta.\textsuperscript{257}

The reign of Nikephoros and his wife Anna Kantakouzene Palaiologina (d. after 1313), regent for their son Thomas after Nikephoros’ death, is considered as a period of political decline. Although the state’s prestige was irreversibly diminished, building activity in Arta was intensified until it came to a halt with the fall of the Komnenodoukas dynasty in 1318.\textsuperscript{258}

According to the prevailing view, Nikephoros and Anna did not initiate any new building projects. Rather, they directed their attention towards expanding, remodeling and rebuilding pre-existing foundations. The specifics of their patronage are not documented in the written sources. Thus we have to rely heavily on the evidence provided by the buildings in order to frame their artistic patronage and determine—whenever possible—the varying degree of involvement of the members of the royal family. Four major monastic foundations seem to have benefited from their sponsorship: the Blacherna, Hagia Theodora, the Pan tanassa and the Paregoretissa.

\textsuperscript{257} Upon Michael II’s death, his dominion was divided between his two eldest sons: Nikephoros, his legitimate son, inherited Old Epiros, while John Doukas, Michael II’s natural son, inherited Thessaly: Nicol, \textit{The Despotate (1267-1479)}, 9ff. Lappas, “Πολιτική Ιστορία,” 269ff. Osswald, “L’Épire,” 100ff.

\textsuperscript{258} Anna Kantakouzene Palaiologina’s death is placed between 1313 and 1317: PLP no. 10933; Patlagean, “Theodora impératrice d’Épire,” 457. According to Nicol, \textit{The Despotate (1267-1479)}, 78 (note 51), 79 (note 57), and 80 (note 59), she was certainly alive in 1313. Cf. Osswald, “L’Épire,” 139. The murder of despot Thomas by his nephew Nicolas Orsini in 1318 is commonly regarded as the abrupt end to the Komnenodoukas family rule in Epiros, for instance by Nicol, ibid., 80ff.; and Lappas, “Πολιτική Ιστορία,” 350, 364, among others. Yet, Osswald, ibid., 141ff., points out that Nicholas Orsini was the son of Maria, daughter of Nikephoros, and thereby there is some sort of dynastic continuity.
The Blacherna monastery: The mausoleum of the Komnenodoukai?

The Blacherna church was remodeled to a domed building with the addition of three domes, one over each aisle, and it was further enlarged with the addition of a narthex and an open portico (fig. 9). The date and the reasons for these remodelings remain obscure. Traditionally the transformation of the Blacherna from a barrel-vaulted basilica to a domed church is attributed to the patronage of Michael II, father of Nikephoros. Only the church’s enlargement with the addition of a narthex and an open portico is placed in the reign of Nikephoros, and specifically attributed to the initiatives of his wife Anna Palaiologina.

The remodeling of the Blacherna to a domed church has been associated with the church’s new function as the mausoleum of the Komnenodoukas family. The two tombs preserved in the northwest and southwest bay of the main church do not retain their original form (see figs. 10, 12–14). They were opened in 1896 by the metropolitan of Preveza, Kosmas, and were carelessly reassembled afterwards, using various spolia found in the church. When Orlandos conducted his research in 1936, he reopened the south tomb and tried to reconstruct the form of the original sarcophagus from various fragments found in situ and within the tomb, based on his observations and measurements. According to Orlandos, the north tomb—now a

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259 Orlandos, “Μονή Βλαχερνών,” 49-50; Vocotopoulos, “Art under the Despotate of Epirus,” 226; Papadopoulou, Βυζαντινή Άρτα, 73; Kaponis, “Ναοδομική Αρχιτεκτονική,” 135-136; Acheimastou-Potamianou, Βλαχέρνα, 12, 63-68, 125ff., dates the frescoes of the main church to around the mid-thirteenth century; Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 256-257, accepts Acheimastou’s proposed chronology. Cf. Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 134ff. See also supra, note 41.

260 Orlandos, “Μονή Βλαχερνών,” 12, simply mentioned that the narthex is a later addition. M. Acheimastou-Potamianou, “Βυζαντινές τοιχογραφίες στη μονή Βλαχέρνας της Άρτας,” ΑΑΑ 8 (1975): 208-216, dated the narthex frescoes to around the end of the thirteenth century. Also Vocotopoulos, “Art under the Despotate of Epirus,” 226; Papadopoulou, Βυζαντινή Άρτα, 73; and Kaponis, “Ναοδομική Αρχιτεκτονική,” 135-136 (with additional bibliography). More recently Acheimastou-Potamianou, Βλαχέρνα, 12, 115-122, 125ff., dates the narthex frescoes to after 1284. Also Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 274-276; and Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 169ff, esp. 175 (both accept Acheimastou’s proposed chronology).

261 See relatively: NE 19, no. 4 (1925), 297-300, esp. 299-300 (information acquired from the archive of S. Lambros); Orlandos, “Μονή Βλαχερνών,” 30ff., esp. fig. 26 (records the state of the south tomb after its 1897 reconstruction); and Papadopoulou, Βυζαντινή Άρτα, 76ff.
plain rectangular built tomb—retains only its inscribed, half-preserved, cover slab (fig. 14); whereas the present-day cover slab of the south tomb (fig. 12) belongs to another—a third—sarcophagus from the Blacherna church, whose precise location is not known. Further, according to Orlandos, the south sarcophagus was initially covered by an inscribed slab—just like its counterpart of the north tomb—of which only eight pieces have been found (fig. 15). While the present-day form of the tombs—and even the exact number of the original sarcophagi—is to some extent conjectural, the information provided by the fragmentary inscriptions permitted the identification of the church with the royal mausoleum of the Komnenodoukas family. Yet, the proposed mid-thirteenth-century date, based exclusively on the inscriptive evidence, raises certain difficulties.

Orlandos, in his early study, reaffirmed Lambros’ suggestion that the north double-tomb belonged to the two sons of Theodora, identified with John and Demetrios/ Michael. These are indeed the only sons of Michael II and Theodora mentioned in the sources besides Nikephoros, but both of them outlived their father Michael II and probably Nikephoros himself. Thus if we accept Lambros’ and Orlandos’ reading and interpretation of the fragmentary inscription, the

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264 A further problem is posed by the fact that they both lived and died away from Arta. On Demetrios/Michael, see supra, note 101. The exact time of his death is not known. According to Polemis, The Doukai, 96 (no. 51); and Nicol, The Despotate (1267-1479), 240, he died “in prison in Constantinople sometime after 1304.” On John, who married a daughter of the sebastokrator Constantine Tornikes, see Polemis, The Doukai, 95 (no. 50); PLP no. 205; Nicol, ibid., 9, 240; Lappas, “Πολιτική Ιστορία,” 252ff., 269 (note 1262); and Osswald, “L’Épire,” 98-99. The exact time of his death is also unknown. According to Polemis, “he was imprisoned by the emperor in 1280.” Also Nicol, ibid., 9 (note 2): “John was later to be imprisoned and blinded for making too much of a hero of himself in warfare against the Turks at Nicaea.” It seems that both brothers faced a similar end. If this is a cenotaph, the motives of such an undertaking become all the more interesting.
The inscription Orlandos associated with the south tomb is even more difficult to decipher due to its fragmentary state (fig. 15). The eight preserved fragments—of similar depth, and the same lettering filled with red colored wax for legibility—seem to belong to a long metrical inscription, although only few of them can be pieced together. Of importance are the fragments referring to the deceased as “a Byzantine emperor’s gambros (son-in-law) through the emperor’s sister” who was despot in the West (fig. 15, E).

Orlandos expressed the view that the tomb belonged to Michael II—a suggestion that has been repeated since, mostly without additional comments. Yet, if we accept Orlandos’ proposed reading of the inscription, this person cannot be other than Nikephoros, whose second marriage was to Anna Kantakouzene Palaiologina, the daughter of Eirene/Eulogia, Michael VIII’s sister. Other fragments of the inscription record the names of Manuel (as emperor), of Michael (as despot) and the name.

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265 Orlandos, “Μονή Βλαχερνών,” 46-49, fig. 42. See also Katsaros, “Επιγραφική ‘Δεσποτάτου,’” 523-524.
266 Orlandos, “Μονή Βλαχερνών,” 48-49, fig. 42E.
267 Vocotopoulos, “Art under the Despotate of Epirus,” 226; Papadopoulou, Βυζαντινή Άρτα, 76-78; Acheimastou-Potamianou, Βλαχέρνα, 44, 65ff, 131-132; Osswald, “L’Épire,” 442, 489, 731, 750; Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 19-20, 56-57, and passim. Nicol, The Despotate, 198, considered the interpretation of the inscription “largely conjectural” but “there is at least a measure of evidence for supposing that Michael II was buried in one of the tombs.” Only D. Pallas, “Epiros,” RbK 2 (1971): 284, attributed the tomb to Nikephoros (without substantial argumentation), but his suggestion was largely ignored.
269 Identified by Orlandos as Michael II Doukas.
of a Petraliphas \(^{270}\) which could all be associated with Nikephoros. Nikephoros was probably born during the reign of Manuel Doukas in Thessaloniki (1230-37); \(^{271}\) he was the son of the despot Michael II and was also himself a Petraliphas, the son of Theodora Petralipha. The reference to the deceased as a despot in the West is also in accordance with Nikephoros’ title as it appears in the dedicatory inscription of the Panagia Bellas (Kokkini Ekklesia) in Boulgareli.\(^{272}\) Finally, the inscription of the tomb concludes with an invocation to the martyr Demetrios.\(^{273}\) We do not know whether Nikephoros had a special devotion to St. Demetrios. The saint’s cult has been closely intertwined with the politics of the royal family from at least the time of the Empire of Thessaloniki and it is fairly reasonable to assume that his cult was popular in Arta.\(^{274}\) Additionally, St. Demetrios was also the patron saint of the Palaiologoi,\(^{275}\) and dynastic considerations would have made him the ideal candidate for Nikephoros’ tomb, especially if the funerary inscription was commissioned by his wife Anna Palaiologina. Therefore, the evidence

\(^{270}\) Identified by Orlandos as the brother of the basilissa Theodora.

\(^{271}\) According to Polemis, \textit{The Doukai}, 94, Nikephoros’ birth is placed ca. 1240. Cf. Nicol, \textit{The Despotate}, 149, who places his birth in the early 1230s; and Lappas, “Πολιτική Ιστορία,” 186 (note 821), who prefers a date after 1236. Given the unknown time of Nikephoros’ birth, it is possible that he was born during the last years of Manuel Doukas’ reign (1230-1237) and, possibly, during his mother’s exile from Arta (if the information provided by the \textit{Vita} of St. Theodora is reliable). Theodora was closely related to the ruling family in Thessaloniki, being the niece of Theodore’s wife, Maria Petralipha, and she could have sought refuge there during her five years of exile, instead of wandering in the wilderness. However, all this is purely conjectural.

\(^{272}\) For Panagia Bellas, see chapter 4.

\(^{273}\) Orlandos tried to associate the invocation to St. Demetrios with Demetrios/Michael, brother of Nikephoros, but he rejected this possibility.

\(^{274}\) According to an early twelfth-century description—quoted in M. Angold, \textit{The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204}, 2nd ed. (New York, 1997), 283—St. Demetrios’ fair, held in Thessaloniki every year in October, was very popular, gathering people from different ethnicities and “from all corners of the world.” In Arta the only remaining church dedicated to the saint is St. Demetrios Katsouri on the outskirts of Arta. The fresco decoration of Hagia Theodora also indicates special veneration to St. Demetrios, as he is portrayed along with St. George (the initial patron saint of Hagia Theodora) on the piers framing the templon (see infra, 98). Two pilgrim’s ambullae (κουτρούβια) from Epiros, found during excavations, provide additional evidence for the popularity of the saint in Epiros during the late Byzantine period. One portrays St. Demetrios and St. Nestoras; the other St. Demetrios and St. Theodora (identified with St. Theodora of Thessaloniki and not the basilissa Theodora of Arta), see relatively V. Papadopoulou, “Μολύβδινα φιαλίδια μύρου (κουτρούβια) από την Ήπειρο,” \textit{ΗπειρΧρον} 42 (2008): 9-15.

from the inscriptions of the tombs alone cannot support a date in the mid-thirteenth century but points towards the end of the thirteenth century.

The study of the fresco decoration of the main church provided a second line of arguments regarding the status of the church as a royal mausoleum, as well as Michael II’s potential patronage and burial within. In her recent monograph, Acheimastou-Potamianou discussed the close relation between the church’s remodeling, painted decoration and funerary function, ultimately reinforcing the widely accepted view of a royal mausoleum associated with the initiatives of Michael II.276 According to her analysis, the iconography of the south aisle (St. John the Forerunner in the apse, Pentecost in the dome, healing saints, etc.) creates a fitting setting for a royal tomb and emphasizes repentance. In particular, she drew attention to the two prophet-kings, identified with Solomon and Ezekias (Hezekiah), depicted on the intrados of the west arch of the south dome, i.e. in visual proximity to the south tomb associated with Michael II (fig. 16).277 The unusual pairing of Solomon with Ezekias is explained by their relation to the Temple of Jerusalem—the builder and religious reformer respectively—and in relation to the south tomb. On a second level, she argued, the preference for Ezekias over David could read as a statement of Michael II’s repentance, as recorded in the Vita of St. Theodora, thus strengthening the attribution of the south tomb to Michael II.278 Further, she proposed that the portrait of young Solomon attempted to associate him with Nikephoros—which reinforced her suggested mid-

276 Acheimastou-Potamianou, Βλάχερνα, with extended summary in English (125ff.).
278 Acheimastou-Potamianou, Βλάχερνα, (as in the note above).
thirteenth-century date for the painted decoration. According to this interpretation, Michael II made provisions for his burial several years before his death (1267/68).

Whereas the presence of the two Old Testament kings reinforces the argument of a royal burial and encourages the attribution of the south tomb to a restorer of the church, the connection to Michael II appears less convincing. Generic statements of redemption are to be expected in any burial context. Biblical and exegetical traditions, as well as the overall arrangement of the iconographic program of the Blacherna could justify the pairing of Solomon with Ezekias in a number of ways (for instance their placement underneath the dome featuring the Pentecost as sources of wisdom, witnesses of enlightenment etc). One could also consider the indications provided by the north tomb. The preference for Ezekias in the specific location could be explained by the need to place an equally important Old Testament king, i.e. David, in the symmetrical position in the north aisle, in proximity to the north tomb. The loss of the frescoes in that part of the church makes it impossible to confirm this hypothesis, yet it is worth mentioning that the inscription of the north tomb twice makes explicit references to king David. This suggestion implies the possibility of an even greater level of planning, with painted decoration and funerary inscriptions of both tombs complementing each other.

The portrait of Ezekias alone does not provide any substantial argument for the attribution of the south tomb to a specific ruler. Equally hypothetically, one could argue that the allusion was to Nikephoros. Ezekias holds a scroll with the opening verses of his prayer to God

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279 Acheimastou-Potamianou, Βλαχέρνα, esp. 67 and 132: “…it is worth mentioning that in 1249, about the period when the wall-paintings were made, Nikephoros was eighteen years old.” For the estimation of Nikephoros’ age, she cites Nicol, The Despotate, 149. Yet, as we have already mentioned, the exact date of Nikephoros’ birth is not known (see supra, note 271).
280 ἡ ψαλμικὴ κέκραγε τοῦ Δα(υί)δ λόρα’ and “τὸ ψαλμικὸν πρόσαμα τοῦ Δα(υί)δ μέλος”: Katsaros, “Επιγραφικὴ ‘Δεσποτάτου,’” 522.
upon recovering from illness: ΕΓΩ ΕΠΑ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΥΨΕΙ ΤΩΝ ΗΜΕΡΩΝ ΜΟΥ (Isaiah 38: 10). The most memorable part of Ezekias’ story is perhaps that when he fell severely ill and Isaiah told him of his imminent death, God granted him fifteen additional years to live (Isaiah 38; 2 Kings 20). It is also known that Ezekias succeeded his father, king Ahaz of Juda, and reigned at Jerusalem for twenty-nine years (2 Kings 18: 1-2). There are several points of comparison to Nikephoros’ life. Just like Ezekias, Nikephoros succeed his father and his reign lasted approximately the same number of years. His health seems to have been a concern, as implied by an Angevin document of 1293, although he did not die until 1297. One can argue that the story of Ezekias, who survived additional years by God’s intervention, might have been comforting for the ruling family concerned with the future of their realm. Purely conjectural as this explanation appears, the point is to underline that we have really nothing concrete to associate the south tomb or the remodeling of the Blacherna church with Michael II.

A final argument in favor of a later date is provided by the construction of the domes. As Orlandos has already observed, the two lateral domes of the Blacherna church (figs. 5, 7) and the dome over the narthex of Hagia Theodora (last quarter of the thirteenth century, see fig. 30) are hidden behind triangular pediments and can be attributed to the same workshop. In addition, the domes of the Blacherna church, articulated with brick colonettes at the corners, resemble those of the Pantanassa (fig. 78) and the late thirteenth-century Paregoretissa and are reminiscent of Palaiologan examples found in Thessaloniki. Consequently, a preferable date for the

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281 Achimastou-Potamianou, Βλαχέρνα, 43.
282 See Nicol, The Despotate (1267-1479), 44: Letter of Charles II of Anjou to the nobles of Negroponte (25 June 1293) instructing them “to be prepared to act as trustees for the safety and property of the basilissa Anna, her daughter and her estate in the event that her husband Nikephoros should die before the arrangements had been concluded for the marriage of his daughter to Philip of Anjou.” Also Lappas, “Πολιτική Ιστορία,” 329 (note 1531); and Osswald, “L’Épire,” 120 (note 422).
284 Vocotopoulou, “Church Architecture in Epirus,” 86.
remodeling of the Blacherna church is the last quarter of the thirteenth century, and possibly before the addition of the narthex, which blocks the western windows of the church. In fact, as inconsistencies in planning and construction occur very often in Byzantine architecture—the Blacherna being a paramount example of the sort—one cannot exclude the possibility that the remodeling of the church and the addition of the narthex to be, more or less, contemporaneous.

The narthex of the Blacherna church, on the other hand, is attributed to the initiatives of Anna Palaiologina due to the unique frescoed decoration depicting church councils (fig. 17) and the procession (litany) of the icon of the Virgin Hodegetria, which took place every Tuesday in Constantinople (figs. 18–19). According to Acheimastou-Potamianou, the three noble women in the foreground of the procession can be identified with the basilissa Anna, her sister Theodora Raoulaina and their mother Eirene-Eulogia. The fresco decoration of the narthex commemorates their participation in the church proceedings, which led to the official renunciation of the Union of the Roman and Greek Church and the triumph of Orthodoxy accomplished by the Councils of Blachernai and Adramyttion of 1283 and 1284 respectively.

The fresco decoration of the narthex highlights the active role of the basilissa Anna and her family in the settlement of the ecclesiastical controversy and the triumph of Orthodoxy, and therefore its political and propagandistic character is undeniable. There is also a personal and

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dynastic dimension in the historical-religious scene of the litany. The representation of the deceased mother of Anna, Eirene-Eulogia, among the participants in the procession, along with the depiction of the Second Coming on the vault of the central bay of the narthex suggests that the project was not only intended as a memorial to her deceased mother, but was probably commissioned by Anna as her own intended burial place. Unfortunately, a donor’s inscription that could further clarify the context and the date of the decoration of the narthex (after 1284)—whether before the death of Nikephoros or during Anna’s regency—has not been preserved. For our purpose, it is important to conclude that the remodeling of the Blacherna church and its transformation to a family shrine should be disconnected from the reign of Michael II and placed within the reign of Nikephoros.

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287 Ibid., 46.
288 In a paper delivered on the occasion of the 25th Pan-Hellenic Historical Conference (30 May-1 June 2014, Thessaloniki) entitled “Inscriptional evidence concerning the Petraliphai,” professor Velenis suggested a completely different reading of the inscriptions of both tombs of the Blacherna church. Contrary to the widely accepted interpretation, he questions whether the Blacherna was the royal mausoleum of the Komnenodoukai; instead he associates the inscriptions with members of the Petralipha family. His paper will be published shortly.
Hagia Theodora: A pilgrimage church?

During the reign of Nikephoros and Anna the monastery of Hagia Theodora continued to receive royal patronage. The main church was partially remodeled and enlarged by the addition of a narthex and a portico (fig. 22). In addition, a monumental entrance to the monastery’s precinct was constructed (fig. 20). The main church, the narthex, and even the exterior west façade of the narthex, were decorated with frescoes. The church, refurbished with a remodeled templon, apparently became the resting place of St. Theodora, Nikephoros’ mother, as indicated by the tomb, now located in the area connecting the south aisle with the narthex of the church (figs. 22, 35–36). On whose initiatives these activities took place is hard to estimate. Various interpretations have been offered in the past and new material is now available, as the original but fragmentary iconographic program has been gradually revealed. Work on the fresco restoration, completed only recently (2011), will eventually lead to a new publication, and hopefully, to a better understanding of the church’s complicated history.

Unlike the Blacherna, the remodeling of the main church of Hagia Theodora was rather limited. The clerestory over the central aisle of the basilica was raised in height by means of gables built by brick.289 Both east and west gable was articulated with a window framed by lateral blind semi-arches (fig. 29). As Velenis observed, adding to the height of a church is a trend in the later Byzantine period, also attested in the churches of St. Basil in Arta and St. Demetrios at Prilep (both tentatively dated to the end of the thirteenth-early fourteenth century).290 Similar form of windows can be seen in Arta in the Kato Panagia, and St. Basil, as

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289 Velenis, “Ερμηνεία,” 120 (note 3), and 259 (note 3).
well as in the Porta-Panagia (Thessaly), and the Palaiokatouna church (Akarnania).\textsuperscript{291} In the case of Hagia Theodora, the raising of the clerestory was probably a response to the addition of the narthex, aiming at exalting the main aisle and providing better lighting to the church’s interior. For these reasons, Velenis’ association of the main church’s remodeling with the addition of the narthex remains the most likely explanation.\textsuperscript{292}

Like many churches in Epiros, Hagia Theodora did not initially have a narthex.\textsuperscript{293} The added tripartite narthex communicated with the main church with three openings of which the south one was later blocked by the tomb of St. Theodora (fig. 22).\textsuperscript{294} Of its exterior doors only the west one is still functioning, as the south door has been completely walled in and its north door has been turned into a window (fig. 24). The narthex was vaulted with a low dome (central bay) and longitudinal barrel vaults (lateral bays). Its vaulting system is expressed on the western façade in the form of gables (fig. 26). The gable corresponding to the dome is further articulated with a two-lobed window, while the lateral ones are blind (fig. 27). Unlike the main church, the façades of the narthex are faced with regular cloisonné and are richly decorated with a number of brick patterns, very widespread in Epiros, but nowhere used in such excess. They include dental courses, double-meander, disepsilon, basketwork, and zigzag friezes, as well as sun-disks, crosses, and glazed bowls (figs. 26–28).

\textsuperscript{293} Vocotopoulos, “Church Architecture in Epirus,” 84.
Of the open portico added to the church, only its south part is still preserved (figs. 21–22, 31).\textsuperscript{295} Originally it surrounded the narthex on all three sides, its south wing extending further east to frame the naos of the main church as well. Its vaulting system consisted of ribbed vaults and calottes (northwest and southwest corner bays) supported predominantly on masonry piers and pilasters, as well as columns (west wing). Just as in the case of the narthex the masonry of the portico was faced with cloisonné; and its vaults were expressed on the façades as a row of triangular gables. In this we can discern an effort to unify the appearance of the narthex and portico.

Apparently, rebuilding extended to include other parts of the monastic complex, now long gone. The monumental entrance to the monastic precinct (but not its vaulted passage), located to the south of the church, is all that survives today (fig. 20).\textsuperscript{296} This is a large arched opening supported on masonry piers. The arched part is constructed with bricks, whereas its masonry piers are faced with cloisonné. Like the west façade of the narthex and the south façade of the portico, the upper part of this arched entrance ends in a triangular gable. The surface between the arch and the gable is decorated with a brick meander pattern, not identical but similar in spirit to that of the south façade of the narthex.

The remodeling of the church’s templon screen is placed within this frame of extensive building activity (fig. 32). According to the recent reconstruction proposed—based on additional parts found during restoration work and existing sculptures of the Archaeological Collection in Arta pieced together—the marble templon was made of two distinct groups of sculptures, reused


and newly carved material, assembled in a new configuration.\textsuperscript{297} Apparently, its upper parts are reused material from an earlier templon (epistyle carved in high relief and decorated with geometric and floral patterns) while the remaining parts (colonnettes and marble slabs) were carved anew. The marble slabs, carved in champlève and filled with colored wax (κηρομαστίχη), were decorated with eagles, griffin (fig. 177), sphinx, and an unidentified wild animal attacking a bull.

The fresco decoration of the main church is very fragmentary.\textsuperscript{298} Of interest are the frescoes that confirm its royal status and dedication to St. George. St. George is represented in the semi-vault of the diakonikon apse and, although he is not identified with an inscription, his representation follows the traditional iconography of the saint (fig. 37).\textsuperscript{299} The lower zone of the walls of the church is decorated with frescoes imitating marble revetments with floral and geometric patterns (fig. 35), just as in the Pantanassa church (figs. 71–72). We can single out the depiction of birds with interlocking necks, which finds its parallels in the sculptural decoration of the Blacherna church in Arta and the Porta-Panagia in Thessaly, both royal foundations; and the battle between a knight and a centaur (figs. 39–40).\textsuperscript{300} The latter is unique among the fresco decorations of Epiros and indicative for the tastes of the ruling class. As has been observed, the subject might have religious associations; it is more common in the Western art, and the armor of the knight recalls that of the soldier in the Mocking of Christ in the Blacherna church.\textsuperscript{301} The

\textsuperscript{297} Papadopoulou, “Τέµπλο Αγίας Θεοδώρας,” 233-246, fig. 12 (her proposed reconstruction of the templon).
\textsuperscript{298} On the fresco decoration of Hagia Theodora, see Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 277-310. Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 157- 160 (main church frescoes), 78-85, and 179-187 (narthex frescoes), and 231-247 (catalogue entry, with color illustrations).
\textsuperscript{299} Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 157-158. Cf. Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 286-287, who identifies the saint with St. Theodora.
\textsuperscript{300} Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 159. Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 288-291, fig. 287 (birds with interlocking necks); pl. 72, and figs. 288-290 (knight and centaur).
\textsuperscript{301} Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 159. Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 288-289, pl. 53, and fig. 207.
scene with the knight and centaur could also be seen in relation to St. George’s iconography—a universal military saint celebrated in both East and West, and later commonly portrayed in a courtly context. With the exception of the few preserved post-Resurrection scenes in the diakonikon (Women at the Tomb, Chairete, Incredulity of Thomas), the remaining decoration consists mainly of hierarchs, deacons, and saints—for instance St. George and St. Demetrios framing the templon screen (figs. 32, 38). The representation of St. George twice leaves no doubt as for the dedication of the monastery.

The fresco decoration of the narthex is better preserved and includes a number of Old and New Testaments scenes, and a great number of monks, saints and hierarchs (most of them unidentified). The program poses some challenges as some of its themes, known from manuscripts, are rarely represented in the context of church decoration. For instance, an extensive cycle of the Old Testament patriarch Jacob unfolds with over nine episodes from Genesis, including the commonly portrayed Jacob’s Ladder and his Struggle with the Angel (south bay and one in the central bay). The Vision of Peter of Alexandria is placed above the central door leading to the portico, an unusual location, which underlines its dogmatic and didactic character (fig. 41). The representation of St. Kyriaki (literally “Sunday”) with a garment decorated with personifications of the Holy Week—all of them female, except for Saturday—is known predominantly from Cypriot churches, but is unique in the Epirote context.

302 Detailed descriptions in Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 280-286.
(fig. 42). Even traditional scenes/prefigurations of the Virgin, as Moses and the Burning Bush or Jacob’s Ladder, depart from mainstream iconographic vocabulary; Christ, instead of the Virgin, becomes the focus as he is depicted in the centre of the Burning Bush and on top of the Ladder.

The fresco decoration on the exterior west wall of the narthex has quickly weathered due to the destruction of its portico. Garidis, who studied these frescoes closely, was able to make out two major scenes (fig. 43). The scene on top depicted a two-storied building; a rocky landscape; and a river flowing into a lake or the sea; on the bank of the river was a seated person carrying a sack (?), facing away from the building. The second scene depicted, in the center of the composition, a figure in large scale presumably in a praying position, and on the right a three-storied building and a tower built on a rock. In front of the tower and above the first floor of the building, there was a terrace decorated with precious fabrics and curtains. A few crowned figures stood on the terrace. Garidis suggested two possible interpretations: either that the scenes are related to St. George’s iconography, the rescue of the king’s daughter from the menacing dragon—a popular medieval narration, illustrated in a number of icons; or that they illustrate Theodora’s exile and return to her palace, as recorded in her Vita.

Traditionally, all remodeling and additions, with the exception of the open portico, are associated with St. Theodora, and in particular with the last years of her life, when the mother of

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306 Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 304-305 (who cites the relevant examples from Cyprus and one from Euboea/Negroponte).
307 Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 299-300 (pl. 75, and fig. 327). Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ήπειρου,” 182.
308 Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 296-298 (fig. 317). Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ήπειρου,” 181.
309 Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 297.
the ruling despot retired to the monastery she had previously erected.\textsuperscript{311} This is a suggestion largely based on her \textit{Vita}, which records that Theodora asked for six additional months in order to complete the church. Depending on how we interpret “completion” and when we place the death of Theodora (either in the 1270s or the 1280s), this provides, by most accounts, the time frame for the remodeling and decoration of the main church, the addition of the narthex, and the remodeling of the templon.\textsuperscript{312} The portico, on the other hand, is almost unanimously dated to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century and, by implication, to the years of Anna’s regency.\textsuperscript{313} The gothic groin-vaults of the Pantanassa church’s portico and the western style decoration of the Paregoretissa, both securely dated to the late thirteenth century makes this suggestion reasonably sound. Yet, there is no epigraphic evidence to exclude other possibilities and a later date either.\textsuperscript{314}

As far as the patronage of St. Theodora is concerned, three important contributions, which appeared almost simultaneously some twenty years ago, have been largely neglected. Cvetković argued most convincingly that the marble slab of the sarcophagus of St. Theodora features an investiture relief (fig. 36), representing Anna Palaiologina and her son Thomas and

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\item \textsuperscript{311} Orlandoς, “\textit{Αγία Θεοδόρα},” 103, associates the narthex with St. Theodora. Velenis, “Ερμηνεία,” 120 (note 3), and 259 (note 3), associates the remodelling of the church, and the addition of the narthex with Theodora. Vocotopoulos, “Art under the Despotate of Epirus,” 226-227, dates the narthex towards the end of St. Theodora’s life, i.e. the 1270s. Papadopoulou, “Τέμπλο Αγίας Θεοδόρας,” 245-246, attributes the remodeling of the templon to St. Theodora, and possibly the remodeling of the church, and addition of the narthex. Also Kaponis, “Ναοδομική Αρχιτεκτονική,” 106-107. Cf. Br. Cvetković, “The Investiture Relief in Arta, Epiros,” \textit{ZRVI} 33 (1994): 103-112, esp. 111-112, who suggests that “The basilissa Anna might have erected both the narthex and the martyrion, thus enlarging the foundation of Theodora, a newly venerated local saint.”
\item \textsuperscript{313} Only Vocotopoulos, “Le peinture dans le Despotat d’Épire,” 123, and 125; and Giannoulis, \textit{Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας}, 306, associate the portico with Theodora’s initiatives.
\item \textsuperscript{314} The reign of the despot John II Orsini (1323-1336/7) and the regency of his wife Anna Palaiologina (1336/7-1340) cannot be excluded without some further consideration. As an Italian, he might have favored a more “western” architecture. Most importantly his wife Anna Palaiologina was a direct descendant, a great-granddaughter, of St. Theodora. Endowing the shrine of her great-grandmother would have underlined her hereditary rights and legitimacy of their joint rule. See also \textit{infra}, note 338.
\end{enumerate}
therefore probably both the narthex and the construction of the tomb should be attributed to Anna’s initiatives. Patlagean brought attention to the *Vita*’s authorship, arguing that the traditional identification with the thirteenth-century monk Job Melas Iasites rests on thin evidence. The name of the author does not appear in our extant fifteenth-century manuscript; it is introduced for the first time in the Modern Greek version of 1772. As a possible author she considered another monk, also named Job. Like Cvetković, Patlagean argued that it was probably to Nikephoros’ and Anna’s interest to promote the cult of St. Theodora and concluded with a tentative early fourteenth-century date for the *Vita*. At the same time, Talbot published an English translation of the *Vita*. In her brief introduction, she stressed the rarity of female saints, and voiced her concerns about the authorship of the *Vita*. She questioned the attribution to Job Iasites, who lived in the second half of the thirteenth century, and suggested instead that “it is possible that a later monk named Job may have been the author.” These views have been sidelined mainly, I believe, because they complicate matters and therefore prevent the idea of a straightforward and traditional narrative. Questioning the information provided by the *Vita*, our only Byzantine source on patronage, opens Pandora’s Box. We are fully aware of the dubious character of the *Vita*, but we like to believe it truthful. As a matter of fact, even if the original version dates back to the late thirteenth century, the fifteenth-century date of the manuscript allows for much reworking of the text.

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315 Cvetković, “Investiture Relief,” 103-112. His view was recently endorsed by Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτος της Ηπείρου,” 79ff.
317 Ibid., 459: “On ne jugera pas pour autant recevable l’identification de l’auteur comme le moine Job Melas Iasites…L’unique manuscrit ne l’atteste pas, et elle n’apparaît que dans la paraphrase néo-grecque de 1772—sur une base antilatine peut-être.”
318 Ibid., 459: “Tout au plus pourrait-on l’attribuer à un moine Job qui compose la *Vie* du fondateur du monastère de Geromeri, établi vers 1330.”
319 Ibid., 459: “Tout cela peut suggérer, à titre de simple hypothèse, l’époque ou le pouvoir est à Arta aux mains d’Anna Palaiologina Kantakouzênê…”
321 Ibid., 324-325.
The architecture of the church cannot provide a specific date for its remodeling and addition of the narthex—and therefore cannot confirm the patronage of Theodora. The church’s typological, formal and stylistic features are quite common in Epiros and the majority of comparative material is not securely dated. As the predominant view favors the third quarter of the thirteenth century, it is worth pointing out that the last quarter of the thirteenth century makes a stronger alternative suggestion. The masonry, decorative brickwork, formal features of the gables windows, and the vaulting system of the tripartite narthex, all find parallels in the better documented buildings of the last years of Nikephoros’ reign (Paregoretissa, Pantanassa, Panagia Bellas, St. Basil in Arta). This view seems to be supported by the fresco decoration of the narthex, recently revealed and tentatively dated to the early fourteenth century.\(^{322}\)

Fundić has recently argued that the iconographic program of the narthex might have been devised by Anna Palaiologina’s close confidants, Andritsopoulos and Zorianos;\(^{323}\) and that the cycle of the patriarch Jacob might have some political and dynastic connotations, reinforcing the legitimacy of Thomas as hereditary ruler, against the pretensions of Anna’s son-in-law, Philip of Taranto.\(^{324}\) Although the dynastic implications are not explicit, the dogmatic, liturgical and missionary character of the iconographic program of the narthex makes this association with Anna and her circle of intellectuals likely. What remains unclear is the relation of the iconographic program of the narthex to St. Theodora’s cult or burial, which is not readily apparent, especially if we see the narthex as an addition to serve as her resting place. Even more so, if the very tomb of Theodora consists of an investiture relief depicting Anna and Thomas, as both Cvetković and Fundić have argued.

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\(^{322}\) Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 310. Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 187.

\(^{323}\) Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 84-85.

\(^{324}\) Ibid., 78ff.
The fresco decoration of the narthex does not explicitly communicate its funerary character, or its possible association with a specific cult. The dome has a rather traditional iconography with the Pantokrator, angels, prophets and seraphim, rather than the more funerary-specific Last Judgment of the Blacherna’s narthex. Post-Resurrection scenes have been placed in the diakonikon and not as a part of the iconography of the main church, where they could serve as a setting for a planned burial, if we accept that the original tomb construction was to face the main church as well. Likewise, the tone of the iconographic program with its emphasis on Old Testament patriarchs (Jacob, Moses), hierarchs, and apostles has a pronounced ecclesiastical and missionary character. It lacks even the traditional healing miracles that would be appropriate in the context of her miracle working tomb. Neither can we detect what we might call a pronounced “female” character, nor explicit funerary connotations. Only the female saints, placed on the south wall of the narthex can possibly relate to Theodora’s burial, in the sense that she participates in the pantheon of female saints.325 Judging from the preserved female saints, Kyriaki and Marina, the emphasis is not on royal saints (like St. Catherine or Eirene). Moreover, St. Kyriaki’s iconography underlines the liturgical character of her representation.

The fresco decoration that could relate directly to Theodora’s cult and burial was that of the western façade of the narthex. Garidis privileged the idea that St. Theodora’s *Vita* was illustrated there by arguing that key iconographic features of St. George’s legend are missing. However, this interpretation rests on very thin evidence. His view has been accepted, but can

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325 It is not clear to me whether we have three or four persons depicted there. According to Giannoulis, *Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας*, 304, there are three figures in total, placed on either side of the entrance; to the west: St. Kyriaki, Marina and to the east: a third unidentified female saint. According to Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 233, there are four figures in total. To the west: St. Kyriaki, Marina, and another unidentified female saint; to the east an unidentified figure in royal costume, probably an angel (?).
neither be confirmed nor rejected.\textsuperscript{326} Whether the exterior decoration of Hagia Theodora was elaborating on the dedication of the monastery to St. George, by additional and up to date iconography, or was a unique synthesis educating pilgrims visiting St. Theodora’s shrine about her life and deeds, would be vital for our understanding of the monastery’s development, i.e. whether after her burial the monastery still invested on its primary dedication to St. George or instead focused on its pilgrimage character, as the burial place of the saint queen. At this point, arguing in favor or against any given interpretation seems pointless, given the bad state of the frescoes’ preservation.

The tomb of St. Theodora poses some additional questions. The present tomb is located at the entrance connecting the narthex with the south aisle of the church and owes its form to the 1873 reconstruction.\textsuperscript{327} According to Orlandos, the original tomb must have been a composite sarcophagus of which only a single marble slab remains. This depicts, according to Orlandos’ widely accepted interpretation, St. Theodora with either her son Nikephoros or less likely her husband Michael II.\textsuperscript{328} Whereas Orlandos’ view has been contested as we have seen by Cvetković and Fundić, who favored the identification of the rulers depicted with Anna Palaiologina and Thomas, they all seem to consider this marble slab part of Theodora’s original tomb. But how sure can we be of the tomb’s original form?

The story of the tomb is quite complicated to be dealt with here in detail, as it presents major problems. The original tomb was rearranged at least twice and we know that it was

\textsuperscript{327} Orlandos, “Αγία Θεοδώρα,” 105-114.
violated at an unknown date. Metropolitan Serapheim records the *translatio* of the relics on March 20, 1873, at which time the tomb was reconstructed in its present form. Additionally we are informed by the protocol recording the *translatio* that the tomb was found filled with debris from an earlier attempt to loot the grave; and that the actual burial underneath the floor was intact, covered by another marble slab. As the report goes, the relics found underneath the marble slab preserved “their natural state” and therefore any doubts that the relics had been removed from the grave previously, as rumored by oral tradition, were dismissed.

To my knowledge, the tomb has not been reinvestigated since 1873. All we know regarding the state of the tomb relies on this report. To make things worse, the metropolitan Serapheim was away in Constantinople and not an eyewitness to the *translatio*. Reportedly Theodora’s bones, but not her head, are kept in the church, while the Kato Panagia church claimed to possess “part of the jaw with a tooth” of St. Theodora. Given the extensive rearrangements, relocations and possible subsequent burials, and keeping in mind that the *translatio* of the relics (1873) took place within the context of the Greek War of Independence, a few years before Arta was officially annexed (1881) to the Modern Greek state, reasonable doubts can be raised as to the identity of the person buried there, as well as the original status of the tomb.

The very location of the tomb is puzzling. By all accounts it is considered as original, although the majority of Byzantine tombs were situated against a wall or set in a niche. The idea

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330 Xenopoulos, *Δοκίμιον*, 133-134, and 149-150.
332 Xenopoulos, *Δοκίμιον*, 133.
333 Ibid., 149.
334 Ibid., 150.
of building a narthex as a burial place, and not providing suitable accommodation for the tomb, is difficult to account for. Blocking the entrance connecting the south aisle and narthex was unusual and does not really contribute to the easy flow of the congregation or pilgrims. That is not to say that there is no one buried there. Most Byzantine churches received burials for centuries after their construction. For example, later burials were found in, and around the Pantanassa church. An excess of this practice can be observed in the church of the Panagia Bellas, where the space underneath the floor is literally taken up by later burials.

To return to Cvetković’s argument, if this marble slab is an investiture relief, why could it not have been part of another construction, dismantled at some point and reused in the present location? Is it not unusual to have a person portrayed on a tomb, who is not buried within? And how can we be sure about the identity of the rulers portrayed? The marble slab lacks any inscription that could help identifying them. For instance, why was the other regent queen, also named Anna Palaiologina, the mother of Nikephoros II, ruled out? Like her predecessor, it was to her interest to “invest” on Theodora’s cult, as she was her great-grand daughter, a direct descendant of Theodora.

Given our few certainties, a reasonable suggestion would be that following Theodora’s death, her cult was encouraged and her burial place gradually transformed into a local pilgrimage center. Given the absence of a local cult in Arta up to this point—a practice well-established in

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338 Anna was the daughter of the protovestiarios Andronikos Palaiologos (PLP no. 21435) and granddaughter of Demetrios-Michael. Theodora’s son: see relatively Nicol, The Despotate (1267-1479), 93; cf. Osswald, “L’Épire,” 148. Unlike Cvetković, I cannot rule out the possibility of her being portrayed in the investiture relief of St. Theodora’s tomb.
other Byzantine capitals such as Nicaea and Trebizond and the rarity of Late Byzantine female saints, the elevation of a deceased member of the royal family to sanctity was, if not initiated, certainly encouraged by her son Nikephoros and Anna. It is equally possible that royal support towards the monastery was not confined to their joint reign or Anna’s regency. The despot John II Orsini (1323-1336/7) and his wife Anna Palaiologina (r. 1336/7-1340) had good reasons to continue this practice. Prolonged royal support might explain why the promotion of Theodora’s cult was ultimately successful and enduring. It offered consolation and a sense of continuity during turbulent times, especially when a change of regime, often violent—the murder of despot Thomas (1318), the murder of despot Nicholas Orsini (1323), the murder of despot John II Orsini (1336/7)—shattered any notion of legitimacy.

Theodora emerges from the historical record as a well-born and energetic queen, who undertook distant travels—to Nicaea, the Bulgarian frontier, and Constantinople—to negotiate the marriage of her son with all three reigning Byzantine emperors of her time—Vatatzes, Theodore II, and Michael VIII. She was according to her Vita, humble, generous, pious, and much loved by both subjects and ruling class. It is understandable why she was held up as role model for successive queens of Arta. Whether she stood as a model of female patronage as well, remains elusive and requires additional documentation.

In its present form, the church of Hagia Theodora is an amalgamation of various distinct traditions: Byzantine and Western, courtly and monastic, secular and religious. As dynastic,

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liturgical and dogmatic overtones overlap, we are not aware of how this might have worked for either its patrons or its medieval audience. From our perspective, there is a clear juxtaposition of distinct units and styles with little coherence or effort towards integration. Could the experience have been radically different for the medieval mindset? Would it not have been confusing, for instance, to face Peter of Alexandria’s vision condemning heresies, just before exiting and confronting the Gothic style porticos, supposedly representative of the culture of the heretic Westerners? Was style meaningful in enhancing the religious experience and expressing one’s identity or was rather irrelevant?

Piety is a personal endeavor, but investing on architectural patronage is de facto a political act. In the case of Hagia Theodora, the agenda—whether to reinforce dynastic claims, amplify cultural and religious integration, or simply express and advertise the status quo at a given time—remains obscure. What seems certain is that Hagia Theodora was not an isolated case, but part of a wider project, including the Pantanassa and the Paregoretissa, Arta’s equally important dynastic foundations.
The church of the Pantanassa Philippiados: The question of female patronage.

The Pantanassa monastery—the foundation we examined in relation to the patronage of Michael II—was enlarged around 1294 with the addition of the open vaulted portico and the two chapels that envelope the church on three sides; a tower was also attached to the southwest (fig. 62). With these additions, the Pantanassa became one of the most impressive late thirteenth-century churches, measuring 31.75 X 24.60 m. The donors’ portrait—a wall-painting unearthed during excavations in the west end of the south wing of the portico and meticulously pieced together from numerous fragments in its extant parts—establishes the patronage of Nikephoros and Anna (figs. 91–93). The two rulers—portrayed in full regalia and receiving their crowns from the Virgin—are depicted along with only two of their children: their son and successor Thomas and their daughter Thamar. Velenis, who published the inscriptions that accompany the figures, theorized that Thamar was included in the panel, rather than her elder sister Maria, because Thamar was at the time still unmarried. Velenis thus concluded that the wall painting would have been executed after Thomas’ proclamation as despot (spring 1294) and

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344 Vocotopoulos, *Παντάνασσα Φιλιππιάδος*; idem, “Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” 269-301.
345 Measurements do not include the tower; see Vocotopoulos, “Το καθολικό της μονής Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος,” 271.
347 Vocotopoulos, “Τοιχογραφία Παντανάσσης,” 73 and 76, does not rule out the possibility of a third child depicted. On the other hand, Velenis, “Επιγραφές Παντάνασσας,” 82 and 86, argues convincingly that there is not enough space for the depiction of a third child. In any event—according to Pachymeres 3, 224-227 (IX.4)—Thomas and Thamar seem to be the only children of Nikephoros and Anna at the time of his death. Judging from Pachymeres’ relevant passages all negotiations for the future of the Despotate involved either Thomas or Thamar. Nikephoros’ eldest daughter, Maria, is not even mentioned, which leads us to believe that Maria was not Anna’s daughter (see also note below).
348 Velenis, “Επιγραφές Παντάνασσας,” 82. According to Polemis, *The Doukai*, 95 (no. 49), Maria was Nikephoros’ daughter from his first wife, Maria Laskarina. Cf. Nicol, *The Despotate (1267-1479)*, 37, 43-44. Osswald, “L’Épire,” 117 (note 404), mentions Polemis’ view but in his simplified family tree (111, fig. 5 and 142, fig. 6), Maria appears as a daughter of Anna. Vocotopoulos, “Τοιχογραφία Παντανάσσης,” 76 (note 9) and Velenis, ibid., follow Polemis. If Maria was Laskarina’s daughter, she could hardly be considered a child at this time, being more than thirty years old. Nonetheless, there is always the possibility that Maria was a natural daughter of Nikephoros.
before Thamar’s marriage to Philip of Taranto (fall of 1294), in the summer of 1294. This interpretation and precise dating is certainly attractive, but there are reasons for believing that Thamar may stand in the portrait in her own right as an active donor to the church, rather than simply as a protected member of her family.

The donors’ portrait of the Pantanassa church, through its medium, iconography and style is deeply rooted in the long Byzantine tradition of imperial imagery. If Thamar was omitted, the wall-painting would have read as a straightforward investiture portrait whereby rulers receive their power directly from the Virgin and present their successor/s to the viewer. Thamar’s portrayal creates a kind of unease, not least to the composition itself. In group portraits like this, it is usually the male issues of the imperial couple that are represented, but there are few

349 This interpretation and precise dating of the donors’ portrait has been questioned by Osswald, “L’Épire,” 468-469, and 733-734, who pointed out that Thomas, unlike his parents, is not portrayed with the nimbus. Subsequently he proposed a more loose date, the 1290s, and possibly before Thomas’ investment with the title of despot. In my view, there is no reason to doubt Thomas’ status as despot, since he is portrayed with a crown and holds a scepter. In addition, part of the inscription refers to the despots in plural (ἀμφώ κρατοῦντες δεσπόται). Separately, Osswald places Thomas’ proclamation as despot around 1291, instead of 1294. This practically implies the completion of work at the Pantanassa before 1291 and within a different context, i.e. even before the beginning of negotiations for the marriage alliance between Angevins and Epirotes. This interpretation seems unlikely given the Pantanassa’s eclectic character.


351 Cf. the portrait in the Louvre manuscript of ca. 1403-05, depicting Manuel II, his wife Helena, and their three sons John (future John VIII), Theodore and Andronikos: Spatharakis, The portrait, 139-144; and Hennessy, Images of Children, 170-174. Note that Velmans, “Portrait,” 103, figs. 9-10, incorrectly refers to the patron as Andronikos II (1282-1328). This miniature, although made a century later and in a different medium, is very close in terms of iconography and character to the portrait of the Pantanassa and thus useful for comparison purposes. Portraits in manuscripts could have been a source of inspiration for large-scale mural panels and were certainly used to disseminate imperial imagery and the way a ruler and his family should be portrayed.

352 As already noted by Velenis, “Επιγραφές Παντάνασσας,” 82, the composition placed in an arched frame is off axis due to the presence of Thamar.

353 When examining these group portraits, authors often adopt the term “family” portraits (for instance Spatharakis, The portrait, 251-253; Vocotopoulos, “Τοιχογραφία Παντάνασσας,” 76-78), although usually it is only the ruling couple and their male heir/s depicted. Representations of the female imperial children, on the other hand, are extremely rare, especially from the Byzantine world proper. The only examples, I could locate, are the two representations in mosaic that no longer survive: a) in the imperial palace, the Kainourgion of Basil I (867-886), see
contemporaneous imperial group portraits that could provide a useful comparison since their character varies according to their specific context and medium.  

The architectural details of the remodeling of the Pantanassa, on the other hand, give evidence for the involvement of Thamar in the particular project, even if indirectly due to her young age. The enlargement of an existing foundation with the addition of open porticoes and side chapels is a well-established Byzantine practice. Yet, in the case of the Pantanassa, certain formal and sculptural details are definitely of Western origin. These include the five marble monumental portals with their pedestals, bases, parts of colonettes and cornices and the ribbed groin vaults of the portico (figs. 73–74, 79–80). Parts of the sculptural decoration that survives also testify for western sculptors working in the Pantanassa. Given that none of the previous foundations of the rulers of Epiros bear witness to an interaction of Western and Byzantine

Hennessy, *Images of Children*, 144-145. Yet this was a depiction in the bedchamber of the palace and thus the context is totally different and b) some evidence—although confusing—comes from the refectory of the monastery of Peribleptos in Constantinople. The mosaic panel is known to us mainly from travellers’ accounts. Although many modern works quote the panel there is a disagreement concerning both its location and the number/gender of the persons represented. Cf. Velmans, “Portrait,” 99; M. Johnson, “The Lost Royal Portraits of Gerace and Cefalu Cathedrals,” *DOP* 53 (1999): 257-258; A. M. Talbot, “The Restoration of Constantinople under Michael VIII,” *DOP* 47 (1993): 254; and C. Mango, “The Monastery of St. Mary Peribleptos (Sulu Manastir) at Constantinople revisited,” *REArm* 23 (1992): 473-493. Mango’s account on the panel is by far the most detailed. He proposes that the panel represented Michael VIII, his wife Theodora, and their son Constantine, with two of their daughters and possibly another son. His arguments can be summarized briefly as follows: a) Andronikos could not have been omitted; thus Mango proposes six figures, instead of the five mentioned by the traveler Monconys and b) Monconys had mistaken Theodora for the emperor’s daughter and Constantine for a girl. I am wondering whether the traveller was actually correct about the numbers of the persons depicted and whether he was only mistaken about their gender. In this case, the imperial couple, Michael VIII and Theodora would have been depicted with their three surviving sons: Andronikos, Constantine and Theodore. In support of this, comes Monconys’ lengthy description which mentions that the two girls were dressed “comme l’Empereur, à la reserve de leurs couronnes qui sont fai tes en mitres Pâpales à triples couronnes…” Why would the girls be dressed like their father and why would they wear a crown resembling a papal mitre instead of the open-shaped crown reserved for female princesses? Why would the portrait commemorating Michael VIII’s patronage to the monastery privilege the depiction of the daughters instead of the sons?  

See, for instance, the group portrait of Michael VIII Palaiologos (1258-1282) in the church of the Virgin at Apollonia (modern Albania). Michael VIII and Theodora are depicted along with Andronikos II (1282-1328) and a fourth person, either their second son Constantine Porphyrogennetos or their grandson Michael IX (1294/5-1320): H. Buschhausen and H. Buschhausen, *Die Marienkirche von Apollonia in Albanien: Byzantiner, Normannen und Serben im Kampf um die Via Egnatia* (Vienna, 1976), esp. 143-182; and Johnson, “Lost Royal Portraits,” 256. More recently A. Christidou, “Ερευνώντας την ιστορία μέσα από άγνωστα βυζαντινά αυτοκρατορικά πορτρέτα σε εκκλησίες της Αλβανίας,” in Ανταπόδοση: Μελέτες Βυζαντινής και μεταβυζαντινής αρχαιολογίας και τέχνης, προς τιμή της καθηγήτριας Ελένης Δεληγιάννη-Δωρή (Athens, 2010), 537-563.
architectural traditions, Thamar’s sponsorship seems likely. Through her marriage to Philip of Taranto in 1294, Thamar became not only princess of Taranto but also of Romania, i.e. the whole of Latin-occupied Greece.

The Pantanassa’s unprecedented scale and eclectic character along with the testimony of its donors’ panel invites some speculation concerning the motives of such an undertaking. The inscription records an appeal to the Virgin to help Nikephoros with all her strength (Νικηφόρῳ νέμουσα πανσθένει σθένει). This plea might be regarded as a common *topos* in the context of a dedicatory inscription, but upon consideration, it may carry additional importance. If indeed Nikephoros was in poor health towards the end of his reign, piety should not be excluded as one of the primary motives behind the remodeling.

If Nikephoros’ health was deteriorating, dynastic considerations could be behind the remodeling of the Pantanassa. The Pantanassa’s scale, which exceeds by far any other edifice erected during the Late Byzantine period in Greece, aimed at impressing the viewer and advertising the power of the ruling family and their alliance with the Angevins of Naples. It seems that the more precarious the circumstances for the political future of Epiros, the greater were the need for monumental architecture. Thomas’s minority created additional concerns for

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355 The appropriation of western forms and decoration seems to be in direct opposition to the rulers’ official policies as pious defenders of the orthodox faith. The eclectic taste of the ruling class, the geographical proximity of Epiros to Italy, the commercial, personal and artistic contacts between the two places, the political alliances and the dynastic intermarriages between Byzantine princesses and Western rulers are some of the possible explanations offered so far in order to interpret the rather “unorthodox” phenomenon of such an interaction. See L. Safran, “Exploring Artistic Links Between Epiros and Apulia in the Thirteenth Century: The Problem of Sculpture and Wall Painting,” in *Proceedings of the International Symposium “The Despotate of Epirus,”* Arta, 27-31 May 1990, ed. E. Chrysoy (Athens, 1992), 455-474; and Vocolopoulos, “Church Architecture in Epirus,” 91.

356 Philip of Taranto was appointed by his father as suzerain over all the Angevin possessions in Greece, including the Principality of Achaia, the Duchy of Athens, the Kingdom of Albania etc. He was also invested with the title of despot of Romania: Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady*, 27. For Thamar’s wedding to Philip of Taranto and its implications for the Despotate of Epiros, see also idem, Despotate of Epiros (1267-1479), 35-62. The negotiations for the wedding started in 1291.

357 As read by Velenis, “Επιγραφές Παντάνασσας,” 84: ΝΙΚ(ΗΦΟΡΩ) ΝΕΜΟ[ΥΟΑ] ΠΑΝΚΘΕΝΕΙ ΘΕΝΕΙ.

358 See *supra*, note 282.
the future of the Despotate, therefore underlining hereditary rights and legitimacy must have been a priority for Nikephoros and Anna. Ultimately, the donors’ portrait reminded the respective audience of the lawful rulers of Epiros and their God-given right to rule. Any visual references to the Byzantine emperor are omitted. This comes in contrast to the iconography adopted on a commemorative issue of coinage, some forty years before, which depicted the emperor John III Vatatzes placing the crown either on Michael II or most probably Nikephoros, thus investing him with the title of despot.359

359 The identification of the despot is debated, see Stavridou-Zafraka, “Το αξίωμα του ‘Δεσπότη’ και τα δεσποτικά έγγραφα της Ηπείρου,” 91, and notes 112-114 with the relevant literature.
The Paregoretissa church: A new cathedral for Arta?

The building activities of Nikephoros and Anna culminated at the same time in the rebuilding of the Panagia Paregoretissa (1294-1296), the most ambitious of all projects Arta ever witnessed.\(^{360}\) What initiated the rebuilding of the Paregoritissa remains hypothetical: a partial collapse caused by static inadequacy, war or earthquake.\(^{361}\) The Paregoretissa, which retained to a great extent the previous mid-thirteenth-century (?) building, was constructed quickly, never completed and was meant from the outset to combine both Byzantine and Western traditions.\(^{362}\) As in the case of the Pantanassa church, the eclectic character of the Paregoretissa was the outcome of a series of conscious decisions.

The Paregoretissa appears today as a cubic mass topped by five domes (figs. 94–95). The lower exterior zone of the building is constructed of rubble (except for the east façade), whereas the upper parts of fine cloisonné masonry. The portico that would surround the church on three sides, giving the building lighter proportions, most likely was never constructed.

The Paregoretissa’s almost unarticulated exterior is in sharp contrast to its interior design, form and decoration. The incorporation of the pre-existing building of lower proportions and the quest for greater height led to a unique synthesis of an octagon with a cross-in-square


\(^{361}\) For the possible reasons of the rebuilding of the Paregoritissa (i.e. static inadequacy, war or earthquake), see Theis, Paregoretissa, 142-144 and 164-165. Theis’ conclusions are also accepted by Velenis “Thirteenth-Century Architecture in Epirus,” 280 and Safran, “Exploring Artistic Links,” 459.

\(^{362}\) The artisans and masons working in the Paregoretissa came from major artistic centers such as Constantinople and Apulia. The mosaics suggest craftsmen brought in from Constantinople or Thessaloniki: Vocotopoulos, “Art under the Despotate of Epirus,” 232. For the sculptors originating in Apulia, see Orlandos, Παρηγορήτισσα, 84-85, 93; E. Stikas, “L’église byzantine de la Panaghia Parigoritissa (Consolatrice) d’Arta en Epire et l’influence italienne,” CorsiRav 22 (1975): 357-372; and Safran, “Exploring Artistic Links,” 455-474.
arrangement: eight piers on the ground level support three superimposed ranks of reused columns set on corbels and cantilevered so that the span of the dome is gradually reduced (figs. 101–104). For structural stability the main church is enveloped on three sides by a two-storied ambulatory ending in side-chapels. Although typologically a unique arrangement, the Paregoritissa is a combination of the typical local masonry (cloisonné) with Constantinopolitan design and decoration (ambulatory, porticoes, galleries, side chapels, blind arches, five domes, mosaics), while the entire support system of the dome with its formal and decorative features is to a great extent indebted to the Western tradition.

Western sculpture is mainly confined to the upper zone of the dome’s support system (fig. 110). Real or fantastic beasts are carved on the brackets of the third-story columns (figs. 119–120) and support trefoil arches of a purely decorative character. Voussoirs with figures carved in high relief have been attached to the north and west vaults below the dome. The north arch features a Nativity scene flanked by two angels, Joseph and the prophet-king David, the Magi and shepherds, followed by the evangelist Luke and three Old Testament prophets (Micah, Jeremiah and Isaiah), all holding texts that refer to the Incarnation (figs. 113–116). The west arch features the Lamb of God (fig. 117) flanked by the symbols of the evangelists John (eagle) and Matthew (angel), the prophet-kings David and Solomon (fig. 118) and as well as six additional Old Testament prophets (Job, Moses, Zechariah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, one voussoir is missing) holding texts related to the Crucifixion.

As indicated by their Western iconography, style and technique, these reliefs are the work of Italian craftsmen. In particular, specific links with Apulian works of the early thirteenth century have been demonstrated. Such a comparison encouraged the suggestion that these arches, now attached below the dome, were originally used as portal decoration in the mid-thirteenth-century building, as was common in the Western tradition. Yet, this seems highly unlikely. The original building was of considerable smaller scale and its portals too narrow for the placement of arches nearly four meter across. Nor is it likely that the original arrangement of the individual blocks was different since they present coherent iconographic units.

There is little doubt that the western-inspired reliefs were meant to complement the mosaic decoration of the dome. The Paregoretissa follows the standard decorative program of a Byzantine cross-in-square church, whereby the dome is reserved for Christ the Pantokrator (figs. 110–111), the tympanon for prophets (fig. 112), the pendentives for the evangelists, and the vaults and the upper parts of the naos for the major feasts of Christianity. Therefore the surviving reliefs of the Paregoretissa were integrated most successfully in this prominent location, following the Byzantine tradition, but this came at the cost of being illegible from the ground level. As they are more clearly visible from the galleries, it is fairly reasonable to suggest that their intended audience was the royal family who commissioned them.

The scale, lavishness and pretensions of the building are totally new in character. As the only church in Epiros that features galleries, mosaic decoration and marble revetments (fig. 106),

368 Safran, “Exploring Artistic Links,” 459. This was one of the reasons that led Safran to suggest that these reliefs were originally part of the portal decoration of the mid-thirteenth-century building.
it makes direct associations with Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and it is fairly reasonable to suggest that the Paregoretissa was designed as Arta’s new cathedral.\textsuperscript{369} Moreover, the Paregoretissa’s cultural associations with Constantinople indicate that Anna Palaiologina, the only Constantinopolitan among the Epirote rulers, was actively involved in the project’s conception and implementation.

The western-style sculptural decoration—executed by Italian sculptors coming from Apulia—encourages the interpretation that Anna’s daughter, Thamar, was also involved in the project. The founders’ inscription, in its fragmentary state, remains puzzling (figs. 106–109).\textsuperscript{370} The inscription mentions the names of the patrons as Komnenos Doukas despot Nikephoros/Anna basilissa Komnenodoukaina/Komnenoblastos despot Thomas\textit{ megas}.\textsuperscript{371} The last line of the inscription is not preserved in its entirety and has been reconstructed variously.\textsuperscript{372} The name of “Komnenos” appears, followed by the word “κλάδος” and another one starting with an “A”.

Most recently, Velenis revisited the inscription and reconstructed its missing part as follows:

“Κομνηνοφυής κλάδος Αγγελωνύμων” (i.e. of the lineage of Angeloi).\textsuperscript{373}


\textsuperscript{370} For the inscription, see Orlandos, \textit{Παρηγορήτισσα}, esp. 96-103, and 153-160.

\textsuperscript{371} Orlandos, \textit{Παρηγορήτισσα}, 154: Κομνηνοδούκας δεσπότης Νικηφόρος / Άννα βασίλισσα Κομνηνοδουκαινα / Κομνηνόβλαστος δεσπότης Θωμᾶς μέγας.

\textsuperscript{372} a) According to Orlandos, \textit{Παρηγορήτισσα}, 154: Κομνην[ν] Ελλάδος α[υτάνακτες] or Κομνην[ν] Κ[λάδος άγγελωνύμων].


c) According to Velenis, “Επιγραφές Παντάνασσας,” 83-84: “Κομνηνοφυής κλάδος Αγγέλωνύμων.”

\textsuperscript{373} Velenis’ reading (“Επιγραφές Παντάνασσας,” 83-84) follows closely Orlandos, \textit{Παρηγορήτισσα}, 154, note 8. Orlandos was the first to suggest “Αγγέλωνύμων” based on the evidence of the \textit{Endyte} of St. Mark.
Yet, there is little evidence that the rulers of Epiros used the name of Angelos in their official titles. There seems to be an agreement among modern historians such as Stiernon, Nicol, Macrides, and Kyritses that the rulers of Epiros preferred instead the names of Doukas and Komnenos or the compound form of Komnenodoukas. Only Byzantine historians (Akropolites, Gregoras, Skoutariotes and Pachymeres) would refer to the Epirote rulers as Angeloi, a name with less prestige. The proposed reconstruction as "Αγγέλων" or "Αγγελωνύμων" is thus somewhat conjectural—based mainly on the evidence of inscriptions that cannot be firmly associated with the Epirote rulers. Moreover, in the context of these

374 The only instance—that I know of—where the name of Angelos is associated with the despots of Epiros is the seal attributed to Thomas of Epiros, Nikephoros’ son, see Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557), exhib. cat., ed. H. Evans (New York, 2004), 35-36, cat. no. 9, with further bibliography.


376 Nicol’s suggestion is based on the examination of coins, seals and documents: Nicol, “Πρόσφατες έρευνες,” 43-44. Only one document from Vatopedi, signed by an emperor Michael Doukas Angelos Komnenos Palaiologos is associated with Michael II of Epiros. But as Nicol, The Despotate, 210-211, already observed, this identification is very problematic since Michael II could not claim ancestry from the Palaiologos family. Moreover, Michael II never held the imperial title. On the other hand it is known that Michael VIII Palaiologos signed his documents as Michael Doukas Angelos Komnenos Palaiologos, see D. Kyritses, “The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1997), 224.

377 Macrides, George Akropolites, 41-42.

378 Kyritses, “Aristocracy,” 224-225: “…the rulers of Epiros-Thessalonica who sometimes signed as Komnenoi, more often as Doukai and rarely with both these names. But it is also noteworthy that this family completely abandoned the paternal name of Angelos. The reasons are not very clear, but they must certainly be connected to the rivalry for the heritage of the empire after 1204: it is possible that these rulers wanted to dissociate themselves from their unworthy relative, Alexios III… and stress their relationship to the previous dynastic family, the Komnenoi…”

379 Stiernon, “Origines,” 117, 120, note 44.

380 Macrides, George Akropolites, 41; Polemis, The Doukai, esp. 89 (note 2), 91 (note 9), 94 (notes 1 and 11).

381 The use of “Αγγελωνύμων” appears, for instance, in: a) A seal attributed to the sebastokrator Alexios Komnenos Angelos, i.e. the future emperor Alexios III: Αλεξίου σφράγισµα Κοµνηνῶν κλάδου σεβαστοκρατοροῦντος Αγγελωνύμου


b) A seal of Alexios bearing the inscription: Εγώ κρατών τάς γραφάς Αλεξίου Δουκῶν Κοµνηνῶν Αγγελωνύμων κλάδου

See Polemis, The Doukai, 88, no 41. According to Polemis the seal belongs to Alexios, a son of the sebastokrator Ioannes Doukas (ibid., 87-88, no 40) and should be dated to the second half of the twelfth century.

c) The Endyte of Saint Mark: Κοµνηνοφυὴς δεσπότης Κωνσταντίνος, σεβαστοκράτωρ ἀγγελωνύμων γένους ξύναιμος αὐτάνακτος Λιούνων γένους

inscriptions, “Ἀγγέλωνύμων” either defines the word “γένος” (i.e.
ancestry, lineage, family, class, race) or “κλάδος” (lit.
branch), words which indicate descent but can hardly be considered
as synonyms.\(^\text{382}\) To the best of my knowledge, “κλάδος”
denotes the offspring, the descendant (=γόνος) not the clan/family (=γένος)
and as such appears in the context of at least three
inscriptions from Epiros.\(^\text{383}\) Thus, in the case of Paregoretissa, “κλάδος”
should probably be better understood as a synonym of “βλαστός” (lit.
offshoot, shoot),\(^\text{384}\) used in the inscription to
describe Thomas as the descendant of the Komnenoi (Κοµνηνόβλαστος).
It seems to me an unnecessary repetition to refer to Thomas in the next line
again as a descendant of the Komnenoi (Κοµνηνών κλάδος or
Κοµνηνοφυής κλάδος) only to add and “of the Angeloi” (Αγγέλων or

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d) The seal of Constantine Sebastokrator: + Γραφῶν σφράγισµα Κωνσταντίνου δεσπότου,
σεβαστοκρατοῦντος 
συζυγία σὺν τοῖς νεθοῦσι εὐθαλεστάτοις κλάδοις
υποδέλφων ....................,
εἰκ’ τῆς ἀξίας δ’ ἐπίκλην Ἀγγελονύμου.

See Laurent, “Péplum,” 211; Theocharis, “Endyté,” 274. The identification of the
sebastokrator Constantine, who appears on this seal and on the Endyte of Saint Mark, is much debated. There are two likely candidates, both named
Constantine: either the son of Michael I of Epiros (according to Theocharis)
or the brother of the emperors Isaac II and Alexios III (according to Laurent). Polemis, The Doukai, 86, note 11; and Prinzing, “Studien,” Ἡπειρχρον 24
(1982), 76, note 13, accepted Laurent’s identification. Thus, none of the above examples provides us with firm
evidence to associate the use of “Ἀγγέλωνύμων” with the ruling family of Epiros.

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\(^\text{382}\) For examples, see note above. For the definition of “γένος” and “κλάδος,” see for instance G. W.H. Lampe, A
patristic Greek lexicon (Oxford, 1976); and the medieval dictionary by E. Kriaras,
Λεξικό της Μεσαιωνικής Ελληνικής δηµώδους γραµµατείας, 1100-1669 (Thessaloniki, 1968), also available on line.

\(^\text{383}\) The use of κλάδος as child/offspring/issue occurs, for instance, in Epiros:

a) The Pantanassa’s inscription, see Velenis, “Επιγραφές Παντάνασσας,” 84, line 12-13: “…ἡ συζυγία σὺν τοῖς νεθοῦσι ἐυθαλεστάτοις κλάδοις…” (i.e. the <royal> couple with their… flourishing offspring). Cf. also the acrostic
in Par. gr. 922, f.5v: “…Σὺν τοῖς καταστράπτουσι παισὶ τῶ στέφει /
Τοῖς πορφύρας τε τοῖς σελασφόροις κλάδοις…”;
full text and translation in Spatharakis, The portrait, 102-104.

b) The seal of Michael I Doukas of Epiros, cited by many scholars, see for instance Polemis, The Doukai, 92:
Σφράγισµα γραφῶν Μιχαὴλ ∆ουκικῆς ῥίζης κλάδου
σεβαστοκρατοῦντος εὐθαλοῦς κλάδου

This inscription has been translated by Theocharis, “Endyté,” 279, note 35, as “de la branche florissante des
sébastocrators” and by Stiernon, “Origines,” 111, no. 88, as “florrisant rejeton du sébastokrator.” Despite
Theocharis’ objections (“Endyté,” 279 note 35), Stiernon’s translation is to my understanding the accurate one.

c) Anna’s betrothal ring which reads: 
Μνῆστρον Στεφάνου ∆ουκικῆς ῥίζης κλάδου,
Κοµνηνοφυής τ’ ἐν χερσὶ Ἀννα δέχου.

According to Polemis, The Doukai, 93, note 9, this ring belongs to Anna Doukaina, daughter of Theodore Doukas
who married Stephen Doukas, the future king of Serbia, ca. 1224.
For other examples of κλάδος on seals, see Zacos and Veglery, Byzantine Lead Seals, nos. 2730, 2730bis, 2732,
2738, and 2751. Κλάδος also occurs in funerary inscriptions, see for instance: C. Mango, “Sépultures et épitaphs
aristocratiques à Byzance,” in Epigraphia Medievale Greca e Latina: Ideologia e Funzione, ed. G. Cavallo and C.
Mango (Spoletto, 1995), 112, note 33: “…πρῶτον μεν αὐχείς την βασίλειον κόνων/ του παµµεγίστου παγκρατοῦς
Ἀλεξίου/και της ανάσσης της μεγίστης Ειρήνης/ του ∆ουκοφυοῦς μυριβλάστου κλάδου…”

\(^\text{384}\) For the definition of “βλαστός,” see Lampé, A patristic Greek lexicon; and Kriaras’ medieval dictionary.
Αγγελωνύμων), although this is a possibility for metrical reasons. Alternatively, κλάδος could refer to another offspring of the couple and could be followed by the name of that offspring. An alternative reading, consistent with the context of the inscription and with the evidence of the architecture might have been:

ΚΟΜΝΗΝΟΔΟΥΚΑΣ ΔΕΣΠΟΤΗΣ ΝΙ[ΚΗΦ]ΟΡΟΣ
ΑΝΝΑ ΒΑΣΙΛ[ΙΣΣΑ] ΚΟΜΝΗΝ[ΟΔΟΥΚΑΙΝΑ]
ΚΟΜΝΗΝΟΒΛΑΣΤΟΣ Δ[ΕΣΠΟΤΗΣ Θ]ΩΜΑΣ ΜΕΓΑΣ
ΚΟΜΝΗΝ[ΟΚ]ΛΑΔΟΣ385 ΑΙΚΑΤΕΡΙΝΑ]386

If this interpretation is correct then Thamar, known as Catherine of Taranto after her marriage to Philip, was also commemorated in the founders’ inscription.387 This interpretation, equally hypothetical as the previous readings, presents some advantages: Thamar is commemorated in the dedicatory portrait of the Pantanassa church but not in the Paregoretissa, although both edifices were reconstructed at approximately the same time and both present undisputable western features.

385 Alternatively we may consider the word ΚΟΜΝΗΝ[ΟΔΟΥΚΟΚΛΑΔΟ that appears in the Pantanassa’s inscription, see Velenis, “Επιγραφές Παντάνασσας,” 84, line 12; and Κοµνηνοδουκόπαιδα on the seal of Isaakios Komnenodoukas, see Zacos and Veglery, Byzantine Lead Seals, no. 2736. I proposed ΚΟΜΝΗΝΟ instead, because Orlandos mentions that the available space can only fit ten syllables. However, the word ΚΟΜΝΗΝΟΔΟΥΚΟ can be easily abbreviated to fit the available space, which would result in a dodecasyllabic verse.

386 Similarly, I privileged the form “Αικατερίνα” or “Αικατερήνα” instead of “Αικατερίνη” for it seems more commonly used. See, for instance, the mosaic in the katholikon of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas in Phocis, Greece: N. Patterson-Ševčenko, “The Monastery of Mount Sinai and the Cult of Saint Catherine,” in Byzantium: Faith, and Power (1261-1557): Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Symposia, ed. S. Brooks (New York, 2006), 121, fig. 65. Also the fresco of St. Catherine in the church of St. Nicholas Orphanos in Thessaloniki (1310-1320): Tsitouridou, Ο ζωγραφικός διάκοσµος του Αγίου Νικόλαου Ορφανοί, 200, pl. 101; and K. Kirchhainer, Die Bildausstattung der Nikolauskirche in Thessaloniki: Untersuchungen zu Struktur und Programm der Malereien (Weimar, 2001), 123-125, abb. 66.

387 Thamar’s potential role as a patron of architecture has been overlooked. Yet, she could be associated with at least three projects in Epiros—the Pantanassa, the Paregoretissa and St. Theodora. Moreover, Thamar—a Byzantine princess by virtue and birth, who could claim ancestry from all illustrious Byzantine families (Komnenoi, Doukai, Kantakouzenoi and Palaiologoi)—has been unfairly dismissed as “marginally Byzantine” (as in A. M. Talbot, review of The Byzantine Lady: Ten Portraits 1250-1500, by D. M. Nicol, The Slavonic and East European Review 74, no. 1 [January 1996]: 159).
Whatever the truth behind the dedicatory inscription of the Paregoretissa, there seems to be no doubt that the church was remodeled with the Constantinopolitan court ceremonial in mind. Arta, and more specifically the royal family, were in need of a monumental church that could be used as the setting for the celebration of their major achievements: the bestowal of the title of despot to Thomas; the marriage of Thamar to Philip of Taranto. Although there are no written sources to record the court ceremonial in Arta, it seems no coincidence that the Paregoretissa was designed with galleries. Despite the separatist nature of the Epirote rule, Nikephoros and Anna, as despot and basilissa respectively, were considered even if nominally part of the Byzantine hierarchy. At the time of the Pantanassa’s and the Paregoretissa’s remodeling, their diplomacy was successful. They secured the title of despot for their son Thomas, and an alliance with the Angevin ruler, Charles II of Anjou. Soon after Nikephoros’ death, their prosperity and status deteriorated. This is best demonstrated by the unfinished galleries of the Paregoretissa.

Nikephoros and Anna endowed the city of Arta with a royal mausoleum (the Blacherna), a pilgrimage church (Hagia Theodora) and probably a new cathedral (the Paregoritissa) and transformed Arta into a royal capital city, following closely the Constantinopolitan model. Their projects reveal knowledge of both Byzantine standards of patronage and the use of art and architecture as propaganda. In an effort to strengthen their authority, assert their legitimacy and secure their independence against the pretensions of the Angevins of Naples and the Byzantine emperor, they exploited architecture to its full potential. Their buildings embody and reflect contemporaneous political developments: a) Epiros’ acknowledgement of the Byzantine emperor’s supremacy; b) Nikephoros’ alliance with the Angevins; c) and the increased insecurity as to Epiros’ future, towards the last years of Nikephoros’ reign and during Anna’s regency.
Political agreements, ratified with marriage alliances, not only sustained Epiros’ political life but also had an impact on its visual culture, seen most clearly in the Paregoritissa’s and the Pantanassa’s cultural associations. Ultimately, the eclectic character of each and every one of their projects embodied and displayed the rulers’ definition of identity.
CHAPTER 3
THE PATRONAGE OF THE RULERS OF EPIROS IN THE PERIPHERY OF THEIR DOMINION: THE CASE OF ST. NICHOLAS AT MESOPOTAMON

The patronage of the Komnenodoukas family in the periphery of their dominion is ill-documented. Information concerning their projects comes mainly from the written sources and some fragmentary inscriptive evidence. All available information has been gathered and examined in detail on several instances by philologists, historians, archaeologists and art historians working on the “Despotate.” For this reason, it suffices here to present briefly what is already well known (with an emphasis on the uncertainties concerning their patronage) before proceeding with the examination of St. Nicholas at Mesopotamon, an important standing building, which has received little attention from this point of view.

A letter from the metropolitan Apokaukos addressed to an unnamed patriarch (probably Theodore II Eirenikos) informs us that Michael I (1204-1215) and Theodore Komnenos Doukas (1215-1230) were the patrons of a newly constructed monastery (…τῇ παρὰ τῶν ἡμετέρων μεγάλων Κομνηνῶν, τοῦ τε κῦρ Μιχαήλ ἔκεινου καὶ τοῦ νῦν κρατοῦντος κῦρ Θεοδόρου, νεωργομένῃ μονῇ) at the area under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Chimara. More specifically, Apokaukos clarifies that the church was constructed by Michael I (already dead at the time the letter was crafted) and that it was consecrated by the bishop of Chimara as a stavropegion (τὸν ἐπὶ σταυροπηγίῳ τοῦ ὑφ’ ὑμᾶς συναδελφοῦ ἡμῶν τοῦ Χιµάρας)

ἀνοικοδοµούµενον ναὸν παρὰ τοῦ ἀοιδίµου κυρὶ Ἡσαΐας τοῦ Κοµνηνοῦ-ἐν ὦ καὶ ἡ ἐπὶ τῇ καταβολῇ τῶν θεµελίων ἀνεφωνήθη παρὰ τοῦ Χιµάρας εὐχή καὶ λείψανα µαρτυρικά κατετέθησαν καὶ πάντα …ἐπισκοπικῶς ἐτελέσθησαν).  

389 Apokaukos complains to the patriarch that a certain monk Nikon, patriarchal exarch of the monasteries of Bagenitia, destroyed the church (καθεῖλε δὲ τὸν ἐπὶ σταυροπηγίῳ) and built in its vicinity (κατὰ πολλὴν τὴν ἐγγύτητα τῷ προτέρῳ) a new stavropegion in order to be freed from the bishop’s supervision (ἐτερὸν ἐπὶ σταυροπηγίῳ τῆς σῆς ἁγιωσύνης οἰκοδοµεῖ, ὡς πάντως τὴν ἐπισκοπικὴν ἐποπτείαν ἀποφορτίσηται).  

393 For his new church, Nikon used not only building material from the old church but also its foundation relics for the consecration of the new building (τοὺς τε λίθους τοῦ ἐπισκοπικοῦ ναοῦ ἀφαιρεῖται καὶ τῷ καινιζοµένῳ ἐντίθησαι, καὶ τὸν θεµέλιον καταστηθεὶς καταλιµπάνει, ἐν ὦ τὰ µαρτυρικὰ λείψανα κατετέθησαν).

394 Where Apokaukos’ letter aims mainly at castigating the unlawful behaviour of the patriarchal exarch, it is quite vague in other respects. The name of the monastery is omitted and there are no specific references as for its location, other than being located in the area under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Chimara.  

395 Similarly, Apokaukos does not provide any actual description of the church or the monastery and therefore we do not know anything about its physical aspects. Nonetheless, the letter reveals the cooperation between the rulers of Epiros and the local bishops in the construction of monasteries and documents at the same time the existing tension between patriarchal exarchs, local bishops and metropolitans during the time of the political fragmentation of the Byzantine Empire.
The despot Theodore Doukas with his brother Constantine are probably commemorated on a painted inscription from Mastro Aitolias (figs. 121–123). The church, known as Episkopi Mastrou, was during the thirteenth century the seat of the local bishop of Acheloos. The preexisting church—a three-aisled basilica—has been redecorated in the thirteenth century, probably on the initiatives of the ruling family of Epiros. Information is, however, circumstantial, provided by a very fragmentary inscription, painted on the apse of the sanctuary and by now severely damaged. Katsaros, who published the inscription, identified the persons commemorated with the despot Theodore Doukas, his brother Constantine and their sister Anna. A fourth person—a certain Alexios Komnenos remains unidentified. Complementary to the inscription is the figure of a donor prostrating to the enthroned Virgin and Child depicted on the apse. Being extremely weathered today, the donor has been identified either with Constantine Doukas himself or with an ecclesiastical patron. Based on the high quality of the fresco decoration and the existing inscription, it is has been suggested that the ruling family of Epiros might have sponsored the redecoration of the basilica, ca. 1225, although this is not clearly stated in the inscription itself.


397 For the church, see mainly P. Vocotopoulos, Η εκκλησιαστική αρχιτεκτονική εις την Δυτικήν Στερεάν Ελλάδα και την Ήπειρον από του τέλους του 7ου μέχρι του τέλους του 10ου αιώνας (Thessaloniki, 1975), 11-20, and 179-181, who dates the basilica to the late seventh or eighth century; and A. Paliouras, Βυζαντινή Αιτωλοακαρνανία: Συμβολή στη Βυζαντινή και Μεταβυζαντινή Μνημειακή Τέχνη, rev. ed. (Agrinion, 2004), 52-53, and 197-200, with further references. On the episkepsis and bishopric of Acheloos, see most recently B. Osswald, “L’Épire du treizième au quinzième siècle: autonomie et hétérogénéité d’une région balkanique” (PhD diss., University of Toulouse, 2011), esp. 349 note 108, with the relevant bibliography.

398 Katsaros, “Επιγραφική ‘Δεσποτάτου,’” 533.

399 Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ήπειρος,” 339.
Constantine Doukas is also associated with the addition of the exonarthex in the middle Byzantine katholikon of the monastery of Barnakoba, northeast of Naupaktos (figs. 124–127). The construction of the exonarthex is dated in the year 1229/30, according to an eighteenth-century historical note, which probably copies an earlier document of the monastery. The church had been blown up in 1826, and its exterior walls were completely rebuilt in 1831. Consequently, the reconstruction of the Byzantine katholikon and its various construction phases becomes highly problematic. What remains in situ is the opus sectile floor of the katholikon, some parts of the walls of the narthex, and the exonarthex. The exonarthex, which retains its original supports and superstructure, is a two-columned structure covered with groin-vaults, barrel vaults and low domical vaults, in a strange arrangement, and contrary to the rest of the church, does not retain a similar elaborate floor, which is equally puzzling for a royal foundation. In addition to the eighteenth-century note, the name of a certain despot Constantine (δεσπότην Κωνσταντίνου) is preserved in a fragmentary funerary inscription and, by all accounts, he is identified with Constantine, the brother of Theodore Doukas, who was in charge of the area of Aitoloakarnania. Two additional funerary inscriptions found in the

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400 The katholikon was originally built in 1077, and it was either rebuilt or just enlarged in 1148, with consequent additions thereafter. Main publication: A. Orlandos, *Η μονή Βαρνάκοβας* (Athens, 1922). The architecture of the church has been reexamined by Ch. Bouras, “Θεσσαλίας οικοδομικές φάσεις του καθολικού της Μονής Βαρνάκοβας,” *SChAE* 15 (1995): 47 (with reconstructed plan); and Ch. Bouras and L. Boura, *Η ελλαδική ναοδομία κατά τον 12ο αιώνα* (Αθήνα, 2002), 92-94, and fig. 80 (with additional references). See also N. Kaponis, “Η ναοδομική αρχιτεκτονική του Δεσποτάτου κατά την διάρκεια της δυναστείας των Κομνηνών Αγγέλων” (PhD diss., University of Ioannina, 2005), 54, and 197-198, 268 and 371.


402 According to Orlandos and Bouras, the present exonarthex should be attributed to Constantine Doukas. Yet, the eighteenth-century note refers to three distinct units of the katholikon: a naos, a narthex and an exonarthex. If we accept Bouras’ reconstruction, we have four distinct units: a naos, a narthex/liti, an esonarthex, and an exonarthex. Given the strange arrangement of the vaults covering today’s exonarthex, not very common in Byzantine architecture, and the absence of an elaborate floor in this unit, I am wondering whether the present exonarthex is actually a later addition. If this is the case, then the thirteenth-century exonarthex of Constantine Doukas should be identified with what is today the preceding esonarthex. Similarly, it is difficult to explain how the preexisting, non-imperial twelve-century foundation had such an exquisite floor. Therefore, we should consider the possibility of a repaving in the thirteenth century.

403 For the inscription, see also Katsaros, “Επιγραφική ‘Δεσποτάτου,’” 518-519 (no. 1). Osswald, “L’Épire,” 729-730 (no. 3). Fundič, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 15-16.
katholikon,\textsuperscript{404} provide substantial evidence that the monastery served as a royal mausoleum during the thirteenth century, although the identification of the persons buried there is not always possible.

The next ruler of Epiros Michael II Komnenos Doukas (1231-1267/1268) is credited with the construction of a church, originally the katholikon of a monastery, located on a mountainside near Galaxidi and dedicated to the Transfiguration of Christ.\textsuperscript{405} The existing church—a small single-aisled, cross-vaulted building to which a narthex was added shortly after—suffered considerable damage due to an earthquake in 1862 and was extensively rebuilt by local masons around 1906-1908 (figs. 128–131). The church has already received a thorough study by Vocotopoulos and therefore we need only draw attention to the problems concerning its patronage.

Our only source for attributing the construction of the monastery to Michael II is the Chronicle of Galaxidi, a text written in 1703 but based on older sources, which was found buried in the ruins of the church.\textsuperscript{406} According to the eighteenth-century Chronicle, the church was built by a famous “engineer” (τζινιέρης) from Galaxidi, Nicolo Carouli (Νικολὸν Καρούλην), who

\textsuperscript{404} For these inscriptions, see Katsaros, “Επιγραφική ‘Δεσποτάτου,’” 519 (nos. 2, and 3); and Osswald, “L’Épire,” 731 (no. 7). One of them preserves the name of Alexios R[jaoul or Philanthropenos], who is identified with the son in-law of Michael II. The other inscription does not preserve any name.


\textsuperscript{406} The first edition of the Chronicle is by N. Sathas, Χρονικόν ανέκδοτον Γαλαξείδιου (Athens, 1865), esp. 197-200. The relevant text is prefaced (ibid., 191) as Ἱστορία Γαλαξείδιου εὐγαλµένη ἀπὸ παλαιά χερόγραφα, μεμβράνια, σιζίλια, καὶ χρυσόβουλλα αὐθεντικὰ, ὁποῖα εὑρίσκονται, καὶ εἶναι καὶ σώζονται εἰς τὸ Βασιλικὸν Μοναστήρι τοῦ Σωτήρος Χριστοῦ, χτισµένο παρὰ τοῦ ποτὲ αὐθέντη καὶ δεσπότη Κύρ Μιχαὴλ τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ, οὔ αιωνία ή μνήμη. Ἀμην. [“History of Galaxidi extracted from old manuscripts, parchments, sigillia, and authentic chrysobulls, found, located, and preserved in the royal monastery of the Christ Savior, built by the lord and despot Michael Komnenos...”].
had previously worked “under the Frankish rulers” (στὴν δούλευσι τῆς Φραγκίας). The monastery was allegedly endowed by the despot Michael II with precious gifts and white marble columns of high quality; and Michael’s name was “written” on a “marble column,” located “in front of the narthex.” Besides this specific information, the author of the chronicle mostly elaborates on the fact that the church was built by Michael II in an act of repentance for leaving his wife Theodora—information (more like a topos) associated with the other projects attributed to Michael II, by the *Vita* of St. Theodora. It goes without saying that the “marble column” with the name of Michael does not exist—and most probably never did; and that the author of the eighteenth-century chronicle, himself a priest-monk of the monastery, was clearly drawing information from the *Vita* of St. Theodora to embellish his account.

The author of the chronicle states that he was working from old texts: original documents, kept in the monastery as stated in his preface, and/or secondary literature as implied in his epilogue. As we might expect, with the exception of the Chronicle itself, none of these documents are preserved. In any event, the many inaccuracies of the narrative demonstrate that the author of the Chronicle had very little understanding of his primary sources. Indicative of his poor grasp of history is the fact that he places the construction of the monastery...

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407 Sathas, *Χρονικόν*, 200: “Επιστάτης ἅπαντος στὸ χτίσμο, ἐστάθηκε ἕνας περίφημος τξινέρης ἀπὸ τὸ Γαλαξεῖδι, Νικόλον Καρούλην τὸν ἐλέγα, ποῦ εἶδε κόσμο πολύν καὶ ἐστάθηκε στὴν δούλευσι τῆς Φραγκίας: καὶ ἀφ’ ἑτάθηκε τὸ μοναστήρι τοῦ Σωτῆρος, τὸ ἐπλούτισε ὁ δέσποτας Κύρ Μιχαὴλ µὲ πολλὰ βασιλικὰ καὶ ἀνεχτίµητα δώρα, μανάλια ἀπὸ βασιλικὸ χάλκωµα, κανθάλια ἁσηµένια καὶ μαλαµατένια καὶ κολώναις ἀπὸ µάρµαρο περίφηµο καὶ κάτασπρο- καὶ διὰ τὸν µηνηµονεύεται τὸ ὄνοµα τοῦ Κύρ Μιχαὴλ σὲ όλας τὰς λειτουργίας καθηµεριναῖς καὶ ἐπίσηµας, ἔστοντας καὶ τὸ ὄνοµα τοῦ γραµµένο σὲ µία κολώνα µαρµαρένια, ποῦ εἶνε ἐµπρὸς στὸν νάρθηκα.”

408 See note above. Too much emphasis is placed on the marble columns—information repeated twice in the same sentence, in order to “clarify” that Michael’s name was written on one of them.


410 As discussed in the previous chapter. Also Vocotopoulos, “Παρατηρήσεις στὸν ναὸ τοῦ Σωτῆρος,” 199.

411 The church itself is of a very simplified type and does not require free-standing supports. Similarly, there are no indications for the existence of a porch in front of the narthex. Even if there was a porch, the chances of having white marble columns are very thin. After all, the sculptural decoration of the church consists of few fragments only.

412 See supra, note 406.

413 Sathas, *Χρονικόν*, 221: “διαβάζοντας παλαιὰ βιβλία, ποῦ ἐίναι καὶ σώζονται στὸ μοναστήρι τοῦ Σωτῆρος...”
in the middle twelfth century (1147) and probably within the context of the “Frankish”
(Norman?) invasions to the area, i.e. some hundred years before Michael’s reign.\footnote{In an effort to make sense of this confusion, Hallensleben—see Küpper, Dachtranseptkirche, vol. 1, 109 (esp. note 695), and vol. 2, 109—proposed that the given date of 1147 is probably an error of transcription; and that the error occurred when the eighteenth-century author of the Chronicle converted the annus mundi of the original document into the annus domini, i.e. \( \xi\nu\nu\nu\) (6655AM=1147AD), instead of the correct \( \psi\nu\nu\nu\) (6755AM=1247AD). Admittedly, the letters \( \chi \) and \( \psi \) do not look that similar, and the chronicle is confused in so many other aspects. In addition, if we accept the year 1246/7 that fits with the reign of Michael II, then we should search for a context other than the Norman invasion of the twelve century. In this respect, the narrative is quite vague: pirates came from the Frankish lands in their armed ships (\( \eta\rho\theta\nu\nu \pi\alpha\le \pi\pi\alpha\tau\tau\alpha\zeta\upmu\omicron \mu\acute{\epsilon}\rho\mu\alpha\tau\eta\omicron\mu\acute{\iota}\mu\nu\alpha\iota\nu\gamma\iota\alpha\zeta\sigma\varsigma \mu\acute{\epsilon} \acute{\iota} \mu\acute{\rho}\mu\alpha\tau\eta\omicron\mu\acute{\iota}\mu\nu\alpha\iota\nu\gamma\iota\alpha\zeta\sigma\varsigma \nu\phi\lambda\omicron\alpha\tau\omicron\nu\gamma\iota\omicron\alpha\)). They pillaged four places (Πάτρα, Ἐπαχτο, Βιτρινίτζα and Βοστίτζα), and they besieged and took Galaxidi; the land was deserted and the local inhabitants abandoned their houses and sought refuge in the mountains, where the monastery is now located (see Sathas, Χρονικόν, 197). In fact, this vague description can fit any Latin assault in the area. I am wondering whether this is a very confused reference to the four castles that formed part of Thamar’s dowry and to the Angevin invasions in Aitolonakarnania.} Equally puzzling seems the fact that the author was reportedly one of the few remaining monks of the monastery and, therefore, should have had first-hand knowledge of the katholikon he is describing.\footnote{The author states in his epilogue that he is one of the five remaining monks of the monastery. Two of them, including him, were priest-monks: Sathas, Χρονικόν, 221.} Did he fail to notice the absence of marble columns? And since he paid so much effort to read all those old books as he states, how did he fail to comment on the painted inscription preserved in the apse of the church—much damaged today, but likely better preserved in his own time?

Despite the many questions this written source generates, and largely against the evidence provided by the building, the reliability of the Chronicle has been only partially questioned. As has been already observed by Vocotopoulos, the church’s small scale, simplicity of masonry, and absence of sculptural decoration fails to meet the expectations of a royally sponsored foundation; and that the formal characteristics of the church do not indicate the work of an “engineer” trained in the western tradition.\footnote{Vocotopoulos, “Παρατηρήσεις στον ναό του Σωτήρος,” 203.} Subsequently, and in an effort to reconcile the written record with the material evidence, the discussion focused on the identity of the “engineer.” Was he a foreigner, an Italian as his name implies according to Küpper’s suggestion,
who found employment under Michael II?\footnote{Küpper, \textit{Dachtranseptkirche}, vol. 1, 110.} Or rather a local mason, who had previously worked in the Latin-held territories?\footnote{Vocotopoulos, “Παρατηρήσεις στον ναό του Σωτήρος,” 204. Kaponis, “Ναοδομική Αρχιτεκτονική,” 242, note 840; and Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 21.} All suggestions, however, are based on the assumption that this is a royal foundation of Michael II, without taking into consideration that this is the earliest example of the simplified version of the cross-vaulted church. Besides three additional examples, which date from the end of the thirteenth century, this church type becomes quite widespread especially during the post-Byzantine era.\footnote{Examples of the single-aisled, cross-vaulted churches are cited in Kaponis, “Ναοδομική Αρχιτεκτονική,” 242, who, nonetheless, does not question the date of this church.} At first glance, therefore, it seems tempting to disregard the written account altogether. Yet, a comparison with the first phase of the Blacherna church in Arta or the first phase of the church of Hagia Theodora—both royal endowments and equally modest in their appearances and pretensions—indicates that very often royal foundations do not necessarily meet our expectations of monumental architecture. Consequently, we need additional indications for supporting or rejecting the alleged patronage of Michael II.

The fresco decoration of the church is now completely lost but was partially recorded in the old photographs of Lampakis, who visited the church in 1902, i.e. before its subsequent rebuilding. Of the frescoes, those of the sanctuary are better documented (fig. 131). The semi-dome of the apse was taken up by the Deesis, with the enthroned Christ Pantokrator flanked by the Virgin and St. John the Forerunner. The lower zone takes the form of an arcade with four sculptural arches “supported” on slender columns. Four hierarchs are depicted within these arched recesses. Only John Chrysostom has been identified with some certainty\footnote{Ibid., 208.} but judging by the number of the hierarchs represented they should probably be identified with the four great...
church fathers, as they are depicted, for instance, in the apse of the cave church of Osios Andreas the hermit (fig. 133). An inscription running in one row across the length of the apse, separating the semi-dome from the lower zone, was preserved in its last part. According to Lampakis’ photograph and transcription, the inscription made a special reference to the patriarch and the local bishop.\textsuperscript{421}

The fresco decoration of the church is now considered more or less contemporaneous with the building’s construction, and has been similarly discussed within the context of Michael II’s patronage.\textsuperscript{422} The arguments mostly focus on the representation of the Deesis in the apse, quite common in the Byzantine world, but the only extant example from the Despotate. Privileging the written account concerning Michael II’s patronage, this specific iconography has been considered as a visible manifestation of the donor’s repentance. Thus, the potential funerary character of the iconography and church has been largely rejected, despite the noticed indications for the existence of a burial within the church.\textsuperscript{423} Similarly, the way the inscription relates to the iconography of the apse has not been explained.

To my knowledge, none of the few remaining inscriptions commemorating the patronage of royal or lay patrons (Paregoritissa, Pantanassa, Boulgareli etc) makes specific mention of the patriarch and the local bishop of their time. Therefore, a reasonable suggestion would be to search instead for an ecclesiastical patron rather than a royal patron. This suggestion largely

\textsuperscript{421} [ΠΑΤΡΙ]ΑΡΧΟΥΝΤΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΚΥΡ...ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΥΝΤΟΣ ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΥ...: Recited in Vocotopoulou, “Παρατηρήσεις στον ναό του Σωτήρος.” 208.

\textsuperscript{422} The frescoes had been previously dated to the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Vocotopoulou and others have rejected this view and proposed a date in the thirteenth century (ibid., 204, note 20). In particular, Vocotopoulou prefers a date after the completion of the church, i.e. in the middle or the third quarter of the thirteenth century (ibid., 208-210). Similarly Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 160-161, and passim, accepts Vocotopoulou’s observations and proposed date.

\textsuperscript{423} Vocotopoulou, “Παρατηρήσεις στον ναό του Σωτήρος.” 199, mentions an oblong opening (2.50 X 0.58 m) in the west wall of the narthex, which according to Vocotopoulou served as an ossuary. The possibility of turning an existing tomb into an ossuary at a later date is very probable.
agrees with the physical aspects of the church (lack of monumentality, simplified plan, poor masonry, basic brick decoration, absence of sculptural decoration etc) and its iconography (pronounced emphasis on the Deesis and on the co-officiating hierarchs, who are placed in a relatively elaborate architectural setting).

If this hypothesis is accepted, then the Chronicle of Galaxidi is at least partially misleading. But there is no reason to discredit it completely. In fact, the information concerning its “engineer” might have some substance, primarily because it is unique, and not a topos. If we rely on the Chronicle the builder was from Galaxidi (i.e. a local not a foreigner); traveled widely (?); worked “under the Frankish rulers” or “in the Frankish held territories” (?); and had potentially an Italian name. Depending on how we interpret this vague information and the general references to the “Frankish” invasions that brought about the desertion of the land and the abandonment of the previous settlements in favor of safer locations in the mountains, we could suggest, a later historical context for the construction of the church, i.e. after the Angevin expeditions of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century in the area. Although this is merely a hypothesis, the patronage of Michael II, allegedly attributed to him by “older” sources, seems less secure than has been previously stated. It might well be nothing more than a literary tradition cultivated in the monastic circles during the years of Ottoman rule in the area.

Equally uncertain seems the involvement of Theodora Petralipha to the foundation of the cave church of Osios Andreas the hermit at Chalkiopouloi Baltou in Aitolioakarnania (figs. 132–

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424 Sathas, Χρονικόν, 200: “Ἐπιστάτης ἀπάνω στὸ χτίσιμο, ἐστάθηκε ἕνας περίφημος τζινιέρης ἀπὸ τὸ Γαλαξεῖδι, Νικολὸν Καρούλην τὸν ἔλεγα, ποῦ ἐίδε κόσµο πολὺν καὶ ἐστάθηκε στὴν δούλευσι τῆς Φραγκίας…”
425 The expression “ἐίδε κόσµο πολύν” is usually understood as “he traveled the world.” But this is not necessarily the case.
426 The expression “ἐστάθηκε στὴν δούλευσι τῆς Φραγκίας” is commonly rendered as “he worked in the Frankish-held territories” rather than “under the Frankish rulers.” Thus “Φραγκία” is understood as a place reference, and it is subsequently identified with either Frankish-held Peloponnese or Athens. Yet, it is also possible that the builder simply worked for his “Frankish rulers” and not necessarily abroad.
The attribution is based solely on the information provided by the literary tradition, as recorded in the *synaxarion* of Osios Andreas the hermit—a text composed most probably in the eve of the Ottoman conquest (1449) and later incorporated in the relevant *Akolouthia*, composed in the late eighteenth century and published several years after (1807). Retracing the steps of this literary tradition is of much interest for the alleged patronage of St. Theodora. The eighteenth-century composer of the *Akolouthia* had at his disposal the *synaxarion*, which contained, in turn, a brief *Vita* of Osios Andreas. The *Vita* relates the life and deeds of a certain hermit from a village called Monodentri, who lived during the reign of an “emperor and despot” Michael. After years of wandering, the hermit returned to his homeland, where he spent several years and finally died at an old age. Next, we are told that his fame spread beyond the surrounding villages and reached the “queen of the cities”; that a certain “queen” Theodora and the senate (*σύγκλητος*) offered their help (*συνέδραµον*); and that upon finding the hermit’s relics, Theodora ordered the construction of the church, where the faithful celebrate his memory ever since. In sum, vague language prevails in the *Vita*, which provided the ground material for the composition of the *synaxarion* and later the *Akolouthia*, and we are left wondering about the persons and places mentioned.

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430 Ibid., 207: “ὥστερον δὲ πάλιν πλησίον τῆς πατρίδος ἐπανελθών…ἐπὶ πλείστους χρόνους, καὶ πλήρης ἡµερῶν ἐξεδήµησεν.”

431 In sum, vague language prevails in the *Vita*, which provided the ground material for the composition of the *synaxarion* and later the *Akolouthia*, and we are left wondering about the persons and places mentioned.


430 Ibid., 207: “ὥστερον δὲ πάλιν πλησίον τῆς πατρίδος ἐπανελθών…ἐπὶ πλείστους χρόνους, καὶ πλήρης ἡµερῶν ἐξεδήµησεν.”

431 Ibid., 207: “καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν βασιλείαν πάλιν πλησίον τῶν πάλεων, συνέδραμε καὶ ἐν εύσεβεστάτῃ βασιλίς κυρία Θεοδώρα, καὶ πάσα μετ’ αὐτής ἡ σύγκλητος εὐρόντες δέ τοῦ ἁγίου λείψανον…γνάκαςς δέ ἡ διήλατος βασιλίς, ἢν ἡμῶν τῷ ἁγίῳ οἰκοδοµήσεσθαι· ἠκέτοτε οὖν ὁι πιστοὶ, καὶ μέχρι τῆς δεόρῳ, τὴν αὐτοῦ μνήμην ἐπιτελοῦντες λαμπρώς, δοξάζομεν τὸν παντοδύναμον Θεόν, καὶ τὸν αὐτοῦ θεράποντα…”
Anticipating our questions, the eighteenth-century composer of the *Akolouthia* offers his insight and interpretation. Accordingly, the “queen of the cities” is to be identified with Arta (why not Constantinople?); the patron of the church, the queen Theodora, with St. Theodora of Arta, rather than the restorer of the icons, i.e. the Byzantine empress Theodora, mother of the emperor Michael III the Drunkard (842-867); and finally, the “emperor and despot Michael” should be identified with the despot of Epiros, Michael II.\(^{432}\) Given the above, there seems no doubt that we are dealing here with an eighteenth-century reworking of information of dubious provenance. Keeping in mind that both Michael II and Theodora were by far the most popular rulers of Epiros—partly because the saintly status of Theodora and the circulation of her *Vita* retained their memory alive in the ecclesiastical circles for the years to come—there is always the possibility that Theodora’s alleged patronage is nothing more than a later fabrication on demand.

The physical aspects of the cave church stand largely against the evidence of the literary tradition. This is a small, single-aisled building, severely damaged today, preserving only its eastern part. Of the original fresco decoration, that of the sanctuary area is relatively well preserved and confronts to a rather standard program focusing on the Virgin and Christ Emmanuel in the apse, while the lower zone is taken up by the four great fathers of the church officiating (St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Basil the Great, St. John the Chrysostom, and St. Athanasius of Alexandria). In the upper part of the sanctuary wall, i.e. above the Virgin and Christ, the Annunciation is placed. Finally, on either side of the apse, St. Stephen, the first martyr.

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\(^{432}\) For the annotation, see Kissas, “Οσίος Ἀνδρέας,” 206: “Βασιλεύουσα δὲ πόλις, οὔκ αὐτὴ δοκεῖ μοι ἢ Κωνσταντινούπολις ἀλλὰ καὶ Θεοδώρα, οὔχ ἢ μήτηρ, Μιχαήλ, ἢ τὰς θείας εἰκόνας ἀναστηλώσασα, ἀλλὰ ἢ ἐν Ἀρτῇ ἐνότατοσφηνή ἵσως μήτηρ ἢ γυνὴ ἢ θυγάτηρ τῷ ὁ γρηγορ συγγράφον Ἰωάννη τοῦ Ἰωαννίδος.” The comments of the eighteenth-century composer betray a further confusion, as he is not certain whether St. Theodora of Arta was the mother, wife, or daughter of Michael II.
and Epiphanios of Cyprus are depicted in frontal positions. In addition, there are two preserved painted inscriptions, both from the sanctuary area. The first is a very fragmented dedicatory inscription painted in the columnar form of a roll, placed below the hand of the Virgin and above the head of St. Athanasius. The inscription records the decoration of the church in the years 1282/3 but the name of the patron is omitted. The second is a painted epigram to the Virgin (based on a metrical poem of Michael Psellos) running in one line across the length of the apse, separating the officiating hierarchs from the Virgin and Christ above.

The dedicatory inscription, as preserved today, gives no credit to Theodora. Equally, the remaining frescoes in the sanctuary area provide no indications for a specific cult. We cannot exclude the possibility that there were once additional inscriptions or portraits documenting Theodora’s involvement. Yet, based on the information at our disposal, we can reconstruct the history of this foundation as follows. A cave church was constructed and subsequently decorated in 1282/3 (dedicatory inscription), probably in the place of a preexisting cult. The cave and church were, in all probability, dedicated to the Virgin. This interpretation is supported by: a) the nature of the church (very often cave churches were dedicated to the Virgin, for instance Soumela and Theoskepastos in Trebizond); b) the existing fresco decoration of the apse (Virgin and Christ, Annunciation); and c) the epigram of Michael Psellos referring to the Virgin. In addition, the latter epigram along with the rest of the decoration of the apse (the fathers of the church, bishop Epiphanios of Cyprus and St. Stephen, himself a deacon) hint towards a learned priest, i.e. in all probability an ecclesiastical patron.

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433 Kissas, “Όσιος Ανδρέας,” 212-213. The date of 1282/3 is based on Kissas’ proposed reconstruction of the inscription. Apart from the date, Kissas’ reading is based on very few letters, and therefore I find his reconstruction highly conjectural.
434 Ibid., 212. The epigram is also cited in full (with proposed corrections of earlier readings) in Katsaros, “Επιγραφική 'Δεσποτάτου,’” 521.
Following this line of thought, the Akolouthia of Osios Andreas probably records events that took place after the construction and decoration of the church and not vice versa. A possible guess would be that during turbulent times (probably during the Ottoman conquest), a certain hermit might well have taken refuge in the preexisting cave church. He spent some years there and was subsequently buried at the spot, in what seems to be a separate construction attached to the natural rock, located at some distance behind the apse of the actual church.\textsuperscript{435} The composer of the Akolouthia, several centuries later, had at his disposal a vague literary tradition and tried in his earnest to make sense out of it. In an effort to honor the local tradition and highlight the status of the hermit and his church, he reworked the basic material in a meaningful way, (re?)associating the construction of the church with St. Theodora of Arta. All things considered and against the prevailing view, the possibility of this cave church being a royal foundation and Theodora its possible patron remains in doubt.

We are on more secure ground concerning the patronage of Anna Palaiologina, widow of Nikephoros Komnenos Doukas, due to a number of inscriptions and a group of three churches—Hagia Sophia, St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs—preserved at the village of Hagia Sophia (formerly Mokista) (fig. 232).\textsuperscript{436} One of these inscription, records the name of Anna Kantakouzene Palaiologina and therefore the identification with the widow of Nikephoros seems certain;\textsuperscript{437} a second inscription refers to the protostrator Michael Zorianos as the patron of a

\textsuperscript{435} Kissas, “Ὅσιος Άνδρέας,” 213. This construction, the so-called tomb of Osios Andreas, is covered in concrete today.
\textsuperscript{436} For the churches at Mokista, see Paliouras, Βυζαντινή Αιτωλοακαρνανία, 67 (fig. 37), 68-70 (fig. 41), 223-232 (figs. 230-237); S. Kalopissi-Verti, Dedicatory Inscriptions and Donor Portraits in Thirteenth-Century Churches of Greece, TIB 5 (Vienna, 1992), 57-59; and Katsaros, “Επιγραφική Ὀμοιότάτου,” 519-521. Also Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 25-27, who recites the relevant inscriptions.
\textsuperscript{437} Kalopissi-Verti, Dedicatory Inscriptions, 59, fig. 20; and Katsaros, “Επιγραφική Ὀμοιότάτου,” 520 (no.1). Also Osswald, “L’Épire,” 734 (no. 11) and 759.
venerated church (σεβασμείου δόμου); the remaining two inscriptions record the patronage of Kosmas Andritsopoulos, an ecclesiastical person, founder of the church of the Taxiarchs. The inscriptions alone indicate that we are dealing here with an important late thirteenth-century compound of churches. This project takes place in Aitolia—an area largely under Angevin control—and involves the regent queen Anna, her protostrator and an important member of the church. Complications, however, arise for most of the inscriptions—except for one—were found in the precinct of the compound and not in their original locations. Consequently, the identification of the churches with their respective patrons becomes problematic. Anna was probably responsible for the foundation of the main and largest church, dedicated to Hagia Sophia, which today is in ruins, some thirty meters to the north of the churches of St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs.

A second inscription, now lost, associated Anna Palaiologina with the remodeling of the church known as Megali Chora (dedicated to the Dormition of the Virgin) at the village of Zapanti in Aitolia (figs. 134–135). The church was originally an early Christian three-aisled basilica, reconstructed in the middle Byzantine period as a single-aisled, timber-roofed church, along the central aisle of the former basilica. At a later date, the middle Byzantine church was covered by a longitudinal vault supported on three pairs of piers attached to the lateral walls.

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438 Kalopissi-Verti, *Dedicatory Inscriptions*, 57-58, fig. 18; and Katsaros, “Επιγραφική ΄Δεσποτάτου,” 520 (no. 2). Also Osswald, “L’Épire,” 734 (no. 12).
439 Kalopissi-Verti, *Dedicatory Inscriptions*, 57 and 58-59, figs. 17 and 19; and Katsaros, “Επιγραφική ΄Δεσποτάτου,” 520 (nos. 3-4).
440 The church and its various construction phases need additional documentation. Paliouras, *Βυζαντινή Αιτωλοακαρνανία*, 232, dates Hagia Sophia to the late thirteenth century, and I find his suggestion the most likely. Yet, D. Konstantios, “Νεώτερα στοιχεία σε βυζαντινούς ναούς της Αιτωλοακαρνανίας,” *Ήπειρος* 23 (1981): 270-275, considers Hagia Sophia a twelfth-century basilica. The various opinions concerning the construction phases of the church and its dating are summarized briefly in Kaponis, “Ναοδομική Αρχιτεκτονική,” 200-201, with additional references. Due to the various problems of attribution, the compound of churches at Mokista will be discussed as a collective project in the following chapter.
Today, the church does not retain any evidence for determining the date of this remodeling.\textsuperscript{442} We have to rely, therefore, exclusively on the information provided in 1883 that a certain inscription associated the church’s remodeling with Anna, wife of Nikephoros.\textsuperscript{443} Admittedly, without any sort of transcription (to check the family names of Anna) and without knowing anything specific about its location—there is not much we can say about it. Many noble women of the ruling family in Arta were named Anna and therefore we need more substantial information for the identification. In any event and by all modern accounts, Anna Palaiologina, wife of Nikephoros, makes the most likely candidate for this remodeling, mainly because her patronage is in general well-documented and despite the poor evidence provided by the building and its alleged inscription.\textsuperscript{444}

The available evidence concerning the patronage of the ruling family in the periphery of their dominion, briefly presented above, is for the moment quite circumstantial. For this reason current research is directed towards the reexamination of the remaining frescoes in a number of churches, none of them securely dated, in an effort to piece together evidence provided by the decorative program of churches. Alternatively, I will turn my attention to a building, which probably retains nothing of its original fresco decoration and therefore has attracted little attention since its second publication in the 1970s. An examination of its architecture along with the written record might add another building to the patronage of the rulers in Epiros and most specifically to the last decade of the thirteenth century under Nikephoros and Anna.

\textsuperscript{442} At an even later date the longitudinal vault collapsed, probably due to an earthquake. Subsequently, the church was restored as a timber-roofed building (in March 1805, according to another now lost inscription).

\textsuperscript{443} Orlandos, ibid., 51: “... ἐξ ἐφθαρµένης ἐπιγραφῆς ὁ τρισυπόστατος ἐν Μεγάλῃ Ὑφάρα ναός τῆς Παναγίας ἄνωκοδοµήθη τῇ συνδροµῇ τῆς Ἀννῆς, ἢτοι τῆς συζύγου τοῦ δεσπότου τῆς Ἄρτης Νικηφόρου...”

\textsuperscript{444} Orlandos, ibid., 51. Also Kalopissi-Verti, \textit{Dedicatory Inscriptions}, 59; Paliouras, \textit{Βυζαντινή Αιτωλακαρνανία}, 170-172; Kaponis, “Ναοδοµικὴ Αρχιτεκτονική,” 203, with further bibliography; and Osswald, “L’Épire,” 434 and 754. All accept Anna Palaiologina, widow of Nikephoros Komnenos, as the possible patron of the church, and a date ca. 1300 for the remodeling.
The monastery of St. Nicholas at Mesopotamon (south Albania) is located in the region of Delvino, in the province known in the medieval sources as Bagenitia (figs. 136–138). Tradition and the *Vita* of the fourteenth-century saint Niphon of Mount Athos associate its foundation with the emperor Constantine Monomachos (1042–1054). In conjunction with the prominence of Mesopotamon as the place of origin of many civil and military officers of the Byzantine Empire of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, the monastery’s foundation in the middle Byzantine period should not be excluded although there seems to be no trace of the original eleventh-century church—if such existed.

The monastery of St. Nicholas holds a prominent place in the intellectual and political life of Epiros during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. It is best known as the center of production of three important codices dated to the mid-thirteenth century—the Petropolitanus

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448 In the recent study of K. Giakoumis and G. Karaikaj, “New Architectural and Epigraphic Data on the Site and Catholicon of the Monastery of St. Nikolaos at Mesopotam (Southern Albania),” *Monumentet* (2004): 86-95, the authors argue for a tenth-century date construction of the monastery walls. As they do not take into consideration the possibility of a middle Byzantine foundation for the monastery, they propose that these are the remaining walls of a small Byzantine citadel turned into a fortified monastery.
Located in an area claimed by Epirotes, Byzantines, Hohenstaufen and Angevins, the monastery’s life and property intertwine with their precarious political alliances and ephemeral conquests but we hear very little about how these affected the monastery’s loyalties and status.\(^{450}\)

In 1302, its abbot Niphon was sent to Naples to the court of king Charles II of Anjou (1285-1309) as a personal envoy of the *basilissa* Anna of Epiros along with other members of the Greek clergy to claim properties south of Epiros—in Aitoloakarnania, an area under Angevin control—which had been unlawfully expropriated.\(^{451}\) As the abbot of Mesopotamon was granted requests concerning properties in Angelokastron and Acheloos, this serves as an indication that the Epirote and Angevin rulers were on good terms and (by inference) that the status of the monastery was not a matter of controversy between the two parties. Indicative, however, of the confusion prevailing in the area towards the end of the political life of the Despotate is the appeal of the monks of Mesopotamon to the authority of the patriarch in Constantinople to resolve their dispute with the bishop of Chimara.\(^{452}\) The act (ὑπόµνηµα) issued in 1315 by the then patriarch, John XIII Glykys (1315-1320), condemned the bishop’s reckless behavior after he had taken advantage of the turbulent times to extend the boundaries of his authority to include the

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\(^{452}\) Ibid., 76-77.
The act confirmed the patriarchal rights over the monastery and reaffirmed its privileges and status as a *stavropegion*.

The once prestigious foundation is now deserted and suffering considerably from neglect. All that survives intact is the katholikon, and parts of its wall enclosure with a half-ruined tower. Versakis, who visited the monastery early in the twentieth century, recorded the presence of a single nun and an aged priest living in dilapidated and filthy rooms of which nothing survives. Appalled by the decaying state of the katholikon comparable to a “veritable zoo” filled with mice and cats, bats and birds, Versakis gave us a most telling narrative of the monastery’s decline at the turn of the twentieth century in the first publication of the church in 1915. A second detailed study of the katholikon and its architecture was published in 1972 by Meksi with additions and corrections by the same author in 1975. Through these publications the church is not unknown to scholarship but still remains in the shadow of the more celebrated monuments of the

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453* “Φθάνει μὲν οὖν τῇ τῆς Ναυπακτίας ἐπαρχίας Χιµάρας ἐπίσκοπος, ὡς τῇ διαληψεισὶ τῶν Μεσοποταμιτῶν μονῆ γειτνίσιος τῆς κατ’ αὐτὸν ἐκκλησίας, οὐ καλῶς οὖδὲ δικαίω, πλεονεκτικῷ γε μὴν προσχὼν ὅμματι, τὰ τῆς πατριαρχικῆς μεγαλειότητος ἀπ’ αὐτῆς ἀφαίρεσθαι δίκαια ἐπιχειρήσας διὰ τὸ κατ’ ἑκέννε καιροῦ μάλιστα πολλὰ συμβῆναι τὰ τῆς καιρικῆς περιπετείας ἐν τῷ μέσῳ σκανδάλῳ τα και περιπτώματα, ὡστε καὶ αὐτὸν ἤδη τὸν εἰρημένον τῆς Χιµάρας ἐπίσκοπον οὐκ ὅλιγα τῶν ἀτόπων καὶ ὀχληρῶν ἐπὶ βλάβη τῆς μονῆς διαπράξασθαι, ἀτέ δὴ καὶ τὰ ἑπ’ αὐτῆς πατριαρχικῆς δίκαια ἐπὶ ἑαυτὸν καὶ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐκκλησίαν παρὰ πάντα τὸν εἰκότα λόγον ἐφέλκεσθαι σπεύδοντα ἅτα ὡστ’ ὧν οὐκ ἔπι πλείστων τῆς σφετέρας αὐθαδείας τέ και πλεονεξίας οὕτος ἀπόνατο...”


Despotate of Epiros. More importantly, questions regarding its building history, date, patronage and context remain open to investigation and interpretation.

The building history of the church is complicated. As it stands today, the katholikon is the result of many rebuildings, which have changed its original appearance (figs. 139–142). Most of the repairs, as Meksi has demonstrated, were the result of two consecutive partial collapses of the church in 1793 and 1845 (fig. 146): the north and east façades of the church have been reconstructed extensively, all major windows and doors have been blocked hastily with irregular masonry and a massive buttress has been placed externally against its south façade. These collapses affected also the interior of the church and the superstructure of the building as supports were reinforced and added and domes were rebuilt extensively (figs. 143–144).

Notwithstanding these repairs, the katholikon is still an impressive and unusual building, which requires closer examination. The church consists of a naos, a sanctuary, and a narthex (figs. 145–146). Both narthex and sanctuary are divided today from the naos by a transverse colonnade. The four monolithic granite columns of the west colonnade are the original ones as Versakis has already noted, while the east ones are later additions. Further supports include an irregular pier inserted in the west colonnade and a massive pier dominating the centre of the naos, both the result of the later remodeling of 1793. The naos is topped today by four domes, while the sanctuary and narthex with lower domical vaults. Excavations undertaken by Meksi

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have uncovered the portico surrounding the church on three sides and two apses underneath the foundations of the present day sanctuary (figs. 147–148).459

On the exterior the lower parts of the church are built of stone-faced masonry with many slabs bearing reliefs of real and mythological beasts, while the upper zone is of cloisonné with abundant decorative brickwork (figs. 149–154). The lower zone is further articulated with entrances and blind niches.460 On the west façade there is a single entrance surmounted by a blind arch and flanked by two rectangular arched niches (fig. 155). On the south façade of the church, there seems to have been only one (?) monumental entrance and five niches—two corresponding to the narthex and three (?) to the east part of the naos (figs. 156–157).461 The north façade, which might have provided us with additional information, is unfortunately almost completely destroyed and rebuilt (fig. 161). Yet, judging by the two niches retained to the north side of the narthex and the evidence for a monumental entrance to the naos, it is fairly safe to assume a similar arrangement with the south façade.462 A row of windows articulate the upper zone of church: three trilobed windows on the west façade of the narthex, of which the middle rises higher, and one on the south and north sides of the narthex (figs. 155, 158, and 161). The south façade also retains in good condition the two large trilobed windows of the naos—the easternmost rising slightly higher—while from the corresponding windows of the north façade

460 The number of the original entrances and niches are difficult to determine. Versakis recognized only three entrances in total flanked by niches. Meksi reconstructs five original entrances—one giving access to the narthex and four corresponding to the naos.
461 Versakis was not able to see one of the niches, which was significantly covered by the exterior massive buttress and probably covered in plaster at the time of his visit. Meksi, on the other hand, prefers to reconstruct the middle of the three niches as an additional entrance. We cannot rule out this possibility as the middle niche is more prominent (higher and wider) than the other two, but it is still quite narrow and the masonry filling in its lower parts is identical to the masonry of the niche that is still visible. This part of the church, which corresponds to the east bay of the portico, was remodeled to a parekklesion (see infra, fig. 160).
462 One of the niches of the narthex serves today as the only entrance to the church. Information regarding the monumental entrance of the north façade of the church comes mainly from the original supports preserved in the portico.
only one is partially preserved (figs. 156–157 and 161–162). Smaller single or bilobed windows open above the niches and entrances of the lower zone, placed often on the axis of the upper windows. The upper part of the west façade of the church terminates in gables, which correspond to the windows below, while the south façade has a flat cornice instead (figs. 140–141).

According to the reconstruction proposed by Meksi and followed by Vocotopoulos, St. Nicholas presents a unique architectural solution: a two-aisled church topped by four domes with a bipartite sanctuary and a narthex divided from the naos by a colonnade (figs. 163–164). This reconstruction is based primarily on two basic assumptions: a) the superstructure of the church and the respective supports, apart from later repairs and additions, reflect the original architectural solution and b) the east façade of the church as it appears today is in its entirety a reconstruction of the late eighteenth century, which replaced the original bipartite sanctuary revealed underneath the foundations of the present sanctuary during excavation work. Both concessions require further examination.

The unusual and daring solution with the four domes being supported in the centre of the naos by a single column has been commented by most of the scholars who dealt with the building. According to Versakis, the two west domes with their cylindrical drums retain to a great degree their original form, while the two east domes are almost in their entirety replaced by the new, irregular ones. Meksi’s detailed study of the domes along with investigations on the pier now dominating the centre of the naos offered a more nuanced interpretation. Meksi argued that the southwest dome and parts of the northwest and southeast domes retain their original form, while the remaining parts were reconstructed in two different phases that generally follow

the respective collapses of the walls underneath (figs. 165–166).\textsuperscript{465} Meksi further demonstrated that the irregular pier encased a more regular pier made of brick, which in turn encased a single marble column (fig. 146). Consequently, he reconstructed the naos topped by two pairs of domes; the east, equal in height with eight-sided drums, rising higher than the west pair of domes. Vocotopoulos in his brief comments on the building also incorporated Versakis’ and Meksi’s suggestions without going into details.\textsuperscript{466}

Thus, the authenticity of the domes was never questioned in spite of the many cases in Epiros where partial collapses severely affected the superstructure of the buildings. The Panagia Bryoni\textsuperscript{467} and the Panagia Bellas\textsuperscript{468} are two telling examples. The present arrangement of domical vaults and domes in St. Nicholas—unattested in the buildings of the thirteenth century in Epiros—is very reminiscent of a local post-Byzantine trend, represented in a number of basilicas of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from Argyrokastro and neighboring areas.\textsuperscript{469} This trend, already abandoned in the nineteenth century, makes us wonder whether the superstructure of St. Nicholas owes its “uniqueness” to a later rebuilding.

There are some indications to suggest that the upper part of the church is probably the result of a far greater remodeling than has already been assumed. On the exterior, the domes dominate with their heavy, sturdy and oversized proportions. Lack of elegance and the minimum

\textsuperscript{465} Meksi, “L’ architecture de l’ église de Mesopotam,” fig. 33 and pl. VI, 2.
\textsuperscript{468} The dome of Panagia Bellas over the naos and the domical vault over the narthex collapsed at an unknown time and were replaced by simple pitched roofs. See A. Orlandos, “Μνημεία του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου: Η Κόκκινη Εκκλησία (Παναγία Βελλάς),” Ηπειρόχρον 2 (1927): 156, fig. 1. V. Paradopoulou, “Η Κόκκινη Εκκλησία στο Βουλγαρέλι της Άρτας: Στοιχεία από τη νεότερη έρευνα,” Ηπειρόχρον 42 (2008): 323-324, figs. 3, 13, and 14.
\textsuperscript{469} P. Thomo, “Shpërndarja kohore dhe territoriale e arkitekturës bashqitës në Shqipëri,” in 2000 Vjet Art dhe Kulturë Kishtare në Shqipëri (Tirana, 2003), 171-178, tab. IV-V.
articulation with narrow and simplified arched openings for the windows are in great dissonance with the elegant brickwork displayed in the trilobed windows of the south and west façades of the church and in general with the thoughtful decoration of the church. Lack of consideration in such a structurally sensitive and ideologically prominent part of the building is puzzling.

Comparisons with other domed buildings of the Despotate—and I will limit my discussion to buildings with which St. Nicholas shares a number of common features, such as the Blacherna, the Paregoretissa, the Pantanassa and Hagia Theodora—enforces the suspicion that even the west domes of St. Nicholas might not be the initial ones. Whereas St. Nicholas is a rare example of the use of careless cloisonné masonry for the construction of the domes, in the case of the Blacherna, the Pantanassa, the Paregoretissa, and Hagia Theodora, domes are exclusively constructed of brick. This preference can be explained both structurally and aesthetically and in the case of St. Nicholas, a similar choice for lighter materials should have been desirable, especially if we take into consideration that all four domes were supported in the centre of the naos by a single column. As there is plenty of evidence from the masonry of the church that brick was available and masons were experienced in brickwork, this seems to be an odd choice.

The almost unarticulated and heavy domes of St. Nicholas come in sharp contrast with the elegant and carefully articulated domes of the buildings in Arta. Their elaborate treatment of windows departs significantly from the simplified arched openings of St. Nicholas.

Conspicuously absent are the brick colonettes at the corners, seen in the Paregoretissa, the

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Domes built with cloisonné masonry can be found in the church of St. Stephen at Rivion (Akarnania) and in the lower parts of the dome of the church of St. Nicholas Rodias, where the upper parts are built in brick. Both churches are assigned an early thirteenth-century date (see, for instance, Velenis, “Thirteenth-Century Architecture in Epirus,” 281-282, with further bibliography). Cf. A. Orlando, “Ὁ Άγιος Νικόλαος της Ροδίας,” ABME 2 (1936): 131-147, who assigns a late thirteenth–early fourteenth-century date to St. Nicholas Rodias. In the case of the Paregoretissa, some domes use cloisonné for articulating the corners of the facets of the dome but again the rest is predominantly brick work.
Pantanassa, and the Blacherna. Likewise, St. Nicholas’ west domes with their cylindrical drums depart from the multi-faced, usually eight-sided drums, of the Despotate. The preference for polygonal drums is attested not only in the freestanding domes of the Paregoretissa, and the Blacherna but also in the domes hidden behind triangular pediments, as in the case of the domes over the aisles of the Blacherna and the dome over the narthex of Hagia Theodora. In the latter case one might argue that the polygonal form was determined by the necessity to relate to the frontal pediments but was the case of St. Nicholas different? A closer look at the frieze and cornice crowning today the upper part of the south façade indicates that there was originally an undulating roof line forming gables above the windows— very similar in arrangement to the west façade of St. Nicholas—which was replaced at an unknown time by the flat horizontal cornice that we have today (fig. 158). Therefore we cannot exclude the possibility that the external appearance of the domes of St. Nicholas might have been closer to Hagia Theodora’s and the Blacherna’s hidden domes.

More importantly, all domed Epirote churches present a clear culmination of volumes. Either a single dome dominates as for example in St. Nicholas Rodias, or in the case of the five-domed churches, such as the Paregoretissa, the central dome is more prominent. Even in the case of the Blacherna, where the domes over the central and lateral aisles result from a remodeling, still a clear hierarchy of volumes is retained with the central larger dome rising on a

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471 Vocotopoulos, “Church Architecture in Epirus,” 86 and note 78. Brick colonettes at the corners occur in the Pantanasssa, the Paregoretissa and the free-standing dome of the Blacherna church. Neither the lateral domes of the Blacherna nor the dome over the narthex of Hagia Theodora features brick colonettes probably because they were meant to be hidden behind triangular pediments.
472 Vocotopoulos, “Church Architecture in Epirus,” 86 and note 77. Vocotopoulos refers to the domes over the aisles of the Blacherna as six-sided, while according to A. Orlandos, “Ἡ παρά την Ἀρτάν Μονή των Βλαχερνών,” ABME 2 (1936): 11, these domes are also eight-sided.
474 Technically the Paregoretissa slightly departs from the “canonical” five-dome type. The Pantanasssa’s domes were completely destroyed, only a fragment of a dome was found during excavations.
higher level. For the same reason, the addition of the domed narthex to Hagia Theodora led to the subsequent rising of the roof over the central aisle of the naos.\textsuperscript{475} In comparison, St. Nicholas’ hierarchy of volumes is suspiciously unique.

Meksi, unable to explain how the domes survived the severe collapse of 1793, hypothesized that the irregular piers and their respective arches must had been erected before the collapse of the east wall of the church, otherwise the domes would not have survived.\textsuperscript{476} The unclear lines of the arches and the ancillary parts supporting the domes, already observed by Versakis,\textsuperscript{477} are still visible today but their details are covered underneath many layers of plaster and the presence of scaffolding, which occupy the interior of the church, prevent any conclusive observations. Future archaeological research on the domes and their ancillary parts could clarify the various stages of construction.

Similarly, the supports of the superstructure retained in the interior of the church offer some indications that even the arcaded west colonnade might not reflect the original arrangement. Although the four granite columns separating the narthex from the naos seem to belong to the initial supports of the superstructure, as both Versakis and Meksi have observed, their present location does not correspond to the piers retained on the west wall of the narthex (figs. 146–147). The narthex presents a clear tripartite division in plan, which is also reflected on the elevation of the west façade with the central entrance flanked by two lateral niches. Likewise, the floor of the narthex follows the same division with the central bay decorated with a series of

\textsuperscript{475} Velenis, “Thirteenth-Century Architecture in Epirus,” 281.
\textsuperscript{476} Meksi, “L’architecture de l’église de Mesopotam,” 90: “À cette époque [1793], ont été construits les piliers et les arcs de renforcement qui les surmontent. Il y a lieu de penser que ces derniers ont été aménagés avant que les parties précitées aient été complètement enlevées, car, dans l’absence du grand pilier, la poussée des coupole ouest aurait été difficilement compensable.”
\textsuperscript{477} Versakis, “Βυζαντινός Ναός εν Δελβίνῳ,” 31-32.
three lozenges, while the lateral bays with a simple rectangular pattern. Could this serve as an indication that the four columns were originally arranged differently? Additionally, the tripartite division of the narthex seems to be in accordance with the general layout of the church with the sanctuary, naos and narthex and also longitudinally as the entrance to the narthex corresponds to the central apse, creating a central aisle. If we accept that the narthex formed initially a tribelon opening corresponding to the supports of the west wall, then the naos not only presents a tripartite division longitudinally but also based on the piers retained on the south wall,\textsuperscript{478} a six-bay division. What was the initial configuration of the supports—if different from the present arrangement—is difficult to say without a detailed archaeological research. Could a careful examination of the floor of the naos provide us with the kind of answers we are looking for?

The second concession that gives St. Nicholas its uniqueness concerns the layout of the sanctuary, which has been reconstructed by Meksi with two projecting, equal in dimensions, five-sided apses (figs. 163–164). Subsequently, this unusual arrangement—unattested in the architecture of the Despotate—has been explained functionally, as a solution determined by the need to serve two different liturgies corresponding to the Catholic and Orthodox rites.\textsuperscript{479} Yet, St. Nicholas was not a parish church but clearly an orthodox monastery, more importantly a \textit{stavropegion}, not subject to the authority of the local bishop but to the patriarch of Constantinople. Therefore, this interpretation seems highly improbable.

A closer look at the east wall of the church and the foundations of the apses underneath the present day sanctuary may lead us to an alternative reconstruction. The east façade of the church is constructed in its lower zone of stone-faced masonry, also encountered in the south,

\textsuperscript{478} Three piers are preserved on the south wall corresponding to the narthex, naos and sanctuary. The latter two have been reinforced.

\textsuperscript{479} Meksi, \textit{“Nouvelles données,”} 158-159.
west and north exterior façades of the building (figs. 138–142). The upper zone of the east façade is constructed of irregular, careless masonry of a very low quality (fig. 139). A cornice, which runs along the entire face of the east façade, clearly separates the lower from the upper zone. Admittedly, the stone slabs of the lower zone of the east façade look more fragmented when compared to the other façades of the church but this should not necessarily be attributed to an extensive rebuilding but probably to minor damages caused there under extreme pressure.

Especially when compared to the upper zone, the lower part displays a thoughtful treatment, unattested in the careless, hastily made, masonry of the upper zone. Looking closely at the southeast corner of the sanctuary, where parts of the original masonry have been retained to a considerable height, it is my sense that the rebuilding of the eighteenth century is limited to the part of the wall above the cornice and follows closely the lines of the initial wall (fig. 138).

On the contrary the two apses revealed underneath the raised floor of the sanctuary do not seem to correspond to the building above (figs. 147–148). Based on the accuracy of the plans published by Meksi and his own remarks, the present southeast corner of the church and the outer line of the south apse do not meet at a desirable angle. For unclear reasons, Meksi prefers to reconstruct the original wall of the church further to the east\(^4\) and the apses as five-sided (figs. 163–164) rather than examining the possibility that the present building was erected on the ruins of an earlier building. Unfortunately, the north apse has been only partially revealed. Therefore, its relation to the present building or to an earlier building is less clear. The possibility that the church was erected on the foundations of a wider preexisting building featuring three

\(^4\) Meksi, “L’architecture de l’église de Mesopotam,” 89: “On est amené à conclure que le mur est a été reconstruit et il se joint à l’ancien mur à un metre environ de l’angle très obtus que forme celui-ci. Si l’ont tente de reconstruire l’arc de la niche interrompu en son milieu, on verra que le mur du côté est a été reconstruit plus à l’interieur que sa position initiale.”
apses instead of two should not be ruled out. In this case the north apse would have served as the central apse of the previous building thus solving the puzzle of the unusual bipartite sanctuary.

The existence of two Byzantine phases seems probable if we take into consideration that the wider area suffered many earthquakes during the thirteenth century. The most devastating of them, recorded in the sources, occurred in the 1270s and leveled Durazzo except for its acropolis.\(^{481}\) The earthquake certainly affected Butrint\(^{482}\) and most probably Mesopotamon itself. The evidence of the buildings in Arta, most of them the result of various remodelings, provides additional support to this hypothesis.

**The date and patronage of St. Nicholas:**

The suggestion that St. Nicholas has at least two Byzantine phases prior to any reconstructions of the post-Byzantine era might help us reconcile the diverse opinions expressed concerning the date of the katholikon’s construction. In his preliminary study Versakis placed the katholikon between the second half of the twelfth and the beginnings of the thirteenth century.\(^{483}\) Based on the brick decoration and comparisons with the buildings of the Despotate in Arta, Pallas,\(^{484}\) Meksi,\(^{485}\) and Vocotopoulos\(^{486}\) argued for a date in the third or last quarter of the thirteenth century. Most recently Giakoumis and Karaiskaj presented the evidence of a dated

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\(^{482}\) P. Cabanes, F. Drini, and M. Chatzopoulos, *Corpus des inscriptions grecques d’Illyrie méridionale et d’Épire 2.2: Inscriptions de Bouthrótos* (Athens, 2007), 52: “Durazzo a été détruite par un séisme suivi d’un raz-de-maree en juillet 1269 et les destructions ont touché une vaste région en Albanie, y compris sans doute la région de Butrint.”

\(^{483}\) Versakis, “Βυζαντινός Ναός εν Δελβίνω,” 41.

\(^{484}\) Pallas, “Epiros,” 309.

\(^{485}\) Meksi, “Nouvelles données,” 158.

inscription and attributed the construction of the katholikon as is stands today to the years 1224/5 (figs. 167–168).\textsuperscript{487}

The discrepancy in dating results largely from failing to recognize two consecutive building phases for the katholikon of St. Nicholas. The dated inscription originating from the monastery of Mesopotamon, which Giakoumis and Karaiskaj meticulously examined and related with the katholikon of St. Nicholas and its altar in particular, was nonetheless found not in its original place but in the surrounding walls of the monastery. Thus, the evidence of the inscription indicates a possible construction for the katholikon in the years 1224/5 but its relation to the present building remains unclear.

Both Meksi and Vocotopoulos linked convincingly the present day church of St. Nicholas with the late thirteenth-century buildings in Arta, namely the Blacherna and the Paregoretissa. Meksi, in particular, emphasized the similarities of the mosaic floor of St. Nicholas (fig. 169) to the Blacherna’s, attributing it to the same workshop.\textsuperscript{488} In addition, Meksi drew attention to the similarities shared with the Paregoretissa: the cubic volume of the two buildings, the presence of a portico, the cloisonné masonry, the flat cornices, the western influences, the design of the

\textsuperscript{487} Giakoumis and Karaiskaj, “St. Nikolaos at Mesopotam,” 86-95, figs. 4 and 7. Recent dissertations on Epiros briefly mention the church and they do not take into consideration the new chronology proposed by Giakoumis and Karaiskaj. Thus, N. Kaponis, “Η ναοδομική αρχιτεκτονική του Δεσποτάτου κατά την διάρκεια της δυναστείας των Κομνηνών Άγγελων” (PhD diss., University of Ioannina, 2005), esp. 208 and 212, dates the church between 1267 and 1282 (largely following Meksi and Vocotopoulos), while the ambulatory in the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century (ibid., 253 note 871), but without explaining why he considers the ambulatory a later addition to the church. On the other hand, Osswald, “L’Épire,” 439 and 774-775, mentions the similarities of St. Nicholas with the Paregoretissa in Arta but dates instead the katholikon to the end of the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth century without providing any argumentation.

\textsuperscript{488} Meksi, “Nouvelles données,”158: “En ce qui concerne le mode dont est dessiné le mosaïque, nous en avons relevé quatre types qui ont des ressemblances allant jusqu’ à la complète identité avec ceux de l’église de Vlaherne à Arte. Il ne s’agit pas ici d’une coincidence fortuite du fait que certains des constructeurs de l’église de Mesopotam ont peut-être également participé à la construction de l’église d’Arte.”
mosaic and the sculptural decoration with animals.\textsuperscript{489} In the prominent placement of the three lilies on the floor of the narthex (fig. 170), Meksi recognized the Angevin emblem and along with the appropriation of the western sculptural vocabulary he suggested a date for the construction of the katholikon between 1272 and 1286 but was unable to establish a chronological relation between the church of St. Nicholas and those of Arta.\textsuperscript{490}

Comparisons with the buildings in Arta reinforce and at the same time could modify Meksi’s suggestions. The cubic volume of St. Nicholas and the treatment of the exterior façades with two types of masonry are reminiscent of the Paregoretissa. Yet, the gables of St. Nicholas depart from the flat cornices of the Paregoretissa, bringing the church closer to the Blacherna and the narthex of Hagia Theodora. With the latter buildings St. Nicholas probably shared the peculiarity of the domes hidden behind triangular pediments, which might in turn help us attribute the construction of the church to the same workshops. St. Nicholas’ portico enveloping the church on three sides is also encountered in the Pantanassa, the Paregoretissa, Hagia Theodora and probably the Blacherna,\textsuperscript{491} all examples safely attributed to the end of the thirteenth century. The floor decoration of St. Nicholas with stone slabs combined with mosaic and opus sectile patterns (figs. 169, 171) has its closest parallel to the Blacherna’s (fig. 11),\textsuperscript{492} but also bears similarities with the monastery of Barnakoba,\textsuperscript{493} Hagia Theodora,\textsuperscript{494} the

\textsuperscript{489} Ibid.: “Les ressemblances avec le Parigoritissa concernent le volume cubique, le portique, le cloisonnage, les corniches plates, les influences occidentales et le dessin du mosaïque. Ils concernent aussi les reliefs reproduisant des animaux.”

\textsuperscript{490} Ibid.: “Ces nouveaux arguments nous ont convaincu à attribuer notre monument au XIIIe siècle et plus exactement à la période allant de 1272 à 1286, qui correspond à la présence des féodaux Angevins chez nous, comme nous l’avions souligné précédemment. Il est difficile pour le moment, par manque de données complémentaires, d’établir une liaison dans le temps entre notre église et celle d’Arte.”

\textsuperscript{491} As in the case of the Paregoretissa, where the portico seems to be left unfinished, the piers on the façades of the Blacherna church serve as an indication for the existence of a portico there as well.

\textsuperscript{492} Orlandos, “Μονή Βλαχερνών,” 29-30, figs. 23-25.

\textsuperscript{493} Orlandos, \textit{Βαρνάκοβα}, 22-28, figs. 11-15, and pl. 1.

\textsuperscript{494} A. Orlandos, “Η Αγία Θεοδώρα της Άρτης,” \textit{ABME} 2 (1936): 100, fig. 12.
Pantanassa,\textsuperscript{495} and probably the Paregoretissa.\textsuperscript{496} Similarly, the champlevé technique with colored inlay\textsuperscript{497} used in the capital impost of St. Nicholas (figs. 172–175) was particularly common in the sculptural decoration of Hagia Theodora,\textsuperscript{498} the Paregoretissa\textsuperscript{499} and is also represented in some fragments found in the Blachernarchurch.\textsuperscript{500} Of particular importance is the almost identical treatment of the relief scene with a lion on the west façade of St. Nicholas (fig. 154) to a similar fragment found in the Blachernarchurch, although of uncertain provenance (fig. 176).\textsuperscript{501} As both reliefs share the same peculiarity—the head of the lion is rendered as a human face—they can be attributed to the same workshop.

The appropriation of a western vocabulary, seen mainly in the Romanesque-style reliefs decorating the façades of St. Nicholas, help us situate the present building within the cultural context of the royal foundations in Arta. The merging of the Western and Byzantine traditions—prominent as we have seen not only in the Paregoretissa but also in the Pantanassa’s and Hagia Theodora’s porticoes and securely dated to the last decade of the thirteenth century—encourages a similar date for the construction of the church of St. Nicholas and invites speculations concerning its patronage.


\textsuperscript{496} A. Orlandos, \textit{Η Παρηγορήτισσα της Άρτης} (Athens, 1963), 107. The Paregoretissa retains only parts of the initial marble floor. According to travelers’ descriptions, there were also opus sectile patterns similar to that of Hagia Theodora’s.

\textsuperscript{497} For the champlevé technique, which was not widely used until the late Byzantine period, see Th. Pazaras, “Reliefs of a sculpture workshop operating in Thessaly and Macedonia at the end of the 13\textsuperscript{th} and beginning of the 14\textsuperscript{th} century,” in \textit{L’ Art de Thessalonique et des Pays Balkaniques et les Courants Spirituels au XIVe Siècle. Recueil des Rapports du IVe Colloque Serbo-Grec}, Belgrade 1985 (Belgrade, 1987), 159-182.


\textsuperscript{499} Orlandos, \textit{Παρηγορήτισσα}, 93-103, figs. 106, 111, and 112.

\textsuperscript{500} Orlandos, “Μονή Βλαχερνών,” 38-39, figs. 33-34.

\textsuperscript{501} Orlandos, “Μονή Βλαχερνών,” 40, fig. 37. The relief of the Blachernachurch is according to Orlandos “Frankish.”
The inscriptional evidence and the examination of the building’s fabric suggest two construction phases within the thirteenth century. Interestingly, the date of the earlier foundation in the years 1224/5 coincides with the recapture of Thessaloniki by the forces of Theodore Doukas and the return of the metropolitan of Thessaloniki Constantine Mesopotamites to his see.\textsuperscript{502} Constantine Mesopotamites’ turbulent life and career are known to us, albeit in a sketchy way. As a protégé of the empress Euphosyne Doukaina, Mesopotamites not only held the highest place in the administration under the Byzantine emperor Alexios III (1195-1203) but he was also granted special permission by the patriarch George II Xiphilinos (1191-1198) to serve both state and church.\textsuperscript{503} Mesopotamites was later removed from the court and was appointed metropolitan of Thessaloniki ca 1197.\textsuperscript{504} His first appointment in the metropolis of Thessaloniki was short, but he managed to return to his see before the Latin occupation of the city. Following the capture of the city by the Latins he was exiled, probably to Epiros.\textsuperscript{505} Mesopotamites returned to Thessaloniki when the ruler of Epiros, Theodore Doukas, recaptured the city in 1224 but again his office was short for he defied the will of Theodore and refused to crown him as emperor of the Romans. In 1227 he left his see once again—either by his own will or by force—became a monk and died in exile.\textsuperscript{506}

\textsuperscript{502} For the date of the recapture of Thessaloniki by Theodore Doukas at the end of 1224, see Stavridou-Zafraka, \textit{Νίκαια και Ήπειρος,} 66, note 63, with further bibliography. Constantine Mesopotamites returned to the see of Thessaloniki as early as the spring of 1225 (ibid., 151). For Constantine Mesopotamites, see most recently E. Chatziantoniou, \textit{Η Μητρόπολη Θεσσαλονίκης από τα μέσα του 8ου αι. έως το 1430: Εκκλησιαστική τάξη-Εκκλησιαστική περιφέρεια-Διοικητική οργάνωση} (Thessaloniki, 2007), 91-96, 140, 184-185, 195-198, 291 and passim.

\textsuperscript{503} Kazhdan, “Mesopotamites,” 1349.


\textsuperscript{505} Ibid., 290.

\textsuperscript{506} Stavridou-Zafraka, \textit{Νίκαια και Ήπειρος,} 151-152; A. Karpozilos, \textit{The Ecclesiastical Controversy between the Kingdom of Nicaea and the Principality of Epiros (1217-1233)} (Thessaloniki, 1973), 71-72; Nicol, \textit{The Despotate,} 64-65, 95. Zafraka also argues that between 1227 and 1234 the metropolitan see of Thessaloniki remained vacant as Mesopotamites could not be replaced while he was alive, see A. Stavridou-Zafraka, “The Empire of Thessaloniki (1224-1242): Political Ideology and Reality,” \textit{Byzantiaka} 19 (1999): 219-220; and eadem, “Η Μητρόπολη
Admittedly, there is no concrete evidence to suggest the metropolitan of Thessaloniki as a possible patron of the early thirteenth church of St. Nicholas. However, his influential status both in the pre-conquest regime and during the early years of the Despotate, his obvious associations with the region of Mesopotammon and the information concerning his various phases of exile, probably in Epiros, might serve as indications for a possible patronage towards the monastery of St. Nicholas in thanks-giving for his restoration to the see of Thessaloniki during the years 1224/1225 or as an intended burial place. Although the surviving inscription records only the year, its Eucharistic content fits the profile of an ecclesiastical patron.

In the three lilies decorating the floor of the narthex Meksi rightly recognized, although with some reservations, the arms of the house of Anjou and associated the church with the Angevin realm, proposing a date between 1272 and 1286, when the Angevins were lords of the area extending from Durazzo to Butrint. Yet, by privileging the historical context, Meksi implied exclusive Angevin patronage, disassociating the building from Epirote royal patronage, largely against the evidence of the building’s fabric and his own comparative observations. It would be interesting, therefore, to reverse the approach and see how the building can inform the fragmented historical record concerning the area of Bagenitia.

507 Although Hagia Sophia in Thessaloniki has been proposed as the burial place of Mesopotamites, this suggestion has been questioned. The arguments concerning Mesopotamites’ burial place are summarized in Stavridou-Zafraka, “Μητρόπολη Θεσσαλονίκης,” 58.

508 Giakoumis and Karaiskaj, “St. Nikolaos at Mesopotam,” 91-92. The inscription reads: “The Lord said, he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood shall have eternal life. In the year 6733 (1224/5).”

Among the patterns that have been preserved on the mosaic decoration of the portico, a panel with a griffin points toward royal patronage and associates the church with the ruling family in Epiros. Griffins are rooted in the Middle Byzantine imperial art but they are considered to appear less frequently in the Late Byzantine period. However, griffins figure prominently in all royal foundations of Epiros: on the templon screen of Hagia Theodora (fig. 177) and the Pantanassa Philippiados (fig. 90); on the opus sectile floors of the Pantanassa Philippiados (fig. 76) and the now ruined monastery of Barnakoba (figs. 178–179); on a marble slab from the Blacherna church, later placed in the archaeological collection of the Paregoretissa (fig. 180); on a capital, of unknown provenance, now in the archaeological collection of the Paregoretissa (fig. 181); and on a late-thirteenth century sarcophagus, now in the

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510 Meksi, “Nouvelles données,” 151, 158, fig. 2. See also idem, Arkitektura Mesjetare në Shqipëri (shek. VII-XV) (Tirana, 1983), 188, fig. 60; and idem, Arkitektura e Kishave të Shqipërisë (Shekujt VII-XV) (Tirana, 2004), 238, fig. 205.

511 There is no comprehensive study on the use of griffins in Late Byzantine art. For a general survey, see L. Bouras, The Griffin through the Ages (Athens, 1983). More recently, Ćurić examined a group of Serbian monuments, dating from the mid-fourteenth to the beginnings of the fifteenth century and argued for the royal connotations and the possible funeral function of the griffins. See S. Ćurić, “Some Uses (and Reuses) of Griffins in Late Byzantine Art,” in Byzantine East, Latin West: Art Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann, ed. D. Mouriki et al. (Princeton, 1995), 597-604. Conspicuously absent from his study are the churches of Epiros that can provide the missing link between the Komnenian and the late Serbian examples and modify some of his suggestions concerning the diffusion, use, meaning and function of the griffins. For examples in Greece, see Th. Pazaras, Ανάγλυφες σαρκοφάγοι και επιτάφιες πλάκες της µέσης και ύστερης βυζαντινής περιόδου στην Ελλάδα (Athens, 1988), 94-95 and A. Liveri, Die byzantinischen Steinreliefs des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts im griechischen Raum (Athens, 1996), 42-47.


513 Vocotopoulos, Παντάνασσα Φιλιππιάδος, 48-51, fig. 47.

514 The fragmented marble floor panels of the Pantanassa preserve two representations of griffins, a seated and a standing one. See Vocotopoulos, “Opus Sectile,” 221-227, figs. 1-3, and 6. Vocotopoulos suggests that these were imported from Constantinople rather than made in situ. Is this an indication that these marble panels belong to the second phase of the Pantanassa? Cf. Idem, Παντάνασσα Φιλιππιάδος, 30-37, fig. 31.

515 Orlandos, Βαρνάκοβα, 22-28, figs. 12-13. C. Vanderheye, La sculpture architecturale byzantine dans le thème de Nikopolis du Xe au début du XIIIe siècle, BCH 45, supplement (Paris, 2005), cat. no. 118, fig. 101 and cat. no. 120, fig. 103.

516 Orlandos, “Μονή Βλαχερνών,” 39, fig. 35. Vanderheye, La sculpture architecturale, cat. no. 72, fig. 62.

517 A. Orlandos, “Βυζαντινά Γλυπτά της Άρτης,” ABME 2 (1936): 163, fig. 5; Vanderheye, La sculpture architecturale, cat. no. 34, fig. 31.
Archaeological Museum in Nikopolis (fig. 182). Interestingly, a related group of griffins appears in Thessaly in works associated with Anna Maliassene, the founder of the Byzantine monastery of the Nea Petra on Mount Pelion, a niece of the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259-1282). Griffins decorate the sarcophagus of Anna Maliassene (died between 1274-1276) and a second identical sarcophagus, which imitates that of Maliassene (figs. 183–184), as well as a marble slab originating probably from the monastery of the Nea Petra. The diffusion of the motif in Epiros and Thessaly, where members of the imperial family in Constantinople are involved, does not seem to be coincidental. For our purpose here the most important aspect of the griffin is its unquestionable royal connotations that can relate St. Nicholas with the patronage of the despots in Epiros.

The merging of the two traditions, Western and Byzantine, is not unique to St. Nicholas. It is present in almost all royal foundations in Arta during the last decade of the thirteenth century, largely the result of the marriage alliance between the House of Anjou and the royal Epirote family. The eclectic character of St. Nicholas, therefore, visualized in the same way as the Paregoretissa, the Pantanassa and Hagia Theodora, the joint forces of the two royal houses and provides evidence for the status of Bagenitia during this period.

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518 Pazaras, Ανάγλυφες Σαρκοφάγοι, 44, cat. no. 52, pls. 40-41. This is the lid of a sarcophagus originating from the monastery of Kozile, reused in its altar. Pazaras observes the iconographic and technical similarities with the Paregoretissa’s dedicatory inscription (ibid., 144-145).
521 I. Varalis, “Βυζαντινό Θωράκιο στην Πορταριά Πηλίου,” Εταιρεία Θεσσαλικών Ερευνών 14 (2005): 251-262, fig. 1. According to Varalis, it was likely part of a templon rather than part of a sarcophagus. Varalis observes the technical similarities with the sculptures of the Despotate (namely the pseudo-sarcophagus of St. Theodora, and the marble slab with a griffin from the Pantanassa).
Bagenitia was a “contested” area bestowed to Philip of Taranto as part of Thamar’s dowry.\footnote{Lascaris, “Vagenitia,” 431; Nicol, The Despotate (1267-1479), 47; Sakellariou, “Ο Ανδρεεγαβοί και η Ήπειρος,” 295-6; and Lappas, “Πολιτική Ιστορία,” 329, follow the French Chronicle, according to which Bagenitia would pass to Philip of Taranto after Nikephoros’ death. The actual document of Thamar’s marriage contract has not survived and a number of documents copied from the Angevin registers (giving the Angevin side of negotiations) seem to contradict the evidence of the French Chronicle. Therefore, the extent of Thamar’s dowry remains the subject of scholarly dispute. A number of modern historians, basing their arguments mainly on the Angevin archives, suggested that Anna and Nikephoros agreed to disinherit Thomas and made Thamar their “universal” heir. See relatively the special study by B. Berg, “The Dowry of Thamar of Epiros,” Byzantine Studies/Études Byzantines, n.s., 3 (1998): 96-111; and most recently, Osswald, “L’Épire,” esp. 118-124, and 126-135, with relevant documents and previous literature on the subject. Yet, we might object that Thomas is depicted as a despot in the dedicatory panel of the Pantanassa and he is also mentioned as despot in the dedicatory inscription of the Paregoretissa. From the evidence of those buildings alone, we can safely argue that Thomas took the title of the despot, while his father Nikephoros was still alive. This information is in accordance with Pachymeres, who records that Thomas was granted the title of despot before Thamar’s marriage, a fact downplayed in the Angevin registers. Cf. Berg, ibid., 107 (note 86), who discredit Pachymeres and suggests that Thomas took the title of despot only in 1303, without considering the evidence from the Pantanassa and the Paregoretissa; and S. Asonitis, “Παρατηρήσεις στις πρακτικές πολιτικοϊδεολογικής σύνδεσης Κωνσταντινούπολης και Ήπειρου κατά τον ωρίμω μεσαίωνα,” in Byzantine Arta and its Region. Proceedings of the 2nd International Archaeological and Historical Congress, Arta 12-14 April 2002, ed. E. Synkellou (Arta, 2007), esp. 147 (note 49) and 150, who argues that Thomas took the title of despot even later, some fifteen years after Nikephoros’ death. On the other hand, Osswald, “L’Épire,” 675-677, accepts that Thomas was granted the title of despot before Thamar’ s marriage, on the basis of the evidence provided by Pachymeres and the Paregoretissa, but expresses some reservations on the status of Thomas in the Pantanassa (ibid., 468-469, and 733-734).} If we are to rely on the French Chronicle of Morea, the marriage settlement prescribed that after Nikephoros’ death and if Thomas outlived his father, Philip was to receive in addition the castle of Hagios Donatos\footnote{For Hagios Donatos (modern Paramythia), see Soustal and Koder, Nikopolis und Kephallenia, 236-237.} and the whole of Bagenitia and appurtenances.\footnote{J. Buchon, ed., Recherches historiques sur la principauté française de Morée et ses hautes baronnies (Paris, 1845), vol. 1, 320ff., esp. 324): “et se Thomas vivoit après le despot son père et venoit en parfait eage que il fust sires et despos, que il tenist son pays dou prince, et que le prince eust le chastel de Saint Donat, ou toute la Vagenetie et appertenances”; and J. Longnon, ed., Livre de la conquête de la princesse de l’Amorée. Chronique de Morée (1204-1305) (Paris, 1911), 263 (§ 658).} If this information is reliable and bearing in mind that the \emph{basilissa} Anna of Epiros was on good terms with the Angevins until at least the summer of 1302, then it seems that the terms of the contract were generally respected up to that point.\footnote{Indicative of the good relations between the Epirotes and the Angevins is the aforementioned embassy to the court of Naples in 1302, when the Epirotes were granted their requests. In addition, Charles II seems to have helped Anna against her enemies, the rulers of Thessaly in July 1302: see relatively Nicol, The Despotate (1267-1479), 51-52; Berg, “The Dowry of Thamar,” 105; and Lappas, “Πολιτική Ιστορία,” 334. It seems that, as long as Philip of Taranto was himself a captive of the Aragonese (from 1299 until his release in October 1302), it was not a priority for either party to press their claims over Bagenitia. The Angevins needed Anna’s support and Anna had every good reason to delay handing over the area to her son-in law as long as the political situation was in flux. When Philip returned from captivity, hostilities resumed and culminated in the Angevin expedition against Epiros in the summer of 1304. On the Angevin campaigns against Epiros, see Osswald, “L’Épire,” 128-135, and 679, with further} St. Nicholas’ eclectic character gives further validity
to the written sources. The advantages of a joint patronage towards the most important monastic foundation of the area are self-evident and could have taken place anytime between 1294 and 1302. Moreover, this seems to be in agreement with the policies of Anna Palaiologina. As we have seen, Anna was also involved in the construction of an important ecclesiastical centre at Mokista in Aitolia, i.e. the area under Angevin control as early as 1294. Extending her patronage beyond her capital city to the most vulnerable and “contested” areas of her realm was a way to secure her visibility and protect her interests.

bibliography. It is very possible that Thomas claimed his rights over Bagenitia as early as 1303. This depends on the date of a chrysobull issued by Thomas in favour of the Venetian Jacopo Contareno, confirming the latter’s hereditary rights over property in Brastova (Bagenitia). Yet, the date of this chrysobull (either 1303, or 1318) has not been settled: see relatively P. Lemerle, “Le privilège du Despote d’Épire Thomas I pour le Vénitien Jacques Contareno,” BZ 44 (1951): 389-396; Nicol, The Despotate (1267-1479), 72-73; Lappas, “Πολιτική Ιστορία,” 341; and Osswald, “L’Épire,” 360-361, and 706. What seems certain is, that as soon as the marriage of Thamar to Philip was dissolved (1309), the Epirotes claimed back all territories that formed part of Thamar’s dowry. Indicative is the list of the rulers of Greece compiled in Venice in 1313, where Thomas’ titles include “Duke of Bagenetia” (Dux Vigenitie) among others: Nicol, The Despotate (1267-1479), 80, and 89; Lappas, “Πολιτική Ιστορία,” 347.
CHAPTER 4
THE PATRONAGE OF THE ARISTOCRACY

We would expect that the founding of royal monasteries in Arta and the periphery would have been followed by other aristocratic families residing in Epiros. Yet, the surviving monuments provide us with no firm evidence for the patronage of the Epirote aristocracy up at least to the late thirteenth century. Members of the pre-conquest regime had fled Constantinople and settled in the West according to the testimonies of John Apokaukos and Demetrios Chomatenos but neither the existing written sources nor the material record can fully support their claims.\textsuperscript{526} Some important families such as the Petraliphai and the Maliassenoi formed marriage alliances with the ruling family in Epiros and are somewhat better documented in the written sources.\textsuperscript{527} With the possible exception of the royal consorts (Maria Doukaina, wife of Theodore Doukas, and Theodora, wife of Michael II)—no traces of the building activities of the Petraliphai family—if any—exist.\textsuperscript{528} For the patronage of the Maliassenoi, on the other hand, we are better informed through the cartulary of their family monasteries of Makrinitissa and the Nea Petra on Mount Pelion in Thessaly but these foundations no longer exist.\textsuperscript{529}

\textsuperscript{526} On the Epirote aristocracy, see most recently D. Kyritses, “The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1997), esp. 86-97, 132-134, and 286-287.


\textsuperscript{528} See previous chapter on Arta.

\textsuperscript{529} Magdalino, “Thessaly,” 147-157. Constantine Maliassenos, the founder of the Makrinitissa monastery, was married to Michael II’s sister and served as an important army commander under Michael II. His son, Nicholas Maliassenos, affiliated himself with the imperial family in Constantinople through his marriage to Anna, Michael VIII Palaiologos’ niece.
Local aristocracy becomes more visible towards the last years of the Despotate’s political existence. A few churches—the Red Church (Panagia Bellas), St. Demetrios in Kypseli, the Taxiarchs in Kostaniani and the Panagia Prebentza—can be attributed to the initiatives of the local civil and military aristocracy on the basis of their inscriptional evidence. To these we should add the churches of St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs at Mokista, which have been previously mentioned briefly within the context of the royal patronage in the periphery. All these churches present us with the opportunity to investigate the tastes of the aristocracy, their status and financial means, as well as the motives for their patronage.

The Red Church (Panagia Bellas) near Boulgareli:

On the southern slopes of the Tzoumerka mountains, near the village of Palaiochori in Boulgareli, the katholikon of a monastery is preserved (figs. 3, 185–188). It is dedicated to the Nativity of the Virgin, and is known in local tradition as the “royal monastery” (“Vasilomonastiro”). During Ottoman rule, its katholikon was attached as a metochion to the then more prosperous monastery of Bellas and thus became known as the Panagia Bellas. Today is simply known as the Red Church (Kokkini Ekklesia). Located on an important road linking

Arta with Trikala (Thessaly),\textsuperscript{531} the church was built and decorated in the years 1295/96\textsuperscript{532} by the high-ranking military officer of the despots Nikephoros Komnenos Doukas and Anna Palaiologina, the \textit{protostrator} Theodore Tzimiskes.\textsuperscript{533}

Following the example of the despot Nikephoros and Anna in the Pantanassa Philippiados, Theodore Tzimiskes recorded his sponsorship with a donors’ portrait, a wall-painting located on the east wall of the narthex, flanking the entrance to the naos.\textsuperscript{534} The patron, accompanied by his wife the \textit{protostratorissa} Maria, offers a model of the church to the enthroned Virgin and child depicted above the door (fig. 189). Symmetrically placed, on the other side of the door are the portraits of his brother, John Tzimiskes and his wife Anna (fig. 190). Inscriptions identify the donors who address their prayers to God. In addition, a long dedicatory inscription in dodecasyllabic verse is placed on the west wall of the naos, above the entrance door (figs. 191–192).\textsuperscript{535} Although not entirely intact, the inscription states that the church was decorated by the \textit{protostrator} at a great expense (πυκνοίς αναλλώµασιν) during the reign of the despot Nikephoros and Anna.

\textsuperscript{532} Hallensleben, “Bogorodica Perivleptos,” 304-316.
\textsuperscript{533} \textit{Megas doux, Megas Domestikos} and \textit{Protostrator} were the three highest Byzantine military offices, see Kyritses, “Aristocracy,” 40, and 45. For Theodore Tzimiskes, see \textit{PLP} no. 27951.
\textsuperscript{534} For the dedicatory panel, see Orlandos, “Κόκκινη Εκκλησιά,” 160-164; S. Kalopissi-Verti, \textit{Dedicatory Inscriptions and Donor Portraits in Thirteenth-Century Churches of Greece}, TIB 5 (Vienna, 1992), 32, and 98-99, figs. 87-88.
The Panagia Bellas is a two-columned cross-in-square church with a single projecting apse and a tripartite narthex (fig. 193). It remains largely intact except for the loss of the main dome over the naos (fig. 194) and the domical vault over the central bay of the narthex—both destroyed at an unknown time and now replaced with simple pitched roofs following the restoration of the church by Orlandos in 1967. Built with cloisonné masonry, the brick decorative patterns are limited to the exterior walls of the naos with bands of meanders and reticulate revetments consisting of white and red tiles.

The patron, who had obvious connections with the ruling family in Epiros, seems to have used for the construction of his church members of the team responsible for the Paregoretissa as the similarities in the masonry, construction and brick decoration between the two buildings indicate. The same workshop, as Hallensleben thoroughly documented, was also responsible for the construction of the church of the Panagia Peribleptos in Ohrid (1294/5) commissioned by a member of the Byzantine aristocracy, the megas hetaireiarches Progonos Sgouros, a son in law of the emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos. To these examples we should probably add the roughly contemporaneous church of St. George (Omorphokklesia) near Kastoria (ca. 1300), built and decorated by the local noble family, the πανευγενέστατοι Netzades. All three churches

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536 The church’s overall dimensions are 16 X 9.15m. At an unknown time the two west columns supporting the dome have been encased in piers. The southwest monolithic column and its base (both of granite) were found in situ during excavations. Another base and part of a column (found in the interior of the church, against the north pier of the sanctuary) probably belong to the northwest column supporting the dome: Papadopoulou, “Κόκκινη Εκκλησία,” 329.

537 On the restoration work, see Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 312 (with relevant bibliography).

538 Hallensleben, “Bogorodica Peribleptos,” 304-316.

539 For Progonos Sgouros, see PLP no. 25060. For his semi-military office, see A. Kazhdan, “Hetaireiarches,” ODB 2: 925-926.

540 For the Omorphokklesia, see D. Nicol, “Two churches of Western Macedonia,” BZ 49 (1956): 96-105 (on the ketorial inscription and date of the church, either 1287 or most probably 1302/3); and the now dated publication by E. Stikas, “Une église des Paléologues aux environs de Castoria,” BZ 51 (1958): 100-112. Stikas noticed the striking similarities of the Omorphokklesia with the Panagia Peribleptos in Ohrid: “L’église Saint Clément d’ Ohrida [i.e. Panagia Peribleptos] construite en 1295, présente une ressemblance frappante avec notre église, surtout en ce qui concerne la construction en briques et en arcades aveugles de l’abside” (ibid., 103, note 7). According to Stikas,
present striking similarities to one another, indicating that the builders working in the Paregoretissa proved to be very active and successful in receiving commissions by the aristocratic circles within and outside the geographical boundaries of Epiros.  

Part of the workshop’s success—at least in the case of the Panagia Bellas—seems to have been the desire of the aristocratic patrons to evoke, through their patronage, the most ambitious project of the Paregoretissa. Writing towards the end of the nineteenth century, the metropolitan of Arta Serapheim Xenopoulos claimed that the Panagia Bellas is a close copy of the Paregoretissa, “identical in every aspect but the scale.” He also added that the church followed the Gothic tradition for which he was heavily criticized by Orlandos. For all his inaccuracies,
and in spite of his lack of scientific training, the metropolitan’s impressions stressed the obvious resemblance of the two churches and revealed how the church was perceived by a learned, yet, non-academic audience. Taking into account that medieval audiences were similarly freed from modern formal and typological preoccupations, we might hypothesize that the Panagia Bellas was conceptualized by its patron and perceived by the medieval viewer exactly as the metropolitan Serapheim suggested, as a close copy of the Paregoretissa but on a different scale.

The typological dependence of the Panagia Bellas to the royal foundations of the despots of Epiros becomes obvious only if we consider the two-columned cross-in-square church as a simplified variation of the Constantinopolitan cross-in-square, better suited for smaller scale churches. Then, the links between the Panagia Bellas, the Pantanassa and the first phase of the Paregoretissa become more apparent. Even more subtle seems to be the typological dependence of the Panagia Bellas on the approximately contemporaneous remodeling of the Paregoretissa. Despite its complexity, the core of the Paregoretissa’s superstructure adopts a cross-shaped arrangement topped by a dome, whereby the barrel-vaults of the cross-arms appear externally as gables pierced by trilobed windows. A similar solution but with necessary modifications has been applied to the Panagia Bellas.

The interior decoration of the church remains more elusive but nonetheless betrays the pretensions of its founder.544 Fragments of ancient spolia, mainly parts of ionic capitals and columns, indicate that ancient marble was reused to evoke some sort of status (fig. 195).545 However, the marble used in the royal foundations for the templon screens, floor paving or in the

545 Papadopoulou, “Κόκκινη Εκκλησία,” 324, note 6. Part of an ionic capital is walled in the northwest pier; and two more fragments of an ionic capital are now in the archaeological collection of the Paregoritissa. Cf. Kaponis, “Ναοδομική Αρχιτεκτονική,” 158.
case of the Paregoretissa for the wall revetments must have been costly. Instead of the expensive marble, cheaper and more readily available materials—plaster for the templon and decorated reddish clay slabs for the floor pavement (fig. 196)—were used, without compromising much of the final result, which stylistically and technically seems to have followed the trends of the capital. This is mostly evident in the fragments of the stucco window frames decorated with animal heads (fig. 197), which recall the sculptural decoration of the Paregoretissa and the Pantanassa. The wooden door, decorated with crosses, animals, floral and geometrical patterns carved in low relief might once have complemented the sculptural decoration of the church but its initial position is not certain and to make matters worse it disappeared during World War II (fig. 198).  

The church of St. Demetrios Kypseli (Tourkopaloukon):  

A gold signet ring that once belonged to Michael Zorianos is held today in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 206). The inscription, carved in reverse, +ΣΦΑ/ΓΗ ΜΙ/ΧΑΗΛ ΤΟ/ΖΩΠΙ/ΑΝΟΤV ZΩ /Π/ΗΩΠΩ (seal of Michael Zorianos), does not mention the office held by its owner but he is identified with the protostrator Michael Zorianos, the highest-ranking military commander of Epiros, under the despot Thomas (1296-1318). Michael Zorianos, an

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547 Papadopoulou, “Κόκκινη Εκκλησιά,” 329-330, fig. 12; Orlandos, “Κόκκινη Εκκλησιά,” fig. 20.  
549 Orlandos, “Κόκκινη Εκκλησιά,” 157-159, fig. 5. At the time of Orlandos’ publication, the wooden door was located in the entrance leading from the narthex to the naos. According to Orlandos’ observations the height of the door was reduced in order to fit the opening and, thus, he suggested that the door was designated for another location. Cf. Papadopoulou, Βυζαντινή Άρτα, 120.  
550 For Michael Zorianos, see PLP no. 6666.  
intellectual and the owner of a gospel now kept in the Oxford Bodleian Library (cod. Baroc. gr. 29), was probably also a scribe and illuminist. An inscription found in the precinct of the Byzantine churches of St. Nicholas and the Taxiaruchs in the village of Mokista (Aitolia), now in the museum of Thermos, records him as the founder of one of the churches of the complex, which one has not been identified with any certainty yet.

Besides Mokista, the only surviving foundation that has been attributed to Michael Zorianos’ patronage is the Byzantine monastery of St. Demetrios, near the village of Kypseli (formerly Tourkopaloukon), between Preveza and Paramythia (figs. 199–202). The initials of Michael Zorianos (ΜΧΛΖΡΝ), consisting of six letters set in brick on the south tympanon of the transverse vault of St. Demetrios, identify him as the founder of the monastery (fig. 205). The monastic complex did not generate much interest until its restoration in the years 2004-2007, which culminated in the recent thorough monograph by Vocotopoulos. The monastery consists of the katholikon dedicated to St. Demetrios and a roughly contemporaneous refectory turned

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552 For Michael Zorianos as an intellectual, see Katsaros, “Επιγραφική ‘Δεσποτάτου,’” 530 and note 48 for an extensive bibliography and discussion. Also Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 85-87.
553 According to A. Paliouras, Βυζαντινή Αιτωλοακαρνανία: Συμβολή στη Βυζαντινή και Μεταβυζαντινή Μνημειακή Τέχνη, rev. ed. (Agrinion, 2004), 223-232, the inscription might not have come originally from the churches of St. Nicholas or the Taxiaruchs but from the nearby church of Hagia Sophia. The patronage of the Byzantine churches in Mokista is discussed in detail below.
554 The monastery is located some 18km south of Photike (Hagios Donatos, modern Paramythia), see relatively Soustal and Koder, Nikopolis und Kephalenien, 140.
into a church dedicated to St. George (figs. 203 and 211). The original monastic cells have not been preserved.\textsuperscript{557}

The katholikon, measuring 13.70 X 13.20 m, is a three-aisled cross-vaulted church surrounded on three sides by an ambulatory ending in domed chapels with projecting apses at their east end, flanking the single projecting apse of the naos (fig. 204). The ambulatory’s general layout of unequal dimensions and heights, the divergent domes and apses, the differentiated treatment of windows and blind arcades, the great variety of ornamental brickwork and the absence of uniform masonry throughout, all contribute to a sense of irregularity, whereby nothing seems to mirror its counterpart. Although the ambulatory is considered an afterthought, its construction must have followed shortly after that of the main church.\textsuperscript{558} The various minor modifications and repairs, which occurred during the building’s prolonged life, have all been described in detail by Vocotopoulos.\textsuperscript{559} As usual, they involve the blocking of many of the original exterior and interior door openings, modifications of the original roof lines, and partial rebuilding of the areas that have been damaged over time.

\textsuperscript{557} According to Vocotopoulos, \textit{Saint Demetrios at Phanari}, 21 and 97, the ruined cells to the southwest corner of the monastic complex date to the seventeenth or eighteenth century.

\textsuperscript{558} D. Evangelidis, “Σταυρεπίστεγος εκκλησία παρά τον Αχέροντα,” in \textit{Πεπραγµένα του Θ΄ Διεθνούς Βυζαντινολογικού Συνεδρίου, Θεσσαλονίκη, 12-19 Απριλίου 1953}, vol. 1 (Athens, 1955), 182-183; and Pallas, “Επιρος,” 289, 291-292, considered the ambulatory an addition. Similarly Vocotopoulos, \textit{Saint Demetrios at Phanari}, 35-37 and 103-104, argues that “the ambulatory was not envisaged when planning the church.” In addition to the clearly defined joints between the main church and the ambulatory, Vocotopoulos summarizes his arguments as follows: “The one-light windows of the north and south side of the transverse vault were partially hidden and walled up when the ambulatory was added. The window of the west façade of the naos was obviously planned for an exterior wall. The vaults of the porticoes are not supported by the walls of naos but by transverse walls. Finally, the unusual type of masonry parts of the south and west side of the naos, with horizontal bricks between vertical ones, was meant to be visible.” But as Vocotopoulos observes “The masonry and brick decoration of the cross-vaulted core and of the greater part of the ambulatory are very similar. They must not be very distant in time. This does not apply to the north chapel and the adjacent room, which are later... built by a workshop with more experienced stone carvers...”: ibid., 103.

\textsuperscript{559} Vocotopoulos, \textit{Saint Demetrios at Phanari}, 36-37, 103-104 and passim.
The main church belongs to the three-aisled, cross-vaulted type and thus, typologically, St. Demetrios can be associated with a few buildings from Epiros and Thessaly.\textsuperscript{560} The earliest known examples from Epiros, the churches of the Panagia Bryoni\textsuperscript{561} and the Kato Panagia\textsuperscript{562} date from the reign of Michael II, while the Porta Panagia in Thessaly,\textsuperscript{563} an almost identical copy of the Kato Panagia, was erected by John Doukas—natural son of Michael II—in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. From the same area and roughly contemporaneous with St. Demetrios is the church of the Taxiarchs at Kostaniani.\textsuperscript{564} With the latter, St. Demetrios shares the peculiarity of the quadrant vaults covering the west corner bays of the side aisles, as well as the prothesis and the diakonikon.\textsuperscript{565}

The types of masonry that prevail in the construction of the katholikon of St. Demetrios are variations of the cloisonné.\textsuperscript{566} With the exception of the north chapel and adjacent bay of the portico where the workmanship is more careful, the stones were predominantly roughly cut. For the most part they were set in courses with one or two bricks in the horizontal and vertical joints; alternatively, they were separated by a single horizontal brick course and three horizontally placed bricks filling the vertical joints. Parts of the main church (as for example the east façade and central apse) and its ambulatory (for instance its south façade) demonstrate a combination of

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\textsuperscript{560} A most recent overview of the bibliography on the cross-vaulted churches, in Vocotopoulos, \textit{Saint Demetrios at Phanari}, 41-43, and 105. The three-aisled cross-vaulted churches, in particular, are further subdivided typologically into two variants: In the first, the aisles are separated from the naos by colonnades of three columns (Kato Panagia, and Porta Panagia), while in the second, the most common variant, the colonnade is reduced to a pair of columns (as for instance in the case of the Panagia Bryoni, St. Demetrios Kypseli, and the Taxiarchs at Kostaniani). For the classification of the cross-vaulted churches in general, see H. Küpper, \textit{Der Bautypus der griechischen Dachtranseptkirche}, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1990).


\textsuperscript{562} A. Orlandos, “Η Μονή της Κάτω Παναγιάς,” \textit{ABME} 2 (1936): 70-87.


\textsuperscript{564} Küpper, \textit{Dachtranseptkirche}, vol. 2, 150 (Taxiarchs, Kostaniani), 160 (St. Demetrios, Kypseli); note that the given dates have been revised.

\textsuperscript{565} See \textit{infra}, 174ff.

\textsuperscript{566} Vocotopoulos, \textit{Saint Demetrios at Phanari}, 29-30, 68-73, 100-101, and 115-117.
these techniques, which have been used interchangeably. All these variations of the cloisonné appear in a number of examples from the Despotate and were used throughout the thirteenth century.567

The exterior decoration of the church includes a great variety of well-known brick patterns such as bands with S-shaped tiles resembling a string-course, zigzag, step patterns, and triangular tiles, as well as radial angles, lozenges, and sunburst discs, which enhance the picturesque impression conveyed by the irregularity of the masonry and the design of the church.568 As a contrast, the sculptural decoration is extremely poor. Judging by what is now preserved, it seems limited to the pair of columns which are spolia assembled in a clumsy way (figs. 207–210).569 Wall paintings of the original decoration of the main church have been partially revealed underneath the later layers of whitewash, but have not been published yet.570

To the south of the katholikon stands the refectory of the monastery, the only preserved example besides that of the Paregoretissa’s. It is a rectangular timber-roofed building measuring 14.65 X 5.20 m with a projecting cylindrical apse at its end.571 It is built mainly in cloisonné except for the west wall and the lower parts of south and east walls, which are built with brick and stone rubble. The flat lateral façades of the refectory were articulated with a row of four single windows placed high up on the walls and a row of stone corbels placed below, at the level of the apse cornice; six of them are preserved in the north façade, five in the south. The presence

567 An extensive list of all types of masonry encountered in the architecture of the Despotate in Vocotopoulos, “Πεντακόρατος Βονίτσης,” 373-374, note 59; and idem. Saint Demetrios at Phanari, 68-73, and 115-117.
568 Vocotopoulos, Saint Demetrios at Phanari, 31-34, 75-87, 101-102, and 118-122.
569 The north column is eight-sided (but with unequal sides), with a reused ionic capital squeezed between the column and the masonry above. The corresponding south column is round with a base decorated with reed leaves.
570 See the preliminary report in Papadopoulou and Vocotopoulos, St. Demetrius in Kypseli, 20-28, figs. 20, 30, and 43. Eighteenth-century frescoes are preserved in the sanctuary area (in the main apse and prothesis), while the built templon was decorated towards the late nineteenth century.
of the stone corbels probably indicates that the building was to receive continuous porticoes along its north and south façades. Similarly, three stone corbels have been preserved in the south façade of the main church’s portico.\textsuperscript{572} As has been already pointed out by Vocotopoulos, the refectory must be considered roughly contemporaneous with the church, an estimation supported by the similarities of the masonry and some shared formal and decorative aspects between the two buildings.\textsuperscript{573}

Towards the end of the thirteenth or early fourteenth century when St. Demetrios was erected, a wide range of models of churches were readily available for a patron to choose from. Equally, workshops must have been quite experienced in reproducing and adapting various types of buildings in the desired scale and according to the available financial means. Unlike the \textit{protostrator} Tzimiskes, who chose a quotation of the Paregoretissa, Zorianos, deliberately or not, makes a direct connection with the patronage of his namesake, Michael II. This is attested in the preference for the three-aisled cross-vaulted church, which in the case of St. Demetrios is a simplified version of the Kato Panagia and the Porta Panagia, with one pair of columns dividing the aisles, instead of three. Even the simple but readily recognizable initials of Michael Zorianos parallel the simple cruciform monogram of Michael II in the Kato Panagia. It is no accident that for some time, the church was attributed to Michael II instead.\textsuperscript{574}

However, for all its reference to the models from the reign of Michael II, St. Demetrios conforms to the building traditions of the late thirteenth century. The addition of the ambulatory

\textsuperscript{572} Vocotopoulos, \textit{Saint Demetrios at Phanari}, 30, and 101.

\textsuperscript{573} Vocotopoulos, \textit{Saint Demetrios at Phanari}, 38-39 and 104. As has been noticed, the now partially destroyed bilobed window of the refectory apse is very similar to that of the main apse of the church. Likewise, the blind arches of the refectory apse are very similar to that of the north chapel of the church.

enveloping the church on three sides, ending in domed side-chapels, demonstrates the impact exercised on St. Demetrios by the royal foundations in Arta such as the Pantanassa and the Paregoretissa.\textsuperscript{575} Similarly, the curved gables of St. Demetrios’ transverse vault, encountered also in the Red Church at Boulgareli and probably in the west gable of the Blacherna church, are not attested in the earlier buildings of the Despotate.\textsuperscript{576} Likewise, the brick reticulate revetments, filling the blind arcades of the main apse of the church as well as some of the blind arcades of the domes over the side chapels, also evoke the similarly patterned friezes of the Paregoretissa and the Pantanassa, as well as those of the Red church at Boulgareli.\textsuperscript{577}

As the history of the monastery is not recorded in the medieval sources, we can only speculate on Zorianos’ motives of patronage. On the basis that he was the \textit{protostrator} of the despot Thomas and Arta his main operational base, Vocotopoulos suggested that Zorianos might have originated from the wider area that benefited from his patronage or that he held estates there.\textsuperscript{578} We cannot exclude, however, political motives for establishing a sizeable community of monks there. St. Demetrios monastery was situated some 18 km south of Photiki (Hagios Donatos, modern Paramythia). The castle of Hagios Donatos is mentioned in Thamar’s marriage contract\textsuperscript{579} and again in a proposed peace treaty of June 1305.\textsuperscript{580} The wider area was therefore of

\textsuperscript{575} Ambulatories are unattested in the local tradition. The ambulatories of the Pantanassa and the Paregoretissa are the earliest examples found in Epiros and predate all examples found in Serbia and Thessaloniki. Thus, their Constantinopolitan origin cannot be disputed. See Vocotopoulos, “Παντοκράτορας Βονιτσης,” esp. 370-373 and passim.

\textsuperscript{576} See relatively, Vocotopoulos, \textit{Saint Demetrios at Phanari}, 89 and 123.

\textsuperscript{577} For a discussion of the reticulate revetments with further bibliography, see Vocotopoulos, “Church Architecture in Epirus,” 88-89; and idem, \textit{Saint Demetrios at Phanari}, 83 and 121.

\textsuperscript{578} Vocotopoulos, \textit{Saint Demetrios at Phanari}, 92-93 and 124-125.

\textsuperscript{579} As we have mentioned the written sources concerning Thamar’s marriage contract are controversial. The modern historians who favor the French Chronicle suggest that the castle of Hagios Donatos was allotted to the Angevins as a second instalment in Thamar’s dowry, after the death of Nikephoros (see supra, 159, note 522). Those who discredit the French chronicle in favor of the Angevin archives argue that the castle of Hagios Donatos was the only place allotted to Thomas after his parents’ death. For instance Osswald, “L’Épire,” 121-122: “A terme, Thomas ne devait recevoir que Photikê (Hagios Donatos), qu’il tiendrait comme fief de Philippe.”

\textsuperscript{580} The wider area was therefore of
some political and strategic importance. It is very possible that the construction of the monastery by the *protostrator* followed the successful defense of the Epirote lands, against the Angevin attacks of 1304 and 1306.

The church of the Taxiarchs at Kostaniani:

The church of the Taxiarchs at Kostaniani (near Dodone), located on a major road connecting mainland with coastal Epiros, is a three-aisled cross-vaulted church preserved in a relatively good condition (figs. 136, 212–215).\(^\text{581}\) A painted inscription on the north wall under the cross vault identifies one of its patrons as the pansebastos Isakios, who is not known from other sources (fig. 221).\(^\text{582}\) The fragmented inscription does not preserve the date of the construction and decoration of the church, and thus it is generally assigned to the second half of the thirteenth century, and most likely towards the end of the century.\(^\text{583}\)

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\(^\text{580}\) The proposed treaty of June, 8, 1305 followed the unsuccessful Angevin attack of 1304. The relevant document, copied from the Angevin registers, included the term that Thomas had to return Hagios Donatos and then receive it as a fief from the Angevins. But there seems to be an agreement in modern scholarship that this peace treaty, already signed by Charles II, was never ratified by the Epirote side: see relatively N. Lappas, “Πολιτική Ιστορία του κράτους της Ηπείρου κατά τον 13’ αι.” (PhD diss., Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2007), 343-344; and Osswald, “L’Épire,” 132-133 and note 485, with relevant sources and literature. In a later treaty of the same year (October 18, ratified November 19)—agreed between Charles II and John Orsini of Kephalonia, diving the prospective areas of conquest—the area was given as a fief to John Orsini: see Osswald, ibid., 133.\(^\text{581}\)

\(^\text{582}\) For the topography, see Soustal and Koder, *Nikopolis und Kephallenia*, 92, and 186. The church has not received a detailed study. See mainly D. Evangelidis, “Βυζαντινά μνημεία της Ηπείρου,” *Ηπειρόχρον* 6 (1931): 258-276.\(^\text{583}\)

\(^\text{583}\) Kalopissi-Verti, *Dedictory Inscriptions*, 52, fig. 7. The title of Isakios as pansebastos (πανσέβαστος), which precedes his name, has been partially preserved but it is accepted as such by Kalopissi-Verti. The name of Isakios is followed by the name of a Theodore and a female name that no longer survives.\(^\text{584}\)

\(^\text{584}\) Vocotopoulos, “Art under the Despotate of Epirus,” 228. Further references in Kaponis, “Ναοδομική Αρχιτεκτονική,” 192-196; and G. Fousteris, “Εικονογραφικά προγράμματα σε βυζαντινούς σταυρεπίστεγους ναούς” (PhD diss., Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2006), 35-41, and 238.\(^\text{585}\)

\(^\text{585}\) Vocotopoulos, “Art under the Despotate of Epirus,” 228. The mid-thirteenth-century date proposed by Tsoures, *Κεραμοπλαστικός διάκοσμος*, 202 and Küpper, *Dachtranseptkirche*, vol. 2, 150, has been accepted by Kalopissi-Verti, *Dedictory Inscriptions*, 52. On the contrary, Evangelidis, “Βυζαντινά μνημεία της Ηπείρου,” 258-269, had
The church presents another variation of the three-aisled, cross-vaulted church, whereby the interior supports of the superstructure consist of elongated pairs of piers and pilasters instead of columns, a solution that was probably determined by the lack of readily available columns (figs. 219–220).\textsuperscript{584} The unusual quadrant vaults of the west corner bays of the aisles—a rare vaulting type, also encountered in the case of St. Demetrios in Kypseli—have been explained as the best solution for the narrow and oblong spaces.\textsuperscript{585}

Despite these idiosyncrasies, the typology, the masonry and the decoration of the church link the church of the Taxiarchs with the building traditions of the Despotate. The church type is a simplified variation of the royal foundations of the Kato Panagia in Arta and the Porta Panagia in Thessaly. The masonry of the church—of irregular stones surrounded by fragments of bricks placed horizontally in the joints—is similarly reminiscent of the masonry of many royal foundations. The ornamental brickwork, limited to the apse and the gables of the cross vault

\footnotesize{proposed a late thirteenth to early fourteenth-century date for the construction of the church, which seems more likely given the similarities with St. Demetrios at Kypseli, redated to the end of the thirteenth century. Most recently, Fundić has studied the extensive fresco decoration of the church and related it to the decoration of the Panagia Bellas at Boulgareli. Consequently, she dates the frescoes to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century: Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 197-208, 218-220, 373-382 and passim. Given the above, the construction of the church in the late thirteenth century seems now better documented.}\textsuperscript{584} Columns must have been available for reuse from the sanctuary of Dodone; however, the donor may not have wished to have the trouble and expenses of transportation. Alternatively, we could hypothesize that the master mason preferred the more solid solution of elongated piers and pilasters—almost wall-like—to ensure the stability of the superstructure.\textsuperscript{585}

(figs. 216–217), is restricted to dentil friezes and zigzag patterns and echoes only distantly the royal foundations of Arta. Similarly some fragments with sculptural decoration in plaster, now in the Byzantine Museum of Ioannina,\(^{586}\) and the quite elaborate stucco window frames preserved in situ (fig. 218),\(^{587}\) betray the patrons’ desire to reproduce the lavishness of its more luxurious prototypes.

The church of the Panagia Kyriotissa at Prebentza (Akarnania):

Another pansebastos, Basileios Tziskos, is recorded as one of the two patrons of the church dedicated to the Panagia Kyriotissa at Prebentza in Akarnania (figs. 222–227).\(^{588}\) The patron, who is not known from the written sources, was probably a high official (διοικητής) of the theme of Acheloos, where Prebentza belonged.\(^{589}\) The second patron mentioned in the inscription, George oikonomos, was most probably an ecclesiastical official, a treasurer.\(^{590}\) His contribution to the project is not clearly defined. He might have managed the pansebastos’ donation and overseen the project’s completion; or he might also have contributed financially.\(^{591}\)

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\(^{586}\) Papadopoulou, “Γύψινα Ανάγλυφα,” cat. no. 26, fig. 36. This is a plaster slab, which Papadopoulou considers as part of a templon screen. Yet, the upper part ends in a gable and, thus, we might consider it, alternatively, as the narrow side of a pseudo-sarcophagus (?). At present, it is kept in storage in the Byzantine Museum in Ioannina; and also cat. no. 28-9, figs. 38-9: two fragments of arched lintels. Both are currently on display in the Byzantine Museum of Ioannina.

\(^{587}\) Papadopoulou, “Γύψινα Ανάγλυφα,” 362, figs. 43-44.


\(^{590}\) For the reading “George oikonomos,” instead of μεγάλου οικονόμου, see Kalopissi-Verti, *Dedicatory Inscriptions*, 56-57. Cf. Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 30

\(^{591}\) For the suggestion that this certain George was responsible for the financial management of the patron’s donation, see A. Stavridou-Zafraka, “Από την εκκλησιαστική οργάνωση του κράτους της Ηπείρου: Εκκλησιαστικά
Although a date has not been preserved, the construction and decoration of the church is placed roughly towards the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{592}

Unfortunately, the building was flooded in 1969 by the waters of the artificial lake of the Kastraki dam.\textsuperscript{593}

Panagia Prebentza is a single-aisled timber-roofed church with narthex and a single-projecting apse, flanked originally along the north and south sides by two adjacent longitudinal annexes ending in side-chapels (fig. 224). The longitudinal annexes were revealed during excavations and belonged to the initial construction phase of the church with overall dimensions 15.30 X 10.90 m.\textsuperscript{594} The lower parts of the main church and the annexes were built out of stone rubble, while the rest of the building followed a loose version of the cloisonné masonry.\textsuperscript{595} Varied bands of brick patterns—meanders, \textit{dispsilon}, key-shaped bricks, astragals among others—decorated mainly the apse and the east façade of the church (fig. 225).\textsuperscript{596} Against this richly patterned brick background was set the inscription (figs. 226–227), commemorating the patronage of the \textit{pansebastos} Basileios Tziskos and George \textit{oikonomos} along with the dedication of the church to the Virgin Kyriotissa and the Hagioi Theodoroi.\textsuperscript{597}

Despite the simplicity of the architectural plan, the absence of sculptural decoration and the clumsy execution of the masonry and the brick decoration, the church displays unmistakable

\textsuperscript{592} Vocotopoulos, “Παναγία Πρεβέντζας,” 275; Tsoures, \textit{Κεραμοπλαστικός διάκοσμος}, 199; Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 209-211, 347-351 and passim.
\textsuperscript{593} The church was previously documented and partially excavated. The extensive wall paintings were removed by the archaeological service (see relatively Vocotopoulos, “Παναγία Πρεβέντζας,” 251-275). According to Paliouras, \textit{Βυζαντινή Αιτωλοακαρνανία}, 302-304, when the waters of the lake are calm, the roof of the building is still visible three meters underneath the water surface.
\textsuperscript{594} Vocotopoulos, “Παναγία Πρεβέντζας,” 252, and 266.
\textsuperscript{595} Ibid., 254-256.
\textsuperscript{596} Ibid., fig. 4.
\textsuperscript{597} Ibid., 264. Vocotopoulos suggests that the side chapels were dedicated to the saints Theodore Teron and Theodore Stratelates.
affiliations with the royal foundations in Arta.\textsuperscript{598} The lateral annexes and side chapels not only contribute in enlarging the church with additional spaces but evoke the late thirteenth-century arrangements of the Paregoretissa, the Pantanassa and Hagia Theodora.\textsuperscript{599} On the other hand, models from the reign of Michael II have also exercised their impact on the construction and decoration of the church. For instance, the long inscription of five lines set in brick on the apse and the east gable of the church was meant to be read from the bottom upwards. This recalls similar practices in the Kato Panagia and probably in the Panagia Bryoni as well.\textsuperscript{600} In the later examples, shorter inscriptions occupied the space under the arms of the cross vault. In Panagia Prebentza, the inscription was set instead on the prominent and more visible upper part of the east façade. Clearly both masons and patrons were aware of the long building traditions of the Despotate and were able to synthesize them in a new creation through a process of selection.

\textbf{Hagia Sophia, St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs at Mokista (Aitolia):}

The group of churches at Mokista must count among the most intriguing and little understood building projects of the late thirteenth-century Epiros. As they appear today, the major components of the compound—the church of Hagia Sophia on one hand and the churches

\textsuperscript{598} Vocotopoulos, “Παναγία Πρεβέντζας,” esp. 268-275, discusses in detail all the individual features of the church in terms of masonry, construction and decoration and provides ample comparisons with the other buildings of the Despotate.

\textsuperscript{599} Vocotopoulos stresses the similarities of the Panagia Prebentza with St. Basil in Arta, a building clearly depending on the Paregoretissa. For a thorough presentation and discussion of all examples in Epiros with ambulatories, side chapels and annexes, see Vocotopoulos, “Παντοκράτορας Βονίτσης,” 370-373. As far as I know, none of the preserved examples predates the Paregoretissa and the Pantanassa. Vocotopoulos, “Church Architecture in Epirus,” 84, suggests that this is a Constantinopolitan feature “adopted by Epirote builders during the reign of Michael II,” apparently accepting Theis’ suggestion for the early phase of the Paregoretissa.

\textsuperscript{600} See G. Velenis, “Σχόλια και παρατηρήσεις σε πολύστιχες πλίνθινες επιγραφές,” in Αντίφωνον: Αφιέρωμα στον Καθηγητή Ν. Β. Δρανδάκη, ed. V. Katsaros (Thessaloniki, 1994), 266-281, and Tsoures, Κέραμοπλαστικός διάκοσμος, 145-147.
of St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs on the other—seem to conform to distinct aesthetic systems, if not distinct building traditions (figs. 228–235). The presence of three churches in a single site leaves little doubt as to the importance of the project. However, its construction history, as well as its functional and ideological aspects, is little known. The dedication of the largest church to Hagia Sophia—if indeed it is the original dedication—usually indicates the presence of an important ecclesiastical centre rather than a mere monastic settlement. Four inscriptions carved in stone, by far the largest collection of inscriptions from a single site, confirm in turn its significance by recording the names of the patrons in charge: Anna Kantakouzene Palaiologina, the regent queen, widow of Nikephoros Komnenos Doukas; Michael Zorianos, the protostrator of the despot (Thomas); and Kosmas Andritsopoulos, an enigmatic patron of either the clerical or monastic hierarchy.\footnote{The Byzantine inscriptions from Mokista have been published by various scholars with slightly different readings: see mainly Katsaros, “Επιγραφική Δεσποτάτου,” 520-521; and Kalopissi-Verti, Dedicatory Inscriptions, 57-59, with additional literature.}

As the inscriptions collectively inform us, without delving into the particular problems of attribution, the project summoned the subvention of Epiros’ political, military and ecclesiastical elite, thus setting an ideologically powerful and unique example of patronage. In direct response, the design and construction of the compound with its apparent visual complexities and contrasts solidified the intended statement, providing us with additional layers of interpretation. Founded ca. 1300 and in an area largely under Angevin control, the history of the complex is for the moment inadequately known.

The dominating church of the complex, Hagia Sophia, is severely ruined today, and its construction phases, whether a foundation or a refoundation of the late thirteenth century, remain contested (figs. 228–230).\footnote{D. Konstantios, the excavator of the church, considered Hagia Sophia a middle Byzantine basilica, which was extensively rebuilt in the Ottoman period. Thus, he did not attribute any building construction phases to the} As excavations revealed, Hagia Sophia was built initially as a large
three aisled basilica with a tripartite sanctuary to the east, culminating in three projecting semi-
circular apses (measuring 17.80 X 8.40 m, without including the narthex). Parts of the
original walls built with cloisonné masonry in regular courses indicate that the church conformed
to the local building traditions (fig. 231). Yet, the particular features of the church, probably a
timber-roofed basilica, cannot be reconstructed with any certainty without additional detailed
research. At some point, probably in the Ottoman period, and after a serious collapse, the church
was extensively rebuilt and reduced in length by the transferring of its sanctuary some four to
five meters to the west. At this stage, the church with its new east façade (with just one
projecting apse) was rebuilt entirely with rubble, incorporating, nonetheless, parts of the pre-
existing walls.

Some 30 meters to the south of Hagia Sophia, stand the two adjoined churches of the
compound, St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs, raised on a low platform accessed today from the
west, through flights of stairs (figs. 232–233). Both churches are single-aisled buildings, each
culminating in a single rectangular apse, but without preceding narthexes. The north church of

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603 According to Konstantios, “Νεώτερα στοιχεία σε βυζαντινούς ναούς της Αιτωλοακαρνανίας,” ΗπειρΟχρόν 23 (1981): 270-275. On the contrary, Paliouras, Βυζαντινή Αιτωλοακαρνανία, 230-232, suggests that Hagia Sophia has been built contemporaneously with the churches of St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs and was extensively rebuilt during the Ottoman period. Without any substantial evidence to support the middle Byzantine date for the original construction of Hagia Sophia and with all inscriptive evidence pointing towards the late thirteenth century, Paliouras’ suggestion seems preferable. Cf. also Kaponis, “Ναοδομική Αρχιτεκτονική,” 200-201, who dates the construction of Hagia Sophia to the middle Byzantine period (following Konstantios) but its rebuilding to the thirteenth century.

604 Konstantios, “Νεώτερα στοιχεία,” 270, the initial basilica did not have a narthex. Konstantios considered the tripartite domed narthex a later addition for two main reasons: the floor level of the narthex is 0.60 m lower than the floor level of the present church; and its east wall is of good cloisonné masonry, probably an indication that this wall was originally the west façade of the basilica. Yet, he did not mention whether the narthex floor level corresponded to the initial sanctuary floor level, revealed through excavations.


606 The church, when reduced in length, measures 13.20 X 8.40 m, including the narthex: Konstantios, “Νεώτερα στοιχεία,” 270.

607 On the architecture of St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs, see mainly Paliouras, Βυζαντινή Αιτωλοακαρνανία, 223-229.
St. Nicholas is the largest (internal dimensions 11.10 X 5.35 m); while the adjoining church of the Taxiarchs to the south is quite small (internal dimensions 4.40 X 3.80 m), resembling a parekklesion (but without direct access to the church of St. Nicholas from the interior). Although better preserved than Hagia Sophia, they have also suffered considerable damage over time, and were extensively rebuilt in 1860 and again, partially rebuilt, in 1914. As a result, all window and door openings have lost their initial configuration, having been blocked and altered in form. Likewise, the upper parts of the walls have been rebuilt with rubble and therefore the original vaulting of both churches remains for the moment unknown. Later modifications include the wooden gallery of St. Nicholas and the fairly recent oblong hall attached along its north side.

Unlike Hagia Sophia, the churches of St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs stand quite apart from the familiar Byzantine church. Judging by their standing walls, which remain intact to a great height, the two churches were built simultaneously and almost exclusively with reused material from the ancient sanctuary of Artemis, located in the same area. For the construction of the walls, large rectangular reused ashlar blocks have been placed in irregular courses of uneven height (fig. 234), whereas bricks have been used sparingly, mainly for practical reasons to fill the voids between the irregular stone courses, without any decorative purpose. Likewise, rectangular monolithic stones have been used for the window frames and door lintels, often with matching carved capitals or impost blocks from the ancient sanctuary, as in the case of the windows of the south façade of St. Nicholas, or the now blocked door of the south façade of the Taxiarchs.

In terms of design and despite their small dimensions, the churches of St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs stand out with their compact cubic volumes. All façades are treated as unified,
clearly outlined flat vertical planes, articulated mainly by their windows and door openings. Indicative is the treatment of their east façades (figs. 233, 235). In standard practice, the apses of the sanctuary project beyond the east wall, thus providing the east façade of a Byzantine church with its characteristic articulation, which corresponds visually to the highlighted function of a church sanctuary. Here this effect, and therefore its connotation, is de-emphasized—if not eliminated altogether—in favor of the impression of a single vertical plane. This was accomplished by the simultaneous extension eastwards of the lateral walls of the churches, as if they were buttresses. Accordingly, the single apses of each church, exceptionally rectangular in plan, appear to be hemmed in by the projected lateral walls of the church, giving a sense of a single unified east façade. As a result, the overall impression is that of a very different but thought-out project, with no direct comparable precedents in the architecture of Epiros.

So far we lack a comprehensive study of the compound at Mokista. The churches have been discussed in the context of the preliminary archaeological report of Hagia Sophia;\textsuperscript{608} the general regional survey of the churches of Aitolokarnania;\textsuperscript{609} or briefly commented on as examples of the thirteenth-century local school of architecture.\textsuperscript{610} Their inscriptions, on the other hand, have been published repeatedly, often as texts in their own right, rather than as integral parts of the architectural complex.\textsuperscript{611} As the frame of research affects the opinions expressed, the complexities of the compound at Mokista have advanced very different theories.

To some specialists, the visual contrasts between Hagia Sophia and the churches of St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs suggest that the three churches may not have been founded

\textsuperscript{608} Konstantios, “Νεώτερα στοιχεία,” 270-275.
\textsuperscript{609} Paliouras, Βυζαντινή Αιτωλοακαρνανία, 223-232.
\textsuperscript{610} Vocotopoulos, “Church Architecture in Epirus,” 79-92 (passim).
\textsuperscript{611} Katsaros, “Επιγραφική Δεσποτάτου,” 520-521, and 530; and Kalopissi-Verti, Dedicatory Inscriptions, 32, and 57-59.
simultaneously. According to this view, based mainly on a formalist approach, Hagia Sophia is the oldest church, probably of a late middle Byzantine date. To paraphrase the argument, the noted differences between the two major components of the compound are explained in terms of tradition (Hagia Sophia) versus modernity (St. Nicholas and Taxiarchs). It is also implied that the same workshop could not have been responsible for the construction of all three churches. Yet, even the advocates of this theory admitted that typological comparisons are not a secure criterion and that the proposed chronology of Hagia Sophia needs additional verification.

A second theory, based mainly on the available inscriptional evidence, suggests that all three churches were built contemporaneously. Consequently, the construction and aesthetic inconsistencies of the compound are explained in practical terms. The reused material of St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs imposed certain limitations, affecting not only their masonry and construction techniques but also some of their most unusual formal features, as for instance their rectangular apses. According to this view, Hagia Sophia’s regular masonry with cloisonné, probably indicates that spoils from the ancient sanctuary were no longer available, having been already used in the construction of St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs. To reword the argument loosely—risking some oversimplification—the available material is to a great extent the determining factor of the final product.

A third theory, although not strongly supported even by its advocates, discerns possible western influences in the design and decoration of St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs. The cubic

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614 Paliouras, Βυζαντινή Αιτωλοακαρνανία, 223-232.
615 Vocotopoulos, “Church Architecture in Epirus,” 85.
616 Paliouras, Βυζαντινή Αιτωλοακαρνανία, 231-232.
volumes of the churches reminiscent of western secular (palatial) architecture; the rectangular apses, reminiscent of, but not quite faithful to the analogous examples of the Frankish churches; the characteristic trefoil pattern, carved in the single monolithic block of the sanctuary window of the Taxiarchs, have all been considered separately or in combination to account for a possible western influence. These legitimate observations, which indicate that the masons of the churches were certainly partially trained in the western tradition, were, nonetheless, quickly marginalized in the context of a general discussion about the various possible sources that inform the local “school” of architecture.

To explain the complexities of the compound at Mokista solely in terms of typology, availability of materials and workshops, or general stylistic influences is to downplay aspects of the compound, which in their conception had little to do with practical considerations and everything to do with the interests of its patrons. Currently there are no sound arguments to subdivide the complex of Mokista into two distinct components. The date around 1300, suggested by the inscriptive evidence, can accommodate the particular typological, formal and construction features of all three churches and there is little doubt, at least in this case, that the patrons had at their disposal the means, the materials and the workshops to realize very different projects through a process of selection. As their intellectual pursuits, social status, and political stance are relatively well documented, we should attempt to approach the final product as a process of choices, rather than as a series of limitations.

Hagia Sophia, as far as we can tell, has been built with all the characteristics of the local Byzantine building tradition. There was nothing inherently unusual in its plan or masonry. It accounts for the continuation of the building traditions in the wider geographical area (i.e. 
Epiros, central Greece, the Peloponnese etc), and given its cloisonné masonry and overall dimensions was a costly project. Its apparent contrasts with St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs do not necessarily indicate a lapse of time between their constructions, nor is it a safe indication for assuming that different masons were at work. By the end of the thirteenth century, the juxtaposition of seemingly conflicting construction techniques and formal aspects is to be observed in a number of contemporaneous projects from the wider area. To illustrate the argument we need only to refer to the church of St. Nicholas at Mesopotamon or the Merbaka church in Argolid.618 Both buildings employ a sort of ashlar masonry for the lower zone of their façades and regular cloisonné for their upper parts. Moreover, they both combine features from the Byzantine and the Western traditions. This demonstrates that during the late thirteenth century, within the wider geographical and political context, workshops were not necessarily specialized in one technique or a single style but were equipped to respond more or less successfully to the demands of their patrons. In addition, by this time the rulers of Epiros, the Duchy of Athens and the principality of Achaia were related by blood or marriage.619 This would not only facilitate the movement of builders from one region to the other but also encourage the formation of mixed workshops able to work in different traditions. Likewise, the very location of Mokista, five kilometers to the west of ancient Thermos, meant practically an endless resource of readily available building material. Therefore, Hagia Sophia’s traditional appearance is probably best understood as a choice, rather than an indication of an earlier date or a shortage in ancient material and skilled workshops. Coupled with its large size, surpassing in scale even churches of the capital, Hagia Sophia stood as a marker of the Byzantine hegemony over the area.

618 The church of St. Nicholas at Mesopotamon has been discussed in the previous chapter. The Merbaka church has been thoroughly treated by M. L. Coulson, “The Church of Merbaka: Cultural Diversity and Integration in the 13th-Century Peloponnese” (PhD diss., University of London, 2002).

619 Nicol, *The Despotate (1267-1479)*, esp. 50-51.
In contrast to Hagia Sophia, the design and masonry of St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs gave them the trappings of “ancient” architecture. No doubt, the building material contributes towards this impression as it consists exclusively of reused, large ancient blocks. Their availability not only facilitated the process, but probably provided the initial idea. Yet, it is the way spolia were integrated into the new context that makes the difference. To achieve the appearance of a massive, all stone construction resembling the ancient temples, the mortar joints and bricks were reduced to a minimum, more or less successfully. Individual stones of uneven dimensions seem to have been partially reworked to form rough and inconsistent courses wherever possible. The workmanship is uneven but the monochrome, undecorated blocks give the façades a certain austerity. Further details demonstrate a care in making the most of the building material, as for instance in the articulation of the east façade with alternating courses of vertically and horizontally placed blocks to create a continuous horizontal stone cornice, defining the lower zone below the level of the windows (figs 234–235). The emphasis on the horizontal axis, a basic principle in the design of the Greco-Roman buildings, is also demonstrated by the low krepidoma of the churches, or the arcade pattern of the windows placed high up on the south façade of St. Nicholas. Equally, the window and door frames exclusively built of stone with their carved impost blocks convey the sense of an ancient temple. As far as we can tell, due to the extensive rebuilding of all window and door openings, bricks were limited to the construction of their arched parts. The overall impression of the churches standing on a low platform is that of a late thirteenth-century rendering of an ancient temple with a roman resonance.

A number of churches in Epiros make use of ancient spolia, mainly capitals and columns for the interior supports, but none of them is exclusively built of reused ancient blocks in a way to resemble the ashlar construction of the ancient buildings. For a variety of reasons, cloisonné
masonry prevailed for the most costly projects and there are few churches in the wider geographical area, exclusively or partially built in ashlar masonry.⁶２⁰ All of them are to be found in the Latin-held territories, but they do not form a coherent group as their building material (either spolia or newly carved blocks), construction techniques (regular or irregular courses) and formal aspects differ. Moreover, for the most part they are not securely dated and therefore their historical, social and economic context cannot be defined with any certainty.⁶２¹ From this point of view, the churches of St. Nicholas at Mesopotam and the Merbaka church in Argolis, partially built in ashlar masonry, would be the best points of comparison, as they are both situated in the immediate geographical and cultural context of St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs. It should be noted, however, that in the case of Mokista, references to the western culture are not that explicit. As for the all ashlar construction of the churches at Mokista, the best example from the wider area would probably be the little Metropolis in Athens, the most famous example of classicizing architecture, currently associated with the “antiquarian” interests of its possible patron, the erudite metropolitan of Athens, Michael Choniates.⁶２２ Just like St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs, the little Metropolis in Athens was built exclusively of ancient spolia, but in this case the reused material and workmanship is of a totally different, i.e. higher, level of quality. It includes more than eighty decorated blocks of great variety arranged in a continuous upper frieze, with equal in height, continuous courses in the lower zone. Strictly speaking this is a

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⁶２⁰ Examples include: St. Nicholas at Fields, the church of Panagia Souvala, the Omorphoekklesia in Aigina, etc: see relatively Bouras and Boura, Ελλαδική Ναοδομία, with extensive literature.


⁶２² For the little Metropolis in Athens (known also as Panagia Gorgoepikoos or St. Eleutherios), see Bouras and Boura, Ελλαδική Ναοδομία, 44-49, and passim; and Ch. Bouras, Βυζαντινή Αθήνα, 1ος-12ος αι. (Athens, 2010), 158-165.
comparison that the churches of Mokista would never live up to, but we might ask whether the difference is that of quality rather than spirit.

At Mokista certain details demonstrate that the reused material was handled to convey the sense of a unified project, creating a link between past and present. Roman inscriptions, one of them walled in the south façade of St. Nicholas, apparently provided the models for the Byzantine inscriptions. Unlike the brick or painted inscriptions that appear commonly in the context of the churches of Epiros, all preserved Byzantine inscriptions of Mokista were carved anew on the reused building material following the old manner (fig. 236). As we might expect, Roman and Byzantine texts communicated to the onlooker very different ideas, so we are left wondering whether the appropriation of the past remained at all times on a very superficial level. Was this just a case of a random selection of Roman inscriptions and correspondingly a mere stylistic imitation of the ancient models for the sake of uniformity? Due to the state of preservation of our material, any affirmative or negative response rests mainly on circumstantial evidence.

Nonetheless, the only Roman inscription walled in the south façade of St. Nicholas might indicate a process of selection in the way old material was recycled into a new context to express thoughts, ideals and wishes through the words and deeds of their roman ancestors (fig. 237). The inscription records a local historical event that took place more than a thousand years before the construction of our church. During the diarchy of the local roman archontes (Π[οπλ]είου

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623 A second Roman inscription was found behind the sanctuary of St. Nicholas during the excavations of July 1902. As reported by Soteriadis, “Βυζαντιναὶ Επιγραφαί,” 208-209, this second inscription was used as building material for the krepidoma of the church and therefore was not meant to be visible.

624 The inscription is mentioned by G. Soteriadis, “Βυζαντιναὶ Επιγραφαί εξ Αιτωλίας,” Parnassos 7 (1903): 208-215, esp. 208, within the context of the first publication of the Byzantine inscriptions of Aitolia, but without a transcription. It was published several years later by a classical archaeologist, who dated the inscription to the second century AD and provided us with a transcription and a draft drawing. The slab measures 1.41X 0.70 m and,
Αντωνίου and Πο[υλβίου Αιλίου), two brothers (Αριστόδοφος and Νικίας), liberated their slave, a woman named Σωτηρίχα, in the name of Zeus Sun (ὑπό Δία Ήλιον), under the auspices of Artemis Ηγεμόνης (Artemis the “ruler”). At first sight, the pagan references of the inscription look inappropriate for a Byzantine church, and we might consider its inclusion simply as building material. There are certain associations, however, which must have been noticed by the patrons of the church. The slave’s name, Σωτηρίχα, alludes to Σωτηρία (i.e. Salvation) was desirable in the new context for its possible eschatological and political connotations, as the churches were built at a time when the wider area of Aitolia and Akarnania was under Angevin control. Likewise, the suitable number of the two Roman archontes in charge or of the two brothers liberators, Aristodemos (the most illustrious of citizens) and Nikias (the victorious) might have been seen as a playful reference to the co-founders of the churches, Andritsopoulos and Zorianos—a high clergyman and a military commander respectively. Similarly the goddess Artemis Ηγεμόνη (ruler), who appears as a guarantor of the act of liberation might be seen as an indirect political reference to the regent queen Anna, who placed the whole project in Mokista under her auspices. This would certainly have been a case of over interpretation, except that the patrons of the church were known for their intellectual pursuits and their political theses.

At the very least, a high ranking ecclesiastical patron like Andritsopoulos would have been familiar with the hagiographic texts of the life and miracles of St. Nicholas, which connect in fact, includes two columnar inscriptions, very similar in character and wording, of which only one is legible: see relatively K. Romaios, “Θέρμος και γειτονικοί τόποι,” ΑΔ 9 (1924-25), supplement 1922-25: 4-6, fig. 2. Paliouras, Βυζαντινή Αιτωλοακαρνανία, 223, commented briefly on the inscription’s political-religious character and meaning, but again firmly within its Roman context.

625 As the inscription reads, it seems that the reference is to Zeus/Sun, and this is probably the way it was understood in the thirteenth century. Yet, in another inscription from the nearby Thermos, there is a clear reference to Zeus, Earth and Sun (ὑπό Δία, Γην, Ήλιον) as if they are three different deities, see relatively Romaios, ibid., 5.

626 The reference to Artemis (Αρτέμιτος Αγεμόνας) is placed as a headline to the text of the act (with bigger and more spacious lettering).
him with the goddess Artemis. The first story involves the destruction of the ancient temple of Artemis in Myra by St. Nicholas during his office as metropolitan. The second is a posthumous miracle of St. Nicholas, the “Thauma de Artemide”: Artemis gave pilgrims traveling by boat to the tomb of St. Nicholas at Myra evil oil to light candles on her behalf and thereby destroy his shrine, in revenge for the destruction of her own temple; St. Nicholas advised the pilgrims to throw the oil into the sea, saved them from the waves and the storm caused by the dangerous oil, and prevented the destruction of his church. The inclusion of the Roman inscription referring to the goddess Artemis in the façade of St. Nicholas at Mokista recalls these stories, verifying indirectly the original dedication of the church. By constructing the church of St. Nicholas with reused material from the ancient temple of Artemis, the founder of the church at Mokista reenacted the legend of St. Nicholas. This adds another layer of interpretation to the unusual appearance of the church, which might have been determined by the nature of the project. In addition, the patron may have wanted to draw parallels between himself and St. Nicholas, the bishop of Myra, an archetype for bishops and metropolitans. This latter point gives us a first indication for the possible identification of Kosmas Andritsopoulos with the metropolitan of Naupaktos.

627 For the hagiographic texts, see G. Anrich, Hagios Nikolaos: der heilige Nikolaos in der griechischen Kirche; Texte und Untersuchungen, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1913-1917).
628 Anrich, Hagios Nikolaos, vol. 1, 127-128 (Vita per Michaëlem §29), 227-228 (Vita compilata § 42), 250 (Vita per Metaphrasten § 15), 403 (Encomium Neophyti § 27). N. P. Ševčenko, The Life of Saint Nicholas in Byzantine Art (Turin, 1983), 130-133.
629 Anrich, Hagios Nikolaos, vol. 1, 135-137 (Vita per Michaëlem § 44-48), 233 (Vita compilata § 58), 265-266 (Vita per Metaphrasten § 31), 270-271 (Vita acephala § 6), 399-400, and 410-411 (Encomium Neophyti § 18, 41), and 310-311 (Vita Lycio-Alexandrina § 19). Ševčenko, Saint Nicholas, 95-103, esp. 96, 98, 102-103.
630 According to Ševčenko, Saint Nicholas, 95-103, the only known representation of the “Thauma de Artemide” is preserved in the church of St. Nicholas Orphanos in Thessaloniki. Cf. Giannoulis, Τοιχογραφίες Άρτας, 88-90, who identifies the sea story represented in the church of St. Nicholas tes Rodias in Arta with the same miracle story. Fundić, “Η Μημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 149-150, 295-296, refrains from identifying the sea story in St. Nicholas tes Rodias.
631 Because of his importance, St. Nicholas is often represented among the co-officiating hierarchs in church apses, see G. Antourakis, Ο Άγιος Νικόλαος στη Βυζαντινή τέχνη και παράδοση: Εικονογραφική και λειτουργική σπουδαιότητα του Αγ. Νικολάου ως συλλειτουργού Ιεράρχου στις αψίδες των Βυζαντινών εκκλησιών (Athens, 1988).
Building a church with all the trappings of an ancient “temple” was in its genesis and completion a statement of continuity and *romanitas*, characteristic of the political ideology of the ruling family in Epiros. To be sure Anna Palaiologina was self-conscious of her Roman heritage and of the nature of the Byzantine rule, as an uninterrupted continuity from Roman times. This is indicated, for instance, in Anna’s proposal to the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II, that his son and heir, Michael IX should marry her daughter Thamar. In exchange for this marriage, Anna promised to settle on them the lands of Epiros, as they were ancient remains of the Byzantine Empire and place herself and her son, under the Byzantine emperor (πᾶσαν χώραν καὶ ἕαυτὴν καὶ παῖδα, ώς ἄρχαῖα ἐλλείµµατα Ρωµαϊδος, ἐγχειρίζειν). Her proposal, as recorded by Pachymeres, probably reflects her mindset accurately. A few years later, these ideas are echoed in a different but similar way in her response to the Angevins, when they demanded that her son Thomas should do homage to Philip of Taranto, his overlord. As recorded in the French Chronicle of Morea, Anna replied that Thomas was a despot and therefore his loyalty was to the Roman (Byzantine) emperor, from whom Thomas received his title and lands. Even if we

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632 Pachymeres 3, 224-227 (IX. 4). Pachymeres’ passage has been commented and interpreted variously by: Nicol, *The Despotate (1267-1479)*, 45-46; Lappas, “Πολιτική Ἱστορία,” 325-329, esp. 326 (note 1518), who questions the sincerity of Anna’s proposal; and Oswald, “L’Épire,” 118-119 and 675-677, who rightly argues that Pachymeres summarizes (unsuccessfully) in a single passage events that took place over a long period of time, i.e. before and after Nikephoros’ death. Notwithstanding some objections concerning his reconstruction of events, Osswald’s suggestion that Anna’s proposal took place ca. 1291 seems preferable.

633 Pachymeres, ibid., 227. As Pachymeres explains, this marriage was against canon law. Thamar and Michael IX were related within the sixth degree of consanguinity, and consequently the proposal was rejected. Several years later, Anna proposed the marriage of her son Thomas to Michael IX’s daughter, this time by promising to repudiate her son-in-law, Philip of Taranto, and settle the towns and territories that constituted Thamar’s dowry on her son Thomas and his wife: Pachymeres 4, 494-495 (XI. 30). Cf. the comments by Nicol, *The Despotate (1267-1479)*, 56; Lappas, “Πολιτική Ἱστορία,” 339-340; and Oswald, “L’Épire,” 130 (esp. note 473). This marriage took place probably ca. 1307: Nicol, *The Despotate (1267-1479)*, 75; Lappas, “Πολιτική Ἱστορία.” 345 (esp. note1601); and Oswald, “L’Épire,” 135.

634 J. Buchon, ed., *Recherches historiques sur la principauté française de Morée et ses hautes baronnies* (Paris, 1845), vol. 1, 454-456; J. Longnon, ed., *Livre de la conqueste de la princée de l'Amorée. Chronique de Morée (1204-1305)* (Paris, 1911), 381-382 (§975-976). Again this passage has been variously commented on and interpreted by: Nicol, *The Despotate (1267-1479)*, 56-57, who suggests that according to feudal law, Anna was in the wrong, but according to Byzantine law she was at least partly right; Lappas, “Πολιτική Ἱστορία,” 338-339, who considers the French Chronicle a little bit biased, advocating the Latin rights. The terms of Thamar’s dowry have
interpret both statements as mere diplomatic maneuvers deprived of any substance other than preserving the precarious political future of her dominion, we still have to admit that this rhetoric fits the profile of a Byzantine princess nurtured in the political ideology of her era.

This political ideology was not confined to the ruling family only, but seems to have been shared by a restricted circle of intellectuals, at least by her closest confidants, the protostrator Zorianos and Kosmas Andritsopoulos, the co-founders of the complex of the churches at Mokista. Again evidence is circumstantial based on a single piece of correspondence between the two men. Andritsopoulos addressed to Michael Zorianos, a short prophetic work on the fall of the Byzantine Empire, entitled “Πρόρρησις τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου Άνδριτζοπούλου πρὸς τὸν Ζωριάνον κύρ Μιχαήλ.”

The work is of little literary merit and its context and purpose quite difficult to decipher. Andritsopoulos connects, like others before him, the fall of the Church (ἡ ἐκκλησία τῶν Ῥωμαίων) and the Byzantine rule (ἡ τῶν Ῥωμαίων βασιλεία, τὸ τῶν Ῥωμαίων σκῆπτρον, τὴν τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχήν) with the coming of the Antichrist and the end of the world. He suggests that the church has already fallen and that there is no hope of the renewal of the Roman rule. Apparently considering himself a Roman, with a rhetorical question Andritsopoulos

been recently revisited by Osswald, “L’Épire,” 120-122, 126, and 128-130 (with relevant bibliography), demonstrating that Anna tried to overturn what had been previously agreed with the Angevins.

The text was published with a short commentary by S. Lambros, “Η Πρόρρησις του Άνδριτζοπούλου,” NE 3 (1906): 474-476. The author of the work is identified with Kosmas Andritsopoulos, the co-founder of the churches at Mokista. For the identification, see additionally Soteriades, “Βυζαντιναί Επιγραφαί,” esp. 214; PLP no. 940; Nicol, The Despotate (1267-1479), 247; Paliouras, Βυζαντινή Αιτωλοακαρνανία, 232 (note 8); Katsaros, “Επιγραφική ’Δεσποτάτου,’” 530 (note 48); Kalopissi-Verti, Dedicatory Inscriptions, 57. Cf. S. Lambros, “Άννα ἡ Καντακουζηνή,” esp. 86, who identifies the author of the work with Constantine Andritsopoulos (but, as she is citing Lambros and PLP as her sources, this must be an overlooking).

Lambros, “Πρόρρησις,” 475: “…κατέχον δὲ ἔλεγε τὴν τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχήν· τότε ἡ τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου παρουσία γενήσεται, καὶ τότε τῶν Ἀντιχρίστου παραγενέσθαι. Σοφομόνης γὰρ τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ τῆς βασιλείας τῶν εὐσεβῶν, ὁ διάβολος οὐκ ἔλειςται, ἀλλὰ παραχωρήσει θεοῦ, διότι ἡ καθολικὴ συντέλεια πληροίεται, παρέρχεται πρῶτον μὲν ἡ ἐκκλησία τῶν εὐσεβῶν, κατὰ τόν σταυρὸν ἀριθμὸν, παρέρχεται δὲ καὶ ἡ βασιλεία...”

Lambros, “Πρόρρησις,” 475: “ὁ σταυρὸς ἔχει εἰς ψῆφον χίλια διακόσια ἕβδομα καὶ εὐ, ἀπερ ἐπιφρόθησαν ὑπὸ τοῦ δεσπότου ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ ἔως τοῦ Παλαιολόγου λοιπὸν ἔως τὸ τέσσερον ἡ ἐκκλησία τῶν Ῥωμαίων καὶ ἡ
expresses his conviction that with the fall of the church and the ruling Byzantine dynasty, there is no future for the Byzantines to be victorious and prosperous.\textsuperscript{638} He speaks in an authoritative tone,\textsuperscript{639} appears as a spokesman on behalf of the church and pays his respects to Zorianos,\textsuperscript{640} but his identity is only partially revealed. As the sender and recipient of the letter are identified with the co-founders of the churches at Mokista, it might be of interest to locate the Πρόρρησις in a more concrete context.

The date of the letter is not known, but the recipient, Michael Zorianos, appears to be already established in a high office. This brings us closer to the end of the thirteenth century and therefore closer to the date of the foundation of the churches at Mokista, where insessional evidence defines Zorianos as the protostrator of the despot (Thomas). Andritsopoulos’ profile, on the other hand, is less well documented.\textsuperscript{641} The inscriptions of Mokista, which seem to have been collectively authored by him, do not preserve any information to clarify his status: Kosmas Andritsopoulos simply records his first and last name.\textsuperscript{642} In the title of the Πρόρρησις, on the other hand, its author is only defined as αγιώτατος (most-holy) Andritsopoulos. Thus he is

\footnotesize{βασιλεία. Ἐπεὶ γοῦν ὁ αριθμὸς τοῦ σταυροῦ ἔπληρώθη...οὐκ ἔτι ἔλλη τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἄνακαναικισθήναι τό τῶν Ῥωµαίων σκῆπτρον-καταλλαλέουν δὴ τοῦτο καὶ ἡ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου παρουσία γενήσεται.” Andritsopoulos argues that the church survived from the time of Christ until 1271, the time of Palaiologos (i.e. Michael VIII). Apparently, there was a prophecy that the end of the world will come after 1271 and probably this is an indirect reference to Michael VIII’s unionist policies (?), a sign of the church’s and empire’s weakness.

\textsuperscript{638} Lambros, “Πρόρρησις,” 476: Ἐπεὶ γοῦν τέλος ἐγένεται ἡ ἐκκλησία καὶ ἡ βασιλεία, ως τοῦ διαβόλου ἑόρθη ταραμαμένοντος, πῶς Ῥωµαιοί τροπαιουχήσοσι, πῶς ὑπεραυξηθήσονται, τῆς δυναστείας αὐτῶν ἡ ἐπορχομένη κατὰ μικρόν, ως δεδήλωται;”

\textsuperscript{639} Lambros, “Πρόρρησις,” 475 (beginning of the letter): “Περὶ τῶν Ῥωµαίων βούλομαι σε γινώσκειν, ὅπερ οὐκ ἐστι δοκεῖν ὕψωτον εἰς τῶν ἄλλων μιαν.” From this opening statement alone, we gather that the self-proclaimed confidence of the author would have been inappropriate if he was merely an abbot or a bishop.

\textsuperscript{640} Lambros, “Πρόρρησις,” 476 (end of the letter): “Καὶ προσκυνῶ τὸ µεγαλεῖόν σου.”

\textsuperscript{641} He is probably related to “Nicolaus Andricopulus” (Nicholas Andritsopoulos), a member of the delegation sent by the despots Nikephoros to the court of Naples in 1279 to conclude a treaty with the king of Naples, in fact to negotiate the terms of Nikephoros’ vassality to the Angevins: Lambros, “Ἀννή Βατακουζήνη,” esp. 41-42; cf. Nicol, The Despotate (1267-1479), 23 (note 47). Palouras, Βυζαντινή Λευκοπεραναία, 225. Kalopissi-Verti, Dedicatory Inscriptions, 57. Lappas, “Πολιτική Ιστορία,” 293-294 (esp. note 1381). Oswald, “L’Épire,” 108, and 669-672.

\textsuperscript{642} According to Katsaros, “Επιγραφικὴ Δέσποτάτου,”’ 530 (note 48), Andritsopoulos is most likely the author of all inscriptions of Mokista.
currently considered a monk or priest,\textsuperscript{643} an intellectual of the circle of the Despotate.\textsuperscript{644} But as αγιώτατος is one of the ways to address the metropolitan,\textsuperscript{645} then Andritsopoulos might not have been merely a high ranking priest, but rather the exiled metropolitan of Naupaktos. This suggestion is supported by the pedantic and rather pessimist tone of the letter, and could explain in turn, why Andritsopoulos identity is nowhere explicitly stated. The rulers of Epiros had already ceded Naupaktos, the only remaining metropolitan see within Epirote lands, to the Angevins, and political insecurity increased, especially after the death of Nikephoros.\textsuperscript{646} It seems that Andritsopoulos was not only clearly aware of the weakening of the roman rule in the area, but probably personally affected as his see was in danger. If this is the case, then we can also explain why the Πρόρρησις was addressed to Zorianos. Sender and recipient of the letter had their equal share of responsibility in preserving continuity by defending the welfare of the church and state, respectively. Seen in this light, Andritsopoulos’ letter is a reminder of duty, an indirect call for action, which is mirrored in the construction of the churches at Mokista.

If the preservation of the church and the roman rule was an existential necessity for Andritsopoulos, we can approach the construction of the churches at Mokista as a political and religious act. To compensate for their territorial loss, and the loss of their ancient ecclesiastical

\textsuperscript{643} Lambros, “Πρόρρησις,” 475; Paliouras, Βυζαντινή Αιτωλοακαρνανία, 232 (note 8); Kalopissi-Verti, Dedicatory Inscriptions, 57.

\textsuperscript{644} Nicol, The Despotate (1267-1479), 242, an 247; Katsaros, “Επιγραφική 'Δεσποτάτου,'” 530.

\textsuperscript{645} Depending on the nature of correspondence, the metropolitan was defined most commonly as ιερώτατος (patriarchal and imperial documents), η αγιωσύνη σου (by secular and ecclesiastical persons) and πανιερώτατος (legal documents). Πανιερώτατος, ιερώτατος, άγιος, αγιώτατος, δειπνότατος and μυκηρώτατος are the common ways to address a metropolitan: see relatively E. Chatziantonioú, Η Μητρόπολη Θεσσαλονίκης από τα μέσα του 8ου αι. έως το 1430: Εκκλησιαστική τάξη-Εκκλησιαστική περιφέρεια-Διοικητική οργάνωση (Thessaloníki, 2007), 274-275.

\textsuperscript{646} Naupaktos was one of the four castles ceded to the Angevins according to the terms of Thamar’s marriage contract. Nicol, The Despotate (1267-1479), 47ff. For the Angevin administration in Ailoakarnania, see ibid., 63-68; and for the church of Naupaktos in particular: ibid., 66-67, and 234. The prevailing view is that Naupaktos was the only metropolis within Epirote lands in 1294. But this depends largely on which date we accept for the promotion of the bishopric of Ioannina to a metropolitan see (either in 1284/85 or 1318/9); see relatively Lappas, “Πολιτική Ιστορία,” 313 (note1469), 317-318; and Osswald, “L’Épire,” esp. 409-417, who review the relevant bibliography and arguments on the date and reasons for the promotion of Ioannina to metropolitan see.
metropolitan see to the Angevins, the ruling elite of Epiros resorted to the construction of a new ecclesiastical center that could substantiate their political, religious and territorial claims over the area. The joint patronage of Anna Palaiologina, Zorians and Andritsopoulos illustrates the political character of the project, the single example from Epiros to combine political, military and ecclesiastical support. The dedications of the churches—verified epigraphically only in the case of the church of the Taxiarchs—seem to accord well with the patrons and the function of the complex of churches. St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs are obvious choices for an ecclesiastical and military patron respectively. Coupled with the large scale of the church dedicated to Hagia Sophia, it leads us to consider whether Mokista was to serve as the new, provisionary seat of the metropolitan of Naupaktos.\(^647\) The history of the metropolitan see of Naupaktos in these years is not well documented and the estimations of modern scholars concerning the situation of its metropolitan vary.\(^648\) For this reason the specific function of the complex at Mokista remains open.

\(^{647}\) As we have seen even Arta did not have a church dedicated to Hagia Sophia. This is not a coincidence for Arta remained throughout the thirteenth century a bishopric of Naupaktos.

\(^{648}\) According to Nicol, The Despotate (1267-1479), 66-67, there was an appointed metropolitan of Naupaktos at this time: “Philip had undertaken to respect the religion of his Greek subjects, and for a time he did so. In 1300 the basilissa Anna wrote to Charles II to remind him of this undertaking, since the Greek bishop of Naupaktos was being denied access to his diocese. Geoffroy du Port [i.e. the vicar-general of the Angevin territories] had declared that he had no mandate from the king to allow the bishop to officiate. On 9 August Charles sent him orders to admit the bishop into Naupaktos and to afford him complete freedom ‘according to the agreements made’…on 14 October 1307 Pope Clement V announced the appointment of a Latin archbishop of Naupaktos…His letter of appointment observes that the church of Naupaktos has been restored to Roman obedience and that the schismatic Greek who insolently called himself its archbishop has been removed.” From 1307 on, Nicol considers the metropolitan see of Naupaktos no more than titular (ibid, 234).

According to Osswald, “L’Épire,” esp. 415, the metropolis of Naupaktos remained vacant during the years of Angevin occupation: “La situation ecclésiastique de l’Épire durant la période allant de 1285 à 1362 est particulièrement mal connue. En effet, nous n’avons que quelques documents patriarchaux mentionnant l’Épire et aucun mentionnant Naupacte. Bien sûr, cette situation provient en grande partie d’un problème de conservation des sources…Il est donc fort tentant de formuler l’hypothèse selon laquelle le patriarchat, aux ordres de l’empereur, procède, a un embargo sur les nominations de métropoles hors de la juridiction impériale. Force est en effet de constater que la nomination d’un métropolite orthodoxe à Naupacte en 1300 fut le fait d’un synode épirote. De fait, à notre connaissance, aucun métropolite ne fut nommé à ce siège par Constantinople avant 1362…”
What seems certain is that architectural patronage was a great opportunity to articulate visually and to circulate to a wider audience ideas otherwise confined within a restricted circle of intellectuals. The case of St. Nicholas and the Taxarchs, where spolia have been used excessively as self-references to the past, was not a phenomenon confined to Epiros. We may suggest that in the future it should be examined in the context of similar projects, like the little Metropolis in Athens or the Merbaka church in Argolis, both currently associated with the initiatives of erudite metropolitans, the Byzantine metropolitan of Athens, Michael Choniates, and the Latin archbishop of Corinth William of Moerbeke, respectively. All these cases seem to point towards the same direction, i.e. a circle of intellectual patrons, who took an interest in the mysteries of the visible world.

**General remarks on the patronage of the aristocracy:** The few buildings that can be firmly associated with the patronage of the Epirote aristocracy represent too small a sample to permit definite conclusions. Yet, some preliminary observations can be drawn based on the patterns revealed. Most of the existing buildings date roughly towards the late thirteenth century. The absence of earlier buildings can be explained by the chance survival of the material under examination, yet the preservation of the late thirteenth-century examples does not seem coincidental. The reign of Nikephoros and Anna was by far the most productive phase of the Despotate, when monumental foundations were erected mainly in the capital. The example of the royal patrons was quickly followed by the members of the local aristocracy who were eager to adopt the patterns of public beneficence and status exaltation of their sovereigns. At least in one case, the complex of the three churches at Mokista, there are also indications of a close cooperation between the rulers and their military and ecclesiastical hierarchy.
The visibility of the aristocracy at this period may also suggest an increased confidence in their social role either as military or civil officials. The presence of two army commanders (Theodore Tzimiskes and Michael Zorianos) as patrons of the three late thirteenth-century churches (Boulgareli, Kypseli, Mokista) showcases their importance in safeguarding the welfare of the state. This is particularly noticeable under the regency of Anna and during the minority of the despot Thomas, when the services of loyal generals to lead the army campaigns against the various enemies were in great demand. The patronage of the military commanders is counterbalanced by the activities of the civil nobility (the pansebastoi) who might have held administrative offices. The presence of the high ranking clergy, on the other hand, is less visible in our material and can probably be best studied through the written sources and inscriptional evidence. One notable exception is the compound at Mokista, where the high profile ecclesiastical patron should probably be identified with the exiled metropolitan of Naupaktos, as we have suggested.

If the construction and decoration of churches during this period permit us to trace an increased awareness of the social status of the nobility, it also demonstrates their increased religiosity and anxiety. The dedication of the churches to the Virgin (Boulgareli, Prebentza) seems to follow the tendency of the royal foundations in the capital, where many churches are

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649 In the previous chapter we have already mentioned the construction of a stavropegeion by Michael I and the bishop of Chimara (see supra, 123ff.). Likewise, the correspondence of John Apokaukos records his initiatives on the restoration and decoration of his metropolitan church in Naupaktos dedicated to the Virgin, see relatively V. Katsaros, “Συμβολή στη μελέτη των προβλημάτων βυζαντινής τοπογραφίας στη δυτική Στερεά (12ος-13ος ΑΙ.): Πηγές και δεδομένα,” Βυζαντινά 13. 2 (1985): 1503–1539, esp. 1522-1526; and Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 12-13.

650 Such is the case of Michael Philanthropenos, priest and oikonomos of the metropolitan see of Ioannina, who renovated the church of the monastery of St. Nicholas ton Philanthropenon in the lake of Ioannina, in the year 1291/2—according to a sixteen-century inscription (1541/2), which copies the original one, although with some anachronisms: Nicol, The Despotate (1267-1479), 241-242 and 247-248; Stavridou-Zafraka, “Εκκλησιαστική οργάνωση,” 166; Osswald, “L’Épire,” 412 and 737-738; and Fundić, “Η Μνημειακή τέχνη του Δεσποτάτου της Ηπείρου,” 30.
similarly dedicated to the Virgin (Kato Panagia, Pantanassa, Paregoretissa). At the same time military saints (St. Demetrios in Kypseli, Hagioi Theodoroi in the side chapels of Prebentza) and the archangels (Kostaniani and Mokista) become prominent along with the Virgin, the protector *par excellence*. The dedication, on the other hand, of the two churches at Mokista to Hagia Sophia and St. Nicholas—if these are the original dedications—sets this project apart, and leads us to consider whether this was an ecclesiastical center rather than a monastic complex.

Religiosity might have been the obvious motive in the construction of monasteries but their geographical distribution reveals the desire of the patrons to control the landscape through the construction of religious foundations. It is interesting to note that none of the buildings in the capital of the Despotate can be attributed to the initiatives of the aristocracy. Reasons of chance survival and the anonymity of many existing churches in or near the capital (for instance St. Nicholas Rodias or St. Basil in Arta) might explain this rather strange phenomenon. Yet, the preserved examples indicate that the nobility was mostly active away from the capital, commanding important strategic and commercial roads (Boulgareli, Kostaniani) or conveniently placed in the politically vulnerable areas of the Despotate, where the Angevin presence after 1294 was a destabilizing factor (Prebentza, Mokista, Kypseli). Military, civil and ecclesiastical aristocracy seems to have been actively involved in preserving the lands that were most remote from the capital, thereby enhancing the moral of the local population, sometimes in close cooperation with the ruling family (Mokista).

The cost of the construction and decoration of a church and providing for the necessary means for a monastery might have been considerable. The dedicatory inscriptions preserved stress the fact that the sponsorship occurred at a great expense (Boulgareli, Kostaniani, and
Mokista). In most cases, the dedicatory inscriptions or portraits mention more than one donor (Boulgareli, Prebentza, Kostaniani, and Mokista), but their relation is not always clear (as in Kostaniani). In the case of Boulgareli, where the donors are relatives, we might argue that more than one person contributed in the construction of the church to relieve the financial burdens and maintain the founder’s privileges. In the case of Prebentza, the inscriptive evidence suggests the joint patronage of a pansebastos with the oikonomos, but the latter might have been only the manager of the donation. In Mokista, on the other hand, the joint patronage had little to do with financial concerns and probably nothing to do with family ties. Consequently, their collaboration should be best understood in regards to functional and ideological considerations.

The buildings commissioned by the civil and military aristocracy show for the most part no desire for innovation. Their architectural plans, masonry and decoration are rooted in the long tradition of the Despotate and each building references the foundations from the reign of Michael II or Nikephoros and Anna. None of them, however, can be considered a direct copy of a given model. The outcome in all cases involves choices adjusted to the given scale and financial means. Complicated architectural plans such as the Paregoretissa’s or the Constantinopolitan cross-in-square (the Pantanassa, first phase of the Paregoretissa) were obviously rejected in favor of the two-columned cross-in-square (Boulgareli), the simplified version of the cross-vaulted church (Kostaniani, Kypseli) or the single-aisle church (Taxiarches and St. Nicholas at Mokista, Panagia Prebentza). Yet, ambulatories, first introduced in the Pantanassa and the Paregoretissa, were occasionally deemed desirable even for the simple single-aisled structures such as the Panagia Prebentza.
As in the case of the architectural plans, we cannot detect a clear preference for a type of masonry over the other. Workshop practices, financial means available and the desire to reference a specific model, might all have played a role in determining the patron’s choice. This is best demonstrated in the case of Mokista, where the cloisonné masonry of Hagia Sophia is juxtaposed with the all-stone construction of St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs in a single site. Similarly, St. Demetrios in Kypseli demonstrates a great variety of cloisonné in a single project. There is at least one case, the churches of St. Nicholas and Taxiarchs, where the extensive use of ancient spolia might have been dictated by the character of the project (reconstructing the legend of St. Nicholas and his shrine in Myra, or as self-references to *romanitas*).

Brick decorative patterns enlivening the exterior façades are represented in most examples but sculptural decoration is generally limited. Spolia from ancient sites have been occasionally used (Kypseli, Boulgareli) but not as extensively and prominently as in the case of Mokista or the royal foundations of the capital (Hagia Theodora, Pantanassa or Paregoretissa). Although marble must have been available for reuse, it seems the cost of transportation and workmanship was still high and therefore was not preferred. In Boulgareli and Kostaniani the temple screens were made out of plaster. Similarly, the opus sectile, mosaic or marble floors of the royal foundations were not reproduced. The decorated clay floor slabs in Boulgareli betray the desire of the patrons to reproduce the more lavish examples in a cheaper medium.

The formal and sculptural western vocabulary, conspicuous in all late thirteenth-century royal foundations, was largely ignored. This could be explained either as a shortage of skilled labor to work in a western tradition or as an expression of their identity. After all the local aristocracy did not share the intimate ties with the Westerners as the despots did. The noteworthy
exception of Mokista, a project that demonstrates a subtle appropriation of the Western tradition verifies the rule.
The foundation of the so-called “empire” of Trebizond early in the thirteenth century can be seen as the result of the political weakness of the Byzantine Empire towards the end of the twelfth century. The founders of the Empire of Trebizond, Alexios I Komnenos (1204-1222) and his brother David (d. 1212), were grandsons of the former Byzantine emperor Andronikos I Komnenos (1183-1185), who was brutally murdered by the mob in Constantinople in 1185.

Prior to the Fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders in 1204, the two brothers had fled the city and found refuge in the court of their paternal aunt, Thamar, queen of Georgia. With Thamar’s
military support, Alexios soon became master of Trebizond while his brother David proceeded westwards and occupied Paphlagonia. 654

Alexios and David were no outsiders to the Black Sea region and might have been seen, in the eyes of their subjects, as its lawful rulers. Their imperial lineage gave them an aura of legitimacy and the ties with the native inhabitants of the Black Sea further facilitated their expeditions. 655 Kastamon in Paphlagonia was the ancestral castle of the Komnenoi and their grandfather, Andronikos I Komnenos, had briefly been appointed governor in the area (1182), before acquiring the Byzantine throne. Given the long history of independence of the Black Sea region 656 as well as the chaotic situation in Constantinople at the time of the Latin conquest, it is possible that Alexios and David were welcomed there as restorers of order. 657

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654 Magoulias, *Annals of Niketas Choniates*, 343 (§ 626): “David Komnenos enlisted Paphlangian and the inhabitants of Pontic Herakleia and hired as mercenaries a division of Iberians who lived on the banks of the Phasis River. With these he subjugated towns and cities, and exalting his own brother whose name was Alexios, he became his forerunner and herald. He was to spend his time in the regions of Trebizond, and, like the proverbial Hylas, his name was invoked but he was never seen.” See also supra, notes 652-653. Thamar’s active role in the foundation of the empire of Trebizond—stated most clearly in *The Georgian Chronicle*, 86-87—was debated by Greek, Russian and Georgian scholars (see relatively Bryer’s preface, xvii-xx; and more recently Savvides, *Oi Megálpoi Komnénoi ton Tráxeíntaon*, 31-34).


David’s swift advance westwards has been generally understood as a prelude for a future campaign against Constantinople. If this is the case, then the plans of the Grand Komnenoi to occupy the throne of Constantinople soon came to an end. David’s army failed to take Nicomedia (1205-1206) and he had to accept Pontic Herakleia as his westernmost holding. Following David’s death in 1212, Paphlagonia was annexed to the Nicaean empire (by 1214) and Sinope was lost to the Seljuk Turks in 1214. Nonetheless, the “empire” of Trebizond had by then been firmly established and would survive until the capture of its capital by the Turks in 1461.

Scholars tend to examine the long history of the Empire of Trebizond, which spans more than two and a half centuries, separately from that of the Byzantine Empire. After 1214, the Empire of Trebizond became geographically isolated and “ceased to be of more than local importance.” As Angold concisely put it, the Empire of Trebizond is cut off “from the mainstream of Byzantine history. It became instead a ‘Greek emirate’. Its history belongs with that of Anatolia and the Black Sea rather than with that of the late Byzantine empire.” Such views, although not completely unjustified, inevitably lead to a linear narrative of the late Byzantine history, equated with the history of the Palaiologan empire centered on Constantinople. Yet, the decline of imperial authority in the provinces, especially the frontier-

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660 The Grand Komnenoi tried to recapture Sinope several times during the thirteenth century, see M. Kuršanskis, “L’Empire de Trébizonde et les Turcs au 13e siècle,” *REB* 46 (1988): 109-124, but this does not necessarily indicate ambitions for taking Constantinople.
663 Again, this is partly justified especially if we take into consideration the importance of Constantinople in defining Byzantine identity, concisely summarized by P. Magdalino, “Byzantium=Constantinople,” in *A Companion to Byzantium*, ed. L. James (Oxford, 2010), 43-54.
provinces, occurred gradually over a prolonged period of time. This is particularly true for
Pontos where local rulers often maintained only a nominal allegiance to the Byzantine emperor.
Given that the separatist tendencies of the region were not something new, we might ask whether
Trebizond and its area of influence—ruled from 1204 onwards by a branch of the Komnenian
family of Byzantium—came closer than ever before to whatever we consider as “mainstream”
Byzantium.

Despite the geographical isolation of their empire and the diverse ethnic composition of
their subjects, the rulers of Trebizond never abandoned their claim to romanitas and always
stressed their illustrious ancestry from the imperial house of Byzantium. They considered
themselves—and indeed they were—the direct descendants of the Komnenoi who ruled
Byzantium in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. That they took pride in their ancestry is clearly
stated in the abbreviated form of their title as Grand Komnenoi. Thus, they never questioned
their own Byzantine and imperial identity. Similarly, the court bureaucracy and administration of
their empire closely followed the Constantinopolitan model and the clergy of Trebizond refused
to support the establishment of an autonomous church.

The way the Grand Komnenoi defined themselves in relation to the Laskarids and later
on to the Palaiologan dynasty remains inadequately documented. By most modern accounts the
Grand Komnenoi appropriated from the very beginning the imperial titles of the Byzantine

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665 See relatively R. Macrides, “What’s in the name of ‘Megas Komnenos’?,“ ArchPont 35 (1978): 238-245; and
Oikonomides, “Chancery,” 321-322, with further literature.
666 For the administration, see mainly Oikonomides, “Chancery,” 299-332. The religious affairs of the “empire” of
Trebizond have not been so far successfully clarified; see relatively, A. Karpozilos, The Ecclesiastical Controversy
between the Kingdom of Nicaea and the Principality of Epiros (1217-1233) (Thessaloniki, 1973), 50-51. Lambsides,
“Ὁ ανταγωνισµὸς µεταξὺ τῶν κρατῶν τῆς Νικαίας καὶ τῶν Μεγάλων Κοµνηνῶν,” 16-17. Savvides, Οι Μεγάλοι
Κοµνηνοί της Τραπεζούντας, 24-26. Metropolitan Chrysanthos (Philippides), Η Εκκλησία Τραπεζούντας, ArchPont
4-5 (1933), 175ff.
emperor and claimed to be the sole emperors “of the Romans.” Whether this was an official and consistent practice from 1204 up to 1282 remains to be seen. What seems certain is that John II (1280-1297) was the first ruler of Trebizond to abandon his imperial claims and accept the dignity of despot, thus recognizing the authority and supremacy of the Byzantine emperor in Constantinople. This arrangement, however, did not last long as his successors in Trebizond reclaimed imperial status, although it is not known whether they reverted to the old claim of being emperors of the Romans. It is only from the second half of the fourteenth century that we get a clearer picture, thanks to the earliest surviving official documents issued by the chancery of the Grand Komnenoi. At that point, the Grand Komnenoi used the title “emperor of all the Orient, of the Iberians and of Perateia” or some shorter version of the same title that identified them as emperors “of all the Orient,” thus placing themselves as independent rulers and their dominion as a “satellite” empire to Byzantium.667

Anatolian and Caucasian “influences” have long been recognized in the Trapezuntine architecture and give additional justification to the claim that the identity developed in Trebizond was somehow different from that of mainstream Byzantium.668 These views have recently been revised by Eastmond, who argued that the material evidence from Trebizond, its art and architecture, provides an alternative, broader definition of Byzantium than that promoted by Nicaea during the years of exile.669 His thorough treatment of Hagia Sophia as a material

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668 S. Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” AnatSt 10 (1960), 175: “The lack of Constantinopolitan trends is striking, as much trade must have passed between Trebizond and the capital, but the opus sectile floor and the columns, capitals and bases in St. Sophia (and perhaps floors in some of the other churches) are almost the only proof of any contact at all….Trebizond, like Asia Minor in general, was more of the East than of the West; and its architecture, in its synthesis of various elements, remains resolutely individual.” See also C. Mango, Byzantine Architecture (New York, 1976), 166: “The frescoes that decorate St. Sophia are purely Byzantine; the architecture contaminated; the sculpture entirely alien.” Also R. Krautheimer, Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture, rev. ed., with S. Ćurčić (Harmondsworth, 1986), 420.
669 Eastmond, Hagia Sophia.
manifestation of imperial identity, political ideology and cultural orientation, opens up the way to reevaluate the architecture of Trebizond.

In the following chapters I take a similar approach, but with a different focus and different conclusions. I examine the three major religious foundations of the city of Trebizond—the cathedral church of the Panagia Chrysokephalos, the pilgrimage church of St. Eugenios and the monastery of Hagia Sophia—to explore their architecture, decoration, function and symbolism. With the awareness that identity is not static but changes in response to new circumstances, my inquiry seeks to trace changes in the political ideology and cultural orientation of Trebizond. The building and rebuilding of the Chrysokephalos and St. Eugenios along with the construction of Hagia Sophia can inform us about the most obscure period of Trebizond, from the beginnings of the empire up until the mid-fourteenth century. As shown in the case of Epiros, every new building project, as well as each building phase or renovation, redefines identity, political ideology and cultural orientation. As in the case of Epiros, I bring issues of date and patronage into the discussion and propose revisions of earlier scholarship. By reexamining the contexts of these buildings, the main focus shifts from the years of Pontic independence to the period of rapprochement with Constantinople, in particular the last two decades of the thirteenth century and the early fourteenth century. In what follows I hope to demonstrate that the art and architecture of Trebizond can be better understood within the larger Byzantine context and that its material culture is an important source of information for Palaiologan Byzantium as well.
CHAPTER 5

THE CHURCH OF THE PANAGIA CHRYSOKEPHALOS IN TREBIZOND

The cathedral church of Trebizond, Panagia Chrysokephalos, was most probably the first large-scale religious project of the Grand Komnenoi (figs. 242–245). Situated in the center of the middle city (figs. 239–240), the cathedral was originally attached to a monastery of which there is no trace today. The present building replaced an earlier middle Byzantine church (of the tenth century) known only through inscriptional evidence. It is not clear when the construction of the cathedral started, probably after 1214, but it was most probably finished by 1235, for Andronikos I Gidon (1222-35), second ruler of Trebizond, was buried in the church that year.

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672 For the two inscriptions, which belong to the tenth-century church and are now both lost, see Millet, “Les monastères et les églises de Trébizonde,” 422-423 (fig. 1). Both inscriptions referred to the renovation of the “venerable and holy throne” by the metropolitan Basil (ανεκαινίσθει ο τίμιος και ἁγιος θρόνος…). The one bearing the date of 914 was found under the floor of the church and was recorded by Marengo, vice consul of Spain in Trebizond: C. Marengo, “Trébizonde,” Missions Catholiques 11 (1879): 302 (with figure). This inscription was already lost at the time of Millet’s visit. The second inscription found by Millet in the nearby church of St. George referred to the same “novation” but without a date and comes according to Millet also from the Chrysokephalos. See also Bryer, “Une église ‘à la demande du client,’” 218 and 222. Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 238 (note however that their fig. 60 is the plaque published by Marengo and not the one found in St. George Kourtzas and published by Millet).

673 The information that Andronikos Gidon, the son-in-law and successor of Alexios I (1204-1222), was buried in the Chrysokephalos is inferred from Panaretos’ chronicle. Panaretos does not mention Gidon’s burial at the time of
The Chrysokephalos served as the cathedral, the coronation and funeral church of the Grand Komnenoi and, it is this combination of functions that makes it the most important church in the empire. As a cathedral, it was the seat of the metropolitan, head of the church of Trebizond. The cathedral accommodated the coronations of the rulers and served as their prime dynastic mausoleum, as well as the final resting place of the metropolitans. In addition to these exalted functions, the Chrysokephalos also had to accommodate the various requirements of its monastic community on a daily basis. Provision for these complementary and at times competing functions makes the rebuilding of the Chrysokephalos an overly ambitious project, which defies simplified classification. Both written sources and the archaeology of the church can reveal some aspects of the building’s function, design and patronage.

Written accounts concerning the Chrysokephalos come from the mid-fourteenth century onwards and thus should be treated with caution, for there is always the danger of projecting future developments back into the thirteenth century. Nonetheless, the dynastic and funeral function of the building is well attested. From Panaretos’ chronicle we know that the Chrysokephalos served in his time as the coronation church of the Grand Komnenoi. This is clearly stated only in the case of John III Grand Komnenos (1342-1344), who was crowned Gidon’s death (Panaretos, 617-13), but later on when he mentions that Theodora Kantakouzene (d. 1426), wife of Alexios III, was buried in the Chrysokephalos “ἐν τῷ κοιµητηρίῳ τοῦ Γίδωνος, έις το παράβηµα” (Panaretos, 81, 18-22). Thus, the construction of the cathedral probably antedates 1235. Another marble block bearing the name of Alexios Komnenos was found, presumably under the floor of the church, and was reported by Marengo, Missions Catholiques, 303: “En 1877, les Turcs ayant fait démolir une partie du dallage pour reparier un mur, ont trouvé un marbre, long de 1m. 80, portant, au milieu, une tête de bœuf dorée, avec une palme de chaque côté et le nom ΑΛΕΞΙΟΣ ΚΟΜΝΗΝΟΣ.” At the time of Millet’s visit, this block had already disappeared. Millet thought this could be a reference to Alexios I but he refrained from attributing the construction of the cathedral to this ruler. See also Bryer, “Une église ‘à la demande du client,’” 218; Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 238 (inscription no. 3). Cf. Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 48-51, who considers Alexios I as the patron of the Chrysokephalos. J. Rosenqvist, “Three Trapezuntine Notes,” ByzSlav 54, no. 2 (1993): 296 and note 47, relates this marble block with Alexios II, based on a relevant reference in his funerary oration. I find Rosenqvist’s suggestion more likely. After all, the floor was repaired with little care during the Ottoman times—a time when it is more possible that this marble block found its way underneath the floor. Having said this, without the necessary documentation of this finding, any judgment seems impossible today.
emperor there in 1342, but there is some evidence to suggest that this was the common practice at least in the fourteenth century.\(^{674}\) But when it comes to the thirteenth century, our written sources are remarkably silent and give us no indication whatsoever to suggest that coronation ceremonies were held customarily in the court of Trebizond.

Panaretos’ chronicle is also our main source for the burial function of the Chrysokephalos for metropolitans and rulers alike. Only two metropolitans are mentioned by name—Barnabas (d. 1333) and Niphon (d. 1364)—but there is good ground to suggest that this was the common practice.\(^{675}\) Besides the metropolitans of Trebizond, between 1382 and 1389 a burial in the Chrysokephalos received the monk Dionysios, founder of the Dionysiou monastery in Mount Athos.\(^{676}\) This seems to have been an exceptional arrangement however. Dionysios, the brother of the metropolitan of Trebizond, Theodosios, had died during his trip to Trebizond to secure funds from his patron Alexios III (1349-1390). His burial in the Chrysokephalos must have been dictated therefore either by Dionysios’ close connection to Alexios III or was arranged by his brother the metropolitan. The exact circumstances and location of his tomb are not known, but his miracle-working relics turn the Chrysokephalos at this late date into a sort of pilgrimage center.

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\(^{674}\) Panaretos, 67, on the coronation of John III in 1342: “Καὶ ἐστέφθη τῷ αὐτῷ μηνὶ Σεπτεμβρίῳ εἰς τὴν Ἑρακλέαν ἐν τῷ Ἥμιλον.” A few lines below (67,22), Panaretos refers to Michael’s coronation in 1344 (ἐστέφθη δὲ μηνὶ τῷ αὐτῷ κα’) without any specific reference to the place of the coronation and I feel this is because there is no need to repeat the information just cited above; whereas Alexios III’s coronation in St. Eugenios in 1350 is clearly stated as having taken place in St. Eugenios (Panaretos, 69).\(^{675}\) Panaretos, 75: “…ἐκοιµήθη ὁ µητροπολίτης Τραπεζοῦντος κῦρ Νήφων νόσῳ προσπαλαίσας πλευρίτιδι, ἐτὶ ὄν ἐν τῇ Σουµελῇ, καὶ ἐνεταφιάσθη αρχιερατικῶς εἰς τὴν Χρυσοκέφαλον, εἰς τὸν τάφον τοῦ µητροπολίτου κῦρ Βαρνάβα.” This brief entry records that the metropolitan Niphon (1351-1364) was buried in the Chrysokephalos and shared the same tomb with his predecessor Barnabas (1311-1333). This becomes most interesting since Niphon had previously fallen out of grace and was forced to retire in Soumela where he died. Still, this was by no means an impediment to his burial in the Chrysokephalos in a way that befitted a metropolitan (ἐνεταφιάσθη ἄρχιερατικῶς), which makes us in turn consider this as the accepted procedure. See additionally the comments of Lampsides in his edition (Panaretos, 120) concerning the identification of Soumela (either as the actual monastery in the Matzouka valley or its metochion in the city of Trebizond).\(^{676}\) N. Oikonomidès, ed., *Actes de Dionysiou* (Paris, 1968), 10-13. Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, 239.
At the same time the Chrysokephalos seems to have served as the mausoleum of the ruling family from the beginning of the thirteenth century until the last days of the empire (figs. 246–247). Few rulers are mentioned by name—Andronikos Gidon (d. 1235), John II (d. 1297) and Theodora Kantakouzene (d. 1426) and probably Alexios IV (d. 1429)—but the Chrysokephalos seems to have been the designated burial place for the ruling family unless otherwise stated. In fact, Panaretos seems to go out of his laconic way when mentioning the burial of John II (1280-1297) in the Chrysokephalos only because this ruler had died in Limnia, away from Trebizond. This does not necessarily mean that the Chrysokephalos was the only place for a royal burial. The monastery of the Theoskepastos certainly served as an alternative dynastic mausoleum during the last years of the empire. And then there is always the question of the royal chapel in the Palace, never properly examined and now long gone.


For the question of Alexios IV’s burial in the Chrysokephalos, see Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, 201, with further bibliography. This was a free-standing, four-column arched ciborium, which stood east of the northeast apse of the Chrysokephalos until it was destroyed sometime after 1918. There is no epigraphic evidence to verify that this was the tomb of Alexios IV, and the hypothesis that an emperor of Trebizond would be buried outside the main church seems to me problematic. Nonetheless, Bryer and Winfield date the construction of the tomb to after 1429. Cf. A. Mentzos, “Εργαστήριο γλυπτικής στη Θεσσαλονίκη στον 11ο αιώνα,” in *La sculpture byzantine, VII-XII siècles. Actes du colloque international organisé par la 2e Éphorie des antiquités byzantines et l’École française d’Athènes, 6-8 septembre 2000*, ed. Ch. Pennas and C. Vanderheyde, BCH 49, supplément (Paris, 2008), 217-230, who suggests that this tomb is a reused eleventh-century ciborium.

Panaretos does not refer specifically to each ruler’s burial in the Chrysokephalos, but he seems to highlight the cases whereby members of the imperial family are buried somewhere else instead.

Panaretos, 63:46; “ἐκοιµήθη ἐν τοῖς Λιµνίοις μηνὶ Αὐγούστῳ…Ἐπεὶ καὶ ζῶν ἔτι ἐκοµίσθη τὸ λείψανον αὐτοῦ ἐν Τραπεζοῦντι καὶ ἕτοιμον ἐν τῷ ναῷ τῆς Χρυσοκεφάλου.” See the comments of Lampsides concerning the interpretation of this problematic text in O. Lampsides, “Διορθωτικά εἰς το Χρονικόν Μιχαήλ του Πανάρετου,” *ArchPont* 21 (1956): 5 and 21-22.

Members of the ruling family buried in the Theoskepastos include: a) The despot Andronikos (d. 1376), natural son of Alexios III b) Manuel III (d. 1416/7) and c) initially Alexios IV (d. 1429) before his body was transferred to the Chrysokephalos: see relatively, Panaretos, 78, 13 and 17, and 81, 4; Janin, *Grands centres*, 273-274 (with some mistakes); and Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, 244-245.

For the painted inscription recorded and interpreted by Uspenskij as an indication that Alexios I (1204-1222) was buried in the palace chapel, see N. Oikonomides, “The Chancery of the Grand Komnenoi: Imperial Tradition and Political Reality,” *ArchPont* 35 (1979): 324; and Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, 184. Cf. however Rosenqvist, “Three Trapezuntine Notes,” 295 and note 45, who rules out this possibility, on good grounds I believe, unless of course there was a *translatio* of Alexios I’s relics from the palace chapel to the Chrysokephalos following the completion of the cathedral.
However, the question whether the Chrysokephalos was intended right from the beginning to serve as the royal mausoleum and whether it remained as the primary burial place for the ruling family can be answered with considerable certainty. Additional evidence to Panaretos’ information is provided by the well-known funerary/memorial oration (epitaphios) of Alexios II (1297-1330) written and delivered by the court official Constantine Loukites—the protonotarios and protovestiarios of Alexios II—at the memorial service held nine days after Alexios II’s death (1330). What is interesting about this text in the context of our inquiry is Loukites’ appeal to Alexios I (1204-1222) to receive in his tomb Alexios II, his great-grandson and namesake, who “now dwells with and is buried with him” (τὸν ὁμώνυμον, νῦν δὲ καὶ ὀμόσκηνον καὶ ὀμόταφον)—a common practice it seems for the burial of rulers in the Chrysokephalos. Most importantly, Loukites, in a highly structured rhetorical style, invites almost all Alexios II’s predecessors to the throne of Trebizond along with his Constantinopolitan Komnenian predecessors and his Palaiologan relatives to welcome the deceased emperor among them. Oikonomides noted that the speech makes references to a series of painted portraits located in the reception hall of the palace of the Grand Komnenoi further suggesting that the delivery of the speech took place in the same hall. If indeed the memorial service had taken place in the

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685 We already know from Panaretos that the metropolitans Barnabas and Niphon shared the same tomb and that Theodora Kantakouzene was buried in the tomb of Andronikos Gidon (Panaretos, 75,20-24, and 81,18-22). Therefore it is entirely possible that not all of the rulers of Trebizond had their individual tombs in the Chrysokephalos. This practice must have been dictated by space oikonomia and/or symbolic considerations, as the case of Alexios I and Alexios II demonstrates.

reception hall of the palace, then locating the tomb of the deceased emperors would seem a futile attempt.

For reasons already presented by Rosenqvist in length, the place of the speech’s delivery—only indirectly indicated in the text twice as “ἱερὸς σηκὸς” (i.e. a holy temple)—is beyond doubt the Chrysokephalos and not the reception hall of the Palace of Trebizond as had been previously suggested by Oikonomides. Supporting evidence to Rosenqvist’s interpretation is provided by Loukites’ appeal to the deceased Alexios II to raise his “eyes” and look around to the people attending the service: the clergy and monks, the archontes and the whole gathering of people of various ages and social standing.

Besides locating the shared tomb of Alexios I (1204-1222) and Alexios II (1297-1330) in the Chrysokephalos, Rosenqvist rightly remarked that the text opens up the possibility to locate the tombs of all Alexios II’s predecessors to the throne of Trebizond in the Chrysokephalos. These include Alexios II’s closest relatives—i.e. in addition to his great-grandfather (Alexios I), his grandfather (Manuel I) and his parents (John II and Eudokia)—but also Andronikos Gidon (1222-1235), John I Axouchos (1235-1238) and possibly George Komnenos (1266-1280).

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687 Loukites, *Epitaphios*, 421 (beginning of the speech): “Τί τὸ καινὸν τούτο καὶ κατηφὲς ἂθροισμα σήμερον; Τίς ὁ τοσοῦτος νῦν ὅχλος ἐνταῦθα περί ἡμᾶς, καὶ τί βουλόμενος τὸν ἱερὸν σηκὸν τούτον κατέλαβεν;” And again towards the end of the speech (ibid., 429): “…καὶ τὸν ἱερὸν σηκὸν ἐντεῦθεν στενοχωρούμενον…” The description of a church as a “holy temple” (θείῳ σηκῷ) can be found also in Lazaropoulos, *Synopsis*, Miracle 23, lines 1217-1218.


689 Loukites, *Epitaphios*, 429: “Παριστάµενος µετὰ πάντων τῶν εὐσεβῶν, συνευφραινόµενος, µετὰ ἁγγέλων συναγαγόµενος, ἐν κόλποις Ἀβραὰµ ἐπαναπαυόµενος καὶ µετὰ δικαίων πάντων συναριθµούµενος, ἀρὸν κόκλω τοὺς σοὺς νοεροὺς οφθαλµοὺς καὶ θέασαι τὴν παροῦσαν ἡδῇ κατάστασιν, ἀρχερέων συνέλευσιν πολιτῇ καὶ συνέσει τετµηµένον, ἱερῶν καὶ μοναστῶν ἱερῶν συνεδρίαν, ἀρχόντων συνάθροισιν, τοῦ κοινοῦ παντὸς σύναξιν παντοδαποῦ συνεδρίου ἐκ πάσης ἡλικίας καὶ τάξεως καὶ τὸν ἱερὸν συναγαγόµενον, πάντων ὑπὲρ σοῦ πρεσβευόντων, χεῖρας ὁσίας αἰρόντων, αἰνούντων καὶ εὐλογοῦντων τὸν Κύριον καὶ δεόµενον ὡς ἄθικος ὑπὲρ τῆς σῆς, βασιλεύ, πρὸς Κύριον µεταστάσεως, ἀνέσεως καὶ συνήθους τῶν ἔπαισιµένων άφέσεως καὶ µακαρίας σῆς ἀναµνήσεως.”

690 Rosenqvist, “Three Trapezuntine Notes,” 294-299.
Therefore, the Chrysokephalos was the burial place for all rulers of Trebizond from Alexios I up to Alexios II with few exceptions.  

The reference to the written sources concerning the function of the Chrysokephalos as the metropolitan, coronation and burial church of Trebizond was a necessary step before proceeding to the examination of the architecture. On a very basic level, the church, now a functioning mosque, retains none of its furnishing and royal tombs that could help us understand the way the space once worked. Only remnants of its sculptural decoration—columns and capitals and the marble door frames with reused spolia from ancient buildings—the opus sectile panels in the sanctuary area and the now covered opus sectile floor provide us with a glimpse of the formerly splendid royal church (figs. 248–254, 269–270 and 273). On another level, it is important to resist the temptation to favor one function over the other as we proceed with the building’s formal examination.

The architectural form of the Chrysokephalos can give us an additional insight into the way the church functioned. Unfortunately, until today we lack a detailed study of the building’s complex architecture, which remains obscured by thick layers of plaster. Until a new study of the church becomes available, we have to rely on the old study made by Baklanov early in the twentieth century, during the short Russian occupation of the city (1916-1917). Selina Ballance, who made accurate surveys of the rest of the churches during her stay in Trebizond in

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691 Only two of Alexios II’s predecessors are omitted: Andronikos II (1263-1266) and Theodora (1285). Oikonomides’ suggestion (“Chancery,” 323 and note 3) that these rulers were not represented with portraits in the reception hall of the palace is probably right. Additionally we can suggest that Theodora as a usurper was probably denied a burial in the Chrysokephalos. As for Andronikos II, we know practically nothing of his short reign and the circumstances of his death (Panaretos, 62.4). A third interpretation based on the AIMA sequence is provided by R. Shukurov, “AIMA: the blood of the Grand Komnenoi,” BMGS 19 (1995): 161-181.


1958, in the case of the Chrysokephalos could offer only a partial description of the church and a new plan as she had no access to the galleries (fig. 255). Thus, for all the details pertaining to the gallery levels of the Chrysokephalos, the old description and sketch plans of Baklanov are still invaluable (fig. 256). The architectural stages of the building, as established by Baklanov and Ballance, formed the point of departure for all later attempts—mainly by Bryer—towards an understanding and interpretation of the Chrysokephalos, and as such they merit revisiting (figs. 257–258).

The Chrysokephalos in its present form is a three-aisled domed church of an elongated plan with a strong east-west axis, built in ashlar masonry. At the east end, the church culminates in a single pentagonal apse—the southern semi-circular one being a modification of a later date—while the prothesis and diakonikon are simply the easternmost bay of the north and south aisle respectively. The main church is preceded at the west by a narthex and an exonarthex. The cruciform core of the church is shaped by four vaulted bays, which today open from floor to vault, at the intersection of which a twelve-sided dome rests on four massive piers of irregular form (figs. 259–263). Galleries run over the aisles, narthex, exonarthex and over the additions on the north-east (fig. 256).

There is a general consensus that the present form of the church is the result of at least two major building phases. The first one includes the construction of a basilica with narthex and galleries above. In the second phase, the basilica was transformed through the insertion of the crossing and dome. There is, however, no unanimity as for the extent and the particulars of

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695. Bryer, “Une église ‘à la demande du client,’” 216-237. This article was reproduced with a few changes in Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 238-243. Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 48-51, accepts most of Bryer’s suggestions.
each stage of modification, and this inevitably gives way to a series of questions regarding the
dating of each phase and the function of the church in each stage. Minor alterations and additions
to these two major building phases—although easily traceable—are equally difficult to date with
any certainty. These include the construction of the north porch, the adjoining rooms east of the
north porch, and the apse of the diakonikon. Only some modifications can be dated with
certainty to the period following the church’s conversion into a mosque. These include all the
wooden structures inside the church—at the northern part, the entrance and the sanctuary—as
well as the placement of the mihrab on the southern wall and the enlargement of the windows.

Baklanov, who was the first and the only one to attempt a complete study of the
Chrysokephalos in 1917, argued that the present building was the result of two major
construction phases along with many additions, alterations and modifications that occurred over
time.697 The initial building was a three-aisled basilica with six bays forming the nave and aisles,
a single apse, narthex and galleries above aisles and narthex.698 This basilica was kept intact to a
great extent during the second stage, i.e. the building’s remodeling into a domed church. The
procedure according to Baklanov involved a) the removal of one pier from each arcade to form
the transept and bay dome (thus unifying two former bays of each aisle and nave into one), and
b) the reinforcement of the four existing cruciform piers of the basilica to support the dome.
These piers were enlarged with the addition of masonry to their inner angles, thus resulting in
their irregular shape. In this way, not only were the supports of the dome reinforced but also the
span of the arches bearing the dome was reduced.

698 Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 151, also accepts this stage (her stage 2) but unlike Baklanov
who attributes all major phases of the Chrysokephalos to the period of the empire of Trebizond, she dates this stage
to the tenth or eleventh century.
Baklanov’s main evidence for the remodeling of the church comes from the gallery level.\textsuperscript{699} The vaulted transepts that currently open from floor to vault interrupted the galleries that once run all along over the aisles from east to west. In other words, the two easternmost bays of the aisles—which in the second stage became isolated from the rest of the galleries west of the transept—were previously an integral part of a continuous gallery. Thus, in his interpretation, the arcaded openings that once gave access to the rooms east of the transept and to the west part of the gallery—now currently blocked and part of the east and west walls of the transepts respectively—are vestiges of the former basilica.\textsuperscript{700} Similarly, the corbels, still retained and visible in the south transept and the west cross arm currently serving no purpose at all, were once the supports of a timber gallery that belonged to the earlier phase of the basilica (figs. 260 and 268).\textsuperscript{701}

There are also strong indications that the exonarthex and the gallery above were an addition to the initial building.\textsuperscript{702} Baklanov observed that a) on the ground level, the vaulting of the exonarthex was higher than that of the narthex, thus resulting in differentiated floor levels in the galleries above, b) the piers of the upper floor did not entirely correspond with the piers of the ground floor; instead, the upper floor was partially supported on the vaults of the ground floor, an indication that the vaults of the ground floor had already been completed, covered and

\begin{verbatim}
\textsuperscript{700} Baklanov, “Deux Monuments byzantins de Trébizonde,” 385: “Si nous examinons avec attention les murs latéraux (est et ouest) des extrémités du transept, nous remarquerons sous le stuc postérieur au premier étage, les formes des arcades murées, qui correspondent parfaitement par les dimensions et le tracé, aux arcs qui séparent les chambres des galeries latérales du gynécée. Du côté intérieur des chambres adossées à ces murs, les susdites baies se dessinent sous forme de niches profondes, avec traces évidentes de murage. Ceci nous force, pour ainsi dire, à supposer que primitivement les deux galeries du gynécée s’étendaient le long de toute l’église, sans interruption, et que leurs extrémités orientales n’étaient pas isolées comme elles le sont maintenant que la nef transversale les a séparées de la partie occidentale.”

\textsuperscript{701} Baklanov, “Deux Monuments byzantins de Trébizonde,” 387: “Un témoignage indirect en faveur de la continuité des galeries est rendu également par les saillies qui existent dans ces mêmes murs latéraux, sous les arcs murés: saillies qui sont les vestiges du sol des galeries anciennes et qui, dans l’état actuel, n’ont aucune raison d’être.”

\end{verbatim}
invisible when the piers of the upper floor level were constructed, and c) there was a noticeable
difference in the quality of construction between the two levels. However, Baklanov refrained
from attributing the addition of the exonarthex and the gallery above to the same construction
phase as the remodeling of the transepts and the dome.

A final indication for the Chrysokephalos’ rebuilding is provided by the present day
access to the galleries. Access to the galleries above the side aisles and the narthex of the church
is gained only through the eastern part of the north aisle, through a ledge supported by a triple
arcade—the same one leading to the north east rooms of the gallery (figs. 256 and 269–271). A
similar symmetrical arrangement is to be visualized for the southern part of the church: the two
columns that presently support the façade of the north porch originally belonged to the triple
arcade that once gave access to the south east part of the galleries (figs. 272–273).

Baklanov thought that this way of approaching the galleries through the eastern part of the church and in
close proximity to the sanctuary might not have been the primary one and suggested that the

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narthex ont été exécutés très simplement et même grossièrement, sans aucune décoration, en grand partie, pour
autant que la couche de stuc permette d’en juger, en pierres très grossièrement taillées à l’exception des arcataelles
qui, elles, sont en briques minces et carrées.” Also ibid., 387-388: “Enfin, le caractère même de la structure des
parties inférieures et supérieures, pour autant qu’on en puisse juger par la surface badigeonnée de la bâtisse, est
different; les profils des arcs, les courbes des voûtes diffèrent aussi, plus réguliers en haut, plus irréguliers en bas.”
704 Baklanov, “Deux Monuments byzantins de Trébizonde,” 387: “Mais, abstraction faite de ces modifications, on
peut supposer que la basilique elle-même, dès avant la construction de la coupole, n’avait pas atteint immédiatement
de si vastes dimensions et que ses différentes parties avaient été construites à des époques différentes.”
705 Baklanov, “Deux Monuments byzantins de Trébizonde,” 380. This arcade—similar in form to the one still
preserved in the north part of the church—was dismantled after the church’s conversion to a mosque, when the south
transept was considerably modified for the placement of the mihrab. Hence, according to Baklanov, the form of the
north porch as appears today is dated to the period after the conversion of the church to a mosque. Cf. Ballance,
“The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 150-151, who considers the north porch as a late addition (later than the
remodeling of the main church), but still Byzantine; also Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 238 and 243, who consider the
north porch as a Byzantine addition to the church (after the 1340s), following Ballance. In addition, Bryer and
Winfield suggest that there was a symmetrical porch to the south, “long excised and blocked for the mihrab” (ibid.
238) but without justifying their claim. They are apparently following the description of the Chrysokephalos given
by Ch. Texier and R. P. Pullan, Byzantine Architecture (London, 1864), 199 and pls. 67-68, which is inaccurate in
several key aspects. Whether there were side porches in the Chrysokephalos at any time during the Byzantine
period—highlighting the side entrances to the church, just as in Hagia Sophia—and what their form was remains to
be seen.
building in its first stage probably had another more direct access to the galleries above the narthex through the western part of the church.\footnote{Baklanov thought that the galleries served mainly as a \textit{gynaikonites}. This is why he was eager to search for a more accessible entrance to the galleries than the present one.} Hence, he sought to locate these former staircases (having left no trace today) in the northwest inner angle of the narthex, which indeed presents some inconsistencies when compared to the south west.\footnote{Baklanov, “Deux Monuments byzantins de Trébizond,” 380 and 382.}

Selina Ballance built on Baklanov’s analysis, modifying some of his suggestions, and established the architectural sequence of the various parts of the cathedral to which she assigned tentative dates (fig. 255).\footnote{Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 146-151.} Her major objection involved the procedure and the extent of the remodeling. Following a closer survey of the ground floor, Ballance demonstrated that the piers supporting the dome were not the initial cruciform piers of the basilica—as Baklanov thought—but composite ones built anew. Thus, she argued that the transepts, all the dome piers and the dome itself belonged to the second stage of construction and probably the addition of the exonarthex as well.\footnote{Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 150.} The parts from the earlier building included only the apse, “all the structural walls of nave and aisles up to the earlier vault spring level, slightly lower than the present one,” and possibly the narthex.\footnote{Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 150.}

The remodeling proposed by Ballance involved a far more extensive rebuilding of the cathedral than previously suggested. And this seems to be accurate. However, she had no access to the galleries and, inevitably, she offered only a partial description of the church. That left us with many unanswered questions regarding the unusual planning of the church that only a new survey of the building could settle. Nonetheless, the architectural stages of the building as

\footnote{Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 150.}
established by Ballance have been maintained by Bryer, who revised her tentative dates as follows
(fig. 257):

1. A pre-1204 church which left no trace.

2. An imperial, three-aisled, barrel-vaulted basilica, comprising the present structure from apse to narthex as well as galleries over the aisles and narthex, built after 1214 and finished by 1235.

3. Major reconstruction of the existing basilica into a domed church with the addition of the exonarthex and extension of the galleries above, starting after 1339 and finishing by 25 March 1342, 1349, 1350 or 1351.

4. Enlargement of the prothesis, addition of porches and of the south apse after the 1340s.

According to the established interpretation, the early thirteenth-century Chrysokephalos was by all means exceptional: a three-aisled basilica, built in ashlar masonry with a single pentagonal apse, a narthex and galleries over the aisles and the narthex. The Chrysokephalos seems to have followed an unusual, seemingly outdated church plan, which had been abandoned everywhere in Byzantium or the Christian East for some centuries. The choice for such a deliberate “archaism” and the reference intended still remain an open question.

Bryer suggested that it was the Chrysokephalos’ function as a coronation church that decidedly determined its overall plan and some of its peculiarities. The building was designed from the very beginning to meet all requirements for the coronation ceremony as prescribed by

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711 Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 243.
712 Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 49-51.
Pseudo-Kodinos: a *metatorion*, an ambo and galleries. In Bryer’s reading the north *parabema* (prothesis), which unexpectedly lacks an apse, served as the *metatorion* for the ceremonial dressing of the emperor, while the galleries—again an unusual feature in the early thirteenth century—were provided for the acclamation of the newly crowned emperor. In short, the early thirteenth-century Chrysokephalos was conceived as a reproduction of the coronation church of Constantinople, Hagia Sophia, dressed in a local idiom. This approach may explain some of the underlying forces in the Chrysokephalos design, but creates in turn a series of questions that remain to be accounted for.

Bryer’s suggestion is informed mainly by the fragmented historical context and the written sources available and thus rests heavily on a series of hypotheses: whilst in exile, the Grand Komnenoi were in need of a coronation church, especially between 1204 and 1282, when they still maintained their claims to the Byzantine throne; Pseudo-Kodinos’ information on Constantinopolitan coronation ceremonies, which comes from the second half of the fourteenth century might actually bear relevance to early thirteenth-century Trebizond; and finally that the Chrysokephalos was primarily designed as a coronation church whereas other functions were complementary or subordinate to this.⁷¹⁴

These hypotheses, though, might be partially challenged. In fact, our sources are completely silent concerning coronation ceremonies taking place in Trebizond as early as the beginning of the thirteenth century. While this might be attributed to a chance preservation of our written record it becomes more suspicious when considering the relevant evidence for Epiros: Theodore Komnenos Doukas’ uncanonical coronation in Thessaloniki (1227) by the archbishop

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⁷¹⁴ According to this view, the ideal church for the orthodox liturgy would have had apses for both the prothesis and the diakonikon but here this aspect was compromised because the chamber traditionally designated as the prothesis served as a *metatorion* instead.
of Ohrid, Demetrios Chomatenos, as a rival emperor to John III Doukas Vatatzes (1221-54) was heavily castigated by the then patriarch Germanos II. But we hear nothing about Trebizond, which makes us question whether a similar practice in Trebizond would have gone unnoticed by the Nicaeans. Likewise, the evidence from Pseudos-Kodinos that the galleries of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople were used for the acclamation of the newly crowned emperor does not necessarily make galleries a *sine qua non* for an imperial coronation. Alexios III’s coronation in St. Eugenios (1350)—a church without galleries—instead of the Chrysokephalos can serve as an indication that galleries might not have been as indispensable as previously thought of.

Lastly, this approach tends to downplay the funeral function of the church—indeed better documented in our sources than that of the coronation at least for the thirteenth century—to such a degree that the same chamber (prothesis) is considered both as a *metatorion* and a burial place, something highly unlikely. Leaving these reservations aside, we still cannot fully explain the intended references behind the Chrysokephalos’ basilical design.

The preference for a basilica over a centralized church plan remains to be accounted for. If the early thirteenth-century Chrysokephalos was intended as a replication of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, then the sources for its basilical plan are not readily apparent. It is possible that

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718 Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, 240. Bryer and Winfield identify the “prothesis” as the *metatorion* and the possible burial place of Andronikos Gidon: “Andronikos Gidon…was given a tomb in the *parabema*—presumably a pastofory, perhaps the northeast chamber (which we will later propose as a *metatorion* too), rather than the southeast chamber, for that was later equipped with an apse. The Gidon’s tomb was still there, undisturbed, when Theodora Kantakouzene was also buried in it in 1426.” Similarly, the communication of the northeast parabema with the adjoining rooms remains an open question. Bryer and Winfield interpret these additions as the enlargement of the *metatorion* (ibid., 241, 243). But according to Baklanov, “Deux Monuments byzantins de Trébizonde,” 384 the northeast parabema did not communicate with these rooms: “Le carré du Nord-Est a un seul mur plein, le mur nord.” And Ballance’s plan seems to indicate the same thing (“The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 147, fig. 4). Today it is not possible to examine whether there was initially an opening there that was later blocked.
there was in Trebizond a long tradition for building basilicas instead of domed churches, yet little evidence remains today to fully support this hypothesis. St. Anne in Trebizond—rebuilt in 884-5 as a three-aisled, barrel-vaulted basilica with clerestory—is our only surviving example that seems to predate the arrival of the Grand Komnenoi (figs. 274–277). Still, any similarities with the Chrysokephalos rest mainly on a superficial typological comparison. On the other hand, St. Eugenios shares many similarities with the Chrysokephalos and has also been suggested as a possible prototype for the Chrysokephalos but again it is uncertain whether it predates the Chrysokephalos.

A possible reference for the cathedral of Trebizond can be provided by Hagia Sophia in Nicaea—a building with compatible function, scale and layout—which was rebuilt at some point between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. Hagia Sophia in Nicaea has similarly a central nave with a single polygonal (seven-sided) apse and side aisles that end in small domed chambers without apses (figs. 278–279). Without downplaying the complications involved in the construction history of Hagia Sophia and the differences between the two buildings, I want to point out that the construction of the cathedral in Trebizond as a competitor to the cathedral of the Laskarids—their major rivals for the Byzantine throne—should not be ruled out.

720 Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 242, suggest that St. Eugenios served as the model for the Chrysokephalos. However, elsewhere they propose that St. Eugenios was built in 1291, i.e. later than the Chrysokephalos (ibid., 224).
721 Hagia Sophia in Nicaea measures ca. 37X20m. The Chrysokephalos is similarly over 35 m long. On Hagia Sophia in Nicaea, see: S. Möllers, Die Hagia Sophia in Iznik/Izkaia (Alfter, 1994) and U. Peschlow, “The churches of Nicaea/Izkaia,” in Iznik throughout History (Istanbul, 2003), 201-217. Both prefer an eleventh-century date for the major reconstruction of Hagia Sophia, based on the historical context (i.e. after the earthquakes of 1063-1065). According to Möllers though, the architecture of the church could be placed anywhere between the eleventh and thirteenth century. Recently, the omphalion of the opus sectile floor preserved in the west of the nave of Hagia Sophia (see infra, fig. 280) has been convincingly redated to the first half of the thirteenth century, see Chr. Pinatsi, “New observations on the pavement of the church of Hagia Sophia in Nicaea,” BZ 99/1 (2006): 119-126.
722 Unlike the Chrysokephalos, the masonry of Hagia Sophia follows the more established brickwork (layers of rubble alternating with layers of brick or pure brickwork and occasionally use of the recessed brick technique). Hagia Sophia also lacks the galleries of the Chrysokephalos as will be discussed below. And there is always the
Alternatively, we might reconsider altogether whether the Chrysokephalos’ basilical design was inherently unusual or outdated and whether it needs to be treated either as a local expression or as a deliberate “archaism” with intended references. This attitude stems mainly from a preconceived notion that by this time there was but one prevailing church-type, that of the cross-in-square, which better accommodated the needs of the orthodox liturgy. Taking the domed church as the standard expression of Byzantine church architecture, delegates all alternative solutions as outdated or provincial. But basilicas continued to be in use throughout the Byzantine period and continued to be constructed anew during the thirteenth century and later. Mistra—another major late Byzantine center in the Peloponnese—can provide us with an example. Its cathedral church dedicated to St. Demetrios, the Metropolis of Mistra, was built in the second half of the thirteenth century (after 1262) as a three-aisled barrel vaulted basilica with timber-roofed clerestory (fig. 281) and was only remodeled to a domed church with galleries at a later date, perhaps only in the fifteenth century (fig. 282). This example makes us consider whether a basilical design was actually one of the widely accepted options befitting a cathedral church regardless of localities (Trebizond, Nicaea, and Mistra). At all events, basilicas were far easier

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question of Hagia Sophia’s function under the Laskarids. Most recently Angold, “The city Nicaea ca. 1000-ca. 1400,” 36, has argued that Hagia Sophia could have served not only as the metropolitan church, but also as the coronation and the patriarchal church of the Laskarids. If this suggestion is right, the Chrysokephalos was the equivalent of Hagia Sophia in Nicaea.


724 Marinou, *Άγιος Δημήτριος*, 185-199, and 246-247 classifies the cathedral of Mistra as a variation of the timber-roofed basilica, despite the fact that both side aisles and narthex were vaulted. That is because she considers the timber-roofed clerestory the dominant element in the composition of the interior. It is interesting that this variation is unique in Greece (ibid., 191-192). Equally, the elongated shape of the cathedral (with proportions 1:2) is again a unique feature in the Late Byzantine architecture of Greece, and will be maintained also in the design of the Hodeghetria and the Pantanassa of Mistra. Marinou argues that the Metropolis of Mistra was modeled on the nearby Early Christian basilica of Hosios Nikon in Sparta (ibid., 188-190). Her comparative material comes exclusively from Greece, and does not take into consideration the similarly elongated proportions of the churches in Trebizond (see relatively Millet, “Les monastères et les églises de Trébizonde,” 446-447), which can give us a whole different perspective.

725 Vocotopoulos, *Εκκλησιαστική αρχιτεκτονική*, 102 and 105 has concluded that one third of the known basilicas were metropolitan churches.
to build, especially when grand scale construction was involved, as in Trebizond, and were probably better suited to hold larger congregations. Moreover, we should not rule out the possibility that the early thirteenth-century basilical plan of the Chrysokephalos was indebted to its middle Byzantine predecessor of which we know practically nothing.

What actually makes the early thirteenth-century Chrysokephalos exceptional in its planning is the provision for the galleries. Hagia Sophia in Nicaea, although partially rebuilt by the Laskarids early in the thirteenth century, was never remodeled to obtain an upper level. Likewise in Arta, the Paregoretissa was remodeled with full galleries only in 1294-6.\textsuperscript{726} Supporting evidence comes from Mistra. Galleries were introduced for the first time with the construction of the Hodegetria, the second church of the Brontochion monastery, in 1311/12 while this feature is absent from the earlier churches of Mistra (the Metropolis, Hagioi Theodoroi).\textsuperscript{727} More than a hundred years later, full galleries will figure prominently in the construction of the Pantanassa (1428) and in the remodeling of the Metropolis (1443/4-1449).\textsuperscript{728} Thus, at least the evidence from the other late Byzantine centers indicates that galleries become a prominent feature only late in the thirteenth century in the Byzantine courts outside Trebizond. And this sets the Chrysokephalos apart from the norm of the early thirteenth-century architecture, at least as it is known to us.

\textsuperscript{726} As discussed in the relevant chapter on Arta.
\textsuperscript{727} The question of the galleried churches is discussed at length in Marinou, \textit{Άγιος Δημήτριος}, 199-212 with previous bibliography. According to Marinou, the Hodegetria was modified during its construction (1311/12) to include galleries. However, see A. Tantsis, “Η χρονολόγηση του ναού της Οδηγήτριας στο Μυστρά,” \textit{Βυζαντιακά} 31 (2014): 179–204, who argues that the galleries in the Hodegetria were added to the existing building much later, when the despot Theodore I Palaiologos took residence in Mistra (1382-1407).
\textsuperscript{728} Marinou attributes the remodeling of the Metropolis to the workshop responsible for the construction of the Pantanassa on the basis of their shared formal, structural and decorative features (Marinou, \textit{Άγιος Δημήτριος}, 229, and 250-251). The Peribleptos of Mistra also has a gallery but only above the narthex.
Both Arta and Mistra give us some further hints on the sources and function of the
galleried churches that might also bear relevance to Trebizond. Both centers retained a close
political and cultural relation to Palaiologan Constantinople: in the case of Arta mainly through
intermarriages with the Palaiologoi, while Mistra maintained an even closer dependence on
Constantinople through its governors and later its despot, who hailed from the ruling families of
Byzantium (Kantakouzenoi, Palaiologoi). Buildings such as the Paregoretissa in Arta or the
Hodegetria, the Pantanassa and the remodeled Metropolis of Mistra display clearly identifiable
Constantinopolitan features and, without a doubt, the introduction of galleried churches in both
centers is closely related to Constantinopolitan/ Palaiologan practices but not necessarily
attached to coronation ceremonies.

Thus, the most pressing question remains whether the galleries of the Chrysokephalos
belonged to the early thirteenth-century phase of the church or rather formed part of the
subsequent reconstruction of the cathedral at a later date. In other words, was the
Chrysokephalos the first in a series of late thirteenth-century churches with galleries or should it
rather be placed within the context of later Palaiologan developments?

Actually, there is very little evidence to suggest that the early thirteenth-century
Chrysokephalos ever had galleries. Baklanov’s evidence rests mainly on the interruption of the

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729 Mistra was a Byzantine possession, administered from 1262-1348 by a governor appointed from Constantinople
(up to 1286 by a kepale serving for a single year and later by an epitropos for a longer term). From 1348 and up
until 1460 (the handing over of the city to the Ottomans), Mistra was the seat of the despot of the Morea, who was
always a member of the ruling families of Constantinople. Marinou, Άγιος Δημήτριος, 19 and 33ff.
730 Marinou, Άγιος Δημήτριος, 236-238 and 251, suggests that the galleries in the Metropolis might have been
introduced for the coronation of Constantine Palaiologos (January 1449). However, the evidence from Arta, where
no coronations ever took place, does not necessarily put the galleries in such a concrete frame.
731 Cf. Brounov’s short note opposing Baklanov’s theory that the Chrysokephalos was ever a basilica with galleries.
que la Chrysocéphalos était primitivement une basilique, je ne doute pas qu’une coupole recouvrait déjà l’église
galleries and the isolation of the rooms east of the transepts and, to a lesser extent, on the access to the upper floor. Yet, it is uncertain whether the transept vaults of the second stage of the basilica ever opened from floor to vault as both Baklanov and Ballance maintained. In fact, the timber galleries that once ran across the vaulted transepts seem to be an integral part of the remodeling of the church and not the vestiges of the former basilica. And this might also explain why all their efforts to locate an alternative way of gaining access to the upper floor—other than through the eastern parts of the church—proved fruitless. Thus, it remains possible that the isolation of the eastern parts of the galleries with the blocking of the openings and the destruction of the timber galleries might actually reflect subsequent modifications (i.e. a third stage or more), when the form of the galleries might have been considerably altered to accommodate additional functions (providing further isolated space for burial chapels, for instance?) The answer here would be important, for it would determine whether the original planning of the Chrysokephalos was exceptional or rather conventional both within the context of the local architecture (for instance, its relation to St. Eugenios) and the thirteenth-century architecture as is known to us from other Byzantine centers (i.e. Nicaea, Arta, Mistra). This would also help us trace changes in the building’s function from one stage to the next.

The major reconstruction of the Chrysokephalos as a domed church, on the other hand, certainly brought the building’s design in line with contemporaneous trends both in Constantinople and in the other parts of the Byzantine world. Although the motivation behind this remodeling is equally uncertain, the insertion of the crossing and dome resting on four massive piers of irregular shape brought the church design closer to the traditional cross-in-

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square church. And as a domed church with galleries, the rebuilt Chrysokephalos made the intended references to Hagia Sophia in Constantinople readily apparent. Rightly so, Lazaropoulos, the fourteenth-century editor of the miracles of St. Eugenios and for a short period metropolitan of Trebizond, calls it the “Great Church.”

The Constantinopolitan look of the rebuilt Chrysokephalos clearly departs from local practices but it is not an isolated example, owing merely to the desire to replicate in a local context, the Great Church of Constantinople. In other words, it is not only the specific function of the Chrysokephalos as the cathedral, the coronation and the burial church of the Grand Kommenoi that determined its rebuilding as a domed church. As the other two important royal foundations of Trebizond exemplify—Hagia Sophia and the rebuilt St. Eugenios—favoring a Constantinopolitan look at the expense of the local tradition and practices forms part of a general trend in Trebizond. Whereas this shift in orientation—from local to Constantinopolitan—is clearly showcased by these three existing royal foundations of Trebizond, the circumstances of this development remain elusive to a great extent. As is often the case, the poor documentation of the buildings—none of them securely dated—along with the lacunas in our written record inevitably leads to a series of speculations regarding the time, the means, the motives and initiatives, and the context in general that encouraged such a change in orientation.

Today the prevailing estimation places the rebuilding of the Chrysokephalos in the 1340s, following a possible major destruction of the church, which is not specifically mentioned in any of our written sources. Evidence for this hypothesis comes from a hymn composed by Andreas Libadenos for the “patronal” feast of the Chrysokephalos (the Annunciation), on the occasion of

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the church’s rededication by the metropolitan Akakios (1339-1351). Additional indication that the Chrysokephalos underwent some major reconstruction in the 1340s is provided by the fact that Alexios III’s was crowned on 21st January 1350 in the monastery of St. Eugenios, instead of the Chrysokephalos, the cathedral and coronation church of the Grand Komnenoi. As the suggestion for a major destruction and rebuilding of the Chrysokephalos in the 1340s relies heavily on these two pieces of information, revisiting the main arguments is essential.

Oikonomides argued that the refoundation of the Chrysokephalos took place after a possible damage of the church in July 1341 (which is not specifically mentioned in any of our written sources, not even in the hymn) and before September 1342, the date of John III Grand Komnenos’ coronation. Since the hymn was composed for the feast of the Annunciation, Oikonomides proposed that the Chrysokephalos had been rebuilt by March 1342.

Bryer, on the other hand, rightly remarked that although Trebizond suffered a major destruction at the time, a) there is no proof that the Chrysokephalos underwent any severe damage in 1341, and b) even if this is the case, then a nine-month period for repairing the cathedral from such a severe damage is quite tight especially during a period of civil strife. Consequently, Bryer proposed as alternative/additional possible dates for the refoundation of the Chrysokephalos: 25 March 1349 to 1351 on the basis that the coronation of Alexios III in St. Eugenios can be taken as an indication that the Chrysokephalos was being rebuilt at the time.

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735 For the hymn, see O. Lampsides, ed., Άνδρέου Λιβαδηνού βίος και έργα (Athens, 1975), 113-116 (Libadenos’ text) and 230-233 (editor’s commentary).
736 Panaretos, 69.1-14.
737 Oikonomides, “Χρονολόγησις” 214-217.
738 Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 242-243.
Bryer’s proposal also presents some problems. To begin with, other than the events of July 1341, there is no indication in our sources that Trebizond suffered any major destruction following the coronation of John III in 1342 and the coronation of Michael Grand Komnenos in 1344.\footnote{Panaretos, 67.10-24 records the civil war following John III’s coronation and an unsuccessful attack by the Amitiotai (June 1343), but does not specifically mention any material damages. Another unsuccessful attack by the Turks took place in June 1348 (Panaretos, 68.13-19). Similarly, the recorded war with the “Franks” in May 1349 and June 1349 (Panaretos, 68.20-19 and 69.1-4) does not seem to have damaged the walled city.} In addition, of Bryer’s proposed dates, we should exclude March 1349, for Alexios III was crowned in January 1350.\footnote{Bryer has miscalculated the date of the coronation as 29 January 1349. This is certainly an oversight, which, however, only slightly affects his argument.} Thus, the only dates for the refoundation of the Chrysokephalos that remain (following Bryer’s argument) are: March 1350 or March 1351 (allegedly the last year of Akakios’ office, the metropolitan who was responsible for the rededication of the church). These dates also present some difficulties. Firstly, it is far from certain that Akakios was still alive by 1351.\footnote{The metropolitan Akakios’ office is usually placed from 1339 up to 1351: Metropolitan Chrysanthos (Philippides), Η Εκκλησία Τραπεζούντος, ArchPont 4-5 (1933), 231-246). But according to Chrysanthos, Akakios probably died in 1349-1350 (ibid., 245) and his successor, the metropolitan Niphon, was already in Constantinople in August 1351. Here it would be important to know when Akakios died and who the metropolitan of Trebizond was at the time of Alexios III’s coronation. Bryer considers that Akakios was still alive and in rivalry with the circles supporting Alexios III, a fact that might explain his coronation in St. Eugenios. Similarly, J. Rosenqvist, The Hagiographic Dossier of St Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athous Dionysiou 154: A Critical Edition with Introduction, Translation, Commentary, and Indexes (Uppsala, 1996), 39, does not exclude Bryer’s suggestion that the cathedral was either rebuilt at the time or that there was some rivalry with the metropolitan because Akakios had supported Alexios III’s predecessors. In fact, Akakios had received Michael Grand Komnenos as the lawful ruler of Trebizond in the past (Panaretos, 66.7-24 and 67.19-24), and therefore he might have been unwilling to legitimize Alexios III, who was technically a usurper as we will discuss shortly. In any event, neither Bryer nor Rosenqvist suggest who performed the coronation of Alexios III in St. Eugenios, if not the metropolitan.} Secondly, it is difficult to explain why in September 1351 Alexios III married Theodora Kantakouzene again in the monastery of St. Eugenios.\footnote{Panaretos, 70.3,8, Bryer does not take into consideration the subsequent wedding in St. Eugenios.} If this choice was dictated, for a second time, by the fact that the cathedral was not yet ready to accommodate a court ceremonial, then we are tempted to equally reject the dates proposed by Bryer altogether. Thirdly, it is questionable whether the coronation of Alexios III and his subsequent wedding ceremony in St. Eugenios have any relevance to the alleged rebuilding of the Chrysokephalos.
Dynastic considerations seem more plausible for Alexios III’s coronation ceremony in St. Eugenios’ monastery on 21 January 1350 on the feast day of St. Eugenios.\(^{743}\) We should keep in mind that Alexios was technically a usurper, a minor (only eleven-years-old) and of illegitimate birth. When Alexios entered Trebizond in late December 1349 (on the 22\(^{nd}\)) and “received” the throne of Trebizond,\(^{744}\) the reigning emperor, Michael Grand Komnenos (1344-1349), was still alive—albeit ill according to Panaretos.\(^{745}\) Michael was forced to abdicate and retire as a monk to the monastery of St. Sabbas.\(^{746}\) Thus, Alexios III’s supporters would like to stage his coronation as soon as possible and the approaching feast day of St. Eugenios provided them indeed with a golden opportunity: by then, the festivities had already been transformed into a state ceremony, including processions of the relics from the monastery to its metochion in the city of Trebizond, the procession being led by the emperor, the clergy and the state officials, followed by all Christian people.\(^{747}\)

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\(^{743}\) Panaretos, 69\_8-14.

\(^{744}\) Panaretos, 69\_10: “ἐἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὴν Τραπεζοῦντα καὶ παρέλαβε τὴν βασιλείαν.”

\(^{745}\) Panaretos, 69\_4-5: “Τότε γὰρ ἀσθένεια ἐνίκησε τὸν βασιλέα τὸν κύριο Μιχαήλ…” His illness takes place around June 1349, some months before Alexios III’s arrival in Trebizond (December 1349). Panaretos may be in earnest when referring to Michael’s ill-health as Michael was an old man. But this could also serve as an excuse for Alexios III’s usurpation. Panaretos would not like to portray his patron, Alexios III, as a usurper. Similarly Libadenos, Periegesis, 71-72, also refrains from portraying Alexios III as a usurper and attributes his ascension to the throne to the Divine oikonomia (“οἰκονοµίας ἀῤῥήτου θεοῦ καὶ σωτηρίας διὰ παρθένου θεόπαιδος ἧμι καὶ θεοµήτορος ἠµιµε γρό ἱστορίαν γεγενηµένης”). In addition, Libadenos informs us that Alexios III, on his way from Constantinople to Trebizond, was received and acclaimed as emperor of Trebizond: “Αλλ’ οὗτως µὲν ἐξελθὼν τῆς βασιλίδος τῶν πόλεων δήµε παρ’ ἡµόνα τοῦ κόλπου Εὐξέινου καὶ ψαµάθους ἐλλιµενιζόµενος δήµε τινὶ καὶ προσφεµίζων ταῖς παραθαλαττιδίοις πόλεσι καὶ τυγχάνον πρεπούσης δοχῆς τε καὶ δεξιώσεως µάλα βασιλικῆς. Ἦκε δὲ µετὰ Σινώπην ἐς Αµινσὸν κάκεδεν ἐς Κερασοῦντα καὶ παραβάλει Τριπόλεσιν, οἴ καὶ ὑπὸ πᾶσιν ἀναγορεύεται µάλα καλῶς.” Therefore, Libadenos leaves no doubt that Alexios III’s usurpation was well orchestrated from Constantinople. Most importantly, his account indirectly verifies the information provided by Lazaropoulos that it was the Byzantine emperor, John VI Kantakouzenos (1347-1354), who promoted Alexios III to the throne of Trebizond (Lazaropoulos, Synopsis, Miracle 25, 338ff, lines 1687-1703). Less diplomatically than both Panaretos and Libadenos, and certainly more emphatically, Lazaropoulos refers to the deposed Michael as “unduly blunt and frivolous and also old and childless” (ibid., lines 1690-1691, trans. by Rosenqvist).

\(^{746}\) Panaretos, 69\_16-18: “Τὸν δὲ κύριο Μιχαήλ περιορίσις ἐν τῷ στηλίῳ τοῦ ἀγίου Σάββα ἀπέκειρε κατὰ µοναχὸν.” A year later Michael will be sent back to Constantinople (Panaretos, 69\_16-18). On the monastery of St. Sabbas, as a place of confinement, see Janin, Grands centres, 288; Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 231.

There were additional reasons for staging Alexios III’s coronation in St. Eugenios, for the monastery had actively supported his succession rights to the throne of Trebizond during the dynastic struggles that followed the death of his father, Basil Grand Komnenos, in 1340. Basil had married twice: initially the Constantinopolitan princess Eirene Palaiologina (natural daughter of the Byzantine emperor Andronikos III Palaiologos) with whom he had no male heirs, and later to another Eirene, a Trapezuntine lady, who had previously born him two (illegitimate) sons. Following Basil’s death, however, Eirene Palaiologina seized the throne of Trebizond and sent Basil’s second wife with her two children, Alexios and Kaloioannes (the future Alexios III, renamed Alexios after his grandfather) to Constantinople. But her rule was immediately opposed by a fraction of the aristocracy who made St. Eugenios their stronghold, while the Palaiologina and her supporters held the acropolis. The opposition maintained themselves for some months in the monastery of St. Eugenios (April to July 1340), until the Grand Duke John besieged the monastery with artillery and temporarily ended the dynastic struggle in favor of the Palaiologina. Ten years later, Alexios’ coronation in St. Eugenios can be seen as a tribute to the monastery for its political role during the civil strife of the 1340s.

748 The dynastic struggles following Basil’s death are conveniently summarized in Rosenqvist, Hagiographic Dossier, 37-40.
749 Panaretos, 64-65, 69.
750 Among the people who supported the dynastic rights of the then young Alexios against Palaiologina’s usurpation was Lazaropoulos himself. As we are informed from his autobiographical notes, embedded in his miracle collection of St. Eugenios, Lazaropoulos was also exiled to Constantinople by Eirene Palaiologina’s supporters (: Lazaropoulos, Synopsis, Miracle 25, 338ff, lines 1660-1717). While he took with him one of his sons, his wife and other son stayed back in Trebizond. After the death of their son, his wife joined him in exile to Constantinople, leaving behind everything. They lived in Constantinople and did not return to their homeland. If we rely on Lazaropoulos notes, the Byzantine emperor, John VI Kantakouzenos, imposed Alexios III as emperor of Trebizond and entrusted Lazaropoulos with this task, i.e. escorting the future Alexios III back to Trebizond and arranging the transfer of power from Michael Grand Komnenos to Alexios III. Evidently, Lazaropoulos’ involvement in Alexios III’s enthronement was instrumental. Therefore, it is very plausible that Lazaropoulos was also in charge of orchestrating the coronation and wedding ceremonies of Alexios III. Given Lazaropoulos anti-Palaiologan sentiments, hardly veiled in his account, it is self-explanatory, why the Byzantine emperor, John VI Kantakouzenos—himself a usurper of imperial power from the Palaiologoi—entrusted him with such a task. In fact, Lazaropoulos admits that he himself also wished to restore Alexios III to his ancestral throne, thus implying that
Alexios III’s investment in the cult of St. Eugenios and his monastery might also be seen as a way to reinforce the desired association of his reign with the long and generally highly-esteemed reign of his grandfather, Alexios II, thus making his hereditary claims to the throne of Trebizond even stronger. The abovementioned funerary oration of Alexios II by Constantine Loukites is indicative of the popularity this emperor enjoyed.\textsuperscript{751} Alexios II is also the main hero of the story told by Lazaropoulos regarding the festival of St. Eugenios’ birthday, the story even includes a short \textit{enkomion} on the dead emperor.\textsuperscript{752} And when Lazaropoulos narrates the events that brought about Alexios III’s assumption of power, he does not miss the opportunity to stress twice that he is the grandson of the late despot and emperor, Alexios II.\textsuperscript{753} In adopting the name of his grandfather—which had also been the name of his eldest brother, the lawful heir, probably deceased by that time—Alexios III stretched his hereditary claims against the deposed Michael, younger brother of Alexios II and made the dynastic continuation from grandfather to grandson more visible. By associating the reign of Alexios III with that of his grandfather’s, the circles that supported Alexios III wished and succeeded in leaving behind an era of dynastic struggles.

\textsuperscript{751} Loukites, \textit{Epitaphios}, 421-430. I am of the same opinion as Rosenqvist, \textit{Hagiographic Dossier}, 37, and note 64, that this funerary oration reveals the genuine affection of Loukites towards Alexios II. Among the rulers of Trebizond mentioned in his speech, Alexios II is the only one to be addressed as an emperor (\textit{μέγας αὐτοκράτωρ}). This is totally understandable, given that Alexios II inaugurated a totally different era for the Pontic dominion. Given that Loukites was the \textit{protonotarios} and \textit{protovestiarios} and therefore familiar with the protocol, this address does not seem a coincidence (see also \textit{infra}, note 753).

\textsuperscript{752} Lazaropoulos, \textit{Logos}, Miracle 1, 206ff, lines 36-431, and especially lines 216-302, for the short \textit{enkomion} on Alexios II. This part—admittedly not very well integrated into the story and of low quality, when compared to Loukites’ work—seems to draw from Loukites’ funerary oration, which is not surprising given Lazaropoulos’ admiration for Loukites.\textsuperscript{753} Lazaropoulos, \textit{Synopsis}, Miracle 25, 338ff, lines 1660-1717; especially lines 1696-1698: “…ιν’ ὁ τοῦ ἐμοῦ δέσποτος καὶ βασιλέως ἔγγονος τοῦ μεγάλου Κομνηνοῦ Ἀλέξιος τῆς πατρικῆς ἐγκρατῆς ἀρχῆς γένηται…” and lines 1711-1712: “Ἄρξει δὲ Τραπεζοῦντος Ἀλέξιος ὁ τοῦ Ἀλέξιου ἔγγονος τοῦ μεγάλου Κομνηνοῦ.” Note here that Lazaropoulos also calls Alexios II “despot and emperor” (δέσποτος καὶ βασιλέως), which reflects the political reality. As Pachymeres tells us, Alexios II started his rule as a despot but soon afterwards he disobeyed the Byzantine emperor, Andronikos II: Pachymeres 3, 296-299 (IX. 29); Pachymeres 4, 316-319 (X. 7) and 492-495 (XI. 29). I believe Alexios II was the first fourteenth-century ruler to assume the title of the emperor and thus elevating his dominion to an empire.
Either by coincidence or by merit Alexios III’s reign would be the longest in the entire history of Trebizond.

Privileging the cult of St. Eugenios and his monastery seems to have been in line with Alexios’ grandfather’s policies. We should keep in mind that it was Alexios II who first introduced St. Eugenios’ equestrian portrait on his coinage, thus establishing the iconography of the martyr as the holy rider and active protector of the emperor in his military campaigns.754 Alexios II is said to have enjoyed the ample support of St. Eugenios and he demonstrated his keen interest in promoting St. Eugenios’ cult through his initiatives to reform the festivities of the martyr’s monastery. Alexios II is thought to be the one who introduced the celebration of the martyr’s birthday (June 24) along with that of his martyrdom (January 21).755 Similarly, Alexios III’s reign was placed under the protection of St. Eugenios from the very beginning.756 Alexios III was thus building on his grandfather’s policies and staged his coronation with dynastic considerations in mind.

If, for the reasons presented above, it remains highly questionable whether the coronation of Alexios III and his subsequent wedding ceremony in St. Eugenios had anything to do with the alleged damage and restoration of the Chrysokephalos, then what additional evidence remains on the destruction and subsequent remodeling of the Chrysokephalos in 1340s?

755 According to Lazaropoulos, Logos, Miracle 1, 206ff, lines 36-431.
756 According to Lazaropoulos (Synopsis, Miracle 25, 338ff, lines 1660-1717), when he was entrusted with escorting the future Alexios III to Trebizond, the prospect of the difficult trip to Trebizond and the undertaking at hand daunted him and he sought advice. Conveniently, St. Eugenios appeared to him in a dream and assured him that Alexios III will reign over Trebizond. See also Rosenqvist’s introduction in his Hagiographic Dossier, 38-40.
As already mentioned the written sources are silent on this matter. While Panaretos and to a lesser extent Lazaropoulos provide evidence for the burning of St. Eugenios’ monastery, they record nothing about the destruction of the cathedral. This omission might be justified, when considering the scope of their work. Yet, Libadenos—our most valuable complementary source to Panaretos for the period 1336-1355—describes in his Periegesis the dynastic struggles of his time and the burning of Trebizond in 1341 by the Turkomans in great detail, but also fails to mention anything specific about the destruction of the cathedral. His silence seems all the more strange if we take into consideration that Libadenos was not only an eyewitness of the events he is describing, but was also appointed as prototaboularios and chartophylax of the metropolis and as such had a specific relation to the cathedral and access to documents and archives.

As the only indications for a major destruction and rebuilding of the cathedral in the 1340s remain the great fire of 1341 and the rebuilding mentioned in the hymn composed by Libadenos respectively, we shall return to Oikonomides’ argument. The hymnographic text makes it clear that the Chrysokephalos was built “anew” (ναὸν φαεινὸν βοθρικῶν ἐκ χωµάτων) and rededicated by the metropolitan Akakios, on the occasion of the “patronal” feast of the

757 Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 242.
758 Panaretos’ short chronicle aims mainly at recording the reigns of each ruler of Trebizond. Lazaropoulos, on the other hand, focuses on the miracles of St. Eugenios. Both of them had a firsthand knowledge of the events and they were awarded high posts under Alexios III. Panaretos served as protonotarios and Lazaropoulos was appointed as metropolitan of Trebizond (ca. 1364-1367). Therefore, they must have been aware of a major destruction of the cathedral in the 1340s. On Panaretos’ life, see mainly Lampside’s introduction in his edition: Panaretos, 9-33. Also Savvides, Οἱ Μεγάλοι Κομνηνοί τῆς Τραπεζούντας, 161-164 (with further bibliography). On Lazaropoulos’ life, see Rosenqvist’s introduction in his Hagiographic Dossier, 30-31.
759 Libadenos, Periegesis, 62-67. Libadenos offers a very vivid picture of the burning of Trebizond in 1341. The fire spread quickly within the city, burned houses and even the churches where people sought refuge. Unfortunately none of the churches affected by the fire is mentioned by name. Panaretos, 665-10, also records the burning of Trebizond but without going into details, stressing instead the human losses.
760 On Andreas Libadenos’ life, see mainly Lampside, Ανδρέου Λιβαδηνού βίος καὶ έργα, 259-280. Also Chrysanthos, Ἡ Ἐκκλησία Τραπεζούντας, passim; Savvides, Οἱ Μεγάλοι Κομνηνοί τῆς Τραπεζούντας, 158-160.
church, i.e. March 25. These are the only chronological indications provided by the hymn and curiously enough no emperor is commemorated, although the text is complete.\textsuperscript{762} Taking into consideration the archaeology of the church as it had been established by his time, Oikonomides rightly suggested that the claim of the hymn should not be interpreted literally and probably referred to a partial rebuilding of the cathedral; the fire probably caused the collapse of the roof of the church and since the coronation of John III in Sept. 1342 could not have taken place in a church without a roof, the partial repair of the church could have only taken place between July 1341 and March 1342.\textsuperscript{763}

However, the archaeology of the church as is known to us today involves a far greater rebuilding than previously thought, which could hardly have taken place during the allotted time. The fire of July 1341 and the losses from the Turkoman invasion left the entire city of Trebizond in ruins, devastated the population of the city, and were followed by the “sudden death” (i.e. the plague).\textsuperscript{764} As Bryer already noted, this probably leaves us with less than nine months—and most of them during winter—for such an extensive rebuilding and redecoration (?) of the cathedral.\textsuperscript{765}

In addition, the metropolitan Akakios must have fallen out of grace during the reign of Anna Anachoutlou (17 July 1341–25 August 1342), since he was eager to receive Michael Grand Komnenos as the lawful ruler of Trebizond on July 30, 1341.\textsuperscript{766} Yet, Michael’s attempt to

\textsuperscript{762} This comes in contrast to the other two hymns dedicated to the Virgin by Libadenos. In these we find an extensive commemoration of the imperial family (i.e. Alexios III, his wife Theodora Kantakouzene and Alexios’ mother, Irene of Trebizond. Both have been edited by Lampsides, Ανδρέου Λιβαδηνού βίος και έργα, 105-108 (verses on the Virgin’s Dormition) and 109-112 (on the Virgin’s birthday) with commentary ad loc, 228-230.

\textsuperscript{763} Oikonomides, “Χρονολόγησις,” 214-217.

\textsuperscript{764} Libadenos, Periegesis, 67: “Επει δὲ καὶ Τραπεζοῦς πυρὶ πάσης ὅλης ἀστῆλακται καὶ βαρβάρων κακώσεως, τῆς περιπληθείσης πρώτερον ἤμιν σώιας ἀπογυμνωθέντες γυνῆ τῷ κοινῷ πυρπολήματι, ἤγουν τῶν καταλοίπων ἀκρίσι βεβρωμένων τοῖς βρούχοις, ὅλοι τοῖς τῆς ἐπάραι γεγόναμεν.” And Panaretos, 66, 10: “…καί ἐκαύθη η ἡ Τραπεζοῦς ὅλη, ἐντός καὶ ἕκτος, καὶ ἐκαύθησαν λαός πολὺς, καὶ γυναῖκες καὶ παιδία. Μετὰ δὲ τὴν πλῆθην ἐκ τῆς δυσωδίας τῶν καυθέντων ἄλγουν ζῶνων καὶ ἀνθρώπων γέγονε καὶ αἰφνίδιος θάνατος.”

\textsuperscript{765} Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 242.

\textsuperscript{766} The sequence of the events is recorded in Panaretos, 66, 10-24.
assume the power over Trebizond lasted only a day; the next morning he was captured and soon taken as a captive first to Oinaion and from there to Limnia. The metropolitan, who favored Michael, must have found himself in an equally uncomfortable situation. Under these circumstances, and as long as Anna Anachoutlou remained in power, it is difficult to explain where and how the metropolitan Akakios found the necessary means and support to finance and complete such an undertaking. Most importantly, the archaeology of the church does not reveal any hasty rebuilding.  

Given the above, it seems more likely that the evidence of the hymn should not be taken at all literally and either refers to a much more minor repair of the church or even a “spiritual” rededication that has nothing to do with the actual extensive rebuilding of the cathedral. In composing his hymn, Libadenos simply used stereotypical (exaggerated) expressions befitting such a renewal, driven mainly from his loyalty to the metropolitan. Such an interpretation could explain both the omission of the emperor’s commemoration and his absence from the actual ceremony as well as the alleged “patronage” of the metropolitan. Such an occasion could have taken place at any given time during the office of the metropolitan Akakios (ca. 1339-1351) and it is hardly possible to narrow down the dates for the composition of the hymn. From the nature and content of the text, however, we are eager to search for a date that meets the following criteria: a) the need for a ceremonial rededication must have followed an important event (fire, disease, civil war and the like), and b) it was written at a period when Libadenos was

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767 As already noted by Baklanov, the Chrysokephalos’ rebuilding was done with great care compared to St. Eugenios’.
768 Libadenos, Periegesis, 68, praises the metropolitan Akakios, who paid him a visit during his illness. This event takes place after Libadenos’ forced return from Crimea (spring 1342?) and probably after the coronation of John III (Sept. 1342), since there is a mention of the civil war that broke out soon after this ruler’s coronation, recorded also by Panaretos, 67 10-16.
769 Bryer, on the other hand, accepts that the Chrysokephalos was rebuilt under the metropolitan’s patronage. This is as far as I know the only case in Trebizond’s imperial centuries, in which a metropolitan features as the patron of a church.
present in Trebizond but either not on good terms with the authorities (to explain why the emperor was not commemorated even in his absence from the ceremony) or there was a vacuum in power. For the reasons suggested by Oikonomides and Lamp sides, the most likely candidate still remains March 1342 although it is not certain whether Libadenos was in Trebizond at the time and thus able to compose this hymn. Equally possible is to search for a date under the reign of Michael Grand Komnenos (1344-1349), when the metropolitan was in good standing and when Libadenos fell twice out of grace: the first time around 1345 and the second time after he was cured from a severe illness, following the plague of 1347-48. Could it be that the end of the great plague in March 1348, which began in Sept. 1347 and lasted seven months, was the occasion for a ceremonial rededication of the cathedral?

A further clue for the possible rebuilding of the Chrysokephalos is provided by its resemblance to St. Eugenios. The question of which served as the prototype for the other I think resembles...

770 Oikonomides, “Χρονολόγησις,” 214-217. Lamp sides, Ἀνδρέου Λιβαδηνοῦ βίος καὶ ἔργα, 232, argues that Anna Anachoutlou reigned only nominally, and consequently she was not present during the ceremonial rededication of the cathedral.

771 Libadenos was finally granted permission to return to Constantinople as he had wished for a long time, and left Trebizond in the fall of 1341 (?) and sailed to “Μαιώτην Βόσπορον” (: Maiotikos/Kimmerios Bosphoros, i.e. Kertch in Crimea) in order to embark on a ship to Constantinople. But he had to remain there until spring, for no ships sailed to Constantinople during the winter. While still in Crimea, ships from Constantinople came and arrested him and brought him back to Trebizond against his will: Libadenos, Periegesi s, 67-68. Cf. Lamp sides, Ἀνδρέου Λιβαδηνοῦ βίος καὶ ἔργα, 189-190 and 276, who suggests that the ships that captured Libadenos came from Trebizond. However, Libadenos makes clear that the ships came “ῥωµαΐθεν” i.e. from Constantinople not from Trebizond (for the fourteenth-century mentality of an intellectual, like Libadenos, Byzantium/Constantinople was the new Rome). Libadenos’ narrative makes it impossible to say with any accuracy exactly when he left Trebizond, how much time he spent away and whether he was back to Trebizond in March 1342. He places his departure for Crimea after the burning of Trebizond by the Turks (July 1341). Upon his return to Trebizond the next thing he reports is a civil war (a reference to the civil war following John III’s coronation in Sept. 1342?). Lamp sides, Ἀνδρέου Λιβαδηνοῦ βίος καὶ ἔργα, 189, dates Libadenos’ trip to Kertch in the fall 1341, but elsewhere in 1342 (ibid., 228). Cf. Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 349, who assumed that Libadenos was in Kertch in 1342 for official business (i.e. in order to save Alania for the Trapezuntines). But it is clear from Libadenos’ own narrative that he just wanted to leave Trebizond for good and return to his homeland, Constantinople.

772 That Libadenos fell out of grace twice during the reign of Michael Komnenos becomes clear through his autobiographical notes in his Periegesis, 69-71; also Lamp sides’ commentary ad loc (190-194) on Libadenos’ friendship with the Scholarioi that determined his change of fortune. During this period of illness and misfortunes, Libadenos constantly appeals to the Virgin for help.

773 Panaretos, 68s,10: “Μηνὶ Σεπτεµβρίῳ…ἐγένετο αἰφνίδιος θάνατος, ἢ πανούκλα, ὅπερ ἀπεβάλλοντο πολλοὶ τέκνα καὶ συνεύνους, ἀδελφοὺς καὶ μητέρας καὶ συγγενεῖς, καὶ διεκράτησεν ἑως μήνας ᾶς.”
is self-evident. The Chrysokephalos was rebuilt with great care and thus must have been the prototype for St. Eugenios or constructed at the same time as St. Eugenios. Thus, it is possible to suggest a date for the rebuilding of the Chrysokephalos, based on St. Eugenios’ rebuilding. As will be discussed below, if St. Eugenios was rebuilt in 1291 and not after 1340 then the Chrysokephalos would have been rebuilt closer to this earlier date as well and not later that the end of the thirteenth century.
CHAPTER 6
THE CHURCH OF SAINT EUGENIOS IN TREBIZOND

As St. Eugenios was the patron saint of the city of Trebizond and the dynasty of the Grand Komnenoi, his monastery enjoyed continuous patronage by the ruling family of Trebizond throughout the years of the “empire” (fig. 283). The cult of St. Eugenios in Trebizond has a long history that goes back to the early Christian times when Eugenios and his three companions—Valerianos, Kanidios and Akylas—were martyred during the persecutions of the Roman emperors Diocletian and Maximian (fig. 284). The establishment and development of his cult are fairly well known to us, mainly through a bulk of surviving hagiographical texts (the various existing versions of his passions, miracles, and enkomia). A possible discontinuity in his cult following the Seljuk invasion of Anatolia late in the eleventh century has been suggested; nonetheless, St. Eugenios’ cult remained alive at least until the last days of the empire. In an effort to strengthen their ties with their subjects and the city of Trebizond, the Grand Komnenoi embraced and renewed the local cult by adopting the saint as their personal protector, the protector of their city and their “state.” In addition to portraying the saint on their


775 For the cult of St. Eugenios and written sources, see most notably: J. Rosenqvist, The Hagiographic Dossier of St Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athous Dionysiou 154: A Critical Edition with Introduction, Translation, Commentary, and Indexes (Uppsala, 1996); and idem, “Local Worshipers, Imperial Patrons: Pilgrimage to St. Eugenios of Trebizond,” DOP 56 (2002): 193-212, with further references. Besides the hagiographic texts, important information regarding the saint’s cult is found in the liturgical typikon of the monastery preserved in the now Codex Vatopedi 1199 and edited by Dmitrievskij, Typikon, 421-457.

coins (figs. 285–286 and 289–292),

successive rulers of Trebizond took great interest in reorganizing the major shrine celebrating St. Eugenios’ cult by replacing whatever pre-1204 foundations existed before their arrival with the new monastic foundation.

Befitting his role as the guardian of the city, St. Eugenios’ monastery was situated east of the fortified citadel, on a hill overlooking the eastern ravine that protected the city proper (fig. 293). This was the most vulnerable part of Trebizond from where attacks against the city often began. Its strategic location must have been recognized already in the early thirteenth century—if not earlier—when according to our sources, the Muslim prince Melik, set his camp close to the monastery and launched his attacks against the city from there. Whether the monastery itself was protected by walls at this early period—as clearly attested in our fourteenth-century sources—is now difficult to assess, since nothing besides its katholikon survives (figs. 294–299).

The study of the surviving church can reveal only some aspects about the monastery and its history. For the rest, literary and archaeological evidence needs to be considered. All available sources have been examined and discussed by now in considerable length. The architecture of the church has been studied by Baklanov with some important information added by Ballance. Literary references to the monastery and the available archaeological material have been adequately exploited since, mainly by Janin, Bryer and Winfield, and most recently by

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777 For the coinage of Trebizond, the dated study by O. Retowski, Die Münzen der Komnenen von Trapezunt, 2nd ed. (Braunschweig, 1974) is still in use. However, some of his attributions have been since revised. For an overview of the coinage of the Grand Komnenoi, see most recently N. Georgiadis, “Εικονογραφία των νομισμάτων της Βυζαντινής Τραπεζούντας,” ArchPont 52 (2007): 127-164.

778 It is difficult to reconstruct the picture of the pre-1204 arrangements. No material remains seem to exist and the written sources that predate the imperial period are very vague in this respect. Xiphilinos, for instance, refers to the place predominantly as a holy precinct (ἱεροῦ τεµένους) or as a shrine/church (σηκόν). It is only fourteenth-century authors, like Lazaropoulos, who in retrospect describe St. Eugenios as an organized monastic community. See the discussion in Rosenqvist, Hagiographic Dossier, 29 and Xiphilinos’ text (ibid., 170-203).

779 On Melik’s attack, see mainly J. Rosenqvist, “Three Trapezuntine Notes,” ByzSlav 54, no. 2 (1993): 288-294, with further references; and idem, Hagiographic Dossier, 50-63.
Rosenqvist. Besides painting a most vivid picture of the monastery and its katholikon, these studies have highlighted one puzzling aspect: the discrepancy between the literary and archaeological evidence.

Without repeating the information presented so far by previous scholars, an attempt will be made here to revise the major architectural stages of the church by reconciling the noted discrepancy between the literary and archaeological evidence.\(^\text{780}\) At the very least then, the discussion will address a series of problems concerning the construction history of the present church. More specifically, these involve the problematic identification of the monastery with its katholikon and by extension the dating of the various architectural stages of the building. At the very best, a revised dating scheme will be proposed for the St. Eugenios church that, in turn, can provide additional clues not only for the Chysokephalos but also for the patronage of the Grand Komnenoi at large.

An interesting aspect of St. Eugenios’ church lies in its apparent similarities to the Chrysokephalos. The construction history of St. Eugenios’ church seems to follow the same steps as the Chrysokephalos. Originally, St. Eugenios was a large scale, three-aisled, barrel-vaulted basilica built in ashlar masonry with a central pentagonal apse and slightly horse-shoe shaped apses for the prothesis and the diakonikon (figs. 300–301). Like Chrysokephalos, St. Eugenios underwent a partial remodeling, which resulted in its present form, that of a domed church. Further additions included the north porch, which serves today as the main entrance of

\(^{780}\) Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, 222-224.
the mosque, and a west porch/portico, which has left no traces. It is doubtful whether there was ever a south porch.

As in the case of the Chrysokephalos, the partial rebuilding of St. Eugenios’ church aimed at replacing the former sober basilica with a more articulated/sophisticated domed church. Yet, the procedure followed in St. Eugenios was different and less successful in its details. Whereas in the Chrysokephalos all dome supports were built anew as composite unified piers, St. Eugenios’ dome rests rather peculiarly on two eastern cross-shaped piers and two western “columns” (figs. 301–304). Strangely enough, these “columns” are built up of masonry and are of unusual form: their lower two-thirds take the form of a square masonry pier, while their upper one-third imitates a Doric column with twenty facets. Of these “columns” only the capitals are reused inverted Ionian bases.

To a certain extent, this strange arrangement was determined by the choice to incorporate parts of the former basilica into the new cross-in-square design. All the upper parts of the basilica were demolished but the exterior walls were kept intact to a considerable height—just

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781 On the western portico, see Finlay’s report of 1850, cited in full in Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 222-223: “There is a portico before the present entrance [i.e. the north entrance in Finlay’s time] but the principal entrance was to the right or west side and had a portico now destroyed.” C. Marengo, “Trébizonde,” Missions Catholiques 11 (1879): 303, also reported the demolishing and new construction that had taken place: “L’église Saint-Eugène était en forme de croix; mais l’une des ailes [the west porch?], ayant été endommagée, fut démolie, et un mur sans porte la remplaça.” On the addition of the minaret adjoining the north porch: “En face, s’élève un minaret bâti il y a un an.” Cf. Millet and Talbot Rice, Byzantine Painting at Trebizond, 111, who mention the west porch/portico as an “exo-narthex”; and Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 222, as a “narthex or west porch.” However, the very idea of the existence of a “narthex” in St. Eugenios is based on the general statement by Texier and Pullan that the Byzantine churches in Trebizond had a “narthex and exo-narthex”: Ch. Texier and R. P. Pullan, Byzantine Architecture (London, 1864), 198. This is repeated thereafter in: Millet, “Les monastères et les églises de Trébizonde,” 450 and 45; Baklanov, “Deux Monuments byzantins de Trébizonde,” 364; and Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 158.

782 Cf. Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 222.

783 See the discussion in Baklanov, “Deux Monuments byzantins de Trébizonde,” 370-373.

below the present window level. To insert the crossing and the dome, the interior arrangement of the basilica had to be modified as well. Of the three pairs of cross-shaped piers forming the aisles and supporting the barrel-vaults of the basilica, the easternmost pair was kept in place to support the dome. To create the dome bay, the rest were demolished and replaced with the present western pair of supports. The desire to conform to a more traditional cross-in-square layout coupled with some inexperience, the lack of actual columns and the need for solid supports might in turn have accounted for the atypical form of the western supports and the resulting clumsiness in the construction.

Without a doubt, this drastic remodeling required an extensive repainting of at least the upper parts of the church and possibly a new floor. The interior of the church was once completely covered with frescoes but only traces of its painted decoration—on the north wall and the lower part of the western columns—were still visible in 1916 when Baklanov examined the building closely (fig. 304). Already by 1928 the building had undergone such extensive cleaning, repairing, replastering/re-whitewashing, as both Millet and Talbot Rice reported, which practically prevented any further observations. The recent vigorous “restoration” of the mosque in 2005 has erased any hopes for a future examination of the remaining frescoes.

With the loss of the interior paintings, the opus sectile floor remains the only reliable source of information for establishing the architectural sequence of the building’s phases. The floor is presumably still preserved underneath the present modern floor of the mosque. It was revealed and examined by the Russian Mission in 1917—before being boarded over again—

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786 Baklanov, “Deux Monuments byzantins de Trébizondе,” 370, 373-375, fig. 4.
787 Talbot Rice, “Notice,” 54. Millet and Talbot Rice, Byzantine Painting at Trebizond, 111.
providing us with all available information up to now and an outline diagram of it (fig. 305). According to the inscription built into it, the floor was laid in 1291. As indicated by the state of preservation of the opus sectile floor, it had undergone two consequent restorations—the first meticulously made with marble blocks probably in 1340s and the second, rather hurriedly with cement only, probably during the Ottoman times.

The way the extant opus sectile floor relates to the two distinct architectural stages of the church remains unclear. Based on the archaeological evidence of the church, and more specifically the architectural similarities with the Chysokephalos, Selina Ballance proposed an early date for the construction of the basilica and a possible rebuilding as a domed church, either in 1291, when the floor was laid, or later in 1340, when according to our written sources the monastery suffered considerable damage. Bryer and Winfield, on the other hand, admitted some difficulty in reconciling the historical with the archaeological evidence. By privileging in turn the historical record, they suggested that the basilica was constructed anew in 1291 and was only remodeled into a domed church after 1340 and before Alexios III’s coronation in 1350. As Ballance rightly noted, the reexamination of the opus sectile floor would clarify with some certainty which period of the church it belongs to. However, the contradictions can also be resolved by reconciling the written sources with the archaeology of the church.

At the heart of the problem, I believe, lies the distorted identification of the monastery with its katholikon. As any medieval monastery—and this is especially true for wealthy

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788 All relevant information is cited in Talbot Rice, “Notice,” 54. The outline diagram of the opus sectile floor is reproduced in D. Talbot Rice, ed., *The Church of Haghia Sophia at Trebizond* (Edinburg, 1968), 84, fig. 54.
789 Interestingly the same date appeared on a funerary plaque of a monk recorded by Millet, “Les monastères et les églises de Trébizond,” 427, fig. 3.
monasteries such as St. Eugenios—there were many buildings within its enclosure besides its main church. Some idea of what once existed can be gained today only through our written sources, namely Lazaropoulos’ collections of miracles. The main gate of the monastery, for instance, features prominently in a number of miracles. In one instance, the gate is locked and access to the interior is being restricted. Similarly, in another miracle, an assessor (apographeus) requests accommodation in the monastery for himself and all members of his retinue. At the abbot’s suggestion that the monastery could accommodate only a limited number of people—the most illustrious ones, while the rest should search for lodgings in the marketplace of the city instead—the assessor advanced against the gates of the monastery, mounted on his horse. Upon entering the monastery without permission, they accommodated themselves in the cells of the monks. On another occasion, the closing of the gates seems to have prevented an insider, a thief, to leave the monastery. Even when the gates remained open during the day, they were supposedly always supervised by a doorkeeper and/or the sacristans to prevent trespassing.

The monastery’s amenities included cells for the monks and the abbot but also for a limited number of guests requesting accommodation in the monastery as indicated in the miracle

792 Lazaropoulos’ two extensive collections of miracles—the Logos and the Synopsis—have been edited and translated into English by Rosenqvist, Hagiographic Dossier, 204-245 (Logos), 246-359 (Synopsis) with commentary ad loc. These miracles cover an extended period of time from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries, but the descriptions provided are to a great extent informed by the author’s firsthand knowledge of the monastic establishments of his time.

793 Lazaropoulos, Logos, Miracle 4, 234-239. This miracle tells the story of the governor of Trebizond, a certain Dionysios, who was punished by the saint on the account of the damage caused to the monastery’s crops by his horse-keepers and their maltreatment of the monks. When the repentant governor approaches the gates of the monastery in the company of a large number of people, he finds them locked. The doorkeeper checks the outsiders through the spy-hole of the door and access is finally granted by the abbot himself.

794 Lazaropoulos, Logos, Miracle 5, 238-243.

795 Lazaropoulos, Synopsis, Miracle 11, 284-287. Supposedly the thief in his effort to escape reached the outer gate of the monastery and there he became paralyzed. Having spent most of the night hours by the gates, he was finally released from his paralysis, through the saint’s intervention. He was still unable to leave, but only able to go back to the church, and admit the theft he committed to the sacristans.

796 As inferred from Lazaropoulos, Synopsis, Miracle 12, 286-289.
cited above. The number of the cells cannot be estimated of course but the use of the sounding-board (σηµαντῆρα) to call monks to prayer is indicative of a sizeable monastic community. Of the monastery’s storage rooms, we hear specifically about the wine-cellar where “jars and little amphorae, wine-skins and bottles, bowls and cups and goblets” were kept, obviously in such a large quantity that caused immediate “awe and amazement.” Mention is also made of the cistern of the monastery—obviously supplying water and ensuring its self-sufficiency in times of danger—when a woman suffering from hemorrhage is instructed to eat figs and drink water from the cistern of the monastery as a cure for her disease.

Therefore, the references we find in our sources about the destruction of the monastery in the 1340s do not necessarily apply specifically to its katholikon. Thus, a possible way to go about it is to try to differentiate—whenever possible—information pertaining to the monastery as a whole and to its church in particular. Textual references to the monastery’s destruction in the 1340s can be found in Panaretos’ chronicle, Libadenos’ Periegesis and Lazaropoulos’ collection of miracles.

The most direct reference to the monastery’s burning comes from Panaretos’ chronicle. During the civil war of 1340 members of the aristocracy who opposed Palaiologina’s rule maintained themselves in the monastery of St. Eugenios for some months (April to July 1340). In an attempt to oppress the revolt, the Grand Duke John of Limnia finally besieged the monastery with artillery and the monastery was burned. Panaretos’ laconic statement “and the monastery was set on fire and all its beauties were burned” (καὶ ἐπυρπολήθη ἡ μονή καὶ πάντα τὰ ὠραῖα

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797 Lazaropoulos, Synopsis, Miracle 10, 282-285, esp. lines 706-707.
798 Lazaropoulos, Synopsis, Miracle 8, 274-277 (trans. by Rosenqvist).
799 Lazaropoulos, Synopsis, Miracle 4, 264-269.
800 Panaretos, 65.
801 Panaretos, 65, 26-27.
αὐτῆς ἀπεκαύθησαν) offers a direct reference to the monastery’s burning, but how much damage the actual katholikon had suffered remains a matter of speculation. A great fire would have certainly affected all wooden structures within the monastic enclosure or its granaries. As for the church itself, it was predominantly built of stone and barrel-vaulted in its upper parts. Thus, the fire may have damaged only its interior furnishings and decoration such as silver reliquaries, liturgical books, icons and wall paintings. Consequently, the burning of “all the monastery’s beauties” does not lead to the interpretation that “the church was burned to the ground.”

Andreas Libadenos, an eyewitness of the events, also refers to the civil war that broke out following the death of Basil Grand Komnenos (1332-1340) and the atrocities the monastery of St. Eugenios witnessed. Even indirectly, he provides additional indications to Panaretos’ evidence for a possible damage of the monastery during the civil war of 1340. But his lengthy description is more of a lamentation and disapproval of the events rather than an explicit reference to the material damages that the monastery might have suffered. It is only when narrating the Muslim attacks of the following year (1341) that he is referring specifically to the damages caused by the fire to the city and its churches but again without naming any of them.

A third indication on the monastery’s destruction in the 1340s, although more controversial in its interpretation, comes from Lazaropoulos from the 1360s. Lazaropoulos talks

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802 Bryer’s suggestion that the word “ὡραῖα” (beauties) should be emended into “ὁρρέα” (granaries) is cited in Rosenqvist, *Hagiographic Dossier*, 38 and note 69.
803 See the discussion in Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, 222-224. Nonetheless, they date the rebuilding of the katholikon to after 1340, thus accepting that it was considerably damaged.
804 “Τίς τοίνυν ἔωρακε τῶν ἀστικῶν τς καὶ ἐπηλύδων τότε τόν ἐμφύλιον πόλεμον καὶ ἀδακρυτὶ παρῆλθε τῇ ἀνάγκῃ τοῦ πτώµατος; ἣν δὴ κατ’ ἄλληλον ἐμφύλιον ὅμοιο καὶ πιστῶν τῷ θεῷ μοῖρα τῆς καηκόν ἐσχεδίασε καὶ τούτο ἀνέβαιε τῶν ἐν τέλει μᾶλλον τοῖς προὔχοις. Τῆς τῆς προὔχον, οὐκ ἐπένθησεν; ἢ τίς ἴδων ἢ ἀκούσας καὶ μαθὼν τὸ μῦσος τῆς ἑρημωνίας οὐ δηνήν ἀνομοξέατο; Ὅδεν Ἐὐγενίου καλλινίκου μονῆ ταῦτα τοῦ μάρτυρος καὶ οἱ τόν Ἐὐξείνον τουτονὶ Κόλχον ἀπόκρισιν ναυτάκωντες ἀνθρωπος, ὃς τῇ φάναι κατ’ ἐπος, τῷ γεγονόνει πάσι ταῦτα περίπτυστα...”: Libadenos, *Periegesis*, 63-64; and Lampsides’ commentary ad loc, 184-185.
of the “old monastery” of St. Eugenios in the context of the Sultan Melik’s attack against Trebizond in 1222/1223. In preparing his attack against the city, Melik encamped “close to the monastery of the great Eugenios, the old one, and round about it” (ἀγχοῦ τῆς µονῆς Εὐγενίου τοῦ πάνυ τῆς παλαιᾶς, κύκλωθεν δὲ). This reference to the “old monastery” has been taken by Bryer and Winfield as an indication that the early thirteenth-century church of St Eugenios was not the one known to Lazaropoulos in the 1360s. On the contrary, Rosenqvist suggested that the words “της παλαιᾶς” (“the old one”) was embedded in the text only to clarify where Melik set his camp, i.e. around the monastery proper as opposed to its metochion within the walled city and therefore it should not be taken as a reference to the monastery’s situation before the devastating fires of the 1340/1341.

However, neither of the above interpretations is wholly satisfactory. Clearly Lazaropoulos’ reference is to the monastery and not the church, as Bryer and Winfield interpret it to be; and whether it was only intended as a topographical reference, as Rosenqvist suggests, cannot be ruled out. Yet, given that St. Eugenios’ monastery was located outside the walled city, the fact that Melik encamped there and around it before his attack against the city and not around the metochion, situated inside the walled city seems to be common sense that does not require further clarification. Lazaropoulos’ odd wording seems better understood either as an indication that the monastic buildings of his time were not the original ones (which is in perfect accord with Panaretos’ information on the burning of the monastery) or, most probably, simply as a honorary reference to “the monastery of old” and its long-standing existence, with no relevance at all to the monastery’s status before the fires of the 1340s.

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806 As translated in Rosenqvist, “Three Trapezuntine Notes,” 288-289. Cf. his translation in Hagiographic Dossier, 315: “They encamped close to the old monastery of the great Eugenios, all around it.”
807 Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 223.
Direct but less explicit references to the katholikon of St. Eugenios and its possible rebuilding are provided only by Lazaropoulos’ *Synopsis* in two instances. The first reference—*Synopsis*, miracle 1—is found in a passage narrating the Iberian campaigns of the Byzantine emperor Basil II during the winter of 1021/1022. The emperor, before his victorious encounter with the Iberians, goes first to Trebizond and pays his reverence to the church of St. Eugenios. The relevant passage reads as follows:

When the emperor [i.e. Basil II] arrived in Trebizond he approached the church of Eugenios, famous among martyrs, to show his reverence and at the same time to see if the church was in need of some repair. After embracing the martyr’s holy relics with all the reverence and veneration of which he was capable, he erected the two large apses and constructed the two high columns and the dome of the roof which can still be seen in the church, showing due respect toward the monks and bestowing abundant money upon them.810

The second reference to the katholikon is found in the same collection—*Synopsis*, miracle 23—in the context of the aforementioned story of Melik’s attack against Trebizond in 1222/23. As recorded by Lazaropoulos, after a failed attempt to take Trebizond by force, Melik threatened to destroy the church of St. Eugenios and ordered his men to “pull down and destroy the upper parts and urged his men on to break up and remove the floor” (ὁθεν και ὅλος κατὰ τοῦ θείου νεω τοῦ μεγάλου Εὐγενίου ἐξώριμησε, καὶ καθελεῖν μὲν τὰ ἁνωτέρα καὶ κατασπᾶν ἐπιτάττει, τοῦδαφος δὲ ἐξορύττειν καὶ ἀφανίζειν ὁ δύσμορος καὶ λίαν ὠμὸς ἐπισπεύδει).812 Lazaropoulos does not tell us whether the threat was realized, but later on we learn that the church was further desecrated as Melik and his soldiers reclined near the saint’s relics inside the church and female dancers entered its holy precinct.813

809 Lazaropoulos, *Synopsis*, 246-259; and Rosenqvist’s introduction (47-50) and commentary ad loc.
811 Lazaropoulos, *Synopsis*, 308-335; and Rosenqvist’s introduction (50-63) and commentary ad loc. Also Rosenqvist, “Three Trapezuntine Notes,” 288-294.
812 Lazaropoulos, *Synopsis*, 318f, lines 1318-1321; and Rosenqvist’s introduction (56-58).
813 Lazaropoulos, *Synopsis*, 324f, lines 1395-1398; and Rosenqvist’s introduction (56-58).
From both stories recorded by Lazaropoulos, it becomes clear that the author was aware of the partial destruction of St. Eugenios’ church and its subsequent remodeling. This is not surprising if we consider Lazaropoulos’ career—first as a sacristan and later as metropolitan of Trebizond—and his first-hand knowledge of the monastery of St. Eugenios. Yet, factual information pertaining to the church’s remodeling is manipulated so as to serve the author’s own purposes of hagiography and propaganda. For this reason, the very outcome of this remodeling, that is the domed church, is attributed erroneously either to the patronage of Basil II or placed within the context of Andronikos Gidon’s heroic deeds and St. Eugenios’ miraculous interventions. Understood in this way, it is then reasonable to suggest that the remodeling of the church, given in both stories as a past event, took place certainly before Lazaropoulos’ own time, at some unidentified point in the past, that the author had no interest in recording accurately.

From the texts cited above it becomes apparent that whatever damage the monastery had suffered in the 1340s did not necessarily affect its katholikon. Consequently, if we disassociate the fires of 1340/41 with the rebuilding of St. Eugenios as a domed church, then the most probable date for the rebuilding remains the date 1291 retained in its opus sectile floor. That the extensive rebuilding of the church would require a new floor is a reasonable assumption and it is further supported by the odd story of Melik’s order to destroy the upper parts of the church along with its floor.

The suggestion that St. Eugenios was rebuilt as a domed church in 1291 is reinforced when we look closely at the north porch of the church, which serves today as the main entrance to the mosque. Ballance noted that “the north porch is an addition, but still Byzantine” basing her argument on the carvings built into it. Without going into details, her plan shows that she

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814 On Lararopoulos’ life and work, see Rosenqvist, *Hagiographic Dossier*, 30-42.
assigned this addition to the remodeling of the church (fig. 300). Following Ballance, also placed the “enlargement” of the church (i.e. the addition of porches to the north, the west and possibly to the south) at the time of its remodeling. Accordingly, they proposed a date after 1340, without taking into consideration, although they did notice, two useful details.

The first, which can still be observed, is the ropework pattern built in the pilasters of the north porch, which seem to retain their original configuration (figs. 306–307). An identical pattern is to be found in the church of St. Michael at Platana (Akçaabat), decorating the carved cornice of the apse (fig. 408). This is a church, which Bryer and Winfield attributed to the reign of John II and Eudokia on good grounds. A similar ropework pattern is to be found also in the Chrysokephalos, built in the upper parts of the church during a later repairing with reused material, probably spolia from the late thirteenth-century building (figs. 264–267). The second relevant information is provided by Millet, who saw and recorded an inscription that no longer exists. This was an epitaph of a monk (?), carved on a stone, and dated December 1291, i.e. the same year with the opus sectile floor of church. At the time of Millet’s visit, this slab was placed as a step at the entrance of the Turkish school, but it was reportedly found on the ground in front of St. Eugenios’ church. Although found out of context, Millet suggested that the stone came most probably from either the north or the west porch of the church—the former considerably rebuilt, while the latter completely demolished. This is actually very likely, since Marengo also reports in 1879 that the minaret was placed against the north porch only a year

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815 Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 158, fig. 11.
816 Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 224.
817 St. Michael at Platana is discussed in the last section of the following chapter within the context of John II’s and Eudokia’s patronage.
818 Millet, “Les monastères et les églises de Trébizond,” 427, fig. 3. Also Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 159; Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 222.
before his visit, i.e. some years before Millet’s visit. Taking into account both the evidence of the sculptural decoration of the north porch and the indication provided from the now lost inscription, we can argue that the porches of St. Eugenios were most probably added during the church’s remodeling in 1291. The reasons for this major rebuilding of St. Eugenios in the last decade of the thirteenth century are not clear but it is important to note that it took place within the reign of John II Grand Komnenos and Eudokia Palailogina.

The rebuilding of St. Eugenios’ church must have been followed by a major reformation of the saint’s cult, namely, its association with that of St. John the Forerunner. Whereas the main focus of the monastery’s cult has been until then, as expected, St. Eugenios and his lesser fellow martyrs—Valerianos, Kanidios and Akylas—the introduction of St. John’s cult in the monastery is an interesting turn that could be explained in the context of the katholikon’s rebuilding and patronage under John II Grand Komnenos. The main source for this unexpected development—in itself neither well documented nor self explanatory—is Lazaropoulos’ collections of miracles. But as is often the case with hagiographic texts, discerning factual information from fabrications is not always possible and Lazaropoulos’ stories are not always easy to decipher.

Lazaropoulos provides information about the joint cult of St. Eugenios and St. John the Forerunner in St. Eugenios’ monastery on two separate occasions. The more straightforward case informs us that a painted image of St. John the Forerunner existed in the north part of St. Eugenios’ church, where a silver chain was suspended for some time. This painting may have paralleled a painting of St. Eugenios himself in the south part of the church, to the right of the sanctuary, and close to the special chamber (κέλλη) where St. Eugenios’ relics were kept along

819 Marengo, Missions Catholiques, 303.
820 Lazaropoulos, Synopsis, Miracle 11, 284-287, esp. lines 712-716.
with those of his three companions. The way the painted image of St. John the Forerunner is singled out indicates the relevant importance of St. John’s cult in the monastery, already established in Lazaropoulos’ own time. And although the miracle supposedly took place in the distant past, there is no reason to doubt that this reference was informed by the author’s first-hand knowledge of the church.

A less straightforward insight into the joint cult of the two saints is found in the long, fanciful story told by Lazaropoulos regarding the festival of St. Eugenios’ birthday. According to the text, St. Eugenios himself revealed the date of this birthday to be on the very same date as St. John the Forerunner’s on June 24 and demanded that in addition to the festival commemorating the date of his death on January 21, his birthday should also be celebrated. On the saint’s insistence and despite some initial hesitation, this additional festival was established already during the reign of emperor Basil I (867-86). But when Trebizond entered a period of turmoil, the festival fell into oblivion. It was taken up again only after the personal intervention of Alexios II Grand Komnenos (1297-1330), in gratitude for the help he received from the saint in killing a dragon. Alexios II, we are told, instructed for the annual, uninterrupted celebration of the festival and provided for the necessary financial support from the imperial treasury.

The significance of this story as a whole has been examined in detail by Rosenqvist and thus need not be repeated here. Of importance here, is on the one hand that this story too points towards a certain coexistence of the two cults in the monastery of St. Eugenios and on the

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821 Rosenqvist, Hagiographic Dossier, 76-77, 81-82; and Janin, Grands centres, 269.
822 It is my sense that the north “aisle” of the church with the prothesis is dedicated to the cult of St. John the Forerunner, while the south “aisle” culminating in the diakonikon is dedicated to the cult of St. Eugenios and his three companions. Whether the “special chamber” that preserved the silver caskets with the relics and possibly the processional cross of the martyr should be identified with the diakonikon itself or with another type of structure is impossible to say.
823 Lazaropoulos, Logos, Miracle 1, 206-229.
824 Rosenqvist, Hagiographic Dossier, 75-81.
other, Lazaropoulos’ deliberate manipulation of the story so as to give the existing situation some sort of justification and structure. The shared birthday of the two saints explains the unexpected relation; the establishment and the “revival” of the shared festival on June 24—whether a fact or a fiction—give this relationship a certain structure. As for the outcome, St. Eugenios is said to participate in or even profit from the established feast of St. John, thus resolving whatever tensions between the two complementing or even competing cults in favor of the patron saint of the monastery.

As Lazaropoulos asserts, the establishment of this festival during the imperial period in Trebizond was initiated by Alexios II (1297-1330). Although this reform does not present itself as an innovation but rather as a revival of a tradition going back to the ninth century, Lazaropoulos fails to mention why it was taken up again at this point. The only justifications he provides are on the one hand the need to honor the long standing—albeit forgotten—tradition and, on the other hand, Alexios II’s eagerness to accommodate the saint’s will in commemorating his birthday, both reasons almost certainly fabricated. As Lazaropoulos was certainly aware, the very idea of celebrating a saint’s birthday is unusual, if not unheard of. The only birthdays the Orthodox Church commemorates are those of Christ, the Virgin and St. John the Forerunner. Thus, having St. Eugenios demanding the celebration of his birthday and especially on the same day as St. John is actually propagandizing St. Eugenios’ equal standing to the “Supreme among all the prophets.” What seems to be implied from this peculiar story is St. Eugenios’ need to assert his authority or reclaim his primacy in his own monastery in

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825 The very establishment of the festival on St. Eugenios’ birthday has been rightly questioned by Rosenqvist, Hagiographic Dossier, 71, 76ff.
826 In the beginning of the text, Lazaropoulos refers to St. John as “the Supreme among all the prophets, the Offspring of the desert, the Eponym of grace and Forerunner” and in the end as “the Baptist and Forerunner…the greatest among mortals and superior among prophets” (as trans. by Rosenqvist, Hagiographic Dossier, 207 and 229).
response to what seems to have been a growing and even competing reverence towards St. John. Still, if the cult of St. John had already occupied a prominent place in the religious life of St. Eugenios’ monastery by the time of Alexios II’s reign, when was it first introduced?

The eminence of St. John’s cult in the city of Trebizond and the monastery of St. Eugenios in particular are not well documented. From independent evidence, it is certain that the cult of St. John enjoyed considerable popularity in the widest regions of Trebizond and at least by the second half of the fourteenth century it was actively supported by the Grand Komnenoi alongside that of St. Eugenios. Within their dominion, the most famous foundation dedicated to St. John the Forerunner was the Vazelon monastery, one of the three most important imperial foundations in the Matzouka valley, some 45 km southeast of Trebizond (fig. 238). Likewise, the famous foundation of the Grand Komnenoi outside their dominion, the Dionysiou monastery on Mount Athos, was also dedicated to St. John the Forerunner. The monastery, which received substantial funding from Alexios III Grand Komnenos in 1374, still commemorates him today as its founder (fig. 314). Interestingly, the surviving double-sided icon of the Dionysiou monastery, which accompanied this donation, depicts on the front side the emperor Alexios III with St. John and on the reverse St. Eugenios along with Valerianos, Kanidios and Akylas (figs. 315–316).

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829 N. Oikonomidès, ed., *Actes de Dionysiou* (Paris, 1968). Dionysiou was to be called “the monastery of the Grand Komnenos,” but according to Oikonomides this name was never used (ibid., 11). See also Oikonomides, “Chancery,” 305, 308-309, and 309-310. For the famous chrysobull of Alexios III of 1374 in favor of the Dionysiou monastery, see additionally *Treasures of Mount Athos*, exhib. cat., ed. A. Karakatsanis (Thessaloniki, 1997), cat. no. 13.19.
830 *Treasures of Mount Athos*, cat. no. 2.29.
additional but ill-documented examples, the circumstances of this development in the city of Trebizond and the monastery of St. Eugenios in particular remain unclear.

A possible answer is given by the katholikon’s rebuilding in 1291 during the reign of John II Grand Komnenos. Lazaropoulos’ reference to the rebuilding of the katholikon with “two large apses…two high columns and the dome” puzzled Bryer who rightly wondered why not three apses. It is very likely, though, that Lazaropoulos was referring not to the rebuilding of the prothesis and the diakonikon as a modern reader would assume. After all, both the prothesis and diakonikon, as far as our present knowledge of the architecture of the church permits us to tell, are parts of the pre-existing basilica. The reference made is therefore in all likelihood to two apse-like constructions within the church as the Greek text suggests (τὰς ἐν αὐτῷ μεγάλας ἁψίδας δύο ἀνήγειρε…), possibly dedicated to the two distinct cults—that of St. John and St. Eugenios. These “apses” could have been in the form of ciboria or some sort of proskynetaria.

The suggestion that St. John’s cult was actively promoted in the monastery of St. Eugenios by John II Grand Komnenos (1280-1297) at the time of the katholikon’s rebuilding finds additional support from the independent evidence of the coins. In addition to issues

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831 It seems that St. Eugenios’ cult played some role at the Vazelon monastery dedicated to St. John the Forerunner. See relatively Rosenqvist, “Local Worshipers, Imperial Patrons,” 207.
832 Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 223.
833 Lazaropoulos, Synopsis, Miracle 1, 256, lines 195-201.
834 Indications for constructions within the church of St. Eugenios are found in a number of miracles. For instance, Lazaropoulos, Synopsis, Miracle 7, 272ff, esp. lines 514-519 describes the “four columns of the holy ciborium of the holy sanctuary” from which myron sprang out and flowed to the floor; see also commentary on Xiphilinos’ Miracles in Rosenqvist, Hagiographic Dossier, 375, lines 176-177. In addition, many miracles involve oil from the lamps of St. Eugenios. In some cases, their location becomes more specific. The lamps were suspended above the martyr’s casket: Lazaropoulos, Logos, Miracle 2, 228ff, lines 446-449; Lazopoulos, Synopsis, Miracle 5, 269ff, lines 439-442; ibid., Miracle 17, 296ff, lines 949-951. In one instance recorded in Xiphinos’ Miracles, St. Eugenios orders the keeper of the church to arrange the lamps at the ciborium over his holy casket in the form of the cross: see Rosenqvist, Hagiographic Dossier, 198ff, lines 495-498 (text) and 380-381, line 497 (commentary). Similarly, the silver chain suspended in the church at the same place where the painting of St. John the Forerunner was (Lazaropoulos, Synopsis, Miracle 11, 284ff, lines 712-716) might indicate some sort of construction infront of the saint’s image.
portraying St. Eugenios, John II Grand Komnenos was the first and only ruler to promote his namesake, St. John the Forerunner, on his coinage, as his personal protector and by extension the protector of his “empire” (fig. 288). The practice of placing the emperor’s namesake on the coinage is certainly quite common in the Byzantine world and has its precedent in Trebizond. Yet, a similar opportunity by his predecessor, John I Axouchos (1235-1238), was passed over in favor of St. George, a military saint. Given the propagandist nature of the coinage, it is reasonable to suggest that John II, the benefactor of the monastery of St. Eugenios, was the one who also seized the opportunity of the katholikon’s rebuilding to accommodate and promote the cult of his namesake saint.

If this supposition is correct, it would have been indeed a convenient arrangement. Of the few known churches in Trebizond celebrating St. John’s cult—St. John the Sanctorus and St. John the Forerunner tes Petras—neither predates with any certainty the rebuilding of St. Eugenios. Thus, the introduction of the cult of St. John in the monastery of St. Eugenios might

835 Georgiadis, “Εἰκονογραφία,” 133-134 (copper trachea, no. 1); Retowski, Die Münzen, 105 (no. 149). V. Guruleva, “Trebizond Coins in Crimea,” in Mélanges Cécile Morrisson, Travaux Et Mémoires 16 (Paris, 2010), 406 (coin from Sudak) and 408 (coin from a private collection in Kiev).
836 For instance, the coins of Andronikos Gidon (1222-1235) portray St. Andronikos: Georgiadis, “Εἰκονογραφία,” 131 (no. 2). In this specific issue, St. Andronikos is depicted on the obverse, inscribed in Greek ΑΝΔΡΟΝΙΚΟ. On the reverse, the standing Virgin with Christ in medallion is depicted along with the inscription KOMNHCΟΓΙΔΑΟΝ. Thus, this ruler seems to be represented through his namesake saint. See also Guruleva, “Trebizond Coins in Crimea,” 403. Similarly, George Komnenos (1266-1280) represents on his coins St. George, see relatively Georgiadis, “Εἰκονογραφία,” 132 (no. 1); Retowski, Die Münzen, 71 (no. 1) and Guruleva, “Trebizond Coins in Crimea,” 403-404.
838 For this church located on the summit of Mount Minthron, east of Trebizond and above the Theoskepastos monastery, see mainly Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 228 and Janin, Grands centres, 282-283. The earliest mention of the church is by Contantine Loukitas (active in Trebizond before 1301, died ca. 1340), but the date of its foundation is unknown: see Loukitas’ Encomium in Rosenqvist, Hagiographic Dossier, 128f, lines 225-228 and commentary ad loc. The monastery must have been an imperial foundation of some importance. In 1362 the imperial family encamped there in order to avoid the plague (Panaretos, 7416-19). In 1365, Alexios III’s son-in-law, the Muslim ruler Kütlübeğ, also encamped there during his official visit to Trebizond (Panaretos, 761-6). It seems therefore that the monastery was occasionally used as an imperial residence.
839 On St. John the Forerunner tes Petras, see G. Millot, “Inscriptions Byzantines de Trébizonde,” BCH 20 (1896): 496-501. Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 228; Janin, Grands centres, 286-287. This church, located to the west of Trebizond, must have been established in 1306.
have been a practical solution compensating for the absence of any famous church dedicated to the ruler’s namesake. It might have been more than this, though. By placing side by side the established and venerated local cult of St. Eugenios with that of his namesake, John II strengthened his own popularity among his subjects. Given the popularity St. Eugenios enjoyed not only among the ethnic Greeks but also among the prosperous Armenian community and the implied—although never properly addressed—Armenian connections of the monastery, then the implications of John II’s initiative become even more complex to decipher (either as an effort to engage his Armenian subjects or a way to overpower them?). Finally, on a symbolic level at least, combining the limited, local character of St. Eugenios with the “international” acclaim of St. John accords well with John II’s policies: his reign strengthened the ties with Palaiologan Byzantium and marked, even if temporarily, the end of the Pontic independence.

840 The relation between the monastery of St. Eugenios and the Armenians needs to be clarified. St. Eugenios himself was of Armenian origin (Janin, Grands centres, 266; Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 165-169). There is a version of his Vita in Armenian: B. Martin-Hisard, “Les textes anonymes grec et arménien de la Passion d’Eugène, Valérien, Canidios et Akylas de Trébizonde,” REArm 15 (1981): 164-185; eadem, “Trébizonde et le culte de saint Eugène (6e-11e s),” REArm 14 (1980): 307-343. A number of miracles reflect the Armenian connections of the monastery, especially with the city of Paipert (Bayburt). According to Rosenqvist, this connection is primarily personal and economic, and characteristic for a certain period of the monastery’s history, i.e. the ninth and tenth centuries (Rosenqvist, Hagiographic Dossier, 71-72; idem, “Local Worshipers, Imperial Patrons,” 201). However, some miracles imply a continuing Armenian influence on the monastery: St. Eugenios is sometimes speaking in Armenian (Lazaropoulos, Synopsis, Miracle 9, 278-283, esp. lines 652-662); there were Armenian (?) tombs in the monastery, as inferred by Lazaropoulos’ reference to monophysites (pre-Chalcedonians) from Erzincan buried in the monastery: Logos, Miracle 3, 230-235, lines 495-500 and Rosenqvist’s commentary ad loc.; the astronomer Chioniades (1240/1250-ca 1320) gave lectures in the monastery attended also by Armenians (Janin, Grands centres, 268 and note 4; Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 224). A social tension between the two communities well into the imperial centuries in Trebizond is implied through Lazaropoulos’ own stance towards the monophysites/heretics (Logos, Miracle 3, 230-235). More importantly, this tension is also recorded in the monastery’s liturgical Typikon of 1346 and includes instructions against the pre-Lenten fast, called in Greek “Artzivouriou” (arajavor), observed by the Armenians. Besides condemning the Armenian practice and dogma as heretic and prescribing the correct orthodox way, there are unflattering comments on the “thrice-accursed” (triskataratoi) Armenians: “Ἐν ταύτῃ δὲ τῇ ἑβδομάδι, ητίς καὶ πρωταπόκρεω καλεῖται, νηστεύουσιν οἱ τρισκατάρατοι Αρµένιοι τὴν βδελυγμένην τῆς τοιαύτης αἱρέσεως νηστείαν, τὴν λεγοµένην τοῦ Ἀρτζιβουρίου, ἠµέξι δὲ καθ’ ἑκάστην ἐσθίοµεν τυρὸν καὶ ὄνω, οἱ κοσµικοὶ δὲ καὶ κρέας, ἀνατρέποντες τὸ δόγµα τῆς τοιαύτης αἱρέσεως” (: Dmitrievskij, Typikon, 447). For the Typikon of St. Eugenios’ monastery modeled after the Typikon of St. Sabbas monastery in Palestine, see Rosenqvist, “Three Trapezuntine Notes,” 289 and note 10. A discussion on the fast of “Artzivouriou” and the response of the Orthodox Church (including examples from other monastic typika, and further references), see M. Chroni, “Ἡ εξέλιξη του θεσµού της νηστείας στο Βυζάντιο. Συγκρητισµός αντιλήψεων και επιρροές,” Εθνικό Ίδρυµα Μελετών-Διαλέξεις Ινστιτούτου Βυζαντινών Ερευνών (2010-2011), Βυζαντινά ΢ύµµεικτα (in print). Also A. Bryer, “Chronology and dating,” in The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies, ed. E. Jeffreys, J. Haldon, and R. Cormack (Oxford, 2008), 34.
We can further argue that Eudokia Palaiologina was actively involved in this project as well, if we consider concurrent developments in Constantinople and her family’s devotion to St. John the Forerunner. Not only the cult of St. John formed part of the Constantinopolitan imperial ceremonial for centuries, but also the increased importance of his cult (especially as an intercessor) is one of the hallmarks of the post-1261 era, probably best exemplified in the famous Deesis mosaic in the gallery of Hagia Sophia Constantinople. Most importantly, at approximately the same time, Eudokia’s mother, the dowager empress Theodora Palaiologina was making arrangements for the imperial mausoleum of the Palaiologoi in Constantinople by restoring the tenth-century Lips monastery. As it is well known, on Theodora’s initiatives, a second church dedicated to St. John the Forerunner was added to the older church of the Theotokos to serve as the place for her burial and for other members of the Palaiologan family. As Eudokia was certainly aware of the developments back in Constantinople, it is not

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842 Various dates have been proposed for the Deesis mosaic, but there is lately a consensus for a post-1261 date. For an overview of the relative literature, see A. M. Talbot, “The Restoration of Constantinople under Michael VIII,” DOP 47 (1993): 252, note 63. For the suggestion that this panel was commissioned by Michael VIII Palaiologos for his coronation in Constantinople, see R. Cormack, “The Mother of God in the Mosaics of Hagia Sophia at Constantinople,” in Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art, exhib. cat., ed. M. Vassilaki (Milan, 2000), 118-122. Cormack’s suggestion seems to prevail, see relatively H. Evans’ introductory chapter in Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557), exhib. cat., ed. H. Evans (New York, 2004), 6, fig. 1.3; and most recently, C. Jolivet-Lévy, “La peinture à Constantinople au XIIIe siècle: Contacts et échanges avec l’Occident,” in Orient &Occident méditerranéens au XIIIe siècle: Les programmes picturaux, ed. J. P. Caillet and F. Joubert (Paris, 2012), 21-40, esp. 29. Also in the same volume, the papers by S. Kalopissi-Verti, “Aspects of Byzantine Art after the Recapture of Constantinople (1261-c.1300): Reflections of Imperial Policy, Reactions, Confrontation with the Latins,” esp. 49 and M. Panayotidi, “Thirteenth-Century Icons and Frescoes at St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai: Some Observations,” esp. 87. For several reasons, which cannot be treated here, and in spite of the general consensus, I would prefer a later date for this panel, well into the reign of Andronikos II.
unreasonable to suggest that she took a special interest in the promotion of the cult of Prodromos in Trebizond as well.

If St. Eugenios was rebuilt as a domed church with porches in 1291, then the construction of the initial basilica must antedate this period. The architectural resemblance with the early thirteenth-century Chrysokephalos suggests a similar date for St. Eugenios’ original construction. Some additional support for this hypothesis may be provided by the castle church of Bayburt and Ispir on the southeastern borders of Trebizond (figs. 317–318). Both churches have been constructed under Muslim rule but within a predominantly Christian context—namely Armenian—by Trapezuntine craftsmen; and, if Bryer and Winfield are right, specifically under the patronage of the Muslim prince Melik around 1223 to 1225, who himself died a Christian. Despite their poor state of preservation, these churches share common features with St. Eugenios such as its rounded apses flanking the central pentagonal apse and the construction with blocks of stone. Here it might be of some importance to note that the liturgical Typikon of the monastery of St. Eugenios—written in 1346—mentions as its ktetor a

845 The similarities between the two churches have been adequately described in the studies of Baklanov, “Deux Monuments byzantins de Trébizond,” 363-391; and Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 156-159. Ballance, however, considered the Chrysokephalos a tenth or eleventh-century building (which is not the case). Consequently, this affected her proposed chronology for St. Eugenios as a pre-1223 church.
848 Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 352-355 and fig. 121, pls. 287a-288c.
849 Their attribution (as in note above) is mainly suggested by the historical context, but needs additional support from the archaeological evidence. Cf. Winfield, “A Note on the South-Eastern Borders,” 170: “A further point of interest is that the masonry of the mosque and of the church [at Ispir] are very similar and suggests that they are not far apart in date. The coarse yellow stone used in the facing of both buildings is the same, and is finished in the same neat fashion so that no mortar shows at the external joints.” The sort of masonry described here is very reminiscent of Hagia Sophia in Trebizond.
850 Here we must note that these features alone are not a proof for an early thirteenth-century date and may have been quite widespread in time. Other churches with similar characteristics are equally of an unknown date. For instance: a) the now destroyed Church C: Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 145-146, figs. 2 and 3; Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 204-205 (no. 32); b) Nakip Camii: Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 152-153, figs. 6 and 7; Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 214-215 (no. 53); c) the now destroyed church of St. Basil: Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond.” 155-156, fig. 10; Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 220 (no. 66); d) the church at Ardeşen: Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 342-343, fig. 120).
certain Zelipoungios, a name of Turkish origin, of whom practically nothing is known concerning his identity and the role he played in the monastery.\textsuperscript{851}

Lazaropoulos’ account of Melik’s attack against Trebizond points to the possible patronage of the original early thirteenth-century church of St. Eugenios by Andronikos Gidon.\textsuperscript{852} When, during the second year of his reign (1222-1223), Andronikos Gidon was faced with the Muslim threat, he is said to have entrusted the Virgin and St. Eugenios with the city’s salvation from danger, and the two royal foundations—the Chrysokephalos and St. Eugenios’ monastery—played an important part in the plot of the story.\textsuperscript{853} Thus, during the siege of Trebizond and before the crucial encounter with the Muslim army, Gidon spends the night in the Chrysokephalos, in an act of piety and supplication.\textsuperscript{854} A few days later, and as the siege continues, Gidon himself leads the procession of the Theotokos’ icon, the \textit{Hodegetria}, and the head of St. Eugenios, carried by the archbishop and the abbot of the monastery of St. Eugenios.

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\textsuperscript{851} Dmitrievskij, \textit{Typikon}, 435. Rosenqvist, \textit{Hagiographic Dossier}, 74 and note 38, rightly accepts the Turkish origin of the name (following Bryer and Winfield, \textit{Pontos}, 225, no. 80) instead of Caucasian. But as for the identity of this person—who is definitely Christian—there are no further suggestions. Given the predominately Armenian Christian population of the widest area under Muslim control and the implied connections of St. Eugenios’ monastery with the Armenians and Bayburt, would it be unthinkable if he was in fact an Armenian with a Turkish name? On the other hand, the idea of a Christianized Turkish population existing in the widest area is also appealing and finds additional support in the story of Melik told by Lazaropoulos. Rosenqvist also suggests that this \textit{ktetor} was most probably “the re-founder responsible for the monastery’s restoration in the period after the fire in 1340 and before the coronation of Alexios III in 1349[\textit{sic}]” (ibid., 74). See also idem, “Three Trapezuntine Notes,” 290: “the monastery’s obscure \textit{ktetor} Zelipoungios must have entered the scene at a rather late stage in its history, probably after 1204, and perhaps even as late as the fourteenth century.” Additionally, Rosenqvist, \textit{Hagiographic Dossier}, 74, suggests that Zelipoungios (\textit{Ζηλιπούγγιος}) might have been related to the \textit{magistrissa} Anna Tzilipoungis (\textit{Τζιλιπούγκης}), recorded in a now lost inscription as the donor of the decoration of St. George church. For Anna Tzilipoungis, see Bryer and Winfield, \textit{Pontos}, 204-205 (no. 32) and 225 (no. 80), fig. 63. However, the only certain facts about the ktetor Zelipoungios are that he was already dead by 1346 and that the \textit{typikon} does not attribute him any title: “…\καθὼς \παρέδωκεν \ὁ \μακαρίτης \κτήτωρ \τῆς \τοιαύτης \μονῆς, \ὁ \Ζηλιπούγγιος \ἐκεῖνος…”

\textsuperscript{852} Lazaropoulos, \textit{Synopsis}, Miracle 23, 308-335; and Rosenqvist’s introduction to this edition, 50-63.

\textsuperscript{853} That Andronikos Gidon relies on the help of God, the Virgin and St. Eugenios is clearly stated in more than one instance in the text and from the very beginning, i.e. upon being informed about the enemy’s plans and before they even approach Trebizond: Lazaropoulos, \textit{Synopsis}, 312f, lines 1192-1196.

\textsuperscript{854} Lazaropoulos, \textit{Synopsis}, 314ff, lines 1248-1266.
respectively and accompanied by the clergy along the walls of the city. Later on, Gidon spends a second night in the Chrysokephalos where, in a dream, a voice assures him of St. Eugenios’ help. Simultaneously, St. Eugenios appears in a dream to Melik (sleeping at the time in the church of St. Eugenios, which is already used as his camp and headquarters) and misleads him, thus contributing to the final defeat and capture of the Muslim ruler. Next, the captive Melik is brought to Andronikos Gidon in a procession (through the gate of the city and past the Chrysokephalos to the palace) and from there in a procession to the Chrysokephalos, where everybody had assembled. After singing the thanksgiving hymns to God and the Virgin, another procession from the Chrysokephalos to the monastery of St. Eugenios takes place, with the participation of the repentant Melik. The story concludes with a peace treaty, whereby among other things, Melik agrees upon an annual income bestowed to the church of St. Eugenios. On his part, Andronikos, in gratitude for the help he received from the Virgin and St. Eugenios, acts as a benefactor of both foundations, providing the Chrysokephalos with

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855 Lazaropoulos, *Synopsis*, 320ff, lines 1346-1363. This procession supposedly takes place a few days after Gidon’s stay in the Chrysokephalos. But, as Rosenqvist rightly observed, the analogy between the two passages is undeniable (see his introduction to this edition, 56-59 and note 27). It is likely, therefore, that either Lazaropoulos draws from two separate sources (as Rosenqvist has suggested) or that in this particular instance, he just elaborates on the core story by dividing it into two or actually three successive stages of the siege. My impression is that, on the whole, Lazaropoulos’ story draws from many and varied sources including *ekphrasis* of Trebizond (*Synopsis*, 322f, lines 1379-1388), imperial triumphs (ibid., 328ff, lines 1496-1511.), the liturgical *typikon* of the monastery (for instance, in his descriptions of the processions), inventories (ibid., 334f, lines 1588-1599) etc. The author synthesizes and edits all these sources to serve his story and agenda.

856 Lazaropoulos, *Synopsis*, 324f, lines 1399-1410. As in Gidon’s first visit to the Chrysokephalos, Gidon is alone in the church but for the presence of the sacristan. The presence of the sacristan—who is named Gerasimos in the first instance, but remains anonymous in the second—unifies the two stories. It seems that the same event has been elaborated on in two different passages (see note above).

857 Lazaropoulos, *Synopsis*, 324f, lines 1411-1473.

858 Lazaropoulos, *Synopsis*, 328ff, lines 1496-1510. This description recalls imperial triumphs.

859 Lazaropoulos, *Synopsis*, 332f, lines 1541-1564. This procession, as the initial one along the walls of the city, recalls the liturgical processions that took place during the annual festivities on St. Eugenios’ feast (January 21), as prescribed by the *typikon* of the monastery.

860 Lazaropoulos, *Synopsis*, 332ff, lines 1570-1599. This is indeed a very interesting turn (the infidel and sacrilegious Muslim ruler becomes a benefactor of the monastery) and makes one wonder, whether Melik’s alleged patronage to the monastery of St Eugenios is somehow informed by Lazaropoulos’ knowledge of the monastery’s *typikon*, which mentions as his *ktetor* a certain Zelipoungios (a name, as mentioned above, of Turkish origin). Rosenqvist translates this generous annual income (…καὶ χρήματα κατ’ ἐτος παρῆχε δαψιλῶς τῇ μονῇ τοῦ μάρτυρος) more loosely as “a generous gift” (ibid., lines 1586-1587).
embellishments of precious stones and gleaming pearls and an exquisite Gospel book, which additionally lists his donations to the monastery. Similar things are offered to St. Eugenios also including “a brilliant embellishment as well as suburban estates, as the inventories describe in detail.”

The balanced structure of Lazaropoulos’ story builds, among others, a connection between the Chrysokephalos and St. Eugenios, while Andronikos Gidon is said to have extended his patronage equally on both royal foundations. Whether this patronage also involved the construction of new churches—either in the case of the Chrysokephalos or St. Eugenios—can only be inferred but it is nowhere explicitly stated. On the contrary, donations seem to involve mainly embellishments and decoration to the preexisting foundations. Lazaropoulos’ silence becomes more problematic when considering the independent evidence of the coinage. Gidon’s coins confirm his special reverence for the Virgin and child and his namesake St. Andronikos. Still, despite his alleged devotion and gratitude to St. Eugenios, the local saint is conspicuously absent from this ruler’s coinage. In fact, St. Eugenios seems to be absent even from the coinage of his successor, John Axouchos (1235-1238), and only introduced for the first time on the coinage of Trebizond by Manuel I Grand Komnenos (1238-1263). Thus, by piecing together all available evidence, the patronage of Andronikos Gidon towards St. Eugenios and by extension a possible date for the construction of the initial basilica of St. Eugenios at the

861 Lazaropoulos, Synopsis, 334f, lines 1588-1596.
862 Lazaropoulos, Synopsis, 334f, lines 1596-1599 (trans. by Rosenqvist).
864 According to Georgiadis, “Εικονογραφία,” 131, no copper coins of John I Axouchos represent St. Eugenios. Similarly, a silver asper with St. Eugenios, previously attributed to John I by Retowski, is now attributed to John II (ibid., 133, no. 1). On the contrary, Guruleva, “Trebizond Coins in Crimea,” 403, attributes copper coins with a half-length figure of St. Eugenios to John I Axouchos.
beginning of the thirteenth century seems a reasonable hypothesis but cannot be proven with any certainty.

We are somewhat on firmer ground considering the last recorded benefaction towards the monastery, which probably took place during the reign of Alexios III. Fallmerayer claimed having seen the portraits of all rulers of Trebizond from Alexios I to Alexios III represented on the western façade of the church along with their painted inscriptions, but without providing a single facsimile. Hence, the hesitation of Bryer and Winfield to accept his statement at face value is totally understandable.

The loss of the west portico certainly contributed to the quick deterioration of the paintings. After Fallmerayer, Finlay reported in 1850 that, despite all his sincere efforts, he could only distinguish remnants of imperial portraits “the red robes and golden eagles on their edges and fragments of inscriptions declaring them to be imperial portraits but not a name was discernible.” Nonetheless, Finlay provided transcriptions of what was still visible: three columnar inscriptions and a fourth running “in one line over the door” (fig. 319). Of the three columnar inscriptions, one is now completely illegible. The other two form part of the imperial titles (βασιλεύς και αυτοκράτωρ; and πιστός βασιλεύς και αυτοκράτωρ) and apparently identify two emperors. As for the inscription over the door, Finlay’s transcription is less than adequate and rightly Bryer and Winfield refrained from commenting. Yet, it seems that at least three words make sense…KYHCIC….KYHCIN APENOC…And a fourth could be read with some

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868 Finlay’s description is cited in full in Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, 222-223, along with a facsimile of Finlay’s transcriptions (ibid., fig. 62).
hesitation as ΒΑΠΤΗΣΤΗΝ (John the Baptist?). Finlay thought that Alexios III was the restorer of the monastery and suggested that portraits of Alexios III and Theodora Kantakouzene were placed at the church where their coronation and wedding took place.

Marengo in his description of 1879 also reports the destruction of the paintings and that he was able to distinguish only a double-headed eagle.\footnote{Marengo, Missions Catholiques, 303: “On y voit quatre colonnes en marbre blanc et une porte en marbre; toutes les anciennes peintures ont été détruites par les Turcs. On y remarque cependant l’aigle à deux têtes.” From the context of his brief description we cannot say if Marengo refers to the paintings on the exterior west wall of the church.} His report is quite vague but the information on the double-headed eagle confirms in a way Finlay’s description of “golden eagles” and might be an indication for Theodora Kantakouzene, based on her portrait in the chrysobull of 1374 (fig. 314).

In 1893, Millet was apparently the last to examine the frescoes before their complete defacement.\footnote{Millet, “Les monastères et les églises de Trébizonde,” 428; Millet and Talbot Rice, Byzantine Painting at Trebizond, 111.} In his turn he was able to distinguish four figures on either side of the door: to the left, Millet saw a person clad in a loros and another holding a scepter; and to the right of the door, a figure kneeling, presenting an object (a model of the church) to a seated saint clothed in Byzantine costume. Millet’s description differentiates considerably from Fallmerayer’s and Finlay’s and is puzzling for two additional reasons. First, his visit took place some forty years after Finlay’s, therefore the state of preservation of the frescoes certainly could not have been improved. Secondly, Lynch, who also visited Trebizond the same year, in 1893, reported that “the frescos on the western wall, which some travellers have noticed, are now nothing more than patches of colour.”\footnote{H. F. B. Lynch, Armenia: Travels and Studies, vol. 1: The Russian Provinces (London, 1901), 31.}
What can we make out from all these nineteenth-century accounts that we can no longer verify? First, the burning of the monastery in the 1340s gives us a possible terminus post quem for the portraits in question, i.e. if we accept that the fire damaged whatever preexisting representations on the west façade of the church. Secondly, all available evidence seems to point towards Alexios III and his immediate family. My best guess would be Alexios III and his grandfather Alexios II, i.e. if Fallmerayer’s statement is at least partially accurate, and since there is no objection based on the transcriptions provided by Finlay. A third person could be Theodora Kantakouzene for we don’t expect her to be omitted. Moreover, the red robes and golden eagles (Finlay) or the double-headed eagles (Marengo) point towards this direction too. In fact, Alexios II, Alexios III and Theodora Kantakouzene are all likely candidates for using this motif on their dress. Although we do not know whether these portraits were done simultaneously or over time and how they relate to each other and to the painted inscription over the door, Millet’s suggestion for a figure prostrating to a seated saint might not be totally fictional, if combined with the wording of the fragmented inscription (Finlay) emphasizing “pregnancy with a male child” (κύησις ἀρρενος; emphatically, the word κύησις appears twice). Was the figure prostrating to the Virgin (?) —and not to a seated martyr (Millet)—an imperial lady extending a sort of supplication to the Virgin and the Baptist for a male heir or offering a thanksgiving for having a male heir? Again Theodora Kantakouzene is a likely candidate for the figure prostrating, since she might have waited for long before Manuel III, was born. Naturally, all this will remain a

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873 As far as I know, the iconography of seated saints is rare; see relatively, C. Morrissom, “The Emperor, the Saint, and the City: Coinage and Money in Thessalonike from the Thirteenth to the Fifteenth Century,” DOP 57 (2003): 181.

874 According to Panaretos, 72-78, Alexios III, while being married to Theodora Kantakouzene, had three sons. The despot Andronikos was born in 1355, and it is clearly stated that he was Alexios III’s natural son, from an unnamed lady, and not from Theodora (εξ άλλης γαστρός και ούκ ἀπὸ τῆς δεσποίνης: ibid., 7234). In 1357, Panaretos records the birth of a legitimate daughter, Anna (…εκ τῆς δεσποίνης ἡμῶν τῆς κυρᾶς Θεοδώρας: ibid., 72113). Next in 1358, Panaretos records the birth of a son, named Basil after his grandfather, but without clarifying whether he was a legitimate son or not (ibid., 7234-732). Next, Panaretos mentions the birth of Manuel III (December 1364), again
speculation, but it is probably safe to relate the repainting of the west façade of the church with portraits of Alexios III and his family—as already Bryer and Winfield have argued.\(^875\)

Before proceeding to the last few points, the architectural stages of St. Eugenios’ church may be summarized and revised as follows:

**First stage:** A new basilica was built early in the thirteenth century, possibly after 1223 (?), probably at the site of an earlier church. The patronage of Andronikos Gidon, implied in the written sources, is possible but cannot be verified from any independent sources.

**Second stage:** St. Eugenios was remodeled to a domed church with porches in 1291 under the patronage of John II and Eudokia Palaiologina. The evidence for this remodeling is provided mainly by the date of the opus sectile floor of the church and it is indirectly supported by our written sources. Ultimately, only the re-examination of the floor could confirm this dating.

**Third stage:** St. Eugenios’ monastery was damaged during the civil war and the subsequent fires of 1340s. The church, however, was not destroyed and retained its 1291 configuration with minor repairs (repairs of the floor and probably partial repainting?).

**Fourth stage:** Imperial portraits were added to the west façade of the church sometime during the reign of Alexios III. This decorative project might have also included portraits of

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\(^{875}\) Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, 224.
Alexios III’s predecessors and new dynastic portraits might have been added subsequently by later Komnenoi as well.

The closing remarks to be made at this point regard the possible connection between the Chrysokephalos and St. Eugenios, the possible prototypes for their remodeling and the patronage of the Grand Komnenoi at large. St. Eugenios and the Chrysokephalos were rebuilt at about the same time—one needs only to look at the almost identical treatment of their domes to suggest that they are not far apart in date (figs. 262 and 302). Consequently, the rebuilding of St. Eugenios in 1291 permits us to suggest a similar date for the Chrysokephalos as well. Both buildings showcase the preference for Constantinopolitan models in the Trapezunteine court during the reign of John II and Eudokia Palaiologina. At the same time, the two rebuildings do not seem to depend exclusively on each other. When looking, for instance, at their dome supports, we notice two different solutions: exclusive use of piers in the case of the Chrysokephalos, whereas a combination of piers and “columns” in St. Eugenios. The implication is that the masons of St. Eugenios deliberately combined, more or less successfully, two existing support systems: only piers (the Chrysokephalos) and only columns (Hagia Sophia, Trebizond). That Hagia Sophia was an equally influential model for St. Eugenios’ rebuilding is observed not only in its strange form of “columns” but also in its added porches.

Since there was not a long-standing building tradition of domed churches in the city of Trebizond could we argue conveniently that Hagia Sophia was the ultimate model for both rebuildings and that this preference for Constantinopolitan models was first introduced around the mid-thirteenth century and set the example for later developments? That almost forty to...
ninety years after the construction of Hagia Sophia (depending on which date we prefer the 1290s or 1340s), can we observe the lasting influence of Hagia Sophia in the rebuilding of both the Chrysokephalos and St. Eugenios, admittedly churches more intimately related to the history of Trebizond? This would have been the most obvious answer but it seems puzzling that Hagia Sophia’s dome support system was most certainly an afterthought, whereas the initial configuration was closer to the Chrysokephalos. For all these reasons the relation of Hagia Sophia to the major rebuildings of the Chrysokephalos and St. Eugenios will be addressed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 7
THE CHURCH OF HAGIA SOPHIA IN TREBIZOND

My examination of the building and rebuilding of the Chrysokephalos and St. Eugenios has revealed a clear break with traditional practices and a shift in the orientation of the Trapezuntine court, but the time and context of this important development remain highly elusive. It is with this question in mind that we turn our attention to Hagia Sophia, the thirteenth-century building, which seems to synthesize harmoniously both regional and Constantinopolitan traits, thus settling competing tendencies within the given Pontic context gracefully (figs. 320–323). Reconsidering the place of Hagia Sophia within the imperial foundations of Trebizond, permits some suggestions on the way the local architecture evolved under the patronage of the Grand Komnenoi.

Yet, Hagia Sophia remains a highly individualist creation, with neither direct precedents nor immediate followers, in this local context. In fact, if we refrain from compartmentalizing and localizing its various components and look at Hagia Sophia primarily as a thoughtful synthesis of the various available sources, then, admittedly, its best equivalent would be the late thirteenth-century Paregoretissa in Arta. This estimation opens up the way of examining Hagia Sophia within the wider context of thirteenth-century Byzantine imperial architecture and patronage. In addition to providing evidence for the cultural orientation of Trebizond alone, Hagia Sophia offers the opportunity to address issues that go beyond local realities. If Hagia Sophia and its counterpart, the Paregoretissa in Arta, are the remaining examples par excellence of how Byzantine identity was manifested along similar paths in the most disparate centers of the
Byzantine world, this might lead us to a significant reconsideration of thirteenth-century Byzantine court culture.

Today Hagia Sophia is considered a mid-thirteenth-century project, commissioned by Manuel I Komnenos (1238-1263) as his personal/dynastic mausoleum. This widely accepted view has some important implications for our understanding of thirteenth-century Trebizond and Byzantium. Firstly, the assigned date makes Hagia Sophia the first project of the Grand Komnenoi in which Constantinopolitan features are to be observed with certainty, thus affecting our perception of how Trapezuntine architecture evolved over the years. Secondly, Hagia Sophia is considered the missing link between Komnenian and Palaiologan developments. In this view, Hagia Sophia provides us with evidence of how metropolitan traditions were disseminated, preserved and developed in remote political centers while Constantinople was under the Latin rule and no longer the center of the Byzantine world. Thirdly, Hagia Sophia was realized by an independent Pontic ruler with imperial pretensions, who was able to marshal the necessary resources for such an undertaking without a firsthand knowledge of Constantinople. Consequently, Hagia Sophia is considered a “local” vision, a construction of imperial identity based on memory, crafted in the years of exile as a compromise between Byzantine imperial aspirations and regional realities/necessities.

For the purpose of this study, the following discussion aims at redefining the place Hagia Sophia holds within the local and wider Byzantine context. Far from offering a comprehensive overview of the monastery and its katholikon, the analysis highlights the uncertainties involved in our present day understanding of Hagia Sophia. The focus is, therefore, on its most challenging and controversial aspects that might hold the key for an alternative interpretation: the
location of the monastery in relation to the city of Trebizond; the unusual architectural design, construction and decoration of the katholikon and the various traditions merging in its creation; the potential architectural symbolism intended; the date, patronage and function/s of the church.

This selective approach is only possible thanks to the two published monographs on Hagia Sophia on whose findings the present discussion builds. The first is a collective work, edited by Talbot Rice, following the extensive restoration of the building undertaken by the Russel Trust between 1957 and 1962. The merits, weaknesses and omissions of this first monograph have been assessed and suggestions for future research have been proposed. Some of the omissions and misinterpretations have been compensated by later studies. These efforts have culminated in the relatively recent study by A. Eastmond, who offered an up-to-date reexamination of the church. As there is a continuous interest in the church of Hagia Sophia,

mainly due to the importance of its fresco decoration, this chapter questions some of the
previous assumptions and ultimately proposes different conclusions.

The traditional views of Hagia Sophia as a “local” expression of power, built in the mid-
thirteenth century by Manuel I Komnenos as his intended burial place could be revised. The
examination of the building reinforces the view that Hagia Sophia was conceived primarily as a
creation of a “Holy Land,” a new Sion with specific references to both Jerusalem and
Constantinople (New Jerusalem). Drawing mainly from Constantinopolitan models, the project
was meant to provide the rulers of Trebizond, their subjects and neighbors with a short physical
and spiritual journey to the “Holy Land.” More than this, it was meant to define Trebizond as the
new Promised Land, a New Jerusalem. By definition, then, Hagia Sophia was and remained an
exceptional building within the local context, a metropolitan creation in its overall conception
and implementation.

The examination of the building and the available inscriptive evidence along with the
historical context suggest that the initiative should be attributed instead to the patronage of John
II Grand Komnenos (1280-1297) and Eudokia Palaiologina (d. December 1301) in the last
decades of the thirteenth century. Placing the patronage of Hagia Sophia within the Palaiologan
era and context has in turn some further implications not only for Trebizond but also for
Palaiologan Byzantium. For Trebizond alone, the suggestion is that Constantinopolitan features

881 Most recently two articles on Hagia Sophia’s paintings have appeared in print: E.A. Vinogradova, “O stile
ospisej Sofii Trapezunskoj,” in Obraz Vizanti: sbornik statej v est’ O.S. Popovej, ed. A.V. Zacharova (Moscow,
Sophie de Trébizonde: Un jalon essentiel de l’art byzantin et ses assonances italiennes?,” in Orient &Occident
am grateful to Prof. Athanasios Semoglou for bringing to my attention the latter article.
882 Trebizond as the New Sion appears, for instance, in the ekphrasis of Trebizond by John Eugenikos (first half of
the fifteenth century): “Αἵρει καὶ αὐτὴ κόκλω τοὺς ὀρθάλμους ἢ νέα Σιὼν καὶ βλέπει θεοφεγγέζ ὡς φωστήρας ἐκ
δυσμῶν καὶ βορρᾶ καὶ θάλασσάς καὶ ἑώρας τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς…” in O. Lampsides, ed., “Ιωάννου Ευγενικοῦ Ἐκφρασις
Τραπεζούντος,” ArchPont 20 (1955), 30.
and traditions were introduced for the first time in a clear and concise way during the reign of John II and Eudokia. The building of Hagia Sophia and the remodeling of both Chrysokephalos and St. Eugenios should be understood as a general reconstruction of Trebizond along Constantinopolitan models and practices that took place under the joint reign of a local ruler and a Palaiologan princess.

Ultimately, Trebizond confirms in a way what has been already observed in the case of Arta under the reign of Nikephoros and Anna Palaiologina. Following the restoration of Constantinople in 1261, there was an attempt by the ruling families of Byzantium, and the Palaiologan rulers specifically, for a reunification of the former empire. Like political and matrimonial alliances, public imperial architecture was used to promote their agendas and manifest a new, more inclusive Byzantine identity which in turn created/shaped collective identity in so far as it is experienced by all. These practices, which are to be observed during the reign of the first two Palaiologoi, Michael VIII and Andronikos II, in other parts of the Byzantine world (for instance in Frankish Peloponnese) bespeak a change in attitude in late thirteenth-century Byzantium and a desire for renewal. Despite the gradual weakening of the central political authority over the provinces, evident already from the reign of Andronikos II, this change in orientation was still maintained in Palaiologan Mistra as late as the first half of the fifteenth century.
7. 1. The monastery: Planning a “Holy Land”

The monastery of Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) was constructed anew in the thirteenth century, some two kilometers west of Trebizond (fig. 239). Situated on an outcrop by the sea, the monastery stood as a landmark of the capital city of the Grand Komnenoi. When approaching Trebizond by sea from the west, the walled enclosure of the monastery would have been the traveler’s first encounter with the western suburbs of the city, before sailing further east past the city proper towards the commercial harbor of Daphnous, located beyond the eastern suburb of Trebizond. By the same token, the monastery of Hagia Sophia would be the traveler’s last impression of the city on his travel towards Constantinople. The chosen location might then actually bear relevance to the interpretation of the monastery as a destination to the New Jerusalem (Trebizond) or as a departure point from Trebizond towards the ultimate New Jerusalem (Constantinople).

The site itself had no previous religious associations and this may indicate that the monastery’s location was thoughtfully determined from the beginning in relation to the city proper. The motivations of the patron in locating his new foundation in some distance from the protected walled city are not readily apparent. A. Eastmond provided a possible answer, arguing that the monastery of St. Sophia was planned with imperial ceremonial in mind. The city proper was indeed too narrow and inadequate for long processions, thus the construction of Hagia Sophia beyond the western suburb of the city and the tzykanisterion (the polo field usually

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883 The distance of Hagia Sophia to the city of Trebizond is variously given as either three kilometers (for instance, Janin, *Grands centres*, 289) or two (Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, 231). It would probably be of some interest to compare it with the distance between the Constantinopolitan Hagia Sophia and the Holy Apostles (nearly four kilometers) or its ultimate prototype the distance from Mount Sion to the Temple of Jerusalem.
885 See the relevant chapter in Eastmond, *Hagia Sophia*, 46-60, esp. 53-57.
understood as the equivalent of the Hippodrome in Constantinople) would have provided the Grand Komnenoi with a longer ceremonial route similar to those that existed in Constantinople.

The desire to emulate the Constantinopolitan imperial ceremonial and provide Trebizond with a longer processional route is a valid hypothesis worth exploring. By the thirteenth century, Constantinople had many clearly established processional routes that involved major dynastic and religious focal points. Building a monastery in Trebizond dedicated to Hagia Sophia was certainly desirable for the obvious allusions to its Constantinopolitan counterpart, the religious and ceremonial centre of the empire. Likewise, the tzykanisterion as an imperial and public space could have served as an intermediate station along the road leading to Hagia Sophia but its equivalent, the Constantinopolitan Hippodrome, was no longer used for imperial ceremonial at this time. Moreover, Hagia Sophia, the Great Palace and the Hippodrome defined the heart of Byzantine Constantinople (fig. 241), while such spatial relation does not apply to Trebizond.

The need for a processional route connecting the walled city of Trebizond, where the Palace of the Grand Komnenoi and the Chrysokephalos stood, to Hagia Sophia is not so evident. The populace of Trebizond was at all times small—not more than 4,000 people on the eve of its fall. More than this, the residential, commercial and industrial heart of the city was its eastern suburb, extending from the eastern gates of the city to the Daphnous harbor (fig. 239). There

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stood the Italian establishments and the aristocratic Greek houses; workshops, warehouses and caravansarays; Latin, Armenian and Greek shrines. All organized along the “imperial way” (*via imperiale*), the road that lead from the eastern gates of the city to the *meydan* and divided the suburb into its north and southern part. Judging by the urban development of Trebizond over the years, the eastern suburb remained at all times the most heavily built up area of Trebizond whereas the western suburbs of the city remained scarcely populated at all times. This partly explains why the walled city and its eastern suburbs appear as the standard background for a number of recorded processions in the sources. If the construction of Hagia Sophia aimed at providing Trebizond with a longer east-west processional route, leading from Hagia Sophia to the *meydan*, this long-term project had little impact on the urban development of the city.

In fact, the only record of a procession leading from Hagia Sophia to the Palace of the Grand Komnenoi comes from a marginal note added to a Trapezuntine *synaxarion* towards the end of the fourteenth century. Given that this note provides the only solid evidence for such a procession and at the same time it is quite problematic in several respects, I include here a slightly emended version of Anthony Bryer’s translation:

> This very day, the *panagiotatos* candidate lord Antonios set out from the monastery of the Stylos for the monastery of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is the Hagia Sophia, where he was ordained by the bishop Kallistratos of Chaldia in front of the emperors, *archontes*, bishops, clergy, abbots,

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889 See relatively Eastmond, *Hagia Sophia*, 55-57. Following Lazaropoulos, Eastmond (ibid., 55) accepts that “Processions were of great importance in the early history of the empire of Trebizond.” In fact, this is far from certain. Lazaropoulos writes in retrospective and after having resided in Constantinople for some eight years. Therefore, it is impossible to say whether the processions he records actually took place in Trebizond at the time of Andronikos Gidon. For instance, the recorded procession of the icon of the Theotokos Hodegetria seems to be modeled on the famous Constantinopolitan procession that Lazaropoulos had certainly witnessed. Chances are that Lazaropoulos’ narrative concerning processions at the time of Andronikos Gidon is to great extent a fabrication informed by developments of his own era.

890 This is MS Peristerota 12 (presently Bodleian, MS gr. lit. d.6). The specific marginal note was first published by Papadopoulos-Kerameus—apparently with mistakes—and was reproduced in full in metropolitan Chrysanthos (Philippides), *Ἡ Ἐκκλησία Τραπεζοῦντος*, ArchPont 4-5 (1933), 257. A new edition, translation (again with a few errors) and commentary was provided by A. Bryer, “Some Trapezuntine Monastic Obitus,” *REB* 34 (1976): 125-138, esp. 132-133 (entry no. 7). Corrections and further bibliography in Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, 233.
priests, hieromonks, monks and public. After the ceremony, the entire party rode to the palaces.\footnote{This translation follows Bryer’s transcription and translations (Bryer, “Monastic Obits,” 132-133, entry no. 7; and Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 233). The available transcriptions of Kerameus-Papadopoulos and Bryer differ considerably. Similarly, Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 56, bases his description of the investiture and procession on Bryer’s transcription.}

The note unfortunately omits the exact year, the name of the emperors and the nature of the investiture. The suggestion is that the note refers to the investiture of Antonios, monk of the Trapezuntine monastery of the Stylos as metropolitan of Trebizond that took place in Hagia Sophia on 9 May 1395 (by inference) in front of the emperors Manuel III and Alexios IV.\footnote{This is the widely-accepted interpretation, elaborated by Bryer and followed by Eastmond. This interpretation raises several questions: 1) It is not clear why the investiture took place in the monastery of Hagia Sophia, instead of the Chrysokephalos, the cathedral of Trebizond. Janin, Grands centres, 289 treats this investiture as an isolated case and refrains from drawing conclusions. Chrysanthos and Janin also remark that the procession described follows closely the Constantinopolitan ceremonial on the occasion of a patriarch’s investiture. 2) This manuscript provides us with the only two references to an otherwise unrecorded Trapezuntine monastery of the Stylos, see relatively Janin, Grands centres, 291; Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 238 (entry no. 118) and 213-214 (entry no. 49). 3) Most importantly, this is the only reference to an otherwise unrecorded metropolitan, Antonios of Trebizond. All scholars take it for granted that there was a metropolitan Antonios of Trebizond, who supposedly held office between 1395 and 1400. But they all cite Chrysanthos who, in turn, bases his argument solely on this very MS. Therefore, it becomes a circular argument. On the contrary, other sources mention Theognostos as metropolitan of Trebizond in 1394/1395 (: Bryer, “Monastic Obits,” 132, note 17), and there is always the problem of the metropolitan Hilarion of Trebizond as the potential successor of Theognostos (: V. Laurent, “La succession épiscopale du siège de Trébizonde au Moyen Age (additions et corrections),” ArchPont 21 [1956]: 91). The name of the metropolitan Hilarion of Trebizond is listed in an anonymous patriarchal letter addressed to the monks of Athos, ca. 1397. Father Laurent dismisses the evidence/authenticity of the letter on the basis that in the years 1395-1400 Antonios was the metropolitan of Trebizond (citing again Chrysanthos). 4) This becomes all the more puzzling if we take into consideration that the patriarch of Constantinople at this time was Antonios IV, who held office in 1389-1390 and 1391-1397. Could this be just a coincidence? 5) Furthermore, the note mentions Antonios as the panagiotatos candidate (ὁ παναγιώτατος ὑποψήφιος κύρ Ἀντώνιος) a title commonly (albeit not exclusively) associated with the patriarch. Chrysanthos, Ἡ Ἐκκλησία Τραπεζοῦντος, 257, is also puzzled and suggests that this is either an overlooking of the scribe or the sole evidence that the metropolitan of Trebizond was granted the right to be called panagiotatos as well. We cannot rule out the latter suggestion since the metropolitan of Thessaloniki was also sporadically called panagiotatos in the late Byzantine period (interestingly, this practice starts with Constantine Mesopotamites, the ambitious metropolitan of Thessaloniki), see relatively E. Chatziantoniou, Η Μητρόπολη Θεσσαλονίκης από τα μέσα του 8ου αι. έως το 1430: Εκκλησιαστική τάξη-Εκκλησιαστική περιφέρεια-Διοικητική οργάνωση (Thessaloniki, 2007), 92-110.} If this is indeed the case, then the procession took the form of an adventus, in imitation of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem.

The very idea of a processional route leading from the Palace of the Grand Komnenoi to the Chrysokephalos and past the western walls of the city, through the “wilderness” (i.e. the
uninhabited, not urbanized area) to the monastery of Hagia Sophia invites an alternative suggestion. It can be understood as a short “journey” out of the capital city of the Grand Komnenoi towards another land. In other words, it was meant to provide the rulers of Trebizond and their subjects with a pilgrimage to a new “Holy Land,” constructed anew within their territory. Likewise, the returning procession from Hagia Sophia back to the citadel and palace would encourage the identification of the city of Trebizond with Jerusalem. This suggestion can be explored further when looking for possible models of inspiration for such an undertaking. The Old city of Jerusalem and the New Jerusalem/Constantinople are the obvious starting points.

The construction of Hagia Sophia some two kilometers west of Trebizond invites initially a comparison with Mount Sion, the holy site in Jerusalem (figs. 411–412). Jerusalem, the city-temple of Solomon, and Sion, the city of David, defined together the political and religious capital of Israel, the Promised Land of the Old Testament Tradition. The two venerated Old Testament sites formed the backdrop of the most important New Testaments events, therefore the religious center of Christianity, the place where the biblical story of salvation unfolded, in short, the omphalos (i.e. the center) of the world. In Christian tradition, Mount Sion was located southwest of Jerusalem sometimes distinguished from, other times identified with Jerusalem itself. Sion, in particular, was believed to be the setting of Christ Last Supper and the place where many post-resurrection apostolic events took place (for instance, the place where the apostles gathered after the Resurrection and the Ascension, the perceived site of the Pentecost).

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Christian topography renewed the relation between Sion and Jerusalem with *loca sancta* bearing witness to Christ Passion and Resurrection. The construction of the Holy Sepulcher, just opposite to the Temple of Solomon, renewed and redefined Jerusalem as the ultimate center of Christian faith, whereas west of Jerusalem, on Mount Sion, a church dedicated to the Holy Apostles was built by 340 to mark the very site of the Last Supper—soon to became ideologically charged as the “mother of all the churches.”

This topographical relation between Sion and Jerusalem and its major *loca sancta*, the church of the Holy Apostles, the Holy Sepulcher, and the Temple of Solomon seems to have been reproduced in the spatial relation between the Chrysokephalos (the royal mausoleum of the Grand Komnenoi) and the Hagia Sophia in Trebizond. As will be discussed below when examining some architectural, iconographic and epigraphic peculiarities of Hagia Sophia in Trebizond allusions to Sion and Jerusalem, and more specifically to the church of the Holy Apostles and the Temple of Solomon abound. If, for their symbolical and ideological connotations, these were the ultimate prototypes for Hagia Sophia in Trebizond, the immediate models should probably be sought after in Constantinople.

Interestingly enough, the same spatial relation existed in Constantinople between the church of the Holy Apostles and Hagia Sophia, the two most influential foundations of the

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capital, built originally by Constantius II (337-61), son of Constantine the Great, and later completely rebuilt under Justinian I (527-65). Whereas Hagia Sophia—with its well-known Temple of Solomon associations—defined the liturgical and ceremonial centre of the empire, the Apostoleion complex located within the Constantinian walls (fig. 241), on the fourth hill, west of Hagia Sophia long served as the venerated mausoleum of the empire, where a number of emperors beginning with the founder of the city, Constantine the Great, found their resting place. The Apostoleion traditionally held an important place in the Byzantine imperial ideology and ceremonial and consequently attracted the patronage of successive emperors.

Even during the Latin occupation of Constantinople, the Byzantine emperor John III Vatatzes (1221-54) reportedly sent money to the Latins for the restoration of the church, following a devastating earthquake. For their symbolic value, both Hagia Sophia and the Apostoleion became the major focal points of Constantinople’s restoration by Michael VIII Palaiologos

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897 A most helpful introduction to Hagia Sophia and the Holy Apostles with further bibliographical references can be found in the Encyclopaedia of the Hellenic World, Constantinople, by J. Kostenec, “Hagia Sophia (Ayasofya Müzesi),” 2007, URL: <http://kassiani.fhw.gr/l.aspx?id=10894> and A. Ball, “Holy Apostles,” 2008, URL: <http://kassiani.fhw.gr/l.aspx?id=10896> respectively. Hagia Sophia still remains the landmark of modern Istanbul and, despite subsequent modifications, restorations and additions, retains to a great extent its Justinianic layout. The Holy Apostles, on the other hand, was demolished in the 1460s following the Ottoman conquest of the city and the Fatih Camii was subsequently built on its site.


(1259-82) and his son and successor Andronikos II (1282-1328). Through patronage and ceremonial, the relation between the two imperial foundations was renewed and given new impetus in the service of the Palaiologan propaganda.

Thus the very location of Hagia Sophia west of the walled city encouraged the identification of Trebizond with Jerusalem and Constantinople as the New Promised Land. It was a land enclosed by fortification walls, providing security against the frequent Georgian and Seljuk raids, permitting restricted entrance to the complex through its southern gate (fig. 324). Upon entering the complex, the visitor/worshiper/pilgrim would have been faced with a different world. This impression is now difficult to reconstruct due to the fragmented nature of our sources (material and textual). Only traces of the original walls and of the two-storey gatehouse at the southwest corner of the site survive. Most of the monastery’s sacred and profane topography, the result of continuous royal patronage that extended until the last decades of the empire—is equally lost. Apart from the well-preserved katholikon and the bell tower (fig. 320), the foundations of a second small church, north of the katholikon, are still visible (fig. 325). The monastic cells and other facilities have now long disappeared and the very existence of an octagonal baptistery north of the katholikon on the edge of the terrace, described by Texier and Lynch, is doubtful.

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901 The Apostoleion was restored soon after the Byzantine reconquest of the capital by Michael VIII Palaiologos and again at around 1300 by Andronikos II. Like Hagia Sophia, the Apostoleion retained to a great extent its Justinianic appearance.
The serenity and isolation of Hagia Sophia standing in the midst of a formal garden is to a great extent misleading. Certainly the location of the monastery far from the bustling life of the city was deemed desirable for the monastic life. Yet, it was not a deserted land but an inviting place. Daily religious services and hymns once enlivened the site—currently a functioning museum. Religious fairs and festivals attracted a host of worshipers and lavish dinners took place in the monastic establishments for the few selected guests. Teachers and students reportedly frequented the monastery, which also served as a center for astronomical studies.

The site could be experienced in many ways on different occasions by different groups of people. When turning our attention to the architectural design, sculpture and iconography of its katholikon, we seek to reveal some aspects of the way this holy land was conceived, designed, functioned and experienced.

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906 See, for instance, John Eugenikos’ praise of Trebizond for providing suitable places for the monastic life: “… ὃτι καὶ τοῖς ἐν τῷ βίῳ πᾶσάν τε ἅφθονιαν τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἐπιχορηγεῖ καὶ μέντοι καὶ ξῆν κατὰ μοναχοὺς τῷ πλέον παρέχεται τῷ ἐρημικῷ καὶ ἤρεμῳ τῶν προαστείων”: Eugenikos, Ekphrasis, 30-31.

907 Panaretos, 7623-28 records the drowning of his son by the monastery of Hagia Sophia, on the feast day of the Transfiguration in 1368. Bryer is probably right in attributing this unfortunate event to the “popular celebrations and over-indulgence that are associated with such fairs and feasts in the Orthodox world” (as trans. by Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 232).

908 As recorded in Lazaropoulos, Synopsis, Miracle 24, on the occasion of the feast of the Transfiguration.

909 Hagia Sophia, as the place where Constantine Loukites taught mathematics and astronomy, is mentioned in Chrysanthos, Η Εκκλησία Τραπεζοῦντος, 339-341 and more recently in A. Savvides, Οἱ Μεγάλοι Κοιμητοί τῆς Τραπεζοῦντας καὶ τοῦ Πόντου: Ιστορική επισκόπηση τῆς βυζαντινῆς αυτοκρατορίας του μικρασιατικοῦ ελληνισμοῦ (1204-1461) (Athens, 2005), 160-161. Given that Loukites received a prominent burial in Hagia Sophia Trebizond, some sort of relation between this intellectual and the monastery must have existed. Gregory Chioniades, the famous Constantinopolitan astronomer, also spent some time in Trebizond, and eventually retired as a monk to Trebizond where he died ca. 1320, see D. Pingree, “Chioniades Gregory,” ODB 1: 422-423. Yet, according to D. Pingree, “Gregory Chioniades and Palaeologan Astronomy,” DOP 18 (1964): 134-160 (esp. 146), the case of Trebizond as a center of astronomical studies has been overrated. See also C. Constantinides, Higher Education in Byzantium in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries (1204-ca. 1310) (Nicosia, 1982), 142: Trebizond as one of the few late Byzantine centers (along with Constantinople, Thessaloniki and later Mistra) that held libraries of some importance. Constantinides concludes that the flourishing of education in Trebizond during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century was inextricably related to contemporaneous developments in Constantinople, in the sense that Constantinople was the ultimate center that trained intellectuals, who were forced to seek employment elsewhere when there was no prospect of getting a post in the capital (ibid., 161).
7. 2. The katholikon: An overview of its architecture, sculpture and decoration

The katholikon of Hagia Sophia stands at the centre of the monastic complex, originally placed on a high platform, raised some 1, 40 m above ground level (figs. 326–327). Access to the church was gained by a flight of stairs, preceding its southern, western and northern monumental entrances. The latter took the form of large barrel-vaulted porches that still dominate the exterior of the church, essentially masking an otherwise quite traditional domed church. The overall impression was that of an unusual and imposing arrangement, unlike anything that existed in Trebizond up to that point.

In terms of scale Hagia Sophia is one of the largest buildings of the thirteenth century, comparable only to the other imperial commissions of Trebizond and Epiros. In its overall dimensions (including the porches) the building measures 35X27 m, surpassing in scale even the church of St. Eugenios. In reality, Hagia Sophia was only rivaled by the cathedral of Trebizond, the Chrysokephalos, an association that might have been desirable. In any case, both the Chrysokephalos and Hagia Sophia were built on an exceptional scale for thirteenth-century standards. Interestingly, the only comparable commissions of the period come from Arta: the royal monastery of the Pantanassa Philippiados built or rebuilt by the despots of Epiros.

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910 The excavations of Talbot Rice revealed a flight of five steps on the north side of the podium. While there were no traces of steps on the western and southern side, these certainly existed given the height of the podium and Texier’s report. See relatively Talbot Rice, Haghia Sophia, 39 and Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 32 and note 14.
912 Similarly, the church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople is believed to have been the second largest church of Constantinople, rivaled only by Hagia Sophia, which is ca. 135 m long. The proposed reconstruction of the Holy Apostles by K. Dark gives a nave width ca 57 m and an overall transept length ca. 70 (: Dark and Özgümüş, “Holy Apostles,” 408). Although the east end of the church is conjectural, the Holy Apostles must have been ca. 100 m long. Conceivably, the relative scale of the two Constantinopolitan buildings might have been reproduced in the case of Trebizond as well.
913 Comparisons put forward by Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 27-28, suggest that all imperial commissions of the thirteenth century including Nicaea, Serbia, Bulgaria, Georgia and etc. were considerably smaller. Eastmond, therefore, favors a comparison of Hagia Sophia in Trebizond with the Pantokrator monastery in Constantinople, the twelve-century imperial mausoleum of the Komnenoi (which measures 29.5 X 19 m).
in the last decade of the thirteenth century, concurrently with the rebuilding of the Paregoretissa. Building on such a scale in both Arta and Trebizond cannot be a mere coincidence, given their distinct Constantinopolitan and eclectic character as a common trait.

Excluding the porches, the plan of Hagia Sophia is that of the traditional Byzantine cross-in-square with a single dome over the central bay (fig. 326). More specifically, the church follows the Constantinopolitan variation of the type with an extra bay between the naos and the sanctuary and, as in many examples of the type, the naos is preceded by a narthex on the west and a tripartite sanctuary on the east. The twelve-sided dome rests on four marble columns of Proconessian marble while the western bays of the cross are unexpectedly groin-vaulted (figs. 333, 335). Given that domes supported on columns, instead of piers, and groin vaults, instead of barrel vaults, do not appear in any of the extant buildings in Trebizond, their presence alone points towards metropolitan, most likely Constantinopolitan, models. To the same

914 The katholikon of the Pantanassa measures externally 31.75 X 24.60 m (including the portico) and 25.10 X 14.80 m (without the portico). The Paregoretissa, in its unfinished status, measures 20.27 X 20.28 m (without the apses). The completion of the peristoon, designed to envelope the church on three sides, would have significantly altered the external dimensions of the church, which is, in any event, equally imposing due to its two-storey elevation and its cubic mass. The question becomes more complicated, when considering the dependency of both buildings on Lascarid and Palaiologan architecture.

915 For the cross-in-square church, see chapter one in R. Ousterhout, _Master Builders of Byzantium_, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, 2008), esp. 12ff.

916 According to Eastmond, _Hagia Sophia_, 31: “The low conical dome appears to be a hybrid of a shallow Byzantine cupola and a much higher and steeper Caucasian dome.” However, it seems that the dome of Hagia Sophia underwent at least two partial restorations: the first in 1486, and the second in 1547. This is recorded in two graffiti found over the painted decoration in the drum of the dome, see relatively Mango, “Notes on Byzantine monuments,” 369 (: a note that compensates for the mistakes included in Talbot Rice, _Hagia Sophia_, 6). A third graffito recorded by Mango (ibid., 369, fig. 2) is also important for it mentions a certain Barnabas, hieromonk and ecclesiarch of this holy monastery. The year is unfortunately missing. At a first glance, this graffito looks older to me than the other two (judging by the style of lettering which is more cursive) and therefore merits, I believe, further examination on the basis of paleographic evidence. I am wondering whether this Barnabas could be identified with the later metropolitan of Trebizond, Barnabas (1311-1333). If this could be the case, then what we might have here is the commemoration of the completion of the decoration of Hagia Sophia ca 1300 since Barnabas is not yet metropolitan.

917 Besides the design of the church, construction is similarly in the main Byzantine tradition: see the relevant chapter on the architecture of the church in Talbot Rice, _Hagia Sophia_, esp. 29-33 (chapter authored by S. Ballance, hereafter: Ballance, _Hagia Sophia_). Some construction techniques, for example, the use of amphorae on the upper levels of the building to reduce the weight of the masonry are also indicative of metropolitan practices. For the use of amphorae in the construction of the Byzantine churches, see Ousterhout, _Master Builders_, 227-230 and
metropolitan models we should probably assign the presence of an upper room extending over
the narthex, of which no local precedents survive (figs. 340–341). This is an interesting feature
of the church’s architectural design that has not received any satisfactory explanation thus far.

The design of the main church is to an extent indebted to the local tradition as well. Hagia
Sophia with its longitudinal east-west axis (31X14 m, excluding the porches) departs from the
squirrel dimensions of the traditional cross-in-square. Its pronounced east-west axis is instead
reminiscent of the basilical design of the Chrysokephalos and St. Eugenios, which could have
exerted some sort of influence on Hagia Sophia’s plan (figs. 326, 255, 300). Similarly, the
articulation of the sanctuary with a central pentagonal apse flanked by two semi-circular side
apses, finds its precedent in St. Eugenios.


918 The central bays of the narthex and the upper room are also groin-vaulted. For some reason both Ballance, Hagia Sophia, 35, and Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 41 treat the presence of the room over the narthex as an “unusual” architectural feature, without commenting on its dependence on Constantinopolitan models.

919 The dimensions for the naos and narthex alone are given according to Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 27.

920 This is something observed and commented already by Millet, “Les monastères et les églises de Trebizonde,” 446ff (with comparative tables for the relative proportions of the naos). In Trebizond, the elongation of the naos involves the western bays.

921 This is at least the widely-accepted view as in Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 172; and eadem, Hagia Sophia, 35. Yet, from a practical point of view, the elongation of the naos might have been preferred simply to create a sense of spaciousness, since the cross-in square church was, anyway, ideal for small scale churches. From this point of view, it would be interesting to see whether the squirrel dimensions of the cross-in-square church remained at all time standard or whether there was a general tendency during the thirteenth century for more elongated plans. The Church E at Sardis, for example, has also “an unusually elongated, basilical character” with approximate exterior dimensions 19.10 X 10.95 m, see relatively H. Buchwald, “Sardis Church E-A Preliminary Report,” JÖB 26 (1977): 265-299; reprinted in idem, Form, Style and Meaning in Byzantine Church Architecture (Aldershot, 1999), Study III. Alternatively, if the desire in Trebizond was to imitate Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, then the so-called basilical character of the church might find an additional explanation.

922 The central pentagonal apse is, indeed, a hallmark of the local architecture (Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 172-173; and Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 31-32) and certainly contributes to the visual uniformity of the projects in Trebizond as Eastmond has argued. Yet, whether this form is directly influenced from Georgia or Russia, as Ballance suggests, seems to me uncertain. In fact, the parallels she cites (from St Sophia and Panagia Chalkeon in Thessaloniki to St. Sophia in Kiev and St. Sophia in Novgorod), where a combination of a central polygonal apse (either three or five sided) with rounded ones is to be observed, rather bespeak the wide diffusion of Constantinopolitan models. The simple typological resemblance to St. Sophia, Kiev, St. Sophia, Novgorod and Mokwi, Georgia (i.e. the combination of a central pentagonal apse with rounded ones) does not necessarily establish
Integral to the architectural design of Hagia Sophia are the three large barrel-vaulted porches articulating the north, south and west entrances to the building (figs. 328–330). These take the form of deep rectangular covered stoas and despite their uneven size—the south porch being the largest, while the western substantially smaller—these porches give the church plan a distinct cruciform character (figs. 322 and 326). The overall design of the building thus results in a combination of two traditional layouts, that of a centrally planned (main) church with a cruciform building (formed by the porches). Buildings following the one or the other type abound in Byzantine tradition but no extant parallels of such a combination exist. For this reason, Hagia Sophia’s design is usually regarded as an “awkward,” “unique” solution, an architectural innovation of Trebizond, a possible “elaboration of the Georgian system” of façade articulation. The possibility of a strong regional influence on the church’s form is open to interpretation. An alternative suggestion, taking into consideration the Byzantine/Constantinopolitan imperial tradition, will be offered below in relation to the function of Hagia Sophia and its immediate models.

a direct relation between eleventh-century Russia or Georgia with Trebizond. The same articulation is to be found, for instance, in the architecture of the Laskarids, in the Church E at Sardis and the church of the Prophet Naum in Philadelphia (Alaşehir), see respectively Buchwald, “Sardis Church E.,” 265-299, fig. 2 and 3 and idem, “Lascarid Architecture,” JÖB 28 (1979): 279-280, 282, fig. 30; reprinted in idem, Form, Style and Meaning in Byzantine Church Architecture (Aldershot, 1999), Study VI. This is not to imply either a direct relation with the Laskarid examples, which differ in terms of construction and decoration. The pentagonal apse, in particular, is already present from the early Christian times and therefore could be used in a variety of combinations thereafter. In my view, the royal projects in Trebizond simply took an extant Byzantine form, which was appropriate for the large scale of these buildings, and used it consistently to create uniformity.

923 The examination of the building and the excavations undertaken by the Russell Trust Expedition indicated that the porches were designed and constructed simultaneously with the main church (see the relevant chapters on the architecture and excavations in Talbot Rice, Hagia Sophia, esp. 21-25, 34-36, 37-40; and Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 34-39). Cf. Brounov, “Sainte-Sophie de Trébizonde,” 393-405.

924 On cross-shaped churches in the Holy Land and elsewhere, see R. Krautheimer, Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture, rev. ed., with S. Ćurčić (Harmondsworth, 1986), 73ff, fig. 34 (: St. Babylas, Antioch), fig. 38 (: Holy Apostles, Milan), figs. 57, 198 (: St. John Ephesus), fig. 100 (: Qal’at Sī’man), figs 128-129 (: Tomarza, Cappadocia), fig. 145 (Mausoleum of Gala Placidia, Ravenna) etc. Of particular interest in this respect are the early and middle Byzantine cruciform churches in Cherson, see A. Romančuk, Studien zur Geschichte und Archäologie des byzantinischen Cherson (Leiden, 2005), 83-86.

Whereas the scale and the plan of the church invites comparisons with faraway Arta and Constantinople, the cut stone masonry of Hagia Sophia seems at first glance firmly rooted in the larger regional context of the Anatolian plateau. Hagia Sophia is built in its entirety in ashlar masonry with finely cut, yellowish sandstone slabs set in alternating thick and thin courses over a rubble core.\textsuperscript{926} Facing the exterior of the church exclusively with stone sets Hagia Sophia apart from contemporaneous practices in Constantinople and the Western provinces where brick was extensively applied on the exterior façades in a number of techniques.\textsuperscript{927} On the other hand, ashlar masonry was a hallmark of the eastern provinces, used throughout the Byzantine period predominantly in Syria-Palestine, Asia Minor and the Caucasus (Armenia, Georgia).\textsuperscript{928} Most churches in Trebizond follow this tradition that can be traced back at least to the middle Byzantine period in the masonry of St. Anne (figs. 274–275).\textsuperscript{929} Likewise, Armenians, Georgians and Seljuks also favored stone masonry and by the thirteenth century stonework was already a shared architectural heritage of the Anatolian plateau. Therefore, a strong regional tradition might account for the external appearance of Hagia Sophia.

Upon closer examination the fine workmanship and the well-laid courses of stone slabs give Hagia Sophia a very distinct, polished exterior unmatched anywhere in Trebizond\textsuperscript{930} and in the larger context of the architecture of the Caucasus and Anatolia.\textsuperscript{931} In terms of construction

\textsuperscript{927} Constantinople generally favored a mixed technique with alternating bands of ashlar and bands of brick. In the western provinces, cloisonné prevailed—essentially ashlar masonry whereby each individual stone is framed on all four sides by bricks. Both Constantinople and the western provinces were also interested in the decorative properties of brick, which was used for the ornamentation of the exterior façades, at times even excessively as in Arta (see the relevant chapter on construction in Ousterhout, \textit{Master Builders}, esp. 169ff). In Hagia Sophia Trebizond, brick was used structurally (for arches and vaulting), but there was no interest in its decorative properties, see Ballance, \textit{Haghia Sophia}, 30-34.
\textsuperscript{928} M. Johnson, “Ashlar,” \textit{ODB} 1: 204.
\textsuperscript{930} This has been already observed by Brounov, “Sainte-Sophie de Trébizonde,” 398, 404.
\textsuperscript{931} See the discussion in Eastmond, \textit{Hagia Sophia}, 29-31.
techniques, most Trapezuntine churches display a much rougher workmanship and in reality only
the five-side apses of St. Eugenios (fig. 311) and the Chrysokephalos (fig. 243) demonstrate a
somewhat closer—but still inferior to Hagia Sophia—treatment.\footnote{Hagia Sophia itself presents evidence for two distinct types of masonry. Ballance, \textit{Haghia Sophia}, 10-11, observed that the lower parts of the church were built in a rougher masonry, whereas the rest of the church is of uniform, better quality stonework. This observation provides, among other things, additional evidence that a change of plan occurred during construction. This might also indicate that a different workshop took over.} In this respect, neither Armenian nor Georgian architecture provides strictly comparable material. The question gets more complicated when considering, on one hand, the wide diffusion of this type of masonry during the thirteenth century from the Latin West to the Christian and Muslim East in a variety of secular and religious buildings, and on the other hand, the cultural heritage of Constantinople itself where a number of early Christian buildings were entirely faced with ashlar masonry. Given that the patron/s of Hagia Sophia brought in masons, craftsmen and artists from varied cultural backgrounds for this specific project, the general suggestion of a strong regional impact on Hagia Sophia’s external appearance is not so self-evident.\footnote{This is not to dispute that Hagia Sophia fits well the architectural style of Anatolia and the Caucasus or that regional craftsmen were at work. The question remains to what extent this was the determining factor in Hagia Sophia’s appearance.} Just as in every aspect of this magnificent and costly project, this involved, at the very least, a choice. Whether the considerations were primarily practical or there was a more sophisticated strand they were following remains to be seen.

Whereas the masonry of Hagia Sophia is striking for its quality and workmanship, the
carved stonework embedded on the exterior walls and porches initially surprises with its extent,
complexity and character. A considerable range of sculptures are placed mainly on and around
the three porches in a variety of forms: capitals, impost blocks, niches, cornices and friezes as
well as individual stone slabs and reliefs (figs. 344–347). Sculptural decoration, either in the
form of cornices or individual reliefs, is also to be found in other places of the building, most
notably in the sanctuary area (fig. 348). At a first glance, the impression is of an extremely lavish but incoherent collection of materials and designs: ancient and Byzantine reused capitals, columns and bases (fig. 344); newly carved reliefs, most prominent among them, the extensive Genesis frieze of the south porch (figs. 342–343); muqarnas work on impost blocks, cornices and niches (fig. 345) along with stone slabs with geometric and floral patterns clearly departing from the Byzantine tradition (fig. 347a). This unusual arrangement of sculptures has been so far thoroughly described and variously interpreted.\footnote{See the relevant chapters in Talbot Rice, \textit{Haghia Sophia}: on the architecture by S. Ballance (8-36) and on sculpture by D. Talbot Rice (45-54) and Tamara Talbot Rice (55-82). And the relevant chapters in Eastmond, \textit{Hagia Sophia}, 61-76 and 77-96. Idem, “Narratives of the Fall.” 219-236.}

The inclusion of the non-Byzantine sculptures, in particular, is one of the most remarkable features of the church, unrecorded anywhere in Trebizond.\footnote{Sculptural decoration enlivening the exterior walls of churches was not unknown in Trebizond, but it is used generally in a more traditional, restricted way. This is best demonstrated, for instance, in St. Eugenios, with the stone cornice of the main apse, and the carved lintels of the north and south doors but also with individual stone slabs with birds, grapes, crosses, etc (see relatively Baklanov, “Deux Monuments byzantins de Trébizonde,” 363-376, pl. II; Talbot Rice, “Notice,” 54; Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 156-159; Bryer and Winfield, \textit{Pontos}, 222). To a much lesser extent this was the case in the Chrysokephalos—unless the removal of plaster reveals more carved slabs: see relatively, Talbot Rice, “Notice,” 53; Bryer and Winfield, \textit{Pontos}, 238-239.} Consequently, they are either understood as “trophies,” signifiers for Manuel’s supremacy over the Muslims\footnote{This is implied by Tamara Talbot Rice’s suggestion of placing the sculptures of Hagia Sophia in the 1250s, following her analysis of the political context (see Talbot Rice, \textit{Haghia Sophia}, 78-82). Her “political interpretation” has been criticized as simplistic by Eastmond, \textit{Hagia Sophia}, 81ff, who argues convincingly that this sort of ornamentation is quite widespread “geographically, culturally and chronologically” in both Christian and Muslim context up into the fourteenth century (i.e. ibid., 91).} or as part of the common cultural heritage of the Caucasus and
the Anatolian plateau, signifiers of the nature of Manuel’s empire. What is still missing in both interpretations is how they relate to the overall design and symbolism of the church.

Hagia Sophia retains to a great extent its original painted decoration which in terms of iconography, style and technique is that of a familiar Byzantine church. The iconographic program unfolds over the main church and porches and, despite extensive losses, has been fairly reconstructed. It consists of several narrative cycles and individual saints, grouped together in a standard arrangement. The prothesis and diakonikon (and their preceding bays of the naos) contain the early lives of St. John the Baptist and the Virgin respectively (figs. 349–352). From the diakonikon, the narrative continued clock-wise on the south wall and vaults, entirely lost today, probably with the early life of Christ, and from there to the western and northern parts of the church with numerous scenes relating to Christ’s Passion (figs. 357–358). Post-

937 Eastmond, *Hagia Sophia*, 77-96. Eastmond’s suggestion is that these motifs should not be classified either as “Muslim” or “Seljukid”. He prefers, instead, a regional term such as “Anatolian” (ibid., 91). He argues for a cultural syncretism, as the result of the political, commercial and cultural interchange that took place in thirteenth-century Anatolia and the Caucasus. The evidence of the ornament is, according to Eastmond, an indication that “Trebizond was deeply imbued in its regional culture” (ibid., 93), and that Manuel I used it “as evidence of the universality of his power” (ibid., 95). Eastmond concludes that the image of power projected in Trebizond through the external decoration of Hagia Sophia was an “inclusive” one, in contrast to the “restrictive, exclusionary definition” of the Nicaeans and the Palaiologoi (ibid., 95-96). In my view, some of his suggestions/interpretations can be significantly modified if one looks at the Paregoretissa in Arta, itself an “inclusive” image of power similar to that of Hagia Sophia Trebizond.

938 If I understand Eastmond correctly, he offers a more nuanced political and ideological interpretation, regarding the external decoration of Hagia Sophia Trebizond. Yet, this approach does not answer the question why this sort of synthesis is to be observed in Hagia Sophia only. If we accept his thesis of a shared cultural/visual vocabulary we would expect other buildings in Trebizond to display similar trends. This is not, however, the case as far as we can judge based on the few surviving buildings in Trebizond.

939 The wall paintings have been thoroughly described in Talbot Rice, *Haghia Sophia*, in terms of iconography, style and technique (chapters authored by D. Talbot Rice, D. Winfield, and J. Plesters); and they are discussed, most recently, by Eastmond, *Hagia Sophia*, 96-137 (in two separate chapters focusing mainly on their political and liturgical implications respectively, but also including aspects of their iconography, style and date).


941 Scenes that can be identified (in varying degrees of preservation) include: the Washing of the Feet, The Last Supper, The Agony in the Garden and the Betrayal; the Judgment before Pilate and the Denial of Peter; The Crucifixion and the Anastasis.
resurrection scenes are depicted on the wall of the bema (figs. 353–355) and on the vaults of the bema and its preceding bay (Ascension and Pentecost respectively), supplementing the traditional depiction of the Virgin and Child in the apse (fig. 332). The iconographic program of the naos culminates in the central dome with the depiction of Christ Pantokrator surrounded by a host of angels, the apostles and prophets (drum); and the Evangelists with accompanying scenes (Nativity, Baptism, Crucifixion and Anastasis) on the pendentives (fig. 336). The narthex of the church is devoted to the ministry and miracles of Christ (figs. 359–361), whereas the Last Judgment occupies the west porch (figs. 362–364). The north porch includes Old Testament scenes (prefigurations of the Virgin, Tree of Jesse and apostolic scenes (figs. 365–367). The south porch retains only few fragments of its original decoration and therefore its iconographic program cannot be settled with any accuracy. These fragments have been tentatively identified with Old Testament battles and/or depictions of imperial triumphs (fig. 368). The south porch is one of the few places where evidence exists for some partial repainting.

The arrangement of the wall paintings, their style and technique suggests that, on the whole, the iconographic program belongs to one phase of decoration, quickly executed over a relatively short period by a Constantinopolitan workshop, soon after the construction of the

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942 The Incredulity of Thomas and the Appearance of Christ on the shores of the Lake of Tiberias (north side) and the Mission of the Apostles (south side). A fourth scene is completely destroyed.

943 On the Tree of Jesse in Hagia Sophia Trebizond, see additionally the discussion in Caillet and Joubert, “Sainte-Sophie de Trébizonde,” 106-110; and T. Velmans, “L’Arbre de Jessé en Orient chrétien,” DChAE 26 (2005): 125-140. There is a recent comprehensive study in Greek on the complex “historiated” type of the Tree of Jesse, 13th–18th centuries (genesis, evolution and interpretation of a dynastic myth): S. Gouloulis, ‘Ρίζα Ιεσσαί: Ο σύνθετος εικονογραφικός τύπος (13ος-18ος αι.): Γένεση, ερμηνεία και εξέλιξη ενός δυναστικού μύθου (Θεσσαλονίκη, 2007). Whereas the author focuses on the historiated type, there is some brief discussion of the simple type as well, along with references to Hagia Sophia Trebizond (mainly 15-19, and passim).

944 The wall paintings of the north porch are treated in detail in Talbot Rice, Haghia Sophia, 149-155, and 182-183. Important evidence (additions/identifications), and interpretation of the apostolic scenes in Eastmond, Haghia Sophia, 112ff.

945 See the descriptions in Talbot Rice, Haghia Sophia, 155-156.

946 Eastmond, Haghia Sophia, 115-116.

947 Talbot Rice, Haghia Sophia, 155-156, 235, fig. 120.
church. Within this fairly straightforward decorative program, repetitions, peculiarities and inconsistencies do exist. Some of these will be considered below in relation to the other unusual features of the church, as key features in understanding the function and the intended symbolism of the church.

948 The opinions concerning the date, style and homogeneity of the iconographic program of Hagia Sophia differ considerably. See relatively Talbot Rice, *Hagia Sophia*, 183-184 (conclusions on iconography), 235-244 (on the style and date of paintings), and 217-224 (D. Winfield’s summary of technical conclusions, esp. 223-224). As in Eastmond, *Hagia Sophia*, 126ff and Caillet and Joubert, “Sainte-Sophie de Trébizonde,” 104, I also endorse D. Winfield’s estimation that the wall paintings of Hagia Sophia should be attributed to a single workshop and that the completion of the project need not require more than three years work. Similarly, I find Talbot Rice’s suggestion on the metropolitan origin of the artists as the most convincing—a view also strongly supported by Caillet and Joubert, ibid., 104 and 120; and Vinogradova, “O stile rospisej Sofii Trapezunskoj.” 640-641, who additionally relates the paintings of Hagia Sophia to the art of the Balkans. My understanding is that the iconographic program of Hagia Sophia is well-thought out, indeed very sophisticated, and there is nothing to support a local tradition in monumental painting of that scale and complexity prior to Hagia Sophia. Talbot Rice’s suggestion of a “Trapezuntine” group of MSS having influenced the building’s decoration is hardly convincing for several reasons (see relatively Janin, *Grands centres*, 290). Finally, all scholars pose the question whether the artists came from Nicaea or Constantinople (and/or from a major center in the Balkans such as Thessaloniki, Serbia, Mount Athos, according to Vinogradova) based on the proposed date ca. 1260. As I will discuss below, I am not convinced of the proposed date and patronage of the church and therefore I consider Constantinople, as the most likely place of origin of the artists of Hagia Sophia.

949 Most of these have been already discussed by Eastmond, *Hagia Sophia*, 98ff.
7. 3. Building Heavenly Jerusalem: Design, function, architectural symbolism

The brief overview of Hagia Sophia highlighted the unusual and unique features of this church. Looking at the architectural setting, plan, masonry, sculptural and painted decoration as separate entities, it became clear that various and disparate traditions came together for the church’s construction. Some features are readily identifiable, for instance the Constantinopolitan character of the plan and the painted decoration of the church or the regional character of a number of sculptures. Other features (such as the church’s masonry) are harder to pin down with any certainty. The most unique among them, the podium and porches, still await a fully satisfactory interpretation.

This formal approach reveals a series of dichotomies practically on every aspect of the church. The katholikon is set apart from its surrounding buildings; the podium from the church; the porches in relation to the main church; the external appearance of the church versus interior space; Constantinopolitan versus local/ regional traditions. Necessary though it is, this approach prevents us from understanding the various aspects of the building in relation to each other. By compartmentalizing the building into its components we seem to miss the most important point in Hagia Sophia’s creation: architecture, sculpture and wall paintings were meant to complement each other. An alternative way to go about it is to treat Hagia Sophia primarily as a synthesis revealed in its overall conception, construction, decoration and function and often also in its minute details.
Ample evidence exists that podium and church were laid out in relation to each other and belong to the same period of construction, thus forming part of an organic unit.\textsuperscript{950} The retaining wall of the podium was laid out first in the form of a rectangle with its eastern part curved to form a semicircle (fig. 326). The enclosed space was filled in with earth to create this terrace on which the church stands. This man-made “land” had a distinct funerary character, housing a number of burials. These took the form of niched tombs, organized along the southern and northern parts of the retaining wall, flanking the entrances to the church (figs. 326–327). In addition, the podium provided the church with greater visibility and secured the uninhibited circulation around the building within the clutter of the various monastic buildings. The existence of the podium determined to a great extent the scale of the church set on top and the specifics of its layout.

The podium and the church work well together in terms of design and function. The three large porches extend up to the extremities of the terrace on north, west and south sides, taking advantage of the available space. Their main entrances give direct access to the interior of the church, while their lateral openings permit circulation around the church. Their form and scale contributes decisively to the monumental appearance of the church and the ensuing cruciform layout of the church offers an additional reference to the funeral function of the podium. More than anything, these deep porches serve as a transition from the outside world to the familiar interior of an orthodox church, highlighting the importance of “entering” either as an act or as a concept.

\textsuperscript{950} See here Ballance’s conclusions and Talbot Rice’s report on the excavations in Talbot Rice, \textit{Haghia Sophia}, 35-36 and 37-40 respectively; and Eastmond, \textit{Hagia Sophia}, 27ff.
The masonry and the sculptural decoration greatly contribute in this transition. Much of the exterior has been refaced during the nineteenth-century restoration but the impression of the polished yellowish sandstone still gives the sense of a “desert” when compared to the heavily-populated interior of the church, filled with all kinds of Old and New Testament scenes.\(^{951}\) Similarly, it seems safe to assume that the bulk of the sculptural decoration was concentrated—much like today—on and around the porches, highlighting their prominence as portals. In this respect, the decorated and undecorated parts of the exterior façades worked together in harmony to contrast both exterior from interior space and at the same time to offer the viewer a quite structured approach towards his ultimate destination (i.e. entering the church).

The unusual collection of sculptures further invited the viewer to pause for a minute and contemplate on the nature of the exterior world and his journey, if so inclined. That is to suggest that they served as more than just decorative devices, with the purpose of guiding the worshiper in his actual and spiritual journey towards salvation. Conceivably, one could argue that the seemingly incoherent juxtaposition of sculptures was actually desirable. Old and new carvings found their place on the façades in what seems to have been a “timeless” journey towards salvation. Cultural traditions from Byzantium and Anatolia—easily classified or not—merged in a way to introduce the viewer to the landscape of this exterior world and the anthropogeography of the lands of Christians and Muslims alike—Byzantines, Armenians, Georgians and Seljuks. Within this overall scheme everyone was welcomed to make his own associations, depending on his cultural references. Moreover, one can argue that this merging of various cultural traditions was a direct reference to the real Jerusalem, a holy place for Jews, Christians and Muslims.

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\(^{951}\) Here it should be mentioned that the frieze might have been painted, see relatively Eastmond, “Narratives of the Fall,” 222.
alike—a place claimed and appropriated by the thirteenth century by people of different dogmas and nationalities (fig. 412).

The idea of a built-in approach to the interior of the church gains ground when looking at the specifics of each porch and the possible hierarchies that might have existed. Certainly, access from the different parts of the monastic complex could be gained by any of the three available porches and this was probably the usual practice. Yet, the southern porch was in terms of its location, scale, design and decoration the most prominent one and it is safe to assume that this was the designated “official” entrance, facing, more or less, the main gate of the monastery, being the largest and the most richly decorated of the three (fig. 328).952 The west and north porches, on the other hand, seemed to have been designed as possible entrances or exits. When entering or exiting from the West porch, the extensive Last Judgment worked as a reminder to the faithful of Christ’s Second Coming (figs. 362–364). Likewise, upon entering the church from the north porch the iconography offered an introduction to the story of salvation (with its various Old Testament scenes and prefigurations of the Virgin) and at the same time instructed the viewer on the church’s apostolic role (depiction of the Teaching of the Apostles, and the Baptizing of Peoples) (figs. 365–367). While the iconography of the north porch is greatly varied, subjects as the Hospitality of Abraham, the Tree of Jesse, or the Baptizing of the Peoples might have had additional resonance for a specific group of people: the non-Christian subjects or allies of the empire, especially those non-Christian rulers married into the family of the Grand

If this is the case, then we might envision that during royal ceremonies, different groups of people entered the church following a structured process.

Looking closer at the southern porch we can see how its sculptural program summarizes in the most condensed form what this “journey” and church is about (figs. 342–343). The sculptures seem to have been organized with some order and hierarchy. Two mythological creatures, a centaur and a semnurv or griffin, take up the spandrels flanking the central arched opening of the porch. A double cornice, curved around the central opening only, continues horizontally across the tympanum, separating visually its upper part. Above, the Genesis frieze runs across the entire length of the tympanum with various scenes depicting the Creation and Fall of Man. Flanking the central quatrefoil opening above the frieze, sculptures are organized in three distinct levels/rows. The bottom one seems to have held four independent panels of which

953 Seeking alliances, the Grand Komnenoi often resorted to marrying their daughters with Turkoman leaders of the wider area. This practice is well documented for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but there is no relevant information, as far as I know, for the thirteenth century: Savvides, Οι Μεγάλοι Κομνηνοί της Τραπεζούντας, 173-178. R. Shukurov, “Between Peace and Hostility: Trebizond and the Pontic Turkish Periphery in the Fourteenth Century,” Mediterranean Historical Review 9 (1994): 20-72. E. Zachariadou, “Trebizond and the Turks (1352-1402),” ArchPont 35 (1979): 333-358. For the thirteenth century: R. Shukurov, “Trebizond and the Seljuks (1204-1299),” Mésogéios 25-26 (2005): 71-136. On the other hand, Georgian-Seljuk marriage alliances had already taken place from the early thirteenth century. David Narin (1234-1293), for instance, was of Georgian-Seljuk descent: A. Peacock, “Georgia and the Anatolian Turks in the 12th and 13th centuries,” AnatSt 56 (2006): 127-146. As far as Trebizond is concerned, the intermarriages with Turks seem to have been initiated by Alexios II Grand Komnenos, i.e. from the early fourteenth century on: A. Bryer, “Greeks and Türkmens: The Pontic Exception,” DOP 29 (1975): 113-148; and also M. Kuršanskis, “Relations matrimoniales entre Grands Commênes de Trébizonde et princes géorgiens,” BK 34 (1976): 112-127, esp. 115-117. In any event, Panaretos,74,75 records that in 1362, Alexios III and his family were staying at the monastery of St. John the Sanctifier (for fear of the plague), where they received an embassy from the Turks (from Taccedin çelebi, emir of Limnia) for a prospective marriage alliance (which actually took place several years later, in 1379). Again in 1365, Panaretos, 76,77 records the visit of Maria (sister of Alexios III) and her husband, Kütübâ (emir of the “Amitiotai”) to Trebizond. During their visit, they did not stay at the palace, as we might have expected, but again at the monastery of St. John the Sanctifier, outside the walled city (for the monastery, see Janin, Grands centres, 282-283 and Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 228). From this we gather that royal monasteries were probably the designated residences for these occasions, although it is difficult to say what determined such a choice (keeping them at a distance due to suspicion?). Nevertheless, we expect that the Grand Komnenoi would have seized the opportunity during embassies visits to demonstrate to foreigners the splendor of their churches.

954 The sculptural decoration of the south porch is described in Talbot Rice, Hagia Sophia, 46-52, 54 and in Eastmond, “Narratives of the Fall,” 219-236 and idem, Hagia Sophia, 61ff (with an emphasis on the narrative frieze).

955 Cf., however, Eastmond, “Narratives of the Fall,” 220; and idem, Hagia Sophia, 61-63, who argues otherwise.
only the extreme right survives, depicting an eagle and identified by its inscription as the symbol of the evangelist Mark. We would expect the three remaining slabs of this level to hold the symbols of the other evangelists. Further up, the middle row contains two omphalia flanking the central quatrefoil opening, defining and advertising the place as the center of the world. The third row, just above the quatrefoil includes three independent panels depicting a fish (?) (west), intertwined doves with pomegranates (middle) and a double cross (east), symbols known for their funerary, eucharistic and salvation connotations, used here plausibly as abbreviated references to the various functions of the church. The protruding stone arch circumscribing the tympanum is left undecorated with the exception of its key stone, holding an eagle, the heraldic symbol of the Grand Komnenoi. The whole synthesis is contained within the crowning cornice depicting a continuous vine scroll, a symbol of Christ, of Truth and eternal life.

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956 Eastmond, *Hagia Sophia*, 62 suggests that “the logical locations for the other three evangelist symbols are taken up by other sculptures.” Yet, from the remaining three panels, the two flanking the quatrefoil now remain bare. The one to the extreme left is still in situ, but no longer identifiable.

957 Actually both slabs take the form of a pentomphalion (five interlacing circles, although in the eastern one, the central motif is a square placed diagonally), a very common Byzantine design. The technique, a combination of carving and inlay of stone or paint, is also at this time common in the Byzantine world. The slab to the west had according to Talbot Rice its central omphalion filled with “red paste” (does this indicate the use of κηρομαστίχη?), while the slab to the east has in its central square a star and a crescent. Rightly, I believe, Eastmond, *Hagia Sophia*, 82-83 argues against the interpretation of the motif as the political symbol of Islam. Given the symmetrical positions of the two slabs, and the inclusion of the motifs within the design of the pentomphalion, my suggestion would be that they were designed to be viewed in connection to each other, primarily as cosmological symbols: the sun, moon and stars. Any additional religious or political interpretations, inherently associated with cosmological symbols, depend on the immediate context of the specific decoration (here overwhelmingly Christian), but also on the viewer and his ability to draw associations based on his cultural background.

958 As was the case with the omphalia, these panels are also made with inlay technique. I believe that both iconography and technique is in the mainstream of the Byzantine tradition, but Talbot Rice, *Hagia Sophia*, 50-51, favors an eastern “influence.”

959 Eastmond, *Hagia Sophia*, 66-67, fig. 39, connects this motif with the Georgian tradition. Isn’t this a universal Christian symbol used continuously from the early Christian times onwards (starting from the catacombs)? In my opinion, when dealing with widely diffused motifs, which form part of a universal artistic vocabulary, the question of Eastern versus Western “influences” gets quite complicated, especially when projects of the highest level of patronage and of an eclectic character are involved, as in the case of Hagia Sophia Trebizond. One way to go about it is to examine the motif in its regional context, especially if we consider the project, partly at least, as a local creation. Given that Trebizond is geographically closer to Georgia, it is understandable why the search starts from there. Often this search ends up with very broad parallels. Lacking concrete parallels (where iconography, style and technique are involved) to showcase that artists have worked in both places, the argument rests primarily on the geographical proximity, and secondarily on the historical context (i.e. Trebizond as a local power, firmly rooted in Anatolia and the Caucasus).
past and present, myth and history, Old and New Testament, truth and convention are all combined in an unhistorical time and place, firmly rooted at the same time in the here (Trebizond) and now (the time of the Grand Komnenoi or any given time thereafter).

The overall program of the south porch situates the viewer in time and space and this idea becomes more explicit with the iconography and inscriptions of the dominating Genesis frieze. Faced with the story of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from Paradise the viewer is reminded of the original sin that brought about his quest for salvation. He is encouraged to identify himself with them, reminded of his “nakedness.” Just like Adam he stands before Paradise, which in

The other way around is to examine the motif within the overall design of the specific porch and church. In this case, the south porch of Hagia Sophia gives us some indications for a possible western influence, see relatively the review of Chr. Toufexi-Paschou in AP 29 (1968), esp. 436-439: a) the quatrefoil window is used predominantly in western architecture, b) The lion/cat head that marks the junction of the curved and horizontal section of the vine scroll cornice and similar heads on the horizontal extremities of said cornice also echo western practices. Talbot Rice, *Hagia Sophia*, 49, considers a possible western (Romanesque) influence but quickly discounts it in favor of an Eastern influence, c) The design of the porch with the triple arched opening—the central arch rising higher than the rest and slightly pointed— also seems very Constantinopolitan or even Western, d) The subject of Genesis—prominently placed here on the frieze—is also very common in the West (San Marco, for instance). Taken all together, they seem to indicate some sort of western influence on the design of the south porch of Hagia Sophia. Again, we should not exclude the possibility that these ideas and designs come from Constantinople, where such an assimilation of Western and Byzantine traditions is to be expected.

The frieze is treated in detail in Eastmond, “Narratives of the Fall,” 219-236 and again in idem, *Hagia Sophia*, 61-76. The narrative includes from right to left: the Creation of Eve, the Temptation of Eve, the Creation of Adam from the frieze but in my opinion this is partly compensated by the inscription, which runs above. The inscriptions in Hagia Sophia are not merely comments on the iconography but they function as generators of images (not necessarily depicted) and interact with the actual iconography. The one on the right reads: + Εὐφύτευσεν ὁ θεὸς Παράδεισον ἐν Ἐδέμ καὶ ἀνατολάς καὶ ἔθετο τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐκεῖ (And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed). The one on the left reads: + Ἀδὰμ ἀπεναντί τοῦ Παραδείσου καὶ τὴν ἴδιν γύμνωσεν θρηνῶν ὀδύρετο (Adam sat before Paradise and, lamenting his nakedness, he wept): transcriptions and translations as cited in Eastmond, “Narratives of the Fall,” 222 and idem, *Hagia Sophia*, 66 (: here read θρηνῶν not ζηρενῶν).

The protoplasts are depicted naked after their expulsion from Paradise. Their “nakedness” is further emphasized with the inscription that runs above.
turn defines this actual church as the “Paradise God planted eastward in Eden.” Through symbols and metaphors, the viewer is informed that he is about to enter Heavenly Jerusalem.

The wall paintings of the south porch must have highlighted its function as a passage. These are now entirely lost and therefore difficult to reconstruct with any certainty. Judging from few fragments, the most plausible interpretation is that Old Testament battles were once included (fig. 368). Given the iconography of the south and north porches, the one likely candidate here is Joshua in his capacity as a military and religious leader of the Israelites and a prefiguration of Christ. In this view, the narrative that starts from the exterior of the south porch with the Genesis frieze, unfolds into the interior walls of the same porch with the battles of the Israelites on their way to the Promised Land. At the same time, Joshua as a prefiguration of Christ is consistent with the iconography of the south porch and it is juxtaposed with the prefigurations of the Virgin on the wall paintings of the north porch. This sort of iconography would have specific resonances in this context. Any emperor entering the church would be reminded of his role as a military and spiritual leader of his people and even flatter himself through the identification with

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962 As emphasized by both iconography and inscriptions. See here Mesarites’ description of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople: “…the church had been gifted with its location not on earth but in heaven, or indeed in that paradise planted by God in the East” (Mesarites, Apostles, 863).
963 Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 115-116. Eastmond suggests in addition an alternative reconstruction with imperial triumphs of Manuel I. This seems to me highly unlikely as there is no evidence to support this hypothesis. The helmets of the soldiers, reminiscent, according to Eastmond, of contemporaneous Seljuk military dress, aimed probably at a conflation of Ismaelites and Seljuks.
964 Joshua appears in the Bible in Exodus, and thus we have a continuation from Genesis to Exodus. The illustrated Byzantine Octateuchs (which include the Book of Joshua) could have been the ultimate source for this iconography. Yet, the overall decorative program of the church with the various combinations and juxtapositions of cycles (which always takes into account the architectural setting) shows experience in monumental decoration.
965 See here again Mesarites’ description of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople: “…For there is a variety of gardens in it…vines and fig trees and pomegranates surpassing those of the Canaanites, whose fruits Joshua son of Nave, with Caleb, when they spied out the land of Canaan, brought back to the people in the desert, as a token of the land which was foretold to them” (Mesarites, Apostles, 863). It is interesting how Mesarites’ description fits with the iconography of Hagia Sophia Trebizond (vines and pomegranates decorating the south porch; and probably Joshua represented on the wall paintings). I am wondering whether this is merely a coincidence or whether the iconography of the south porch of Hagia Sophia also echoes the church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople.
Joshua and his triumphs. Likewise, any viewer would not only be reminded of the Old Testament narrative but would be encouraged to identify himself with the Israelites on his way to this Holy Land.

The journey reaches its climax upon entering the church. On the interior walls, the narrative of salvation continues with scenes from the New Testament and representations of individual saints. Although it is more extensive than most contemporaneous examples, this is the familiar iconography of a late Byzantine church taking place in a familiar architectural setting, that of a cross-in-square. It is mainly when one pays attention to the central bay of the naos and its synthetic architectural and visual iconography that the whole project comes together, acquiring a more defined meaning with specific references to Earthly and Heavenly Jerusalem.

On the floor the splendid omphalion underneath the dome marks the place as the center of the world (figs. 338–339). At the centre, the circular slab depicted an eagle attacking a hare (removed during the nineteenth-century restoration of the floor and now on display in the

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966 The Book of Joshua must have been quite popular within imperial circles. The tenth-century Joshua Roll is the only extant independent illustration of the Book, but it is believed to be a copy of an earlier MS, and along with its thirteenth-century annotations indicates a continuous interest on the subject. The very few Byzantine illustrated Octateuchs that survive come from a period ca. 1050-1300. These are discussed in detail most recently by J. Lowden, “Illustrated Octateuch Manuscripts: A Byzantine Phenomenon,” in The Old Testament in Byzantium, ed. P. Magdalino and R. Nelson (Washington, DC, 2010), 107-152. According to Lowden, the illustrated Octateuchs, commissions of Constantinopolitan aristocrats, are a middle and late Byzantine phenomenon. It is unfortunate that the Vatopedi MS 602 (ca. 1270-1300) lacks Genesis and Exodus (only the second volume is preserved), as it would have been interesting comparative material for the iconography of the south porch. The most famous example of Joshua in monumental painting comes from the Panagia Church of the monastery complex of Hosios Loukas, Greece, see M. Chatzidakis, Hosios Loukas (Athens, 1997), 13-17, fig. 5 (: citing additional examples from Cappadocia and Naxos).

967 Thus there is also a continuation from the original sin of Adam and Eve to the sins of the Israelites.

Byzantine museum of Thessaloniki). On the corners of the opus sectile floor, four reused marble columns with matching capitals—reminiscent of or possibly reused materials from the church of St. Polyeuktos in Constantinople—support the dome and give this central bay the form of a ciborium. This “iconography”—obviously chosen for its allusions to the earthly Jerusalem (the Holy Sepulcher and the Temple of Solomon)—finds its counterpart in the dome. Looking up we are faced with an extensive depiction of the Heavenly Jerusalem with the Pantokrator being surrounded by angels, apostles, prophets and the four evangelists “commenting” on the four major events that made the promise of salvation possible: the birth, baptism, death and resurrection of Christ (fig. 336).

If there was any ambiguity left as for the identification of this church with Earthly and Heavenly Jerusalem the two painted inscriptions in the dome bay put these ideas in words. The most prominent one (fig. 337), taken from the Psalms, encircles the image of the Pantokrator in the dome:

Out of the heaven did the Lord behold the earth, that he might hear the mournings of such as are in captivity and deliver the children appointed unto death that they may declare the name of the Lord in Sion and his worship in Jerusalem (Psalm 101: 20-22)

The second one, taken from Haggai, is placed on the face of the eastern double arch beneath the dome:

Out of the heaven did the Lord behold the earth, that he might hear the mournings of such as are in captivity and deliver the children appointed unto death that they may declare the name of the Lord in Sion and his worship in Jerusalem (Psalm 101: 20-22)

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969 For the liturgical and ceremonial use of the eagle on the floors of the Byzantine churches, see Prokopiou, Ο κοσμολογικός συμβολισμός, 128-129.
971 The form of the ciborium takes a variety of meanings. For the cosmological symbolism of the ciborium (as an abbreviated representation of the cosmos), and as a representation of the Tomb of Christ see, for instance, Angelidi, “Περιγραφή Αγίων Αποστόλων,” 119-120 and L. Bouras, “Ciborium,” ODB 1: 462 (with further references). On the wall paintings of Hagia Sophia, the Temple of Solomon is represented as a ciborium as will be discussed.
972 Talbot Rice, Hagia Sophia, 111-112; and Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 73, and 100.
973 This inscription survives in a more fragmentary state, but nonetheless it is safely reconstructed. Transcription and translation as cited in Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 102. Note, however, that the clear eschatological references of the
For the New glory of this temple shall surpass the old, saieth the Lord (Haggai 2: 9)

Taken together these inscriptions become a concise statement of the church’s design, function and symbolism. The place is identified as a New Sion and a New Jerusalem and, in the Lord’s very words, as a Heavenly Jerusalem. This is the land where the sinners come in hope of salvation and where those already dead (in this case buried underneath) expect deliverance from death. This is the place where the faithful worship God. By entering the church and participating in the worship of God, the “pilgrimage” to the Holy Land is being fulfilled and salvation becomes possible.

Greek text to Christ’s Second Coming—the original text reads the first (πρώτην) and last (ἐσχάτη), instead of the new and old—are somewhat lost in translation. Similarly, the word oikos (house) rendered as Temple significantly narrows the multivalent meaning of the word. Visually, it is also important that we have Lord All-mighty (παντοκράτωρ) who speaks these words—equally lost in translation—who is at the same time depicted on the dome. Cf. Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 104: “The choice of inscriptions at Trebizond cannot be fitted into any such straightforward pattern. They do not immediately relate to the imagery around them, and have no obvious theological significance in the same way that the apse inscription does…However, it is possible that they do have political significance…” In my view, these inscriptions do relate to the imagery of the dome very closely. But they work more than mere descriptions, setting the symbolical, liturgical and funerary tone of the church. This is after all the case of most inscriptions in Hagia Sophia Trebizond, which function in a very sophisticated way, like exegetical comments rather than descriptions. This becomes very clear especially in the case of the post-resurrection scenes in the area of sanctuary, where the inscriptions along with the iconography guide the viewer in understanding the true meaning of what is being represented. In my opinion, the suggested idea of a political meaning not filtered through a firm theological concept is alien to Byzantine religious art in general and to the decoration of a church in particular.
7. 4. Possible models for Hagia Sophia Trebizond

From the conception to the implementation of this ambitious project there were problems that masons were either unable or indifferent to address properly as Brounov and Ballance have amply demonstrated.\textsuperscript{975} This fact, in turn, makes us think that they were either working on a given model but were unable to solve particular problems in situ or that they felt comfortable enough to try something new, i.e. to improvise through a combination and reworking on familiar models. In either case, the great complexity of the project suggests that the model or models preexisted and therefore it is of interest to seek the sources of inspiration.

The location of the monastery west of Trebizond and its function as a teaching center, along with the cruciform layout of the church, its iconography and funerary function, recall the Apostoleion in Constantinople. This foundation, now long gone, acted as a model of paramount influence during the early and middle Byzantine periods. The most famous architectural “copies” of the Apostoleion include the church of St. John in Ephesos and the church of San Marco in Venice which reproduce several aspects of the church quite faithfully (figs. 369–370).\textsuperscript{976} Its impact on the architectural design of the late Byzantine churches is difficult to assess unless its five-dome articulation is perpetuated indirectly through the success and diffusion of the distinct type of five-domed churches of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries—such as the Paregoretissa in Arta, or the Holy Apostles and the Hagia Aikaterini in Thessaloniki—which reproduce this important aspect of the Apostoleion albeit in a different disposition.\textsuperscript{977}

\textsuperscript{975} Brounov, “Sainte-Sophie de Trébizonde,” 393-405; Ballance, \textit{Haghia Sophia}, 8-36.
\textsuperscript{977} The ultimate archetype of the five-domed churches of the late Byzantine period is considered to be the Nea of Basil I (built next to the imperial palace in Constantinople and consecrated in 880), known only from brief
With Hagia Sophia in Trebizond it seems that another aspect of the Apostoleion was to be reproduced: its cruciform layout, the hallmark of the church, particularly exalted in Mesarites’ description for its potential symbolic significance: “This Church, then, as we see it, is raised on five stoas, not, however, in the manner of that pool of Solomon at the Sheep-gate…” writes Mesarites and explains below:

The stoas, however, are not all stretched out at length, or unfolded side by side, but four of them have their foundations in the form of a cross, and face toward the four quarters of our earth, to the east, I mean, and the west and the north and the sea; while the other in the center stands up above them, and the direction of this one faces toward heaven, calling on the heavenly God-Man, I believe, to descend to it and through it, as though from heaven, and, in His portrayed form, to gaze down upon all of the sons of men, who by His command dwell upon the earth, but possess their commonwealth in heaven. And like a square-cut stone or a geometric outline, it [the central hall] binds the other four to itself and binds them to each other as well, and stands there as a kind of mediator and a reconciler of those which formerly were separated from each other, in this, I believe, imitating the mediator between God and man, who is portrayed in the midst of it [the central hall], Christ, truly the square-cut stone, who bound together those things which formerly were far divided, and who through Himself drew us, who were formerly His foes, to His own Father and our God. Beginning with Him, as though from a kind of kentron…”

Descriptions, see mainly: S. Ćurčić, Gračanica: King Milutin’s Church and Its place in Late Byzantine Architecture (University Park, PA, 1979), esp. 85-90. Buchwald, “Sardis Church E,” 277-283 and idem, “Western Asia Minor as a Generator of Architectural Forms in the Byzantine Period: Provincial Back-Wash or Dynamic Center of Production?,” JÖB 34 (1984): 199-234 (esp. 225); reprinted in idem, Form, Style and Meaning in Byzantine Church Architecture (Aldershot, 1999), Study V. Buchwald doubts that the Nea Ekklesia of Basil I was the first cross-in-square church with corner domes. He thinks that the description of the Nea by Constantine Porphyrogenitus better fits a cruciform church with five domes, like the Apostoleion. On the five-domed churches, see also I. Sinkevič, “Formation of sacred space in later Byzantine five-domed churches: A hierotopic approach,” in Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia, ed. A. Lidov (Moscow, 2006), 260-281. Ćurčić remarks that many of the five-domed churches were built as mausolea: S. Ćurčić, “Architecture in the Byzantine Sphere of Influence around the Middle of the Fourteenth Century,” in Deçani et l’ art byzantin au milieu du XIVe siècle, ed. V. Djurić (Belgrade, 1989), 58. This might serve as an indication that the original idea of the five dome articulation comes from the Apostoleion, although, according to Magdalino “…Byzantines tended to see this church [i.e. the Apostoleion] as a paradigm of the number four”: P. Magdalino, “Observations on the Nea Ekklesia of Basil I,” JÖB 37 (1987): 51-64, esp. 56-57; reprinted in idem, Studies on the History and Topography of Byzantine Constantinople (Aldershot, 2007), Study V.

978 Mesarites, Apostles, 869. I cite Mesarites’ text for it raises several important points regarding: a) the symbolic interpretation of the cruciform layout out of the church, b) the dome as heaven, c) the Pantokrator gazing down to all men, who dwell upon the earth, and d) the interpretation of Christ as the “square-cut stone” (this might be understood as a reference to the ashlar masonry of the Holy Apostles). All these points are very relevant to Hagia Sophia in Trebizond as well.
In the case of Hagia Sophia in Trebizond, the central hall which “binds” the four stoas takes the form of a fully developed cross-in-square church.\(^{979}\) Now if we accept that the cross-in-square naos is just a simplified rendering of the complicated interior layout of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople\(^ {980}\)—a building with a multivalent symbolism\(^ {981}\)—then we can understand the sources of inspiration and the benefits for the curious layout of Hagia Sophia in Trebizond. The suggestion is, in other words, that the architect of Hagia Sophia in Trebizond combined the formal layouts of the two most important Constantinopolitan monuments, Hagia Sophia and the Apostoleion, and aimed at transferring through form the imperial, cosmological and religious associations inherent in them. Through these immediate models, anagogical references to the monuments of the Holy Land—the church of the Holy Apostles in Sion, the Temple of Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulcher—were made possible.

Within this context we can understand many peculiarities of this church. The motivation, for instance, behind the construction of the podium might be understood in relation to both function and intended symbolism. Besides providing space for burials in a more organized way and securing greater visibility for the church above, the podium might have been implemented for its symbolic references to the high platform the Temple of Solomon was raised on.\(^ {982}\) In this way, the very idea of the podium as a man-made “Holy Land” on which the church stands becomes more explicit.

\(^{979}\) In the proposed hypothetical reconstruction of the Apostoleion by Angelidi, “Περιγραφή Αγίων Αποστόλων,” 113 (fig. 6), four small groin-vaulted bays take up the four corners of the central dome bay.

\(^{980}\) The complicated architectural form of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople was never reproduced faithfully. But the general suggestion of the cross-in-square as an allusion to Justinian’s Hagia Sophia seems to me correct. This idea is supported in this case also by the shared dedication of both foundations to Hagia Sophia.

\(^{981}\) As R. Ousterhout put it concisely (“New Temples and New Solomons,” 239), Hagia Sophia alone “may have been meant to evoke the Heavenly Jerusalem, or the Throne of God, or the Temple of Jerusalem, or quite possibly all three” but ultimately it was its multivalent symbolism and lack of an exclusive meaning that turned it into a powerful image (ibid., 252).

\(^{982}\) Similarly, the Nea in Jerusalem built by Justinian with Solomonic overtones was also raised on a high platform (Ousterhout, “New Temples and New Solomons,” 247).
In the same fashion we can explain the presence of the upper room above the narthex (figs. 340–341) as a symbolic reference to the room of the Last Supper and therefore to the church of Holy Sion.\(^983\) It should be noted here that the presence of an upper room above the narthex is neither rare nor a unique feature to Trebizond but most certainly a Constantinopolitan feature.\(^984\) Nevertheless, its function remains contested—either as a chapel\(^985\) or as a funerary chamber\(^986\)—since all its furnishing and decoration are now lost. A shallow apse in its east wall serves as an indication of some sort of liturgical function and the difficulty in gaining access to the room suggests that it may also have served as a treasury room for precious vessels or manuscripts.\(^987\) The suggested symbolic interpretation of the upper room is reinforced by the representation of the Washing of the Feet and the Last Supper—conveniently located over the vault of the central western bay of the naos (figs. 357–358).\(^988\) Whether this room over the narthex imitated an architectural form of the Apostoleion in Constantinople or Sion is no longer possible to say.\(^989\)

In addition to the architectural form, the ashlar masonry of the church might have been deliberately chosen to make the intended references to the models of Hagia Sophia even more

\(^983\) See Pixner, “Church of the Apostles Found on Mt. Zion,” 31-32, with plans of the Crusader Church of St. Mary, including plan and section showing the location of the Room of Last Supper above the Room of the Washing of the Feet.

\(^984\) Examples from Constantinople include: the monastery of Lips (Fenari Isa Camii, north church), the church of Christ Pantepoptes, the Pantokrator monastery (Zeyrek Kilise Camii) and the Parekklesion of the Pammakaristos (Fethiye Camii), see relatively Ch. Delvoye, “Empore,” RbK 2 (1971): 129-144. Examples of gallery chambers from Serbia (Gračanica, Žiča, Sopoćani and the complex of churches at Peć) are discussed in Ćurčić, Gračanica, 96-99. Ćurčić concludes that the very concept of a gallery chamber belongs to the Constantinopolitan tradition.

\(^985\) Ballance, Hagia Sophia, 20-21 (with a thorough description of the upper room).

\(^986\) Lafontaine-Dosogne, “Remarques,” 380-381.

\(^987\) Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 41. In fact, the difficult access to this room from the floor level of the naos and the narrow passage of 60cm in the thickness of its southern bay that gives access to the roof level at the south-west corner of the dome block (see the full description of S. Ballance as cited above) essentially means that it was through this upper room that one could eventually reach the roof level of the church for repair purposes. This is to suggest that it had a very practical function as well.

\(^988\) For the location of the Washing of the Feet and the Last Supper, see Talbot Rice, Hagia Sophia, fig. 55, 3a and b.

\(^989\) See also Wilkinson, Jerusalem Pilgrims, 353: “Armen.4-165 is an obscure passage, but it seems to state that the sanctuary of Holy Sion was not in the normal place, but in the upper room in the gallery.”
explicit. No doubt, stonework in general is a local characteristic of both Trebizond and the wider Caucasian and Anatolian region and such a choice would make sense for practical but also for symbolic and political reasons. Admittedly, the end result—the polished exterior of Hagia Sophia—finds no easy parallels in the local context and thus the very idea of local masons working exclusively in Hagia Sophia loses ground. This in turn makes us consider the possibility of Constantinopolitan masons being brought to Trebizond to work alongside local masons in order to clothe the architectural form of the church in masonry reminiscent of its ultimate models. 990 As far as we know Hagia Sophia in Constantinople was originally faced externally with marble slabs 991 and the external appearance of the church of the Holy Apostles must have

990 This suggestion seems initially fanciful, but the ashlar masonry of Hagia Sophia does not correspond with anything known from Anatolia or the Caucasus. At the same time ashlar masonry seems to have been in vogue particularly during the thirteenth century under the Latins, who undertook several restoration projects in Constantinople, and previously in the Holy Land. Under the reign of the Byzantine emperor Manuel I (1143–80) close ties between the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem and Byzantium existed: C. Brand and A. Cutler, “Jerusalem, Kingdom of,” ODB 2: 1036. We know that Constantinopolitan artists worked in the Holy Land (Nazareth and Bethlehem) alongside locally trained masons and Westerners: J. Folda, “Crusader Art and Architecture,” ODB 1: 555–557 and idem, Crusader Art: The art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land, 1099–1291 (Aldershot, 2008), chapter 1 (esp. 47ff). And they were most certainly exposed to Western construction techniques in Constantinople working alongside Western masons during the Latin occupation. As far as the assimilation of Western and Byzantine practices is concerned, the evidence from Constantinople alone is meager. Yet, Serbia, the Frankish principalities in Greece (mainly in Peloponnese and Athens), and the Holy Land gives us some idea of what might have been the case in the capital as well during Latin domination.

991 As stated in Kostenec, “Hagia Sophia”: “The facades of Hagia Sophia were neither plastered nor presented their brick masonry but they were faced with white Proconnesian marble slabs.” Cf., however, R. Jenkins and C. Mango, “The Date and Significance of the Tenth Homily of Photius,” DOP 9-10 (1956): 131 and note 46: “The west façade of St. Sophia had a revetment of Proconnesian marble, traces of which still remain.” This was also the case of the ninth-century palatine church of the Virgin of the Pharos, rebuilt by Michael III: “The whole façade (πρόσοψις), i.e. presumably the western façade of the church, was covered with a revetment of white marble, so perfectly joined together that it seemed to be monolithic” (Jenkins and Mango, ibid., 131). On the church of the Virgin of the Pharos, see also: I. Kalavrezou, “Helping Hands for the Empire: Imperial Ceremonies and the Cult of Relics at the Byzantine Court,” in Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, DC, 1997), esp. 55-57; and most recently P. Magdalino, “L’égérie du Phare et les reliques de la passion à Constantinople (vii/viii-xii siècles),” in Byzance et les reliques du Christ, ed. J. Durand and B. Flusin (Paris, 2004), 15-30. A. Lidov, “The Theotokos of the Pharos: The Imperial Church-Reliquary as Constantinopolitan Holy Sepulcher,” in The Byzantine World: The Art of Constantinople and National Traditions (Moscow, 2005), 79-108 (in Russian with English summary).

The case of the eleventh-century church of Christ Pantepoptes, whether it was similarly partially covered externally with marble revetments, as initially suggested by Van Millingen, has been contested by R. Ousterhout, “Some Notes on the Construction of Christos Ho Pantepoptes (Eski Imaret Camii) in Istanbul,” DChAE 16 (1991-1992): 47-56, esp. 49. Interestingly, the fragments with sculptural crosses found during the excavations of the Pantepoptes (Ousterhout, ibid., fig. 3) resemble closely some of the crosses built in Hagia Sophia in Trebizond or found in excavations (Talbot Rice, Hagia Sophia, 52, fig. 11).
been similar.\textsuperscript{992} For these reasons, the possibility that the polished ashlar masonry of Hagia Sophia in Trebizond was to a great extent meant to allude to Constantinopolitan models and through them to the buildings of the Holy Land should not be ruled out.

The iconography of the painted program supports such an interpretation. Eastmond thoroughly discussed the pronounced emphasis on the apostles in Hagia Sophia and demonstrated that part of its iconographic program was modeled after the Apostoleion.\textsuperscript{993} The relation to Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, on the other hand, evoked mainly through the shared name and possibly through the architectural design of the church is iconographically more elusive. Such a relation is built indirectly, I believe, through references to its model’s symbolism—as the New Temple of Solomon, an Earthly and Heavenly Jerusalem. While this could be the case with any Byzantine church,\textsuperscript{994} the iconography of Hagia Sophia in Trebizond evokes the Temple in fairly specific ways and extends beyond the area of the dome to encompass the areas of the sanctuary and narthex as well.

Within the larger thematic iconography of the sanctuary, for instance, scenes have been carefully chosen and located for their specific Temple associations. Two such scenes are included in the prothesis and its preceding bay, dedicated to the early life of John the Baptist: the Annunciation to Zacharias\textsuperscript{995} and the Murder of Zacharias\textsuperscript{996} (figs. 349–350). This Temple

\textsuperscript{992} This seems to be the case given a) Dark’s evidence from the site, who assigned the well-coursed ashlar blocks (light whitish-grey limestone) on which the Fatih stands to the Apostoleion; b) the representation of the church in the \textit{Menologion} of Basil II (976-1025) as “whitewashed”; and c) the various written accounts on the church: see relatively Dark and Özgümüş, “Holy Apostles,” 393-413.

\textsuperscript{993} Eastmond, \textit{Hagia Sophia}, 108-115.

\textsuperscript{994} Ousterhout, “New Temples and New Solomons,” 223-233 (with further references).

\textsuperscript{995} The correct identification of the scene in Lafontaine-Dosogne, “Remarques,” 388, fig. 7. The scene of the angel appearing to Zacharias takes places in front of the Temple, which is here represented by a six-column ciborium.

\textsuperscript{996} Talbot Rice, \textit{Haghia Sophia}, 93 (fig. 59). The scene is located in the bay preceding the prothesis (fig. 55, 9a). Zacharias, John the Baptist’s father, was a high priest at the Temple. Regarding the slaying of Zacharias between the porch and the altar of the Temple, see Wilkinson, \textit{Jerusalem Pilgrims}, 357. And of the migration of “Holy sites” and
imagery is mirrored in the diakonikon of the church, dedicated to the early life of the Virgin, with the scenes of Joachim and Anna bringing offerings to the Temple\textsuperscript{997} and the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple (figs. 351–352).\textsuperscript{998}

The desire to associate the sanctuary of Hagia Sophia with the Temple of Jerusalem is explicit in the iconography of the bema as well. David and Solomon are represented once more on the under face of the sanctuary arch, thus equating the entrance to the bema with entering the Temple or the Holy of Holies in particular (fig. 356).\textsuperscript{999} The idea of conflating the bema of this church with the Temple of Jerusalem is further demonstrated visually with one of the post-resurrection scenes on the north wall of the apse, the Incredulity of Thomas (fig. 353).\textsuperscript{1000} This scene, Christ’s appearance to the Disciples/Incredulity of Thomas, follows John’s Gospel and takes place in the Temple of Jerusalem, which is indicated here by the architectural setting and the closed door of the Temple, in front of which Christ stands.\textsuperscript{1001} In fact, the very location of

\textsuperscript{997} Talbot Rice, \textit{Haghia Sophia}, 103-104, 181, fig. 68; fig. 55, 14a. The Temple is represented by a ciborium.
\textsuperscript{998} Talbot Rice, \textit{Haghia Sophia}, 89, 99-100, 182; This scene (pl. 27, B; fig. 65) is placed thoughtfully in the bay preceding the diakonikon (fig. 55, 12b). Here the architectural background is more elaborate than the rest of the representations of the Temple. At the Chora monastery, the cycle of the Virgin’s early life takes up the inner narthex, see J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, “Iconography of the Cycle of the Life of the Virgin,” in \textit{The Kariye Djami}, vol. 4, ed. P. Underwood (Princeton, 1975), 161-194.
\textsuperscript{999} Talbot Rice, \textit{Haghia Sophia}, 95-97, fig. 61. David and Solomon are represented in Hagia Sophia at least two more times: a) among the prophets of the dome, and b) in the image of the Anastasis (partially preserved). The choice, therefore, for this repetition must have been determined by the desire to identify this sanctuary with the Temple.
\textsuperscript{1000} Talbot Rice, \textit{Haghia Sophia}, 124-125, fig. 87 and 171.
\textsuperscript{1001} According to John’s Gospel the first two appearances of Christ to the Disciples take place in the Temple of Jerusalem (John 20. 19-29), while the third one (John 21) at the Sea of Tiberias. Therefore, both post-resurrection
these post-resurrection/apostolic scenes in the area of the sanctuary can be understood in relation
to the closing verse of Luke’s Gospel: “And were [i.e. the apostles] continually in the temple,

The desire to associate Hagia Sophia in Trebizond with the Temple of Jerusalem can also
explain some iconographic peculiarities of its narthex, almost exclusively devoted to narrating of
Christ’s Miracles. Of particular interest, in this respect, is the image of Christ Discoursing with
the Doctors in the Temple (south bay, vault)1003 preceded by the image of Christ Curing the Man
Born Blind at the Pool of Siloam (fig. 361).1004 The selection of the latter image is in accordance
with the overall thematic iconography of the narthex and therefore visual associations with Sion
and Jerusalem1005 might have been coincidental. Yet, the former does not easily fit in within the
overall narrative. This scene could be viewed independently, as a separate event in Christ’s life
(probably underlining the monastery’s function as a teaching center) or in relation to the other
scenes of the narthex as the opening event of Christ’s public ministry.1006 The iconography and
inscription of the scene (Luke 2: 46) refer to Christ’s teaching at the Temple when he was twelve
years old,1007 but it could also be viewed in relation to the image of Christ’s Baptism (same bay,
est wall and vault),1008 thus recalling to mind the Gospels’ narrative about Christ’s later
discourse with the doctors in the Temple of Jerusalem about the nature of the baptism of John
Whatever the case, the choice of the image of Christ among the doctors invited the viewers to contrast the narthex of this church with the atrium/porch of the Temple where the action of this event took place.

Finally, I would like to briefly address a few iconographic issues not fully examined yet that can provide us with: a) additional support for the relation of Hagia Sophia Trebizond with its immediate models; b) further indications for the church’s symbolism; c) indications that this iconography is neither unique nor a local innovation—as has been suggested—but could be understood within the context of contemporaneous artistic trends and developments emanating from Constantinople.

The first issue involves the extensive iconography of the dome and its inscription. As already noted by Talbot Rice, the depiction of both apostles and prophets in the drum of the dome at the same time is rare because usually the one or the other group was depicted in accordance with the space available. Consequently, he explained this as a sign of lavishness. In fact, what determines the group represented is not so much the availability of space but rather the adherence to the two distinct types of dome decoration, featuring either the Ascension or the Pantokrator and prophets. During the late Byzantine period, the latter prevailed as

1009 That the three images—Christ’s Baptism, Miracle at the Pool of Siloam, and Christ among the Doctors—could be viewed in relation to each other is indicated by their location. This group of images begins at the east wall of the south bay of the narthex and extends up to the middle of its vault. A wide decorative border separates this group from the following image of the Marriage Feast at Cana.
1010 Talbot Rice, Hagia Sophia, 179-180.
1011 For the two prevailing systems of dome decoration during the middle Byzantine period, see N. Gioles, Ο Βυζαντινός τρούλος και το εικονογραφικό του πρόγραμμα (Μέσα 6ος αι-1204) (Athens, 1990), with summary in German.
demonstrated in a number of surviving examples and variations of the type, whereas the former (the Ascension) is still represented with a few thirteenth and fourteenth-century examples.\footnote{1012 T. Papamastorakis, Ο Διάκοσµος του τρούλου των ναών της Πολαϊολόγειας Περιόδου στη Βαλκανική Χρονόγνηση και την Κύπρο (Athens, 2001), 39-57.}

In Hagia Sophia we seem to deal with the merging of the two systems: the Pantokrator is being depicted on the dome but the prominence is given to the apostles (taking up the space between the windows) at the expense of the prophets (delegated in the embrasures of the windows). This peculiar development also seems to be related with the decoration of the dome of the Apostoleion. Mesarites’ description of the Apostoleion implies that the image of Christ Pantokrator in the dome replaced the earlier Ascension and that the apostles still held their prominent place.\footnote{1013 N. Gioles, Η Ανάληψη του Χριστού βάσει των μνηµείων της Α’ Χιλιετηρίδος (Athens, 1981), 176-181.} It is possible, then, that the Apostoleion had a similar dome decoration as Hagia Sophia in Trebizond but to what extent this latter depended on the former is impossible to say. It would not be surprising though, if both inscriptions and prophets of Hagia Sophia’s dome also formed part of the Apostoleion’s renovated decoration.\footnote{1014 As indicated by Mesarites’ “Invocation of the Apostles”: Mesarites, Apostles, 867ff.} The dome’s inscription surrounding the Pantokrator (Psalm 101: 20-22) is to be found on the domes of a series of fourteenth-century churches. The most prominent examples include the Holy Apostles in Thessaloniki (decorated ca. 1310-1314), the church of the Virgin Hodegetria at Peć (1337), the church of Christ Saviour at Prizren (1348-1370), St. George in Sofia (decorated \footnote{1015 This suggestion is born out of some considerations: a) Mesarites’ description/interpretation of the Pantokrator (cited above) fits well with Hagia Sophia’s dome decoration and inscription, b) the dome of the Apostoleion must have been significantly wider and therefore, in terms of space, there was no problem of placing prophets in the embrasures of the windows, c) In Hagia Sophia Trebizond the inscription around the Pantokrator had to be abbreviated in order to be both legible from below and at the same time complete, d) the content of Hagia Sophia’s dome inscription would fit the function of the Apostoleion as the burial place for emperors and patriarchs alike, while its references to Sion and Jerusalem would make desirable connections between the Apostoleion and its prototype in Sion, e) the same inscription appears in a series of buildings that must have been influenced directly or indirectly by the Apostoleion. But this will remain a hypothesis. Alternatively, we might consider the possibility of the artists in Hagia Sophia Trebizond updating their original model with the inclusion of the prophets and inscription based on current models for a dome’s decoration and the particular context of this church.}
in the second half of the fourteenth century), and the church of St. Demetrios at Markov Manastir (painted in 1376/7). Interestingly, all these buildings represent the highest level of royal or ecclesiastical patronage of their time and some at least might have used the Apostoleion in Constantinople as a possible model of inspiration.

A last point concerning Hagia Sophia’s dome decoration is the unique synthesis of Christological scenes accompanying the portraits of the Evangelists and their symbols (fig. 336). The origins of this sort of decoration is attributed to the combination of two different systems of decoration found in monumental architecture, the one associated with the pendentives of the cross-in-square, the other with the squinches of the octagonal churches (Hosios Loukas, Chios and Daphni), or to the juxtaposition of Christological scenes with the portraits of the Evangelist

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1016 A fuller catalogue is given in Papamastorakis, Διάκοσµος, 75 (with additional bibliography in his corresponding catalogue entries).
1017 The founder of the Holy Apostles in Thessaloniki, for instance, was the patriarch Niphon. For an overview of the relevant literature, see most recently Chr. Mauropolou-Tsioumi, “Άγιοι Απόστολοι,” in Ψηφιδωτά της Θεσσαλονίκης (4ος-14ος), ed. Ch. Bakirtzis (Athens, 2012), 296-353. The complex at Peć, on the other hand, became the seat of the Serbian archbishopric (and from 1346 patriarchate), and the burial place of Serbian archbishops. The first Serbian archbishop, Sava I (St. Sava), is credited with the foundation of the church of the Holy Apostles at Peć, upon his return from the Holy Land in 1230—in reality, the church was built by Sava’s successor, archbishop Arsenije I (1233-1263). According to the written sources, the church was built in the image of the glorious Sion church and the church of St. Sabbas in Jerusalem. Although it is in doubt whether there was any physical resemblance with its claimed prototypes (besides the dedication and the iconographic references to the Sion church), a possible source for this foundation at Peć was the church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, the burial place of patriarchs and Byzantine emperors: see relatively Gavrilović, “Between Latins and Greeks,” 76-83. G. Subotić, L’art médiéval du Kosovo (Paris, 2006), 28-36. Pantelić, Dečani, 90-92. The church of the Virgin Hodegetria was added to the complex at Peć by the archbishop Danilo II (1324-1337), see Subotić, Kosovo, 201ff. On the iconography and inscription of the dome, see the brief description by Velmans in T. Velmans, V. Korač, and M. Šuput, Rayonnement de Byzance, (Paris, 1999), 264-265, figs. 224-225. For a variety of reasons, associations with Peć might have been desirable for the decoration of the other foundations of the Serbian nobility, like St. Savior (Sv. Spas) at Prizren, and Markov Manastir. For Sv. Spas, see Papamastorakis, Διάκοσµος, 26, 31-32 (no. 69), 311 and passim, who places the construction of the church during the reign of Stefan Dušan and its decoration between 1348 and 1370 (following Djurić). On the contrary S. Ćurčić, “Two examples of Local Building Workshops in Fourteenth-Century Serbia,” Zograf 7 (1976): 45-51, argues that the church has been built before 1348, during the second or the third decade of the fourteenth century, a suggestion that probably affects the dating of the paintings (ibid., esp. 48, note 10). For Markov Manastir, see infra, note 1091. Similarly, the rebuilding and decoration of the dome of St. George in Sofia takes place at a time (in the 1370s?), certainly before 1382 when the Turks captured Serdica) when Serdica is a bishopric under the supervision of the metropolitan of Vidin and ultimately of the patriarch of Constantinople (instead of the patriarch of Tarnovo), see relatively A. Kirin, “The Rotunda of St. George and Late Antique Serdica: From Imperial Palace to Episcopal complex” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2000), 55-62. The artists responsible for its decoration probably came from Constantinople: Velmans, Rayonnement, 289, fig. 240.
found in manuscript illumination of the twelfth century. A similar decoration albeit in a different arrangement is to be found in the fourteenth-century church of St. Demetrios at Peć (Kosovo, Serbia) and, most importantly, in the late thirteenth-century Paregoretissa in Arta (1294-1296), again in a different arrangement and this time in a different medium (figs. 113–118). Nonetheless, regardless of the differences in medium and arrangement, all these examples point towards the same direction: the need to integrate major Christological feasts in the area of the dome. This was accomplished in each individual building according to the architectural setting and the training of the workshop.

Closer to Trebizond, in terms of the juxtaposition of portraits with accompanying scenes on the pendentives, is the dome decoration of the narthex of the church dedicated to the

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1018 Talbot Rice, *Hagia Sophia*, 180; Lafontaine-Dosogne, “Remarques,” 384-385; and Eastmond, *Hagia Sophia*, 119-120. Talbot Rice discussed the selection of scenes in Hagia Sophia at Trebizond in relation to Hosios Loukas and Daphni, but not in relation to that of Chios (probably because the Nea Moni contains eight Christological scenes). As Maguire has ably demonstrated, the selection and arrangement of the scenes in Nea Moni was devised to emphasize four of them (the Nativity, Baptism, Crucifixion and the Anastasis—the same selection as Trebizond) at the expense of the others, for not only do they correspond to the major feasts of the orthodox church (Christmas, Epiphany, Easter), but also to imperial ideology and ceremonial: H. Maguire, “The Mosaics of Nea Moni: An Imperial Reading,” *DOP* 46 (1992): 205-214. A similar attempt to combine the two different systems of decoration is to be observed in the idiosyncratic dome of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo. The dome bay is formed by a central square pierced by four arches, surmounted by a dome on “squinches.” On the face of the eastern arch is the Annunciation and on the western arch (facing the Annunciation), the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. On the zone above, the deep angular squinches are taken up by the four evangelists, and the four flat niches by the four prophets (David and Solomon, John the Baptist and Zacharias): see relatively O. Demus, *The mosaics of Norman Sicily* (New York, 1988), 25-72. Also, E. Kitzinger, “The son of David: A note on a mosaic in the Capella Palatina in Palermo,” in *Ευφρόσυνον: Αφιέρωµα στον Μανόλη Χατζήδακη* (Athens, 1991), 239-242. In the case of the Cappella Palatina, therefore, the evangelists and a careful selection of prophets occupy the squinches, whereas the two selected feasts are taking up the arches below the dome. Interestingly, two scenes, the Crucifixion and Anastasis, are missing from the Christological cycle; see relatively W. Tronzo, *The Cultures of His Kingdom: Roger II and the Cappella Palatina in Palermo* (Princeton, 1997), 55-56.

1019 As already noted by Talbot Rice, *Hagia Sophia*, 180; and Lafontaine-Dosogne, “Remarques,” 384-385. The church of St. Demetrios was added to the complex at Peć by archbishop Nikodim I (1317-1324) and decorated in 1345 by the archbishop and later patriarch Joanikije II (1338-1354), see Subotić, *Kosovo*, 198 and 210-215; and Papamastorakis, Διάκοσµος, 26, 31, 55, 259-260, 304, 313. The dome of St. Demetrios features the Ascension (following the dome decoration of the older church of the complex that of the Holy Apostles) and under the dome six Christological scenes: Nativity and Presentation of Christ in the Temple (south), Baptism and Transfiguration (west), Raising of Lazarus and Christ entering Jerusalem (north), the latter repainted in the seventeenth century. Cf. Talbot Rice, *Hagia Sophia*, 180.

1020 As far as I know the case of the Paregoretissa is not discussed in relation to Trebizond. As we have seen, the Christological scenes at the Paregoretissa take the form of sculptural arches. Just two of them survive attached to the north and west arches supporting the dome, representing the Nativity and Crucifixion.
Archangel Michael in Lesnovo. The church was commissioned by the despot John (Jovan) Oliver, a local feudal lord under the Serbian king and later emperor Stefan Dušan. The construction of the naos began in 1341, whereas the domed narthex was added to the church and decorated in 1349. What is interesting in Lesnovo is that, by the mid-fourteenth century, the painter of the narthex felt comfortable enough to render a known subject differently. The dome contains the image of Christ Pantokrator but the traditional representation of the four evangelists on the pendentives has been replaced with the portraits of the great church fathers (St. Gregory of Nazianzus, St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil and St. Athanasius) depicted as sources of wisdom (figs. 371–372). They are seated in front of their desks, reading and writing with the inspiration of allegorical figures of Divine Wisdom, while their teachings are represented either as a river or as a well to which people come to drink. The composition of portraits and scenes is so close to that of Trebizond that it suggests that the painter here and in Trebizond depended on some common models, which they reworked according to the requirements of their respective churches. Given the geographical distribution of these churches (medieval Serbia, Epiros, and Trebizond) and their patrons’ relation to Constantinople, there is good reason to suggest their dependence on contemporaneous developments in the Byzantine capital.

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1022 For the despot Oliver (Ιωάννης Λίβερος), see PLP 14888. For his wife, Anna Maria (Μαρία Λιβέρισσα), see PLP 14886. Her identification with the widow of Stefan Dečanski (father of Dušan), the Constantinopolitan princess Maria Palaiologina (PLP 21391) has been refuted. See additionally Pantelić, Dečani, 63, note 190. Also G. Soulis, The Serbs and Byzantium During the Reign of Tsar Stephen Dušan (1331-1355) and His Successors (Washington, DC, 1984), 64. Papamastorakis, Άιωνος, 311.

The second issue involves the “unusual” location of the “apostolic scenes” in the sanctuary of Hagia Sophia, which is considered an innovation of Trebizond (figs. 353–355).1024 A different selection of post-resurrection scenes can be seen, for instance, at the monastery of the Pantokrator at Dečani (Kosovo, Serbia),1025 this time grouped together on the groin-vault over the bema and on the south wall.1026 In both cases the location has been determined by the symbolism of the sanctuary as a place of sacrifice and Divine presence. This is made clear in Trebizond where both the iconography and accompanying inscriptions of all post-resurrection scenes underline the Eucharistic character and/or the message of seeing and witnessing the Divine presence.1027

The similar location of post-resurrection scenes in two geographically remote areas (Serbia and Trebizond) points, in turn, towards a common cultural and artistic center, which must have been Constantinople. This is verified in the case of Dečani, the Serbian royal monastery and mausoleum (began in 1329 and completed around 1350), not only through the iconography and style of the frescoes but also through the relations of its patrons, Stefan Uroš III Dečanski (1321-31) and his son Stefan Uroš IV Dušan (1331-55), with the Palaiologoi in

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1026 For the scenes over the groin-vault of the bema in Dečani, see Subotić, *Kosovo*, fig. 59. These include: a) The women at the tomb together with the Women informing the Disciples about Christ’s Resurrection, b) Mary Magdalene standing at the Tomb and Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene (“Noli me tangere”), c) St. Peter at the tomb, Journey to Emmaus, Supper at Emmaus, d) Christ appearing to the Disciples on the Mountain of Galilee, e) Christ appearing to the Apostles on the Sea of Tiberias. And on the south wall: Christ’s appearance to the Disciples (“Peace be with you”). The post-resurrection scenes in Trebizond include: a) Christ appearing to the Disciples/Incredulity of Thomas, b) Christ appearing to the Disciples on the Sea of Tiberias and the Draught of Fishes, c) the so-called Mission of the Apostles, and d) a fourth scene, now completely destroyed.
1027 In all cases the apostles are the witnesses of Theophanies. This is indicated by their gestures and inscriptions. This becomes more obvious in the so-called Mission of the Apostles, which is treated rather unconventionally, combining iconography from several “theophanies,” the Transfiguration and the Ascension included.
Constantinople. The case of Trebizond, I suspect, was similar and the patronage of the church might hold the key. At the very least, then, the nature of this iconography in both Serbia and Trebizond follows clearly established Constantinopolitan model/s and cannot be credited in either case to “local” innovations. In fact, it is the selection and treatment of the post resurrection scenes in Hagia Sophia in Trebizond that demonstrates a great sensitivity in selecting from a wider repertoire the most appropriate ones for this specific context.

From the analysis so far we can sum up some important conclusions:

1) Hagia Sophia was conceived, constructed and decorated as a unit with intended function/s and symbolism/s.
2) Unique features, peculiarities, and innovations of the architectural design, sculptural and painted decoration serve effectively the function and symbolism of the church.
3) As an overall synthesis depends—more than previously thought of—on Constantinopolitan models, ideas, and practices.
4) The very idea of local improvisations—often overstated—can be held in check when examining Hagia Sophia within its wider Byzantine context.

1028 Stefan Dečanski and his son Stefan Dušan were exiled to Constantinople from 1314 to 1321, and stayed at the Pantokrator Monastery: Soulis, *The Serbs and Byzantium*, 1-2. Pantelić, *Dečani*, 21-22. Ćurčić, “Architecture in the Byzantine Sphere,” 56-57. According to Ćurčić, this phase of cultural “byzantinization” of the Serbian court around the mid-fourteenth century is directly linked to Constantinople—rather than Thessaloniki and Epiros, which was the case during the first two decades of the fourteenth century under king Milutin (ibid., 55-68).

1029 The Apostoleion in Constantinople had according to Mesarites’ description a fuller representation of post-resurrection scenes, which included those represented in Dečani and Trebizond. This is understandable given the enormous scale of the building. From this wider repertoire patrons and artists could choose the ones which best fitted the available space and context of each church and the symbolism intended.
7.5. The date and patronage of the church

Meager evidence remains for settling the date and patronage of Hagia Sophia with any certainty. Our textual sources record that in the early fourteenth century (before 1340) Hagia Sophia was a functioning monastery.\(^{1030}\) A series of graffiti on the external face of the central apse of the church recorded by Millet during his visit to Trebizond, narrow down its construction within the thirteenth century.\(^{1031}\) The earliest of these funerary graffiti bore the date of November 23, 1291 and referred to the death of a certain monk named Kokkinos, while a second bearing the date of 1293 mentioned the death of the *hieromonachos* (priest-monk) Branas.\(^{1032}\) Inscriptional evidence, therefore, gives us the last decade of the thirteenth century as a terminus ante quem for the katholikon’s construction.

The now widely accepted mid-thirteenth-century date of the church rests exclusively on a long-lost portrait depicting an emperor Manuel, traditionally identified with Manuel I Grand Komnenos (1238-63), the *ktetor* of the monastery (fig. 375).\(^{1033}\) This portrait is known to us through two independent records: the lengthy description of George Finlay who visited Trebizond in 1850 and a drawing made by Prince Gagarin sometime later (before 1866),

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\(^{1030}\) This is inferred from Lazaropoulos’ passage mentioning in retrospective a banquet held in Hagia Sophia in the presence of Constantine Loukites (died ca. 1340): Lazaropoulos, *Synopsis*, Miracle 24.

\(^{1031}\) Millet, “Les monastères et les églises de Trébizonde,” 428-429 (fig. 4), 431 (fig. 8).

\(^{1032}\) Janin, *Grands centres*, 289, note 3.

\(^{1033}\) The attribution of the portrait to Manuel I is unanimous in modern scholarship: see relatively Talbot Rice, *Hagia Sophia*; Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, 232; and Eastmond, *Hagia Sophia*. Likewise, Cailler and Joubert, “Sainte-Sophie de Trébizonde,” 104, accept (following Eastmond) a date around 1255, mainly on the basis of the evidence provided by the painted portrait of Manuel. Note, however, that there is an overlooking in the statement that the portrait (représentation) of Manuel I “…avait été vue et relevée par le prince Gagarin au début du XX° siècle.” Equally there is a misunderstanding about the location and the inscription of the portrait, which is referred to as situated in the south porch and that the inscription of the portrait designates Manuel as a new David: “Car si l’inscription accompagnant le souverain dédicant dans le porche sud le désigne comme un nouveau David…” (ibid., 109). As will be discussed, the portrait was placed in all probability in the interior of the church and not in any of the porches. Equally, the allusion to David is made through the iconography of the portrait and not through its inscription.
The portrait has received a thorough analysis by Eastmond and its significance has been already acknowledged: it provides the only concrete evidence for the date of the construction, patronage and possible function of the church as the imperial mausoleum of Manuel I. More importantly, it provides the earliest evidence that the rulers of Trebizond adopted the imperial title of the Byzantine emperors of Constantinople. For all its importance, a number of questions regarding its original location, iconography and function persist. As I hope to demonstrate, the attribution of the portrait to Manuel I and therefore the attribution of the church’s construction to his patronage are far from certain.

7. 5.1. The evidence of the portrait: Manuel I (1238-1263) or Manuel III (1390-1416/7)?

The portrait of Manuel with the inscription that identifies him as the emperor of the Romans finds no parallel in the Byzantine imperial iconography. Its many iconographic peculiarities can be briefly summarized as follows: Unlike any late Byzantine emperor, Manuel is not portrayed in the usual imperial robes, i.e. the loros. Instead he wears a fur-trimmed cloak decorated with single-headed eagles, while his under-robe features a large medallion with St. Eugenios on horseback. Likewise, instead of the traditional crown with prependulia worn by the Byzantine emperors, Manuel has only a double row of pearls on his head. Equally unusual is the horn of anointing he holds in his right hand. Due to its idiosyncratic nature, iconographic

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1034 Talbot Rice, Haghia Sophia, 1-2. Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 139-141. The portrait seems to have been lost by 1866 (Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 181, note 3).
1035 See the relevant chapter by Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 139-151. Without repeating his arguments and thorough analysis, I will focus on some aspects of this portrait, which seem to me problematic.
1036 There are no surviving documents issued by the rulers of Trebizond from the early thirteenth up to mid-fourteenth centuries and consequently there is a lot of speculation concerning their titles. There is a general consensus that the rulers of Trebizond assumed the imperial title of Byzantium from 1204, see relatively N. Oikonomides, “The Chancery of the Grand Komnenoi: Imperial Tradition and Political Reality,” ArchPont 35 (1979): 321. Yet, there is no numismatic, epigraphic or documentary evidence to verify this suggestion.
comparisons with the surviving Byzantine imperial portraits cannot actually help us determine whether Manuel I or Manuel III is depicted.

Similarly, the portrait finds no parallels in the Trapezuntine imperial iconography, which seems to have followed that of the Byzantine emperors. This is best demonstrated by the two surviving, almost identical, portraits of Alexios III Grand Komnenos (figs. 314–315). Both portraits—the one on his famous chrysobull in favor of the Dionysiou monastery and the other on the icon of the same monastery—follow closely the Byzantine iconography. In fact, it is the titles of Alexios III that differentiate him from the Byzantine emperor. Although these are the only painted portraits that came down to us (and therefore not a wholly reliable sample), the practice of adopting the Byzantine imperial iconography is also demonstrated in a series of coins issued by the rulers of Trebizond (figs. 285–290). Given the idiosyncratic nature of the portrait in Hagia Sophia, the identification of the portrayed emperor with either Manuel I or Manuel III rests mainly on the information provided by the accompanying inscription, which describes Manuel as emperor of the Romans and ktetor of the monastery and it is therefore of particular interest.

**The evidence of the inscription:** The inscription reads: “In Christ God, faithful emperor and autocrat of the Romans, donor of this holy monastery, Manuel Komnenos” (Ἐν Χ[ριστῷ] ὑδάτι τῷ Θ[εῷ] πιστῶ βασιλεὺς κ[αὶ] αὐτοκράτωρ Ῥωμαίων κτήτωρ τῆς Ἁγίας Μανουὴλ ο[ς] Κοµνηνός). These are indeed the standard imperial titles used by the Byzantine

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1037 See, for instance, the silver aspers of Manuel I (dated ca. 1250-63), John II (1280-1297) and Theodora Komnene (1285) of Trebizond in Byzantium: Faith and Power, 427-428 (cat. no. 256D), 41 (cat. no. 12N), 428 (cat. no. 256E) respectively, where the rulers are represented either with divitision and chlamys or the loros.

1038 Translation and transcription in Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 141, based on Finlay’s transcription.
emperors but which always appear after—and never before—the emperor’s first name.\textsuperscript{1039} The correct formula, therefore, would have been: “Manuel in Christ God, faithful emperor…” A number of surviving examples from the middle and late Byzantine periods offer supporting evidence that the rule was followed consistently as late as the mid-fifteenth century in Byzantium but also in Serbia under Byzantine influence (figs. 373–374, and 376–380).\textsuperscript{1040} Most importantly, this rule applies to all documents issued by the Trapezuntine Chancery.\textsuperscript{1041} The formula (name followed by title) is reproduced in the correct order in the aforementioned imperial portraits of Alexios III (figs. 314–315), and in the now-lost imperial portraits of the monastery of Theoskepastos (fig. 381) and of Hagia Sophia’s bell-tower (figs. 384–385).\textsuperscript{1042} If indeed the

\textsuperscript{1039} Oikonomides, “Chancery,” 307.

\textsuperscript{1040} For examples, see I. Spatharakis, \textit{The portrait in Byzantine illuminated manuscripts} (Leiden, 1976). M. Parani, \textit{Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography} (11th-15th centuries) (Leiden, 2003). It is interesting that even the later portraits of John VIII Palaiologos (1425-1448) reproduce the correct order (name preceding titles). The one by Pisanello reads: +Ιωάννης βασιλεύς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ Ῥωµαίων ὁ Παλαιολόγος; see \textit{Byzantium: Faith and Power}, 535-536 (cat. no. 321). The other portrait of John VIII on a manuscript (cod. Sinai 2123, fol. 30v) reads: Ιωάννης ἐν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ πιστὸς βασιλεὺς ὁ Παλαιολόγος; for the later, see G. Galavaris, “East and West in an illustrated manuscript at Sinai,” in \textit{Ευφρόσυνον: Αφιέρωµα στον Μανόλη Χατζηδάκη} (Athens, 1991), 180-192.

\textsuperscript{1041} Oikonomides, “Chancery,” 299-332.

\textsuperscript{1042} The inscriptions of Hagia Sophia’s bell-tower are discussed below in detail. As for the imperial portraits and inscriptions of the Theoskepastos monastery, these were already repainted in 1843, during a “renovation” initiated by its ambitious abbess: see relatively, A. Bryer, “Nineteenth-Century Monuments in the City and Vilayet of Trebizond: Architectural and Historical Notes, Part 2,” \textit{ArchPont} 29 (1968), 89-132, esp. 89-108; and Bryer and Winfield, \textit{Pontos}, 244-245 (with relevant bibliography). The original portraits of the Theoskepastos, once located in the narthex of the cave church, were seen and variously recorded by a number of travelers and scholars—Tournefort (1701), Texier (1836), and Fallmerayer (August 1840)—before their repainting. The portraits showed Alexios III, his wife Thedora Kantakouzena (holding a scepter and a golden disc) and his mother, Eirene of Trebizond, who held a model of the church. The inscriptions identifying the imperial portraits run as follows:

\begin{itemize}
  \item + Ἀλέξιος ἐν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ πιστὸς βασιλεὺς κ(α)ὶ αὐτοκράτωρ πάσης Ἀνατολῆς ὁ Μέγας Κομνηνός
  \item + Θεοδώρα ἐν Χριστῷ χάριτι εὐσεβεστάτη δέσποινα καὶ αὐτοκράτορήσα πάσης Ἀνατολῆς
  \item + Ἔριν Χριστῷ… ὁ µήτηρ τοῦ εὐσεβεστάτου βασιλέως κυρίων Αλεξίου τοῦ μεγάλου Κομνηνοῦ
\end{itemize}

I follow here, in general, the best available—but not wholly accurate—transcription of the inscriptions given by Millet, “Les monastères et les églises de Trébizonde,” 438 (nos. I, II and IV respectively), along with some modifications/additions based on the varied transcriptions and facsimiles given by: J. P. de Tournefort, \textit{A voyage into the Levant: Perform’d by Command of the Late French King}, vol. 2 (London, 1718), 176; J. Ph. Fallmerayer, \textit{Original-Fragmente, Chroniken, Inschriften und anderes Materiale zur Geschichte des Kaiserthums Trapezunt} (Munich, 1843-46), vol. 1: 101-102; and Ch. Texier’s engraving in his \textit{Asie Mineure: Description géographique, historique et archéologique des provinces et des villes de la Chersonèse d’Asie} (Paris, 1862), pl. 64—also reproduced in Bryer, “Nineteenth-century monuments,” 99, pl. 41. See also, Ch. Texier and R. P. Pullan, \textit{Byzantine
portrait were contemporaneous with the decoration of the church such deviation from the canon would be puzzling, especially if Constantinopolitan artists were involved. I can offer no satisfactory explanation for this strange innovation. Should this be attributed to ignorance, loosening up of the rules, provincialism or just oversight? An additional problem is posed by the two slightly differed versions given by Finlay and Gagarin. Whereas they both give the name of Manuel in the end of the inscription, Finlay also gives the words “ὁ Κομνηνός,” as we would expect from an imperial portrait, whereas in Gagarin’s portrait these are omitted.1043 Other than that the two transcriptions are identical.

There seems to be no firm ground to suspect this inscription as a late forgery: at least at the time of Finlay’s visit (1850), the portrait was covered by plaster.1044 Yet, whatever happened to the portrait up to the time it was plastered over is unknown.1045 What seems equally puzzling is the fact that part of the inscription’s wording κτήτωρ τῆς ἁγίας µωνῆς ταύτης (i.e. ktetor of this holy monastery), a known Byzantine formula,1046 is reproduced almost verbatim in the forged inscription of the Theoskepastos: Ὅ Μέγας Βασιλεὺς Ἀλέξιος ὁ Κομνηνός καὶ κτήτωρ τῆς µονῆς ταύτης (The grand emperor Alexios Komnenos, and ktetor of this monastery).1047 The

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1043 See the reproduction of Finlay’s transcription in Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, fig. 67.
1044 Cited in Talbot Rice, Haghia Sophia, 1: “I was fortunate enough to find a full-length portrait of its founder….By taking off the plaster I was able to copy the whole inscription.”
1045 Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 234: “The monastery was still active as such in 1509, but the main church had begun a fitful career as a mosque before 1609, although it seems to have been used by Greeks for many years after.”
1046 As in the portraits of Andronikos II and king Milutin in the narthex of the katholikon of the Chilandar monastery in Mount Athos, dated 1320-1321 (see infra, fig. 380). King Milutin is identified as the ktetor of the monastery: ΣΤΕΦΑΝ ΟΝ Χ(ΡΙΣΤ)Ω ΤΩ Θ(Ε)Ω ΠΙΣΤΩΣ ΟΥΡΕΣΙΣ ΚΡΑΛΗΣ Κ(ΑΙ) ΠΕΡΙΠΟΘΗΤΟΣ ΓΑΜΒΡΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΚΡΑΤΕΟΥ Κ(ΑΙ) ΑΠΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΩΣ ΑΝΔΡΟΝΙΚΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΛΑΙΟΛΟΓΟΥ Κ(ΑΙ) ΚΤΗΤΩΡ ΤΗΣ ΑΓΙΑΣ ΜΟΝΗΣ ΤΑΥΤΗΣ. See relatively Br. Todić, Serbian Medieval Painting: The Age of King Milutin (Belgrade, 1999), 58-60, fig. 22.
1047 During the 1843 “renovation” of the Theoskepastos (see supra, note 1042) the original group of the three imperial portraits in the narthex of the cave church was replaced with the new portraits of Alexios III, Theodora Kantakouzene, and the despot Andronikos Komnenos. Finlay, who visited the monastery in 1850 (see his description in Bryer, “Nineteenth-century monuments,” 97-102), recorded the forged inscriptions, which were
latter is known with certainty to be a repainting made in the first half of the nineteenth century (1843), when the imperial portraits of the cave church had been replaced with a new series of portraits. Theoskepastos’ forged inscriptions in their simplistic, inaccurate and straightforward wording differentiate greatly from the original, known to us through previous transcriptions.

Leaving aside any reservations concerning the authenticity of Hagia Sophia’s inscription, it remains our only evidence that Manuel I Komnenos adopted the traditional imperial titles, “the emperor and autocrat of the Romans.” Unfortunately, such a claim cannot be supported either by the numismatic evidence or confirmed by the surviving written sources. Manuel I’s coinage—both silver and copper—attributes no titles to the ruler. He is simply mentioned by his first and family name: Manuel Komnenos (fig. 285). This is in contrast with the practice of the ruler of Epiros/Thessaloniki, Theodore Doukas, who, following his proclamation and coronation in Thessaloniki, appears on his coinage as “despot.”

In fact, the only thirteenth-century ruler of Trebizond who uses the title of the despot on his coins is George Grand Komnenos (1266-80) (fig. 287). Interestingly, the numismatic

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1049 See Epirus: 4000 years of Greek History and Civilization, ed. M. B. Sakellariou (Athens, 1997), fig. 156.

evidence in this case is in accord with the written record. Ogerius, protonotarios of the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos, writing in 1279, reports that, following the Union of Lyons (1274), George Grand Komnenos opposed the unionist policies of Michael VIII and seized the opportunity to challenge the authority of the Byzantine emperor by “adopting the imperial titles.” Unfortunately, we cannot be certain whether this was a common practice during the thirteenth century or simply an isolated instance. What is certain is that from 1282 John II ruled Trebizond as a despot, a title officially given to him by Michael VIII, while at least from the second half of the fourteenth century until the fall of the empire, the Grand Komnenoi ruled as emperors “of all the Orient” as opposed to “of the Romans,” the title in the inscription. Hitherto, lack of information for the thirteenth century coupled with our seeming confidence for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (as far as the titles of the Grand Komnenoi are involved) have favored Manuel I as the likely candidate of our portrait. Yet, the quite consistent fourteenth and fifteenth-century practice might be misleading.

Interestingly, the only “independent” evidence that the rulers of Trebizond used the imperial titles of Byzantium comes from the first half of the fifteenth century, again from Hagia Sophia, from the now lost imperial portrait once located on the eastern face of its bell-tower (figs. 382 and 384–385). This portrait survived until late, albeit in a severely damaged condition,

35. who attributes the silver aspers issued in Manuel I’s name and portray the emperor clad in loros to George Komnenos, instead.

Oikonomides, “Chancery,” 321, note 1. M. Kuršanskis, “L’Empire de Trébizonde et la Géorgie,” REB 35 (1977): 249, note 49, discounts the information of Ogerius, on the basis of the evidence provided by Hagia Sophia’s inscription and Pachymeres’ account: “Ogérios, qui écrivait en 1279, dit que le seigneur de Trébizonde ne s’était fait couronner empereur de Romains qu’à cette date, mais il déformait les faits, comme l’indiquent l’inscription de Sainte-Sophie et la déclaration que Pachymère prête à Jean II.” Leaving aside the inscription of Hagia Sophia, which I believe is an unreliable source of information, Pachymeres’ passage is also tricky. According to Pachymeres 2, 652-659 (VI. 34), John II refuses to abandon his imperial titles claiming his ancestral rights, a claim that Pachymeres considers a mere pretext:...καί τινας προφάσεις τοῦ μὴ αὐτόν κατάρξαι τῆς ἐπὶ τούτοις παραβάσεις, ἀλλʼ ἀπὸ πατέρων ἐχειν, ἐπλάττετο...ἀξίωµα πατρικόν, ἐκ πλείστου καὶ ἐς αὐτὸν κατιόν...” (ibid., 655,5). This passage is rendered in the French translation, correctly I believe, as “il [John II] fabriquait certains prétextes, comme quoi il n’introduisit pas lui-même la violation en la matière, mais qu’il la tenait de ses pères...une dignité ancestral, parvenue jusqu’à lui depuis les temps reculés...”.

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and depicted two imperial figures flanking the Mother of God, along with an inscription identifying the imperial figure on the left as viewed.\textsuperscript{1052} Unfortunately, this inscription did not preserve the name of the emperor portrayed but identified him as \[----\]ασιλεὺς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ Ὄωμαιν καὶ Περατείας ὁ \[μέ\]γας Κομνηνός καὶ ὑ(ι)ός τοῦ Εὐσεβεστάτου (Βα)σιλέως(ζ) Κυρ(ι)ου Ἀλεξίου (...emperor and autocrat of the Romans and of Perateia, the Grand Komnenos and son of the Most Worthy Emperor Lord Alexios).\textsuperscript{1053} This inscription, therefore, is of great importance as it fills a lacuna in the documentary evidence, where such a practice remains unrecorded. For this reason, the attempt to identify the emperor bearing the imperial titles of Byzantium is worthwhile.

The construction of the tower of Hagia Sophia began in 1426/27, according to a graffito published by Millet (fig. 383).\textsuperscript{1054} Combing the evidence of this graffito with that of the portrait and its inscription, Bryer and Winfield rightly suggested that the emperor on the left must be a son of Alexios; either Manuel III (son of Alexios III) or John IV (son of Alexios IV).\textsuperscript{1055} The identification of the imperial figure on the right remains more problematic since no epigraphic evidence survives and we cannot be absolutely certain as to when these imperial portraits were painted on the tower. Given these reservations, Bryer and Winfield proposed that the tower’s construction started during the reign of Alexios IV (1416/17-1429), but was probably completed after he was murdered by his son John IV (1429-1458/60).\textsuperscript{1056} Consequently, they proposed that

\textsuperscript{1052} Following Bryer and Winfield’s suggestion that seems the most accurate description. Previous identifications proposed by Millet and Talbot Rice seem less plausible; see relatively Bryer and Winfield, \textit{Pontos}, 233-236, fig. 68. Cf. Talbot Rice, \textit{Hagia Sophia}, 3.

\textsuperscript{1053} Transcription and translation as appears in Talbot Rice, \textit{Hagia Sophia}, 3.

\textsuperscript{1054} Millet, “Les monastères et les églises de Trébizond,” 431-432, fig. 9. Bryer and Winfield, \textit{Pontos}, 233-234, and pl. 178a. Although the inscription does not mention the month, the year 1427 is to be preferred over the fall/winter months (September to December) of 1426 for practical considerations.

\textsuperscript{1055} Their initial suggestion is cited in Talbot Rice, \textit{Hagia Sophia}, 3.

\textsuperscript{1056} We should remark, however, that: 1) the graffito as transcribed and published by Millet is very laconic, stating that [work] began in 1426/27, without specifying either the nature of work or the date of completion. As the graffito
the two emperors depicted were the deceased Alexios IV (to the right) and his son and successor John IV (to the left as viewed). By placing the portrait of his murdered and estranged father, John IV sought to rectify himself, as Bryer has argued, from the allegedly unintentional murder of his own father. It was in other words, an act of public repentance. Following Bryer’s estimation, then, the emperor, who adopted the titles of the Byzantine emperors in the inscription, should be identified with John IV.

However, the alternative identification of this emperor with Manuel III is still possible, if the emperors depicted on the bell-tower of Hagia Sophia are to be identified instead with Alexios IV (to the right), the builder of the tower, and his deceased father Manuel III (to the left). This seemingly less plausible suggestion, given that Manuel III was long dead, is born out of some considerations. Firstly, there is a good chance that both the tower and the commemorative portraits were already completed before Alexios IV’s murder, at a time when his relations to his son (John IV) were extremely strained. John IV had already left Trebizond for Georgia and from there to Crimea seeking support to overthrow his father, whom he eventually had killed. In this case it is understandable why Alexios IV would not portray his son as his legitimate heir. For a variety of reasons, Alexios IV might actually have preferred to be portrayed along with his deceased father, thus stressing the continuity with his ancestors, i.e. his father Manuel III and through him to his grandfather Alexios III mentioned in the inscription. Admittedly, the reference of the inscription to Alexios as “the most worthy emperor” suits Alexios III better.

is scratched on the lime mortar of the tower’s surface it is taken for granted that it refers to the date of the tower’s initial construction. Other possibilities exist, such as restoration work. 2) In the case the graffito records the construction of the tower, still the completion of the tower would not require more than a building campaign or two and the patron would have been eager to place the imperial portraits immediately, so as to advertise his work.

Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 233-234. 

Similarly the relations between Manuel III and Alexios IV have not always been untroubled either—according at least to a story reported by Clavijo, the envoy of Henry III of Castile, who paid a visit (April 1404) to Manuel III and Alexios IV, on his way to the court of Tamerlane at Samarkand: see relatively, W. Miller, Trebizond: The Last
Secondly, as far as we can tell based on the surviving documents, neither Alexios IV nor John IV included the title “emperor and autocrat of the Romans” in their official signatures, whereas no imperial signatures of Manuel III survive. Arguing from silence is dangerous but Manuel III might have actually made use of the title “emperor and autocrat of the Romans” or as the inscription suggests a mixed title “emperor and autocrat of the Romans and of Perateia.” Interestingly enough, the double-headed eagle, usually associated with the Byzantine emperor, appears in Trebizond’s coinage, only on Alexios III’s and Manuel III’s coins along with the single-headed one. Could this serve as an indication that there was an attempt by Manuel III to adopt not only their effigies but also the Byzantine imperial titles? Thirdly, Lynch’s puzzling report on the portraits of Alexios and Manuel—which he identified, nonetheless, as Alexios I and Manuel I—might be of some relevance. Finally, the very idea of the deceased
Manuel III being represented on the bell-tower accords well with the patron’s portrait in the church of Hagia Sophia: both portraits may have depicted the same person, i.e. Manuel III.

At the very least then both Manuel I and Manuel III could have conceivably claimed for themselves the traditional Byzantine titles and it is ultimately the inscription’s reference to the emperor as ktetor of the monastery that so far favored the identification with Manuel I. Knowing that the church was built before 1291 this leaves Manuel I as the only possible candidate.  

This is indeed a neat argument if only the word ktetor (i.e. founder, patron, donor) of the monastery is understood as the original founder, patron of the church. But this need not necessarily be the case. In the famous portrait from the church of the Chora monastery in Constantinople, Theodore Metochites, the fourteenth-century patron of the monastery, offers the model of the church to the enthroned Christ and the accompanying inscription identifies him simply as the ktetor (fig. 386). Thus, both the iconography and the inscription seem to convey the same message, that of Metochites as the original founder of the church. Yet, in this case at least we can be certain that Metochites was not the original founder. His patronage, extensive

(Paris, 1842), esp. 50 (again on the portraits of Hagia Sophia): “On peut voir aujourd’hui quels étaient le style et la composition des figures qui ornnaient l’intérieur de cet édifice. Au-dessus de la porte principale, on remarque l’empereur Alexis Comnène entouré de sa cour; il porte dans ses mains le globe impérial, et son front est orné d’un diadème blanc.” This time Texier identified the emperor Alexios with Alexios III. Cf. also Texier and Pullan, Byzantine Architecture, 200: “Above one of the doors are three large figures, one representing the Emperor Alexios Comnenus III., surrounded by his court: he bears in his hand the imperial orb, and his head is encircled with a diadem. The other personages are, without doubt, meant to represent the protospatharius, the vestarius, and other chamberlains. This composition resembles in every respect the mosaic of the church of Ravenna…” Did Texier confuse the portraits of the bell-tower of Hagia Sophia with those of the church proper, as Talbot Rice, Haghia Sophia, 243-244, has suggested? Or did Texier confuse the portraits of Alexios III that he saw and recorded in the Theoskepastos monastery with those of Hagia Sophia?

Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 232. Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 141 and 181, note 5.

Any later emperor could claim patronal rights over Hagia Sophia, due to a subsequent donation to the monastery or simply because it was an imperial foundation anyway.

On this portrait, see for instance A. M. Talbot, “Revival and Decline: Voices from the Byzantine Capital,” in Byzantium: Faith and Power, 17-25, fig. 2.3 (mosaic from the inner narthex of the Chora, 1316-21). The inscription reads: +Ο ΚΤΗΤΩΡ ΛΟΓΟΘΕΤΗΣ ΤΟΥ ΓΕΝΙΚΟΥ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ Ο ΜΕΤΟΧΙΤΗΣ.

The inner narthex of the church retains another prominent mosaic panel depicting previous ktetors of the Chora monastery—the twelve-century ktetor Isaac Komnenos and the late thirteenth-century nun Melane, the Lady of the Mongols (most probably Maria Palaiologina, natural daughter of Michael VIII Palaiologos), see relatively: P.
though it was, involved mainly additions to the church, notable among them, the construction and decoration of his own adjacent mausoleum.  

**The function of the portrait:** Unlike Metochites’, the portrait of the emperor Manuel of Trebizond lacks any iconographic reference that would readily qualify him as the builder of the church. Manuel is the patron of the monastery, as the inscription states, but he is not portrayed with a model of the church which would advertise immediately his substantial building or rebuilding of the church—as was a common practice for patrons/builders including Alexios III Grand Komnenos and his donation to the monastery of Dionysiou in Mount Athos or Eirene of Trebizond, the patron of the Theoskepastos (figs. 315, and 381). In other words, the wording of the inscription and the iconography chosen leave an ambiguity as for the status of Manuel as *ktetor*. Moreover, the location of the portrait in the interior of the church—instead of a more prominent place, for instance, flanking a major entrance to the church—would be in itself an additional unusual feature for a donor’s portrait commemorating the construction.

The approximate but not exact location of the portrait in the interior of the church complicates matters even more. Finlay’s description is, in this respect, rather vague. With

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1068 This sort of iconography was so powerful it seems that even in the case of Theoskepastos, a cave church, Eirene is holding the church model to communicate visually that she was the actual patron.  

1069 A number of surviving dedicatory portraits provide supporting evidence for this practice: for instance from the early portraits of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople to the later examples in the monastery of the Chora. The same practice is attested in the provinces as, for instance, in the donors’ portraits from Epiros (the Pantanassa Philippidados, Panagia Bellas etc).  

1070 Finlay records that the image was painted “on the interior wall to the right of the door of the mosque entering from the vestibule” (cited in Talbot Rice, *Hagia Sophia*, 1; and Eastmond, *Hagia Sophia*, 139). According to
some reservations, Eastmond locates the portrait on the now largely destroyed south wall, next to what seems to have been an imperial tomb. Knowing for sure that Manuel III was buried in the Theoskepastos monastery, the identification with Manuel I gains ground since nothing of his burial is known for certain. Yet, the very idea of an imperial tomb in Hagia Sophia is equally a hypothesis often taken for granted. The prominent tomb on the south aisle has long been dismantled, leaving only its traces on the floor and not a single indication as to whom it might belong to.

In reality, the only substantial indications we have for a burial in Hagia Sophia all point to Constantine Loukites, the Constantinopolitan scholar and teacher of astronomy, active in Trebizond from before 1301 until his death around 1340, who served as protovestiarios (treasurer) and protonotarios (head of the chancery) under Alexios II.\(^{1071}\) Firstly, an inscription (epitaph) mentioning the name and burial of Constantine Loukites (Κωνσταντίνου πέφυκα Λουκίτου τάφος) was reportedly seen outside the central apse of Hagia Sophia before disappearing.\(^{1072}\) Secondly, a “broken block carrying the inscription Κωνσταντίνου ΠΡ[εσβυτέρου?]” has been found during restoration work by the Russel Trust expedition—unfortunately, again out of context.\(^{1073}\) The suggestion that this was “of Constantine the presbyter” an otherwise unknown “official of the smaller earlier church” seems too fanciful and

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\(^{1071}\) Oikonomides, “Chancery,” 312-313.

\(^{1072}\) The inscription was recorded by Mordtmann before 1861, see relatively Millet, “Les monastères et les églises de Trébizonde,” 428, note 4 and 433 and Chrysanthos, Η Εκκλησία Τραπεζούντος, 341 and 437. At the time of Millet’s visit (1893), the inscription had already disappeared. Millet seems to suggest that the inscription was in the form of graffito on the exterior masonry of the central apse, below the window: “M. Mordtmann avait autrefois envoyé aux Annali des copies de ces graffites. Ces copies n’ont pas été publiées…Voici ceux que j’ai pu déchiffrer. Grande absise; face centrale. 1. Au dessous de la fenêtre les pierres ont été déplacées. C’est là que devait se trouver l’inscription—aujourd’hui disparue—relevée par M. Mordtmann…” (: Millet, ibid., 428, note 4). Chrysanthos, on the other hand, implies that this was a funerary slab from a tomb.

\(^{1073}\) Talbot Rice, Hagia Sophia, 27.
totally unfounded. In fact, the inscription might point to the very tomb of Constantine Loukites. Thirdly, Lazaropoulos’ only reference to Hagia Sophia involves a personal memory of a banquet once held there in the presence of Loukites, when Lazaropoulos himself fell ill from eating bad food. We cannot of course be sure what triggered his memory for such a narrative, but I would like to think it was the presence of Loukites’ prominent burial in Hagia Sophia.

The uncertainty of the burial in Hagia Sophia leaves us with two options. Either to accept that Manuel I was probably buried there (of which the sole evidence remains the portrait in question) or to accept that no emperor of Trebizond was ever buried in Hagia Sophia.\textsuperscript{1074} In the latter case the portrait would acquire a more general commemorative and dynastic character, which would be equally possible. As in the case of the bell-tower portraits, the depiction of a deceased ancestor stressing continuity would have been at all times desirable. The question then of Manuel I versus Manuel III persists.

\textit{The evidence of the iconography}: Finlay reports that he was not able to check whether this portrait was an overpainting but nonetheless suggested that the emperor Manuel should be identified with Manuel I.\textsuperscript{1075} Prince Gagarin, on the other hand, felt quite certain that this was Manuel III. None of them gave any justification for their particular attributions and we are left wondering whether there was something in the portrait’s design, color or lettering that triggered—even initially—Finlay’s hesitation or Gagarin’s assertion. This sort of evidence is now lost and there remains only the iconography of the portrait as a last resort in the quest for identifying the emperor Manuel.

\textsuperscript{1074} As we have seen the Chrysokephalos was the imperial mausoleum of the Grand Komnenoi throughout the thirteenth century.
\textsuperscript{1075} Talbot Rice, \textit{Haghia Sophia}, 267 note 35.
Eastmond was the only scholar to offer a detailed iconographic analysis of the portrait. Although he accepted the identification with Manuel I, he has also emphasized that the robes worn by Manuel “contrasts with contemporary practice almost everywhere in the Orthodox world” and, equally importantly, that they contrast with the standard Byzantine imperial robes and insignia of Manuel I as depicted on his silver coinage.¹⁰⁷⁶ His main argument that there were alternative ways to depict power in the local Anatolian and Caucasian context and that Manuel’s choice was partly informed by its regional context—although no direct appropriations can be traced—is solid and need not be questioned. Equally convincing is his interpretation of the horn of anointing as a visual device to tie Manuel with the Old Testament prophet David—the archetypal king—and as a means to stress the divine approval of the emperor’s authority. This choice, Eastmond explains, enabled Manuel to exploit the dynastic roots of the Grand Komnenoi through their Constantinopolitan ancestors, the Komnenoi, who also used David as a model of kingship, and at the same time to build connections with the Bagratid rulers of Georgia, who traced their line back to David. All these arguments are sound. Yet, I am less convinced that they necessarily relate to Manuel I and the ideological battles for supremacy between Nicaeans, Epirotes and Trapezuntines. Eastmond’s analysis and interpretation of the portrait within the mid-thirteenth-century context as a more inclusive/pragmatic image of power, inevitably lead to

¹⁰⁷⁶ According to Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 142-143, Manuel I is portrayed on his silver coins with the loros and a crown with prependulia. Cf., however, Kuršanskis, “The coinage of Grand Komnenos Manuel I, 35, who attributes the silver aspers issued in Manuel I’s name and portray the emperor in loros to George Komnenos instead. According to Kuršanskis, Manuel seems to be portrayed in chlamys and divitision, a practice still within the Byzantine tradition (ibid., 23-37). Manuel I holds in his left hand the akakia or a globus cruciger (silver trachea, silver aspers, and copper trachea) and a labarum on a tall staff in his right hand (in most examples with the exception of one copper trachy issue, where he holds a scepter with two dots): Georgiadis, “Εικονογραφία,” 132. Manuel III holds either: a cross-headed scepter only (silver asper, copper trachea); a cross-headed scepter and the globus cruciger (copper trachea); a labarum only (copper trachea); only a scepter with three dots (copper trachea): ibid., 140.
the contamination of the imperial cultures of Nicaea and Epiros as “inherently more conservative.”

As the portrait has no extant parallels to be compared with, examining some of its details might lead us to favor one attribution over the other.

The robes of Manuel are decorated with golden single-headed eagles (wings spread, heads turned to the left) set in roundels on red background. Similar eagles are represented in the carved reliefs on the exterior of Hagia Sophia—on the south porch and above the window of main apse—but with their heads turned to the right. The single-headed eagle is usually understood as the heraldic emblem of the Grand Komnenoi for they appear on coins and on imperial portraits known to us mostly through descriptions. The motif is absent from the coinage of all early thirteenth-century rulers of Trebizond, having been introduced for the first time, it seems, by John II Komnenos (1280-1297). Thereafter it appears on the coinage of Basil Komnenos (1332-1340), Alexios III (1349-1390), and Manuel III (1390-1416/7).

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1078 Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, 227, contested the idea that the single-headed eagle was the “special emblem” of the Grand Komnenoi on the basis that the double-headed eagle also appears from the mid-fourteenth century on Trapezuntine coins and Catalan maps. Hence, they considered the double-headed eagle as the marker of the empire. But as we have mentioned, the double-headed eagle appears on the Trapezuntine coinage only under Alexius III and Manuel III. Therefore, it is much less commonly used as the marker of the empire. Most importantly, none of the rulers of Trebizond, as far as we can tell, is portrayed with double-headed eagles but their Constantinopolitan wives are (Eudokia Palaiologina, Theodora Kantakouzene). Following Bryer and Winfield, Eastmond, *Hagia Sophia*, 147ff, argues for their general use as symbols of power rather than as heraldic symbols of the Grand Komnenoi (esp.150 and 184, notes 60-64).
1079 Guruleva, “Trebizond Coins in Crimea,” 407 and 408, cites examples of copper coins attributed to John II with eagle, wings spread and head to the right. On the contrary, Georgiadis, “Εικονογραφία,” 133-134, and 150 does not include any relevant examples.
1080 For Basil’s coinage with eagle, wings spread and head to the left, see Georgiadis, “Εικονογραφία,” 137 (no.4); and Guruleva, “Trebizond Coins in Crimea,” 409 (no. 74). These are the only examples I could locate that fit with the iconography of the portrait of Hagia Sophia, since in all other cases the head of the eagle is to the right. It would be important if the attribution to Basil is reliable (as neither coin has a portrait of the emperor). In addition, Guruleva cites numerous examples with eagle, head to the right also attributed to Basil Komnenos: ibid., 405 (nos. 6-9), 407 (no. 2) and 409 (nos. 40-73).
1081 For Alexios III’s coinage with eagle, wings spread and head to the right, see Georgiadis, “Εικονογραφία,” 139 (no. 5).
only. It is important to note here that all four rulers were married to Constantinopolitan princesses: John II to Eudokia Palaiologina, Basil to Eirene Palaiologina, Alexios III to Theodora Kantakouzene, and Manuel III to Anna Philanthropene (his second marriage).

The indications from the imperial portraits confirm this last remark. The first ruler of Trebizond to be associated with the single-headed eagle is John II (1280-1297). An imperial portrait from St. Gregory of Nyssa, described by Finlay in 1850 but no longer extant, depicted an “emperor” whose robes were decorated with the single-headed eagle and an “empress” with the double-headed eagle. Finlay’s identification of the figures with John II and Eudokia Palaiologina seems to be the best suggestion. Although the Seljuks used the double-headed eagle from the 1230s, the single-headed eagle of Trebizond found its way there at a much later date than the early thirteenth century and—as all available evidence from Trebizond suggests—through Byzantium and not Anatolia. Therefore, Manuel III becomes a most likely candidate for our portrait based on the evidence provided by Trapezuntine coinage and portraits.

The large medallion on the emperor’s chest shows St. Eugenios on horseback, killing a dragon. The equestrian portrait of Saint Eugenios appears on a number of coins issued by the Grand Komnenoi of Trebizond and remained in use until the fall of the empire (figs. 291–292). It was introduced, however, for the first time by Alexios II (1297-1330) in the early fourteenth century. As silver coins were predominantly used for international transactions, Trebizond

1082 For Manuel III’s coinage with eagle, spread wings and head to the right, see Georgiadis, “Εικονογραφία,” 140 (nos. 4 and 6). There are also some anonymous coins from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries with eagle with spread wings (rev.) and either BB or cross on a city wall (obv.), see Guruleva, “Trebizond Coins in Crimea,” 405, 407, 408, and 410.
1083 On St. Gregory of Nyssa, see Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 226-228, which includes Finlay’s description in full.
1084 On the identification of these portraits, see the discussion on the patronage of John II and Eudokia in the final section of this chapter.
probably adjusted the iconography of its silver aspers at this time in response to the traditions of its neighboring states. Yet, whereas equestrian portraits appear frequently in medieval Anatolia under Seljuk and later under Mongol dominion already in the first half of the thirteenth century, Trebizond insisted throughout the thirteenth century on the traditional Byzantine iconography of the standing portraits. Thus, the equestrian portrait of St. Eugenios is totally absent from the coinage of all thirteenth-century rulers of Trebizond—Manuel I’s coins included—where St. Eugenios is always represented frontally as a standing figure holding in his right hand a long staff surmounted by the cross (figs. 285–286 and 289–290). In addition to coins, the equestrian portrait of St. Eugenios appears on the leather binding of a late fourteenth-century Trapezuntine manuscript (1365), now in St. Catherine’s Monastery at Sinai. We cannot, of course, exclude the possibility that this sort of iconography might have been popular in Trebizond before the fourteenth century and before it was officially introduced on the coinage of Trebizond. Nonetheless, it renders Manuel III again as the most likely candidate for the portrait in Hagia Sophia.

Manuel is portrayed holding a horn of anointing in his right hand and a trilobe scepter (like a very stylized fleur-de-lys?) in his left. The trilobe scepter was introduced in the copper coinage of George Grand Komnenos (1266-1280) and becomes a rather standard feature on the silver and copper coins throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Although Manuel I

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1086 Byzantium: Faith and Power, 427-429: silver dirham of Kiliç Arslan IV, dated 1249 (cat. no. 256A); silver tram of Het’um I the Great and Kay-Khusraw II, dated 1241-42 (cat. no. 256B); silver dirham of Georgia, dated 1244-45 (cat. no. 256H).
1088 Cf. Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 144-145, who describes it as a “cross-headed scepter.”
1089 The trilobe scepter appears on: the copper coinage of George (1266-1280) and John II (1280-1297); the silver aspers of Andronikos III (1330-1332); the silver and copper coins of Basil (1332-1340); the copper trachea of John III (1342-1344); the silver and copper coins of Michael (1344-1349); and on the silver aspers of Alexios IV (1416/7-1429) and John IV (1429-1458). Something similar (and not always easily differentiated from the trilobe) is the scepter with three dots, which appears on Alexios II’s silver aspers, on Alexios III’s silver and copper coins and on
is most commonly depicted on his coins with a labarum in his right hand and with the *akakia* or a *globus cruciger* in his left hand, this might also have been an alternative, easily identifiable attribute of imperial status.  

Here again, we should note that Manuel III is depicted with a trilobe scepter on his coins.

The horn of anointing that Manuel holds in his right hand is rather unusual. The only other extant example is the dedicatory portrait of king Marko at Markov Manastir painted in 1376/7 (figs. 388–390). As both portraits draw from the Byzantine tradition, the portrait of Marko Kraljević is of particular relevance. The painted inscription in the interior of the church explains that king Marko was responsible for the renovation of the church, whose construction had begun by his father, king Vukašin, during the reign of king Dušan, in 1344/5. The dedicatory portrait is placed on the tymanum above the south entrance leading to the church. Both *ktetors* are depicted, flanking the portrait of St. Demetrius, the patron saint of the church: Marko, on the left side, holding the horn of anointing, whereas Vukašin, on the right side, holding the charters for the foundation. Just above the portraits of the founder and renovator, in the upper register of the tymanum, portraits of king David (left) and Solomon (right) are

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1090 Manuel III’s copper trachea. Additionally, the scepter with two dots appears less frequently, on Manuel I’s and George’s copper trachea. Alexios III’s silver aspers and copper trachea predominantly feature the scepter with three dots but the scepter with two dots appears at least once. See relatively Georgiadis, “Εικονογραφία,” 131-141.


included among other saintly figures. The pairing, thus, seems most successful: Vukašin, the builder of the church, is juxtaposed with Solomon, whereas king Marko, the renovator of the church with David. In doing so, the iconography of the portrait at Markov Manastir, clarifies visually the status of both patrons and gives confirmation to the inscripational evidence. This portrait reflects iconographic trends of the late fourteenth century and demonstrates a way to differentiate the initial *ktetor* from the renovator.

This sort of iconography draws directly from the Byzantine tradition. A good example from the middle Byzantine period comes from the Nea Moni in Chios. In the Anastasis scene, where customarily both David and Solomon are represented, the facial features of Solomon have been manipulated so as to resemble those of Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-55)—the imperial patron of the monastery (fig. 387). Casting himself as the New Solomon, Monomachos clarified his status as *ktetor*: he was not simply another benefactor of the monastery but the very initial *ktetor*, the one who actively supported its construction. Given the indications provided by Markov Manastir and Nea Moni, we can suggest that emperors would favor a comparison with Solomon, the builder of the Temple, especially when their patronage involved the construction of a building from foundations. If this is the case, the emperor Manuel of our portrait could not make such a claim as he was most likely not the initial *ktetor* but a later benefactor/patron of the monastery, i.e. Manuel III. In short, if Manuel was not the builder of Hagia Sophia, the association with the prophet-king David was certainly the next best choice.

Still, we should examine the possibility that the emperor of our portrait preferred the association with David instead, for the additional reasons of associating himself with David—

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one of the two founders of the “empire”—and with the Bagratid rulers of Georgia, as Eastmond reasonably argued. This choice, however, fits both Manuel I and Manuel III. The political relations of Trebizond with its neighboring states or entities never ceased to exist. Dynastic relations, on the other hand, only intensified progressively, reaching a climax during the reigns of Alexios III and Manuel III. We know practicality nothing about Manuel I’s consort/wife, the Georgian Rusudan. She might have been a princess (?), his first (?) wife (?) or not.\textsuperscript{1094} What seems certain, however, is that Manuel I chose as his heir, Andronikos II (1263-66), the son by his Trapezuntine wife Anna Xylaloe—with whatever implications this choice created for the Trapezuntine-Georgian relations.\textsuperscript{1095} Two of his daughters (?) were later married to Georgian rulers (in 1273 and 1277, i.e. after Manuel’s death) but this should be credited to George’s pro-Georgian policies.\textsuperscript{1096}

On the other hand the picture of interdependence between the empire of Trebizond, Byzantium, Anatolia and the Caucasus, as embodied in our portrait, becomes clearer in the sources during the reign of Manuel III. He was married to the Georgian princess,

\begin{enumerate}
  \item \textsuperscript{1094} Panaretos 62-63 mentions only Rusudan’s origin from Georgia (τῆς Ἰβηρίας) but does not attribute her any title (ibid., 63\textsubscript{1,3}). On the contrary, he refers to Anna Xylaloe as despoina kyra, and Eirene Syrikaina only as kyra (ibid., 62\textsubscript{2,6}). From Panaretos alone, I understand that Anna Xylaloe was Manuel’s lawful wife at the time of his death, which qualifies her as despoina and also explains why her son, Andronikos II, was promoted by Manuel I as his heir apparent. See, however, Kuršanskis, “L’ Usurpation,” 198-200, who considers Anna as Manuel’s first wife, Eirene Syrikaina as his last, while Rusudan as a mere “maîtresse.” Also Bryer, “The Fate of George Komnenos,” esp. 333 and 345 (we should note, however, that the translation of Panaretos cited by Bryer is incorrect. Panaretos only mentions John II as the second brother of George and not as the second son of Manuel, as Bryer maintains). Admittedly, the sequel of Manuel’s marriages is difficult to reconstruct.
  \item \textsuperscript{1095} According to Panaretos, of the four children of Manuel I that ruled over Trebizond (Andronikos II, George, John II, and Theodora), only the usurper Thedora was from the Georgian Rusudan. Panaretos mentions that Andronikos II was the son of Anna Xylaloe, while George and John II were Manuel’s children by his other Trapezuntine wife Eirene Syrikaina. What seems puzzling to me is that the name George appears frequently in the Georgian royal circles, while no other ruler of Trebizond bore that name. Given the pro-Georgian policies of George Grand Komnenos, I am thinking whether Panaretos was actually misinformed on the subject and whether, in reality, George was Manuel’s son by Rusudan.
  \item \textsuperscript{1096} On these marriages alliances with an unnamed Georgian didebuli and the king of Kartli, Dimitri II, see Kuršanskis, “L’ Usurpation,” 200-201 and idem, “Relations matrimoniales,” 112-127 (esp. 112-115). Also Bryer, “The Fate of George Komnenos,” 332-350 (esp. 342-345).
\end{enumerate}
Kulkanchat/Eudokia, daughter of king David of Tiflis, in 1377 until her death in 1395.\footnote{Panaretos, 78-81. Panaretos describes this marriage in considerable detail. See also Kuršanskis, “Relations matrimoniales,” 112-127 (esp. 118-121).} Their son and future emperor, Alexios IV, was of Georgian-Trapezuntine descent\footnote{Panaretos, 817-8.} (which is important if the portrait was made posthumously). Through his sisters, Manuel III had been connected to Georgian and Turkish rulers.\footnote{Alexios III’s daughter (and therefore Manuel III’s sister), Anna, married king Bagrat V (VI) of Georgia in June 1367, see relatively: Panaretos, 76\textsuperscript{11-17} and 80\textsuperscript{20-28}. Kuršanskis, “Relations matrimoniales,” 112-127 (esp. 117-118). Also Bryer, “Greeks and Türkmens,” 148 note 141. Another sister, Eudokia, married the emir of Limnia (Tadjeddin or Taceddin celebi) in October 1379 (Panaretos, 79\textsuperscript{7-11}). After the emir’s death in 1386, Eudokia went to Constantinople to be married into the imperial family, see relatively: R. Loenertz, “Une erreur singulière de Laonic Chalcocandyle: le prétendu second mariage de Jean V Paléologue,” \textit{REB} 15 (1957):176-184. According to Loenertz, she did not marry John V Palaiologos, as Chalkokondyles maintains, but Constantin Dejanović (Dragaš) instead. Also Bryer, “Greeks and Türkmens,” 148 note 141 (with further references). An unnamed sister of Manuel III had probably been married to Süleyman, emir of Chalybia, and another to Osman Kara Ilük, emir of Samsun: Bryer, “Greeks and Türkmens,” 148 note 140 and Appendix II note 142 respectively. Cf. Savvides, \textit{Οι Μεγάλοι Κομνηνοί της Τραπεζούντας}, 105 note 222 and 173-178 (with further references).} After Kulkanchat/Eudokia’s death (May 1395), Manuel III married a Constantinopolitan noblewoman (Anna Philanthropene), while at the same time his son, Alexios IV, married Theodora Kantakouzene (Sept. 1395).\footnote{Panaretos, 819-17. Tellingly, this double matrimonial alliance with Byzantium took place after Manuel II Palaiologos had renounced his vassalage to Bayezid I (1394) and before the ensuing siege of Constantinople by Bayezid (1397-1403). Obviously, Manuel II Palaiologos was at the time in need of allies against the Ottomans and he might even have made some concessions to the Trapezuntines such as recognizing their ancestral rights to \textit{romanitas}.} Therefore, if we detect in the clothing, crowns and insignia mixed influences from Byzantium, Anatolia and the Caucasus, Manuel III had equally good reasons to accommodate in his portrait a more inclusive vision of his empire.

Needless to say, if the inscription of the portrait is a forgery, then the options for identifying the portrayed ruler are endless. The long discussion offered above aimed mainly at arguing that the portrait of Manuel I is probably not a strong argument for settling the construction date of Hagia Sophia in the mid-thirteenth century. At the same time, the confidence on this piece of information prevented us from looking elsewhere to consolidate this conviction.
For this reason in the final section, I examine the historical context and the architectural patronage of the second half of the thirteenth century to propose John II and Eudokia Palaiologina as alternative candidates for the patronage of Hagia Sophia.

7. 5.2. Architecture and patronage in context: Manuel I (1238-1263) or John II (1280-1297) and Eudokia Palaiologina?

There is nothing substantial (in the form of an inscription or imperial portrait) that could confirm the suggested attribution of the patronage of Hagia Sophia to John II and Eudokia Palaiologina. My argument relies partly on the historical context that favors a late thirteenth-century date for the construction and decoration of the building, but mainly on the extensive architectural patronage of the time in both Trebizond and Byzantium. The similarities of Hagia Sophia to the remodeling of the Chrysokephalos and St. Eugenios and to the other foundations attributed to John II and Eudokia suggest that they all form part of the same project, i.e. an attempt to bring Trebizond in line with Constantinopolitan developments. At the same time, the features of Hagia Sophia, unusual in the Trapezuntine context but shared with the Paregoretissa in Arta, bespeak a distinct architectural style that appeared in the last quarter of the thirteenth century in the provinces as a response to the political and cultural developments of their time.

As we have seen, Hagia Sophia is a very sophisticated building. Its construction required not only a surplus of wealth and a grandiose idea but also a link with a metropolitan Byzantine center, either Nicaea or Constantinople. More than this, Hagia Sophia’s design and decoration show a specific affiliation with the great imperial foundations of Constantinople, the Apostoleion and Hagia Sophia. Therefore we should be looking at craftsmen with a firsthand knowledge of Constantinopolitan tradition as well as a patron well aware of the potentials of programmatic
architecture—unless, of course, we accept that artists and craftsmen were the only ones responsible in transmitting artistic developments into a different context. Unlike other works of art—like icons, textiles, manuscripts and anything easily transportable, therefore easily reproduced or copied on demand—this is hardly ever the case with architecture. The movement of man force and materials in the latter case is less flexible, the process more controlled by the patrons. Buildings cannot be reproduced, the way, for instance, manuscripts can, and they cannot be experienced and appreciated without a firsthand knowledge of what they are about. Equally, buildings cannot be produced outside their cultural milieu, since medieval artists were trained within an established tradition. In short, the production of architecture requires not only a wealthy patron, well-connected on the international level so as to bring in artists from abroad, but also a firm historical and cultural context.

We know nothing about Manuel I as a patron of religious foundations. Manuel is better known for his military expeditions, most notably the capture of Sinope (1254) from the Turks. The construction of Hagia Sophia is usually understood in the light of this victory, as the crowning achievement of a victorious general, a monument erected at a time when the “empire” was at its height, prosperous and wealthy. Albeit this positivist attitude towards Manuel I’s reign might not be that accurate, the existence of the portrait (discussed extensively above) in the church did not encourage challenging his alleged patronage of Hagia Sophia. Therefore, the initial question is whether Manuel’s empire and reign could accommodate such an undertaking as Hagia Sophia.¹¹⁰¹

¹¹⁰¹ This venue has been explored in detail by Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 13-26 (his chapter one on the historical context) albeit with an emphasis on the first half of the thirteenth century and different conclusions.
The opinions expressed regarding the economy of the “empire” under Manuel I are somewhat controversial and cannot provide us with any definite answers. On one hand we know that Manuel was able to use the silver resources of his empire and that he was the first ruler of Trebizond to issue silver coins and, more importantly, in a quantity unsurpassed by any subsequent ruler of Trebizond.\textsuperscript{1102} On the other hand, the picture of Manuel’s wealth that emerges from the numismatic evidence can be misleading. From 1238 to 1243, Manuel was paying tribute to the Seljuks and later, sometime after their defeat at Kösedâg in June 1243, he became a tributary/vassal to the Mongol Ilkhans.\textsuperscript{1103} As Kuršanskis has argued, the very issue of silver coins might have been a response to the Seljuk and later Mongol demands for tribute in silver.\textsuperscript{1104} In addition, both Bryer and Kuršanskis have argued that the large quantity of silver coins attributed to Manuel I, in all probability, continued to be issued over a prolonged period of time under his sons and successive rulers of Trebizond—Andronikos II (1263-1266) and George (1266-1280).\textsuperscript{1105} If so, then the very wealth of Manuel’s reign might be questioned.

Likewise, we have no secure evidence on how much Trebizond profited from the international trade during his reign. The reconquest of Sinope from the Seljuks and the short occupation of this important commercial port by the Trapezuntines (1254-1265) certainly facilitated Trebizond’s trade, especially with Crimea and its hinterland, thus providing Manuel I with additional income.\textsuperscript{1106} Manuel I might also have profited from the fall of Bagdad to the

\textsuperscript{1102} Kuršanskis, “The coinage of Grand Komnenos Manuel I,” 23-37.
\textsuperscript{1103} Kuršanskis, “The coinage of Grand Komnenos Manuel I,” 23-37. M. Kuršanskis, “L’Empire de Trébizonde et les Turcs au 13e siècle,” \textit{REB} 46 (1988): 109-124, esp. 119-122. Cf. Shukurov, “Trebizond and the Seljuks,” 112: “It would be too hasty, however, based on Saint-Quentin’s evidence, to conclude that the Grand Komnenoi were some sort of vassals of the Seljuks at the time…” Shukurov treats the complicated picture of Anatolia and the Caucasus under the Mongols in detail (ibid., 112ff.).
\textsuperscript{1104} See Kuršanskis, “The coinage of Grand Komnenos Manuel I,” 24-25.
\textsuperscript{1106} Shukurov, “Trebizond and the Seljuks,” esp. 120-124, and 133-135.
Mongols in 1258 and the subsequent redirection of the trading route towards modern Iran, through the Black Sea and Tabriz, and from there to the Far East. Yet, according to Bryer and Kuršanskis, Trebizond was able to capitalize on this development only beginning with the reign of John II (1280-1297). The opening of Trebizond’s ports to the Italian merchants and, through them, to international trade is credited to John II’s initiatives/policies.

The estimation that Trebizond escaped isolation and entered more dynamically the international market during the reign of John II is not surprising given that the political circumstances of the “empire” changed considerably from the mid-thirteenth to the late thirteenth century. During Manuel I’s reign, as Eastmond has emphasized, “the relationship between Trebizond and Constantinople was characterized by absence” and it is equally uncertain whether the relations with Nicaea were much better. What seems to be certain is that by 1260, an agreement with Michael VIII Palaiologos had been reached whereby Manuel I recognized the Byzantine emperor’s supremacy in return for some ecclesiastical privileges, but it is doubtful whether this development had any long-lasting results. For a variety of reasons, his successor, George Grand Komnenos, favored instead the Angevin-Mamluk-East Georgian (Kartlian) alliance, against the Palaiologan emperor and his allies, which included the Mongols, the West

1109 Eastmond, *Hagia Sophia*, 20
1110 This is inferred by the act of January 1260 granting privileges to the metropolitan of Trebizond published by L. Petit, “Acte synodal du patriarche Nicéphore II sur les privilèges du métropolitain de Trébizonde (1er janvier 1260),” *Bulletin de l’Institut Archéologique Russe à Constantinople* 8 (1902-3): 163-171. The document addresses Manuel as: “cousin” and “most authentic son” of the Byzantine emperor’s realm; “cousin” of the Byzantine emperor, “dearest son” of the church, and the “most noble” Grand Komnenos (…περιπόθητον εξάδελφον τῆς ἁγίας αὐτοῦ βασιλείας…διὰ κήδους τῆς ἁγίας αὐτοῦ βασιλείας καὶ υἱόν γνησιώτατον αὐτῆς εἶναι…περιποθήτου εξαδέλφου τοῦ κρατίστου καὶ ἀγαπητοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἁγίας αὐτοκράτορος καὶ ἀγαπητοῦ ὑιόν τῆς ἁγίας αὐτοκρατοροῦ πανευγενεστάτου μεγάλου Κοµνηνοῦ κύρ Μανουήλ…). It is also of interest that the act bore the seal and signature of the chartophylax of the Great church, Theodore Xiphilinos, who would be entrusted more than twenty years later with arranging the marriage of John II to Eudokia. I am grateful to Prof. Dimiter Angelov for providing me with the document.
As far as the political and dynastic relations with Constantinople are involved, the decisive step for a prolonged rapprochement was only taken shortly before Michael VIII’s death. As Pachymeres records in considerable detail, this was not an easy compromise and involved at least two major diplomatic embassies to the court of the Grand Komnenoi. Finally in 1282 an agreement was reached. The ruler of Trebizond recognized once again the Byzantine emperor’s supremacy in exchange this time for a marriage alliance. Thus, John II Grand Komnenos married Eudokia, Michael’s third daughter, and took in return the title of the despot. The marriage took place in Constantinople (late in September 1282) and the couple spent the winter there before returning to Trebizond the following spring (25 April 1283). John II thus became the first ruler of Trebizond who had a firsthand knowledge of Constantinople and was an eyewitness of

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1112 Pachymeres 2, 652-659 (VI. 34), comments on how important the submission of the Trapezuntines was to Michael VIII in his quest to restore “order” (βασιλικῇ τάξει). Given the Trapezuntine unwillingness and suspicion, Michael resorted to proposing a marriage alliance. To secure a successful outcome, the first embassy to Trebizond included his wisest and most experienced officials, the grand logothetes George Akropolites, and the grand oikonomos Theodore Xiphilinos (note that he is the same person signing the act of 1260, therefore an expert on Trapezuntine affairs). When this first embassy failed its mission, Michael VIII responded with frequent embassies trying to convince, even threat, the Trapezuntines to obey his will (…προσαποστέλλων συνάκις, τὸ μὲν ἠπείλει, τὸ δὲ…ἐδελέαζεν, ἂν μόνον πεισθέντες ἦκοιν). At last the embassy headed by the logothetes ton oikeiakon Iatropoulos, and an unnamed priest of the church (to guarantee the oaths exchanged) was successful and arrangements were made for the prospective wedding, which was to take place in Constantinople.

1113 The date of their return is given by Panaretos, 622-24 (with the additional information of Eudokia being already pregnant).
the elaborate imperial ceremonial. We can only speculate as to the great impression his prolonged stay in Constantinople left.  

This marriage alliance, which brought Trebizond in good rapport with Constantinople, was to last at least until Eudokia’s death in December 1301. It was the last major diplomatic success for Michael VIII, who pursued relentlessly his vision for a unified, restored empire under his rule. In this respect, his son and successor to the Byzantine throne, Andronikos II, started his long reign with an advantage and was able to capitalize on this development by renouncing the Union of Lyons satisfying both Epirotes and Trapezuntine rulers. At long last, order and peace prevailed among the former competing ruling families of Byzantium. Having his cousin Anna as the reigning basilissa in Epiros and his own sister, Eudokia, in Trebizond, Andronikos II maintained the status quo by attributing the title of the despot to both Anna’s and Eudokia’s sons. Thus, the future Alexios II, the elder son of John II and Eudokia, started his reign also as a despot placed under the care of the Byzantine emperor. Soon afterwards, the precarious peace achieved within the Byzantine world was to give way to hostilities driven by dynastic ambitions. Nonetheless, the 1280s and 1290s was a period when friendly relations between Constantinople and Trebizond resumed.

1114 Many years later (April 1363) Panaretos will be sent in a similar embassy to Constantinople to arrange a new marriage alliance between the Palaiologoi and the Komnenoi (Panaretos, 7424-75). Despite his usual laconic style, he is hardly able to conceal his amazement and awe (…προσκυνήσαµεν προσκυνήσεις φοβεράς…): ibid., 7427-28.  
1115 Pachymeres 4, 492-495 (XI. 29), refers to Alexios II as the ruler of the Laz (τοῦ τῶν Λαζῶν ἀρχοντος Ἀλεξίου…ὁ τῶν Λαζῶν ἀρχηγὸς) but makes also clear that he had received the title of the despot “τῇ δεσποτικῇ σεµνυνόµενοι µοίρᾳ καὶ τὸ Τραπεζήιον ἄστυ κατέχων” (trans. by Failier as “qui était honoré du rang de despote et détenait la ville de Trébizonte). It is not clear to me whether Alexios II received the title of the despot before his father’s death or soon afterwards. Nonetheless, Alexios II was right from the beginning under the care of the Byzantine emperor. See the relevant passages on the events following John II’s death and Eudokia’s visit to Constantinople (June 1298): Pachymeres 3, 296-299 (IX. 29). And on the prospective marriage of Alexios II to Irene Choumnaina, which fell through (later on she married the despot John Palaiologos, the Byzantine emperor’s son): Pachymeres 4, 316-319 (X. 7) and 412-415 (XI. 5).
On the Trapezuntine front, the rapprochement with Constantinople initially met some resistance. Out of the four recorded attempts to overthrow John II, all of them during the first five years of his reign, the last two took place after his marriage to Eudokia and should probably be understood as a counter-action against the alliance with the Palaiologoi. Of these, the invasion of George Grand Komnenos in 1284 (whether the actual ex-ruler of Trebizond or an imposter) was unsuccessful. Shortly after, Theodora Grand Komnene (daughter of the Georgian Rusudan, John II’s half-sister), invaded Trebizond with her Lazic troops and established herself as the legitimate queen of Trebizond (1284-1285), forcing John II and Eudokia into exile. None of these attempts were in the long run successful and John II would return to Trebizond and rule until his death in 1297.

Given the circumstances, John II and Eudokia had not only the money, but also the means and motives for an extensive patronage. The rapprochement with Constantinople and the dynastic alliance of the two houses certainly facilitated the migration of artists and intellectuals from the capital to Trebizond. At the time, there must have been an adequate surplus of qualified

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1116 All attempts against John II are recorded in Panaretos, 62-63, but the motives are not clearly stated. Kuršanskis, “L’ Usurpation,” 187-210, interprets them collectively as supportive of George’s separatist policies. Yet, this might not be the case since initially John II was eager to continue on his predecessor’s path. The rebellion of Papadopoulos in 1281 and the subsequent invasion in Trebizond of David Narin (the Imeretian king and an ally of the Byzantine emperor) in April 1282 both occurred in the midst of the negotiations with the Palaiologoi and before John II’s marriage to Eudokia. Since Pachymeres states clearly that Michael VIII used all available means and threats to convince the Trapezuntines, these incidents could be understood as pressure exercised on John II in order to agree and proceed with his submission to the Byzantine emperor. In any event, the invasion of George in 1284 and the subsequent usurpation of Theodora Grand Komnene in 1284-1285 both had a reactionary character aiming at overturning the recently established status quo.

1117 Panaretos’ reference to George as “ὅν καὶ Πλάνον ἔλεγον” is quite problematic (Panaretos, 62-63). Bryer, “The Fate of George Komnenos,” 332-350 interprets this as “vagabond” instead of “imposter.” Both Bryer and Kuršanskis (as in the note above) paint a rather unflattering portrait of George. But none of them considers Loukites’ oration that refers to George as “remarkable in all but his end” (καὶ σὺ Γεώργιε θαυμάστε, πλὴν τοῦ τέλους): Loukites, Epitaphios, 425. Keeping in mind the extremely complicated politics of the time, it seems fairer to say that George did the best he could to secure the independence of his dominion against the Palaiologan and Mongol demands and recover Sinope, recently lost to the Turks once again. Judging by the fact that George ruled for several years, we can speculate that he initially had the support of his aristocracy. It was only in 1280 that he was betrayed by his archontes (according to Panaretos) or his immediate family (according to the Armenian sources) to the Mongol Ilkhan Abaga. The betrayal and deposition of George was probably initiated by the pro-Palaiologan party.

workshops trained in the metropolitan traditions during the ongoing restoration of Constantinople in the 1260s, 1270s and 1280s. John II and certainly Eudokia, had an easy access to Constantinopolitan craftsmen, probably already in the service of the imperial family, willing to work abroad on demand for a member of the Palaiologan family.

The dynastic alliance of the Palailogoi and the Komnenoi and the ensuing resistance to the new status quo by a fraction of the Trapezuntine aristocracy provides us with the primary drive for the rulers’ patronage. They sought to secure their visibility as the lawful rulers of Trebizond against past and future pretenders to the throne; define and glorify the identity of their joint rule through public works; demonstrate their piety, underlining their adherence to the orthodox dogma and advertising their far-reaching benevolence; reconcile publicly and visually the different forces operating within the empire through constructions, restorations/remodelings and (re)decorations of religious institutions; and gain supporters through donations, as well as ceremonial.

The information we have concerning their patronage is in accordance with this hypothesis. In addition to St. Eugenios and the Chrysokephalos, which have been discussed at length, at least five religious foundations provide some evidence for the patronage of John II and Eudokia Palaiologina. Two of them, St. Gregory of Nyssa in Trebizond and the Blacherna in Tripolis are now completely destroyed. Of the rest, St. Philip in Trebizond and St. Michael at Platana (some thirteen kilometers west of Trebizond) have been partially remodeled, whereas the monastery of Soumela in the Matzouka valley (fig. 238), after so many destructions and rebuilding, retains practically nothing of their patronage.
The attribution of the church of St. Gregory of Nyssa to the initiatives of John II and Eudokia rests mainly on Finlay’s brief description of the church and its royal portraits before its destruction in 1863. The medieval monastery, located on the eastern suburb of Trebizond, served as the third and last cathedral of Trebizond from ca. 1665. Its katholikon, a small church according to Finlay, was destroyed and replaced in 1863 with the new ambitious cathedral building, which was in turn dynamited in the 1930s (fig. 391). The plan of the original church cannot be reconstructed on the basis of the available information but it was probably also a domed church.

The exact date of the monastery’s foundation is unknown. A funerary inscription recording the death of its abbot Theodore in the year 1363, now destroyed, provides the terminus ante quem for its construction. Finlay visited the church in 1850 and noted that “before the door there is a porch on the right-and left-hand walls of which there are three imperial full-length figures on each side.” On the right, he could make out the figure of an “empress” dressed in robes decorated with double-headed eagles and the figure of an “emperor” in robes decorated with single-headed eagles, whereas a third figure was “much defaced.” On the left, Finlay was able to describe only the figure of an “emperor” with richly embroidered robes and a crown similar to the emperor’s on the right. All inscriptions were either illegible or completely weathered. Judging by the double-headed eagles of the empress’s dress, Finlay identified the persons depicted on the right with John II and Eudokia Palaiologina whereas he was unable to identify either the third figure on the right or the emperor on the left.

1119 See the main entry in Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 226-228, and passim. Also Miller, Trebizond, 31-33. Chrysanthos, Ἡ Ἐκκλησία Τραπεζοῦντος, 454-455. Janin, Grands centres, 264-265.
1120 Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 226-228, give additional information on the new cathedral.
1121 Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 230, suggest that St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Philip in Trebizond, St. Michael at Platana, and the Panagia Blacherna in Tripolis belong to the same group.
1122 Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 226-228, cite all inscriptions associated with St. Gregory of Nyssa and Finlay’s description of the portraits in full.
Finlay’s suggestion seems very likely. If I understand his description correctly, he records six imperial portraits in total, arranged by three on each side wall of the porch. If so, then the two groups depicted represent two distinct phases of the monastery’s patronage. The figures on the left are no longer identifiable. For those on the right, the most likely candidates remain John II, Eudokia and possibly the heir apparent Alexios II. Eirene Palaiologina, proposed by Kuršanskis as an alternative candidate on the false assumption that the double-headed eagles were only adopted by the Byzantines after the 1320s, is unlikely. As we have seen, Eirene was abandoned by her husband shortly after their marriage and remained childless. Even if a portrait of her existed, it is doubtful whether it would remain in place after her usurpation of power. For different reasons, neither Theodora Kantakouzene makes a strong candidate. Although she is also portrayed in robes with double-headed eagles in the Dionysiou chrysobull, Alexios III wears the imperial loros (in the Dionysiou chrysobull and icon) in accordance with his titles as “emperor of all the Orient.” In any event, since the patronage of John II and Eudokia finds some additional support in the local tradition, Finlay’s suggestion should be accepted as such.


Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 227 note 342 and Janin, Grands centres, 264-265.

On the contrary, it is doubtful whether St. Gregory of Nyssa was Eudokia’s burial place. This long standing debate is caused by the inscription of the Eudokia/Euphemia, published by Fallmerayer—Original-Fragmente, vol. 1: 101, no. III (fascimile) and 102, no. III (transcription)—in the context of the Theoskepastos’ inscriptions, which in turn invited various transcriptions and interpretations: see relatively, A. Bryer, “Who was Eudokia/Euphemia?” ArchPont 33 (1975-76), 17-24; Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 226-228, 244; and Kuršanskis, “Note sur Eudocie/Euphemie,” 155-158. The inscription refers to an imperial lady (εὐσεβεστάτη) named Eudokia, who took the veil under the name of Euphemia and was the grandmother (μάμμη) of a certain John. Kuršanskis’ identification with Eudokia/ Kulchanat (wife of Manuel III, grandmother of John IV) is to be preferred over Bryer’s who favors the identification with Eudokia Palaiologina (wife of John II, grandmother of John III) for reasons already presented by Kuršanskis.
The church of the Panagia Blacherna in the eastern castle (Kuruca Kale) of Tripolis is similarly completely destroyed (figs. 238, 392–393). Our knowledge of the church is based solely on the information (notes, sketches and a lithograph) provided by the nineteenth-century travelers who visited the castle and church when the latter was still standing. Bryer and Winfield meticulously gathered, studied and presented all relevant material: Cuinet’s information (from 1890) on the statues of John II and Eudokia that were to be seen at the castle of Tripolis before they were moved to the Blacherna monastery inside the castle; Hommaire de Hell’s sketch plan and measurements of the church within the castle made in 1846, showing a small domed church with a single apse, a narthex and portico in the west (fig. 394); Jules Laurens’ lithograph (Hell’s traveling companion) recording the church’s stone masonry and high-drummed dome along with sculptural details including rope work reliefs and window moldings (fig. 395).

The identification of the Blacherna in Tripolis as a foundation of John II and Eudokia led Bryer and Winfield to attribute the churches of St. Philip in Trebizond (figs. 240, 396–403) and St. Michael at Platana (Akçaabat) (figs. 238, 404–409)—previously loosely dated to the

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1126 Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 138-139 give a detailed topographical account of Tripolis and its castles. Chrysanthos, Ἡ Ἐκκλησία Τραπεζοῦντος, 506, 711 and Talbot Rice, “Notice,” 66, mention briefly that there were ruins of the church of the Theotokos still visible.

1127 Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 138ff, and 142-143.

1128 Bryer and Winfield compare the statues of John II and Eudokia Palaiologina to the statue of her father Michael VIII and to the sculptural portraits from Arta (ibid., 138-139). Although their account on Arta’s portraits is a bit blurred and not totally accurate in its details, nonetheless they draw attention to the fact that “this sort of sculptural representation was not without contemporary precedent in Constantinople and Arta and all three examples are curiously linked by the person of Michael VIII.”


thirteenth to fourteenth centuries—to the same group, on the basis of their similar plan, dimensions, proportions and sculptural decoration. Despite their modest scale, the general and particular features of these three buildings also show an affiliation with the great foundations of the city, which has been noticed at various instances by Talbot Rice, Ballance, Bryer and Winfield. Their observations, when synthesized accordingly, might in turn enlarge the group of churches attributed so far to John II and Eudokia Palaiologina to include also Hagia Sophia and the remodeling of the Chrysokephalos and St. Eugenios.

The Blacherna in Tripolis, St. Philip in Trebizond and St. Michael at Platana were originally small churches with a single apse, a square domed naos and a narthex (figs. 394, 397 and 406). Their general layout invariably repeats in a simplified form that of the Chrysokephalos, St. Eugenios and Hagia Sophia. The single apse, in particular, seems to perpetuate the design of the Chrysokephalos, which probably provided these churches with a suitable scale model. Either five-sided (St. Philip, St. Michael) or semi-circular (Blacherna), both variations have been used interchangeably in this period, following the examples of St. Eugenios and Hagia Sophia.

Narthexes are a standard feature in all our examples, while porticoes preceding the main entrance/s to the church seem to have been a fairly standard feature of the late thirteenth-century architecture of Trebizond as well. Better documented is the four columned, groin-vaulted portico of the Blacherna church in Tripolis preceding the western entrance to the narthex, whereas the porch preceding the (main?) entrance of St. Gregory of Nyssa (mentioned by Finlay) cannot be

1132 Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 164-167, figs 17-18, pl. XXIb (: view of the exterior from the south, showing the blind arcing of south wall and apse, and the rebuilt dome). Chrysanthos, Ἑ Ἐκκλησία Τραπεζοῦντος, 1005, fig. 102 (: exterior view of the apse from the north, unpublished collection Talbot Rice/Byzantine Museum in Athens).
reconstructed in its details. St. Philip in Trebizond and St. Michael at Platana might originally have had similar porticoes preceding their western entrances.\textsuperscript{1133} Both churches have been enlarged with the demolition of their exterior western walls and the subsequent addition of an elongated hall. Consequently, all evidence concerning their porticoes is now irretrievable; unless the two carved capitals, incorporated in the new western entrance of St. Philip are, in fact, reused material from the original portico (figs. 397–398 and 402). In any event, Blacherna’s portico with its groin-vault (fig. 394)—a type of vault commonly used in Byzantium but rarely in Trebizond with the exception of Hagia Sophia’s groin vaults over the western corner bays of the naos and the central bays of the narthex and the upper room—gives an additional link with Hagia Sophia in Trebizond.

The domed naos, the essential characteristic of the Blacherna church, St. Philip, St. Michael and possibly St. Gregory of Nyssa, is equally the hallmark of the imperial foundations in Trebizond. In the latter group, the resulting elongated proportions of the naos owe much to the process of rebuilding of the Chrysokephalos and St. Eugenios rather than to a conceptual planning. Something similar is to be observed in Hagia Sophia probably under the influence of the local tradition. The Blacherna church, St. Michael and St. Philip, on the other hand, were built from foundations and were of modest dimensions. Being free from preconditioned restrictions and without the need for internal supports for the dome, the naos took the form of a square dome bay. Despite this difference among the two groups, the prevalence and diffusion of the domed church is, in my view, unlikely without the preceding remodeling of the Chrysokephalos and St. Eugenios.

\textsuperscript{1133} Bryer and Winfield, \textit{Pontos}, 142.
In addition to the general layout, the decoration of the smaller churches provides us with some indications that permit their association with the imperial foundations of Trebizond. The ropework reliefs of the Blacherna church as shown in the lithograph of 1846 (fig. 395) have been compared to those of St. Philip (dome cornices, figs. 400–401), the Chrysokephalos (figs. 265 and 267), St. Eugenios (north porch, figs. 306–307) and St. Michael at Platana (apse cornices, fig. 408). Of importance is Hell’s note on the exterior decoration of the Blacherna church with “plusieurs petites arceaux” which call to mind the similar pattern of St. Eugenios’ cornices (figs. 308–313). It is therefore possible that members of the same sculptors’ workshop were employed in the various projects of John II and Eudokia, the remodeling of St. Eugenios and the Chrysokephalos included. In addition, the information on the statues of John II and Eudokia said to have adorned the castle at Tripolis fits well with the evidence from Hagia Sophia for an interest in and familiarity with figural sculpture.

Talbot Rice and Ballance also noted that the two reused capitals in St. Philip’s remodeled western entrance demonstrated remarkable similarities with the reliefs of Hagia Sophia. When the Chrysokephalos was converted into a mosque, St. Philip served as the new cathedral of Trebizond between 1461 and 1665. During this time the church was enlarged with the addition of a rectangular hall to the west of the medieval church. The new western façade of

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1135 Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 142-143 interprets Hell’s description ("extérieurement une ornamentation à l’aide de plusieurs petites arceaux"); as receding blind arcades similar to those articulating the exterior façades of St. Michael at Platana. As Hell’s accurate vocabulary ("pendentifs…voutes…triple archivolte…voûte à arête…”), indicates, my estimation is that he would not refer to recessed blind arcades articulating the exterior of the church merely as “plusieurs petites arceaux.” On the contrary, the dominant pattern of the cornices in St. Eugenios is indeed a series of continuous small arches described, for instance, by Talbot Rice as “decorative arcading.” Similar work was to be found above the south door of the small anonymous church (church B) located on the eastern suburb of the city near the sea, see relatively Talbot Rice, “Notice,” 54 and 60. By 1958, church B was already gone: (Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 143).
1136 Talbot Rice, “Notice,” 55-56, pl. 9
1137 Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 159-161, figs 13-14, pl. XXa and XXb.
the remodeled church was originally articulated as a triple open arcade, as Ballance has shown. Albeit already walled up during Talbot Rice’s visit, its marble columns, capitals and carved archivolt were, nonetheless, still clearly visible from the interior (figs. 402–403). The south capital was carved with a “stalactite” pattern, while the north represented single-headed eagles with open wings in relief. Their provenance is unknown and both Talbot Rice and Ballance estimated that they were transferred there from a nearby church or even the imperial palace of Trebizond. Conceivably, since Hagia Sophia is the only building in the wider area with this sort of decoration, one could imagine that the reused capitals of St. Philip originally came from this building (from a dismantled structure, an ambo or ciborium), but judging by the published photographs, they seem to be of lesser quality than those of Hagia Sophia. Alternatively, the two marble columns, capitals and carved archivolt may well have formed part of the church’s medieval western entrance or portico, which at the time of its demolition were relocated and incorporated in a similar configuration. Practical considerations make the latter hypothesis more probable, since marble pieces are difficult to transport far, and porticoes were a standard feature of the churches attributed to John II and Eudokia. If so, then we can argue that either the members of the team responsible for the sculptural decoration of Hagia Sophia also worked in St. Philip, or that carved capitals similar to those of Hagia Sophia’s porches were used in St. Philip and other projects of John II and Eudokia.

The opus sectile floor of St. Michael at Platana provides an additional link with Hagia Sophia (figs. 338 and 409). St. Michael underwent an extensive remodeling in 1846, when its dome and drum were rebuilt and a new rectangular hall was added to the west of the medieval church, in a fashion similar to St. Philip.¹¹³⁸ The opus sectile floor was also heavily restored at

¹¹³⁸ See the main publication by Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” 164-167.
this time but its pattern, no doubt, follows quite faithfully its medieval predecessor.\footnote{Ballance, Bryer, and Winfield, “Nineteenth-century monuments,” 258-260 (with description, and illustrations of the floor in pls. 14-15).} As far as we can tell based on the published photographs, its intricate design with interlacing circles \textit{(omphalia)} and technique is remarkably similar to that of Hagia Sophia. Even though the materials used in St. Michael’s floor are of lesser quality (natural stones instead of marble) than those of Hagia Sophia, it is highly possibly that the same workshop was responsible for both projects.\footnote{For Hagia Sophia’s floor, see Talbot Rice, \textit{Haghia Sophia}, 83-87 (including a very interesting note by Michael Ballance on the marbles used). There is little doubt that the variety of marbles described—from white Proconessian and green Thessalian \textit{(verde antico)} to purplish-red (from Egypt and Iasos at Caria) was not available in Trebizond but came with the artists from Constantinople.} Interestingly St. Michael shows—in its design, construction and decoration—an integration of Constantinopolitan and Anatolian traditions (mainly Armenian) comparable to Hagia Sophia.

A late thirteenth-century date for the opus sectile floors of Hagia Sophia and St. Michael gains ground when considering the evidence of other imperial foundations of Trebizond. As we have seen, St. Eugenios’ floor, of a similar pattern and technique, is dated to 1291 (fig. 305).\footnote{Talbot Rice, \textit{Haghia Sophia}, 84: (fig. 54 reproduces the plan of the floor of St. Eugenios made in 1917 by the Russian Archaeological Mission), and 86.} That of the Chrysokephalos, if still extant underneath the modern floor, has never been properly examined.\footnote{Baklanov, “Deux Monuments byzantins de Trèbizonde,” 388 mentions that “…en l’année 1917 le sol était couvert d’un plancher en bois de cyprès, qu’il eût été difficile ou impossible d’enlever, pour nous du moins. En soulevant une ou deux planches, nous découvrîmes sous une couche de crasse, les traces d’un ancien dallage en mosaïque.”} Nonetheless, it has been described by Marengo as being “en mosaïque, à grandes rosaces”\footnote{C. Marengo, “Trèbizonde,” \textit{Missions Catholiques} 11 (1879): 303 (recited also in Talbot Rice, “Notice,” 52, note 2).} indicating a pattern similar to other medieval floors of Trebizond. What still remains in situ are the fine marble and mosaic revetments of the Chrysokephalos’ apse whose patterns and technique are closely related to that of the floors (figs. 248–251).\footnote{Talbot Rice, “Notice,” 52 and pls. 2-4.} It is reasonable then to...
suggest that all opus sectile work in St. Eugenios, the Chrysokephalos, Hagia Sophia and St. Michael at Platana represent a Constantinopolitan workshop, active in Trebizond during the late thirteenth century under the patronage of John II and Eudokia.

The loss of all thirteenth-century painted decoration from Trebizond left us today with no extant comparative material to Hagia Sophia’s wall paintings. Nonetheless, back in 1970, David Winfield was able to recognize underneath the eighteenth-century wall paintings of the Soumela monastery, a fresco layer made by the hand of one of the painters of Hagia Sophia. His observation can no longer be confirmed as Soumela’s frescoes have greatly deteriorated since. But there is no reason to doubt it either. Winfield had spent several years studying, cleaning and preserving Hagia Sophia’s wall paintings, he knew them better than anyone else and left us a most minute description and technical analysis. Consequently, a date in the 1260s has been proposed for the Soumela’s earliest recorded frescoes, i.e. in accordance with the date of Hagia Sophia’s.

Looking, however, at Soumela’s legendary tradition, John II and Eudokia are the earliest thirteenth-century rulers of Trebizond whose patronage towards the monastery can be confirmed in a reliable way due to a copy of an original chrysobull issued by Alexios III in December 1364. This chrysobull records previous donations to the monastery from the time of Alexios III’s great grandparents (John II and Eudokia), his grandfather (Alexios II) and his father (Basil

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1145 Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 285.
1147 In Talbot Rice, Hagia Sophia, chapter 9 (on the making of the paintings) and Appendix A (on cleaning and conservation are authored by D. Winfield; chapter 7 (on the survey of the paintings) is co-authored with Talbot Rice.
1148 Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, 285. Also accepted by Eastmond, Hagia Sophia, 126.
1149 For Soumela’s history over the centuries, see in addition: Chrysanthos, Ἡ Ἐκκλησία Τραπεζοῦντος, 468-484 and passim. Janin, Grands centres, 274-276. Soumela, under the patronage of the Grand Komnenoi and later the Ottomans became one the most powerful and prosperous monasteries of Pontos. Its foundation and earlier history up to the reign of John II is inadequately documented, based mainly on eighteenth-century traditions.
Grand Komnenos).\footnote{See relatively, Janin, *Grands centres*, 274-276; and Oikonomides, “Chancery,” 303-304.} We cannot exclude the possibility of earlier donations to Soumela but we cannot explain either why they would be omitted from Alexios III’s chrysobull. It seems, therefore, plausible that John II and Eudokia were the first in a line of subsequent rulers of Trebizond who took an active interest in the monastery’s welfare and provided the monastery with its earliest recorded frescoes. If so, then the frescoes of Soumela could provide a date for Hagia Sophia’s rather than vice versa.

Apart from Soumela, only the redecoration of St. Eugenios gives us an indirect link to the iconographic program of Hagia Sophia. As St. Eugenios has been discussed at length, it suffices here to say that the remodeling and redecoration of St. Eugenios around 1291 with a “painted image” of St. John the Forerunner located in the north part of the church follows the similar arrangement in Hagia Sophia. This reinforces the suggestion that both decorations reflect contemporaneous developments. Some years later, in 1306, the church of the newly founded monastery of St. John the Forerunner *tes Petras*, would be constructed and decorated to the west of the lower city by the *hieromonachos* Barnabas.\footnote{The church is now completely destroyed, see relatively: Janin, *Grands centres*, 286-287; and Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, 228.} Albeit not an imperial foundation, its name echoes the well-known monastery in Constantinople and enhances the view that the cult of St. John the Forerunner was actively promoted during the reign of John II and Eudokia Palaiologina.\footnote{On the Constantinopolitan monastery, see more recently: J. Durand, “A propos des reliques du Prodrome de Pétra à Constantinople: la relique de saint Christophe de l’ancien trésor de la cathédrale de Cambrai,” *CahArch* 46 (1998): 151-167. E. Malamut, “Le monastère Saint-Jean-Prodrome de Pétra de Constantinople,” in *Le sacré et son inscription dans l’espace à Byzance et en Occident*, ed. M. Kaplan, Byzantina Sorbonensia 18 (Paris, 2001), 219-233. Also Magdalino, “Pseudo-Kodinos’ Constantinople,” 1-14, esp. 9. The evidence from Trebizond and Thessaly demonstrates its importance already in the early Palaiologan period.}
In fact, dating the frescoes of Hagia Sophia to the late 1280s or 1290s does not present any major difficulties. Whereas the prevailing view favors a date in the 1250s or 1260s, the stylistic and iconographic parallels commonly cited range between Sopočani and the Kariye Camii. Within this time frame, a date later in the thirteenth century is also a possibility. In my opinion, the iconography of Hagia Sophia shows artists particularly knowledgeable of Constantinopolitan monuments and well aware of current Palaiologan developments. Once freed from the restrictive “evidence” of the portrait of the emperor Manuel, future research on the wall paintings might reconsider alternative thoughts and objections already expressed even by the very advocates of an earlier date.

One might object that Hagia Sophia looks unique in comparison to other buildings of Trebizond. This objection was partly answered when we discussed how the function and the meaning of Hagia Sophia were different from the cathedral and the local martyr’s church. A second reason is that Hagia Sophia was a new foundation and this enabled its patrons, builders and artists to design, build, and decorate this project from scratch. Rather than merely providing a solution to a problem, i.e. how to turn a former basilica into a domed church, Hagia Sophia offered them the opportunity to embody in a single work the very essence of the empire.

\[^{1153}\] Bryer, “Haghia Sophia in Trebizond,” 270-271, singled out themes such as Jacob with Angel, as “forward-looking” and “treated more vigorously than in the Kariye Camii.” It seems that this discrepancy troubled Bryer and led him to propose a more flexible time frame. One wonders whether his suggestion that the date of Hagia Sophia’s construction and decoration could be placed “at any time up to the death of George Komnenos in c. 1280” would have included the reign of John II, without the restriction imposed by the portrait. Cormack, “Recent studies,” 275-277, accepted the date in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, but also noted a) shared principles of design in both Hagia Sophia and the Kariye Camii (ibid., 276) and b) stylistic similarities to the frescoes of St. Euphemia and the Deesis Mosaic in the galleries of Hagia Sophia Constantinople (ibid., 277). Lafontaine-Dosogne, “Remarques,” 390, advocated a 1250 date for Hagia Sophia’s frescoes, yet she considered the Old Testament prefigurations of the Virgin in the north porch of Hagia Sophia as the first example of this sort of iconography in monumental painting and as a forerunner for the development of the Virgin cycles in St. Clement of Ohrid and in the Kariye Camii. In a similar fashion, she proposed that the extensive cycle of miracles in the narthex of Hagia Sophia “announce” those of the Kariye. In general, there seems to be an agreement that the paintings of Hagia Sophia anticipate the Palaiologan art of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries: see most recently Caillet and Joubert, “Sainte-Sophie de Trébizonde,” 112 and 118.
respect, Hagia Sophia was not an isolated example within the wider Byzantine world. A similar activity is to be observed in the late thirteenth-century Epiros with the remodeling of the Paregoretissa in Arta and the Pantanassa Philippiados under Nikephoros and Anna Palaiologina.

A juxtaposition of Hagia Sophia in Trebizond with the Paregoretissa in Arta, the best preserved example from Epiros, demonstrates that both projects follow similar principles. Their design, construction and decoration integrate various traditions. Constantinopolitan features are highlighted in every aspect of these churches (from design to decoration), whereas their masonry more or less follows the local tradition. Extensive use of sculpture is a hallmark of both churches and becomes the main medium where appropriations from the non-Byzantine traditions are to be observed. In both projects, this syncretism was very sophisticated. In Epiros, for instance, all westernizing features in the Paregoretissa are mainly reserved for the interior of the church—the dome bay—where they were most readily observed by the royal family, who had strong dynastic relations to the Angevin rulers through marriage. In Hagia Sophia, on the contrary, appropriations from the neighboring Christian (Armenian or Georgian) and Muslim traditions are to be found exclusively on the exterior façades of the church and porches. Whether such a choice was specifically intended to address their viewers and subjects or not, Trapezuntine population was far more multiethnic than that of Epiros and, admittedly, Constantinopolitan aristocracy represented no more than a thin upper layer of the Trapezuntine society.

The Paregoretissa in Arta and Hagia Sophia in Trebizond draw from a common source, a common cultural background, which is ultimately Constantinople, and synthesize it with local realities. This might be seen merely as a response to practical concerns and local economies, or as a regional development, i.e. a necessary compromise of imperial pretensions within their local
contexts. Yet, in both examples patrons clearly went out of their way in search of materials and workshops to realize their projects/visions. Shortage of money or qualified workshops was, therefore, not a primary concern. Similarly, the common practices of the ruling families in Arta and Trebizond seem to have enjoyed the support of the central authority in Constantinople. Did these seemingly regional developments in fact represent aspects of the Constantinopolitan court culture of the late thirteenth century?

Hagia Sophia in Trebizond and the Paregoretissa in Arta are not without precedents in the royal court culture of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The integration of seemingly competing traditions is best exemplified in the Cappella Palatina, the Palatine chapel of the Norman kings of Sicily in Palermo\textsuperscript{1154} and in the various projects of construction and restoration undertaken by the Crusader kings in Syria and Palestine.\textsuperscript{1155} The church of the Nativity in Bethlehem is of particular relevance since it was co-sponsored by the Byzantine emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143-80), who provided money and possibly mosaicists for its decoration (fig. 410). It was probably the same emperor who commissioned the construction of the Mouchroutas, a large Islamic-style imperial hall located next to the Chrysotriklinos (the throne room of Justin II), i.e. in the very heart of the so-called “sacred” Palace of Constantinople.\textsuperscript{1156} Whether we consider the Mouchroutas a secular building (and certainly it is, due to its function) or “sacred” (by its very location and association with the Byzantine emperor), the argument is that even prior to the Fourth Crusade, Byzantine court culture was neither as monolithic, nor as exclusive as it may seem at first glance. In this context, it becomes less surprising that within the first year of Constantinople’s recovery by the Byzantines, Michael VIII’s restoration of the capital included

\textsuperscript{1154} Tronzo, \textit{Cappella Palatina}.
\textsuperscript{1155} Folda, “Crusader Art and Architecture,” 555-557; and idem, \textit{Crusader Art}.
as a priority the construction of a new mosque.\textsuperscript{1157} Unfortunately, because of the lack of material evidence, we do not have a clear image of Constantinople’s urban and royal culture and whether the same syncretism observed in Trebizond or Epiros was also present in the imperial foundations of thirteenth-century Constantinople. Nevertheless, the image of Constantinople as a Byzantine capital city, uniform in character, is a quite distorted projection based on the few still standing buildings that escaped destruction.

It is this varied, cosmopolitan, inclusive cultural background that Constantinopolitan princesses brought with them to their new homelands, the primary force behind the remodeling of their respective dominions. While in “exile” from Constantinople, both Palaiologinas, Anna and Eudokia, espoused their mission with consistency and strength. Both maintained throughout a good rapport with their immediate family in Constantinople, preserving at the same time their husbands’ and sons’ interests. Eudokia, for instance, wished to remain loyal to her husband after his death, as Pachymeres tells us, and diplomatically turned down the proposition for a second marriage with king Milutin of Serbia, much to the despair of her brother, the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II.\textsuperscript{1158} Either sincerely or merely as a pretext, Eudokia requested and gained permission to return to Trebizond to convince her son, the now despot Alexios II, not to displease the Byzantine emperor and his overlord. Like Anna in Epiros, Eudokia made Trebizond her personal cause striving at maintaining a fine balance. The text by Pachymeres is a generator of memorable images, while the visually complex buildings, the Paregoritissa in Arta and Hagia Sophia in Trebizond give us narrative in their own right. Together they form a system

\textsuperscript{1157} See relatively Talbot, “The Restoration of Constantinople,” 252-253. This new mosque was constructed to replace the mosques of the Praitorion and the Mitaton damaged in 1201 and 1203 respectively.\textsuperscript{1158} Pachymeres 3, 298-303 (IX. 30-31); and Pachymeres 4, 316-319 (X. 7).
of overlapping narratives and illustrations of late thirteenth-century politics, court culture and Orthodoxy.

Given the above considerations Hagia Sophia should be placed in a totally different context than it has been until now. Instead of representing the ideal of Manuel I Grand Komnenos about the nature of his empire and his office, Hagia Sophia forms part of the Palaiologan vision of their empire after 1282. Hagia Sophia is not merely a provincial expression of power and legitimacy but the very substance of the Palaiologan rule and empire under Michael VIII and Andronikos II. Hagia Sophia embodies the renewed hopes that the Byzantine world was restored to its pre-1204 boundaries. By forcing the rulers of Epiros and Trebizond to acknowledge the Byzantine emperor’s supremacy and accept the titles of despot, order was finally restored. Even if nominally and temporarily, the Byzantine emperor could claim absolute rule over a vast empire extending from Trebizond in the East to Epiros in the West. For Trebizond this development signified the beginning of a new era. The rebuilding of the Chrysokephalos and St. Eugenios, along with the construction of Hagia Sophia aimed at redefining Trebizond between East and West, firmly rooted in its local context and at the same time closely related to Constantinople. In terms of architectural production, this was the most ambitious period in Trebizond. As far as we can tell, building on such a scale was never attempted thereafter. To be sure, later emperors of Trebizond, namely Alexios III and Manuel III, were renowned patrons of churches and monasteries. Still, the general decline of imperial programmatic architecture to be observed in Constantinople and Epiros seems to have taken place in Trebizond as well.
CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSION

This dissertation investigated a number of religious foundations in Epiros and Trebizond, constructed or renovated during the thirteenth century by the royal families and aristocracy in residence. The purpose of this study was to underline the importance of these religious buildings as sources of historical information for thirteenth-century Byzantium and integrate them into the histories of Byzantine architecture and culture. I explored the hypothesis that a close examination of these buildings might reveal some aspects of the social circumstances of their production, the intentions and pursuits of their patrons, the background of their masons and artists, i.e. the kind of information rarely included in our literary sources. I argued that this is could be done when the close analysis of a particular building is set within a broader frame. I suggested that the parallel examination of the building activity in the two former provinces of Byzantium, which formed semi-detached political entities throughout the thirteenth century, can be beneficial for understanding thirteenth-century Byzantium. This claim is sustained by the Byzantine cultural heritage of their patrons, which makes our rigid classifications, according to political and geographical entities, less meaningful. The main findings and suggestions for a particular building or political entity have been discussed in detail within the body of the main text and I will limit this section to the most significant suggestions and implications of this research.

This study has stressed the need to reintegrate the histories of Epiros and Trebizond in the process of reconstructing the Byzantine past. Their status within the thirteenth century—from former provinces to “successor” states to “splinter,” “separatist,” or “satellite” Byzantine states—denotes at best their detached or semi-detached political status. This provides the main
rationale why their histories can be examined separately, and apart from Laskarid and Palaiologan Byzantium. Whereas practical considerations can justify firm divisions according to political entities, this view conceals an implicit judgment: Epiros and Trebizond gradually detach themselves from mainstream Byzantium. Their histories form part of the progressive disintegration of the Byzantine Empire that started already in the late twelfth century, accelerated rapidly after the events of the Fourth Crusade, and became official after the restoration of Palaiologan Byzantium in 1261. According to this view, the importance of Epiros and Trebizond for understanding the overall developments of thirteenth-century Byzantium is more relevant before the restoration of the empire and less important thereafter.

The material evidence presented in this thesis revealed a more nuanced picture. First, the two former provinces did not present any exceptional building activity prior to 1204. Whatever their importance as income-generating provinces for central Byzantine authority might have been prior to 1204, the cultural landscape of both Epiros and Trebizond is markedly defined as Byzantine from the thirteenth century onwards. This is apparently the result of applying the same old Byzantine principles of government and economy to a smaller scale, rather than a radically different model—best exemplified by the character of these projects: construction of cathedrals, royal mausoleums, proliferation of monastic institutions and aristocratic foundations and so on. While the political fragmentation of the Byzantine Empire provides the starting point for tracing thirteenth-century developments in both Epiros and Trebizond, the restoration of Constantinople in 1261 does not correspond to a major turning point of progressive detachment. On the contrary, by the end of the thirteenth century the cultural integration of Epiros and Trebizond appears to have been greater than at the beginning of the century—the combined result of political agreements, royal intermarriages, and intensified architectural patronage.
Second, the buildings examined here were overwhelmingly commissioned by members of the imperial families of Byzantium—not only descendants of the Komnenian dynasty, but also of the Palaiologoi, the new ruling dynasty of thirteenth-century Byzantium. These royal patrons were heirs to a long-standing Byzantine tradition, which they sought to preserve. By investigating the character of their projects, it has been shown, for instance, that it is increasingly untenable to discuss Constantinopolitan “influences” in Epiros and Trebizond as something abstract without acknowledging that this concerns Laskarid and Palaiologan Byzantium as well, i.e. a web of interrelated patrons that defies rigid political, geographical and chronological divisions. In fact, the contribution of members of the Palaiologan dynasty in shaping the cultural landscape of Epiros and Trebizond seems to be greater than previously recognized.

Acknowledging the regional or eclectic character of these projects is neither an end to itself, nor a condescending verdict. This study advocated the need to move beyond the restrictive typological and formalist approaches, to address their “regionalism” or “eclecticism” as a process of assimilating different and sometimes seemingly competing traditions. The suggestion is that there is nothing inherently un-Byzantine or provincial in this process, for the additional reasons that it occurs on the highest level of patronage and across two geographically remote political entities. Instead of discussing the buildings of Epiros and Trebizond as ill-fitted products against model examples, it is more profitable to continue investigating the reasons, the sources and the circumstances that differentiate architectural production by varying the process of inquiry.

My approach to monumental architecture was to look for the people behind the projects, particularly the ones who commissioned and paid for them, but also those who constructed,
decorated and used them. This examination forces us to leave aside any preconceived notions of what a Byzantine church should look like and discuss these buildings as the outcome of constant negotiations and re-definitions of identity. Precisely for this reason “provincial” and “eclectic” buildings like the Pantanassa and the Paregoretissa churches in Arta, St. Nicholas at Mesopotamond, or Hagia Sophia in Trebizond, among others were treated here as the best examples of thirteenth-century Byzantine architecture, regardless of localities, lack of an anticipated ideal purity of form or refinement of construction. If some of these buildings could never be considered as examples of mainstream Byzantine architecture, it is because their reworking of Byzantine identity was too personal and ambitious.

When establishing a more intimate connection between the patrons and their buildings, discussing issues of continuity and change becomes a most complicated subject mainly because the Byzantines, unlike us, saw no inherent quality in novelty. Documenting changes therefore depends heavily on where our focus is. Take as an example the Kato Panagia church in Arta. An architectural historian looking exclusively on its architectural forms will draw attention to the fact that this cross-vaulted church presents an innovation within the traditional frame of the Byzantine architecture. Gathering all relevant examples, defining its geographical spread, discussing the origins of this specific architectural type will demonstrate that it appears for the first time in the thirteenth century, in Epiros and Frankish-held Greece. It is attested in a number of Byzantine and post-Byzantine examples with little diffusion outside this wider regional area. Accordingly, the emphasis will be on what is new, what is a regional manifestation of Byzantine architecture, perhaps indicating a most decisive break with tradition.
My approach was to point out that change and continuity are inseparable. To continue with the same example, whereas the architecture of the Kato Panagia alone permits a discussion about a definite change, its wall paintings do not. As far as it can be reconstructed, the iconography of the church shows nothing but a re-shaping of Byzantine conventions to express what was “universal” rather than “local,” timeless rather than time specific. Whatever new agendas we might detect appear within the frame of a long-standing tradition that stresses continuity from the beginnings to the end of time, reassuring for consistency and purpose. An infinite number of examples could be cited to illustrate the point: the Pantanassa’s Gothic style porticoes complemented the traditional Byzantine dynastic imagery; the Paregoretissa’s western sculptural decoration blended with Byzantine mosaic decoration. Drawing a line between architecture and decoration and, for that matter, any sort of divisions we might come up with, is not only unrealistic, but affects our narratives leading us to emphasize change or continuity.

Byzantines developed a number of ways to stress continuity. The dedication of a church alone, for instance the Blacherna church in Arta or Hagia Sophia in Trebizond, was all that was needed to make a reference to the intended prototype, to support the claim that the new building project was in line with a long-standing Byzantine tradition—in these particular cases with the Constantinopolitan tradition. Even if there was admittedly little physical resemblance with their alleged models, the links were reinforced with pictorial references, for instance, the Constantinopolitan procession of the icon of the Virgin Hodegetria in the Blacherna church in Arta or imagery from the Apostoleion in the case of Hagia Sophia in Trebizond. Less explicit for us to grasp, the re-enactment of processions, such as the litany of the icon of the Virgin Hodegetria in Trebizond, would provide a point of reference. The association with Constantinopolitan traditions, in particular, was in itself a statement of continuity. From that
point of view, the remodeling of older basilicas to domed churches could reinforce the statement, no matter how irrational the process or clumsy the result might appear to us (as in the case of the Blacherna in Arta).

Spolia—collected from nearby sites (as in the case of Mokista) or far away locations (as in the case of Hagia Theodora, the Pantanassa, and many other examples)—were reused to build a visual connection with the past. Whatever the aesthetic and practical considerations behind this practice, there was the additional benefit that every new project, no matter how distinct it seems today from older practices, was given the dignity of an older age. Spolia collected from ancient Nikopolis to be used in the royal projects of Arta, or carried from Constantinople to Trebizond (Hagia Sophia) show the many ways this could be done, and the many varied agendas at work. Even when spolia were conveniently collected from a nearby site, the references intended might have been equally complicated. In the case of Mokista, for instance, I have argued that the spolia taken from the nearby sanctuary of Artemis, were used in the construction of the churches of St. Nicholas and the Taxiarchs, not only to convey the impression of a classicizing architecture and thereby reinforce claims of continuity and *romanitas*, but potentially to build a connection with the famous shrine of St. Nicholas at Myra. Seen under this light, whatever might appear simplistic or dull about these churches at Mokista (such as the single-aisled church plan), or new within the context of the local architecture (such as the construction with large reused ashlar blocks), or even foreign within the context of Byzantine architecture (appropriations from the Western tradition) is counterbalanced by a most traditional and sophisticated approach in the making of a Byzantine church.
The interplay between continuity and change has been reworked in a number of subtle ways, often no longer traceable. Looking, for instance, at Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, the Chrysokephalos church in Trebizond, and the Paregoretissa church in Arta we might very easily take note of their differences in terms of architectural layout, construction, decoration, and so on. Yet, the implementation of galleries in both churches might have been desirable not only for functional (royal ceremonial) or structural reasons (apparently in the case of Arta, the galleries were never completed or used and might have been devised for structural stability), but also to make their adherence to the prototype, i.e. Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, all too clear. This connotation—perhaps not so subtle after all—has been noticed by contemporary scholars.

In most cases, architectural references to older and venerated prototypes are less easily traceable. Hagia Sophia in Trebizond builds a connection with its namesake in Constantinople through its dedication, and with the Apostoleion in Constantinople, and Jerusalem through its painted and sculptural decoration, as Eastmond has already suggested. The sources of its architectural design, on the other hand, appear at first glance as a crude juxtaposition of two different traditions, Constantinopolitan and regional. Taking into consideration the location of the monastery, the overall design, function and symbolism of the church, it is possible to suggest an even greater degree of integration. The imperial churches of Constantinople, Hagia Sophia and the Apostoleion, offered the immediate models for its architectural conception. Through these models, references to the monuments of the Holy Land—the church of Holy Apostles in Sion, the Temple of Jerusalem, and the Holy Sepulcher—were made possible and reinforced through its ashlar construction and its painted and sculptural decoration.
Many of the early royal churches in Arta and Trebizond were built or rebuilt as basilicas. They could be seen as manifestations of provincial architecture, as a continuation of Byzantine traditions that go back to the early Christian times, or as deliberate revivals of the past. When discussing the Chrysokephalos church in Trebizond, I pointed out the many parameters that need to be considered to explain the preference for basilicas over centralized church plans: their scale, function, relevance to the particular site, relation to the local building traditions, but also the broader context of Byzantine architecture. In this particular case, the dynastic context of the cathedral church of Trebizond adds another layer of interpretation. Intentional references to Hagia Sophia, the cathedral church of Nicaea, partially rebuilt by the Laskarid rulers in the thirteenth century, cannot be excluded. If this is the case, clear cut distinctions between old and new, metropolitan and provincial, collapse.

A most noticeable difference in the architectural production of both capitals during the thirteenth century is the shift from basilicas to domed churches. This preference is demonstrated by the construction of new domed churches (the Paregoritissa and the Pantanassa in Arta; Hagia Sophia in Trebizond), or by the transformation of existing basilicas into domed churches (Blacherna church in Arta; St. Eugenios and the Chrysokephalos in Trebizond). A domed solution in many variations (single dome, three-domed, five-domed and so on) was deemed desirable for cathedrals (Chrysokephalos), pilgrimage churches (St. Eugenios, narthex of Hagia Theodora), royal mausolea (Blacherna, Chrysokephalos), in addition to monastic churches in general (like the Pantanassa). This indicates a departure from early thirteenth-century practices were basilicas qualified for all these purposes.
In my view, the way domed churches proliferated from the second half of the thirteenth century at the expense of all other building types, regardless of function or local traditions, documents the overwhelming dominance of Constantinopolitan culture across the two capitals. We cannot exclude other considerations—such as the exalted funerary function of most churches under consideration or the intended reference to a specific model—but when seen together they manifest a change in orientation towards clearly marked Constantinopolitan traditions. In both capitals, cross-in-square churches of the Constantinopolitan variation (the Pantanassa and the Paregoretissa in Arta; Hagia Sophia in Trebizond) were and remained exceptional cases. The implication here is, and always was, that Laskarid Nicaea and Palaiologan Constantinople were the main centers that preserved and disseminated this middle Byzantine tradition. The construction of these churches seems to have paved the way for later developments, but the circumstances and motives for this process are less apparent and therefore debatable.

The second most impressive characteristic of the architectural production of both capitals is the emergence of a highly eclectic architecture. This tendency is represented with a few royal churches, which integrate distinct cultural traditions. In Arta, this is best exemplified by the remodeling of the Pantanassa, the Paregoretissa, and Hagia Theodora, churches which assimilate local, Constantinopolitan and Western traditions; in Trebizond, with the construction of Hagia Sophia, the only extant example to merge Constantinopolitan traditions with those of the Caucasus and the Anatolian plateau, Christian and Muslim alike. These churches stand as landmarks of their respective cities to this day. As iconic images of the past, they have come to epitomize the otherness of Epirote and Trapezuntine architecture; the separatist nature of the local rulers.
As I have argued, to account for these developments, major turning points in the cultural orientation of Epiros and Trebizond, we need to consider not only the financial means, the political and ideological agendas at work, but also the cultural background of their patrons. The case of late thirteenth-century Arta is compelling. Both the Pantanassa’s and the Paregoretissa’s remodeling have an approximate date and known patrons: they were remodeled during the last decade of the century by Nikephoros Komnenos Doukas and Anna Kantakouzene Palaiologina, i.e. the local ruler and his Constantinopolitan wife, the in-laws of a Western prince, Philip of Taranto, the son of Charles of Anjou. Their architectural patronage has a concrete political and ideological context, but also embodies the cultural background of the ruling family. As personal statements of Byzantine identity, they remained isolated examples with no direct precedents, nor immediate followers, even within their regional contexts. Two further exceptions—churches with a similar eclectic character—can solidify the argument. The churches at Mokista also have the signature of the royal family in Arta (Anna Kantakouzene Palaiologina, and the despot Thomas) and her closest confidants (Michael Zorianos, and Kosmas Andritsopoulos). I have suggested that the monastery of St. Nicholas at Mesopotamon makes a second case. Quite unexpected for a stavropegion, its noted similarities with the eclectic royal projects of Arta suggest either direct royal patronage or access to royal workshops by its abbot. At least one of them is known to have maintained intimate ties with the ruling family of Epiros, and Anna Kantakouzene Palaiologina, in particular.

Late thirteenth-century Arta makes a concrete case and leads us to reconsider the way cultural traditions are disseminated; to retrace sources, circumstances and motives that differentiate architectural production. In this particular case, a Palaiologina is involved directly or indirectly in a number of important projects; we need to ask whether upholding the old frame
of provincial architecture and/or local separatism is still reasonable. More importantly, we can use this model and work backwards and across the two capitals in order to account for the major turning points in the architectural production of Arta and Trebizond. Is the case of Trebizond different from Arta?

The concluding remarks I can offer in relation to Arta and Trebizond are based on the way I examined building activity and rest on the revised dates proposed for a number of architectural projects.

In Epiros, the thirteenth-century frame for architectural patronage is more solid due to the political life span of Byzantine rule in the area, although architectural stages of existing buildings may antedate the thirteenth century. Consequently, the main revisions proposed do not affect the general picture of Epiros as is known to us already from previous studies but concern particular historical periods within the thirteenth century and the patronage of specific rulers. For example, the traditional view of Michael II Komnenos Doukas and his wife Theodora as great patrons of religious foundations was questioned. I pointed out that some of Michael’s most celebrated projects—such as the remodeling of the Blacherna church to a royal mausoleum, the first phase of the Pantanassa church and the Paregoretissa church—might have been constructed later than the mid-thirteenth century, and not necessarily during his reign. Likewise, Theodora’s contribution in the remodeling of her future burial place, the church of Hagia Theodora, is not self-evident and requires additional documentation. Therefore, Michael II’s and Theodora’s investment on religious foundations with pronounced political and dynastic character cannot be taken for granted. On the contrary, the reign of Nikephoros I and Anna emerges from this study as the most important period of building activity in Arta and Epiros in general. The remodeling
of St. Theodora, the Blacherna church, the Pantanassa, and the Paregoretissa can one way or another relate to their initiatives. The implication is that Anna Kantakouzene Palaiologina, as a royal consort and later as regent queen, was a most prolific patron of religious foundations.

The revision of dates proposed for Trebizond significantly affects the picture of the thirteenth-century city as it was known to us and the architectural patronage under the Grand Komnenoi. Whereas previous studies implied that there was little building activity in the second half of the thirteenth century and up to the 1340s, the picture here is reversed. I argued that the Chrysokephalos and St. Eugenios were probably rebuilt by 1291, and that the construction of Hagia Sophia could also be placed in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. If these suggestions are correct, the reign of John II and Eudokia Palaiologina becomes a most important period of building activity for the city and “empire.” This idea is supported by a number of related projects attributed to their initiatives—St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Philip in Trebizond, St. Michael at Platana (Akçaabat), the Blacherna church in Tripolis—as well as their recorded patronage towards the legendary monastery of the Soumela in the Matzouka valley.

The proposed dates are tentative, but the overall impression we derive from this research is ultimately coherent, chronologically and contextually, across the two capitals. During times of territorial expansion, there was minimum investment in monumental architecture. There is no evidence from Arta for the construction of large-scale buildings during the first decades of the thirteenth century. Arta was used merely as a power base for expeditions, rather than a potential permanent capital. Things changed when the rulers of Epiros abandon their imperial claims and military campaigns for recovering Constantinople. From this point of view, the construction of large-scale buildings in Trebizond, as early as the first decades of the thirteenth century,
indicates an earlier abandonment of expansionist policies and a desire to solidify Byzantine rule on a local level. The character of their projects—a royal mausoleum (Chrysokephalos), and a shrine to the local saint (St. Eugenios)—seems to reinforce the argument.

The introduction of clearly identifiable Constantinopolitan traditions can be understood within the context of political agreements and intermarriages between the ruling families of Byzantium. The construction of the Pantanassa and the Paregoretissa illustrates the dissemination of metropolitan traditions in Arta, following the settlement of the Komnenodoukai with the Laskarids, or alternatively, with the Palaiologoi. I suggested that this applies to Trebizond as well. Rather than the Pontic independence, it is John II’s decision to accept the dignity of the despot and a marriage alliance with the imperial family in Constantinople that provides the interpretative frame for the construction of Hagia Sophia, the remodeling of the Chrysokephalos and St. Eugenios. In this reading, it is the process of re-integration in the Byzantine commonwealth that generated Arta’s and Trebizond’s remodeling after Constantinople.

The eclectic character of the royal projects in Arta and Trebizond is but a manifestation of court culture. Regional, Constantinopolitan, Byzantine, or generally Medieval, depends on our viewpoint. Sources are tangible following a close stylistic analysis; circumstances and motives are less clear. In Arta, dynastic alliances with the Palaiologoi and the Angevins provide the starting point for the merging of local, Constantinopolitan and Western traditions. This is the work of an educated, ambitious, cosmopolitan ruling class and their cultural advisors. I proposed something similar for Trebizond, by questioning the date and patronage of Hagia Sophia.

This study was shaped as a collection of experiences of “exile.” The narrative started with the Constantinopolitan noble women, who found refuge in Arta in the aftermath of the Latin
Occupation and sought to continue the life-style they had left behind. It concluded with the Constantinopolitan princesses—Anna Kantakouzene Palaiologina and Eudokia Palaiologina—who made Arta and Trebizond their new homelands, as a consequence of their arranged marriages. Their patronage of highly visible religious foundations fostered a sense of unity and gave closure to a century of devastation caused by wars and the breakup of the empire. I stated provocatively that what we admire most in Arta and Trebizond, and in the Paregoretissa church and Hagia Sophia respectively, is to a great extent a metropolitan articulation of Byzantine identity, the Palaiologan vision of their empire, power and rule.
ABBREVIATIONS:

AAA  Αρχαιολογικά Ανάλεκτα εξ Αθηνών

ABME  Αρχείον των Βυζαντινών Μνημείων της Ελλάδος

AAD  Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον

AnatSt  Anatolian Studies

ArchPont  Archeion Pontou

BCH  Bulletin de correspondence hellénique

BK  Bedi Kartlisa

BMGS  Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies

BNJ  Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher

ByzBulg  Byzantinobulgarica

ByzF  Byzantinische Forschungen

ByzSlav  Byzantinoslavica

BZ  Byzantinische Zeitschrift

CahArch  Cahiers archéologiques

CorsiRav  Corsi di cultura sull’ arte ravennate e bizantina

DChAE  Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας
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<tr>
<td>DOP</td>
<td>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</td>
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<tr>
<td>EEBΣ</td>
<td>Επετηρίς Εταιρείας Βυζαντινών Σπουδών</td>
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<td>Ηπειρχρον</td>
<td>Ηπειρωτικά Χρονικά</td>
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<tr>
<td>ΘΗΕ</td>
<td>Θρησκευτική και Ηθική Εγκυκλοπαίδεια (Athens, 1962–1968)</td>
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<tr>
<td>JÖB</td>
<td>Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik</td>
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<td>JSAH</td>
<td>Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians</td>
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<td>ODB</td>
<td>Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</td>
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<td>PAE</td>
<td>Πρακτικά της εν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLP</td>
<td>Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit</td>
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<tr>
<td>RbK</td>
<td>Realexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst</td>
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<tr>
<td>REArm</td>
<td>Revue des études arméniennes</td>
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<tr>
<td>REB</td>
<td>Revue des études byzantines</td>
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<td>SChAE</td>
<td>Συμπόσιο Βυζαντινής και Μεταβυζαντινής Αρχαιολογίας και Τέχνης. Πρόγραμμα και περιλήψεις εισηγήσεων και ανακοινώσεων</td>
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<td>Tabula Imperii byzantini</td>
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<td>ZRVI</td>
<td>Zbornik radova Vizantološkog Instituta</td>
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PRIMARY SOURCES ABBREVIATED:


Lazaropoulos, Synopsis, = Rosenqvist, Hagiographic Dossier, 246–359.


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*The sources of the following illustrations are cited in the captions. Those without a citation belong to the author.

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FIGURE 230. Hagia Sophia, Mokista: The masonry of the south wall (after Paliouras, Βυζαντινή Αιτωλοακαρνανία, fig. 237).

FIGURE 231. Hagia Sophia, Mokista: Detail of the masonry of the south wall (after Paliouras, Βυζαντινή Αιτωλοακαρνανία, fig. 235).
FIGURE 232. St. Nicholas and Taxiarchs, Mokista: View of the churches from the southwest (after Paliouras, *Βυζαντινή Αιτωλοακαρνανία*, fig. 41).

FIGURE 234. St. Nicholas and Taxiarchs, Mokista: Proposed reconstruction of: a) south façade, b) west façade, and c) east façade of the churches (after Paliouras, *Βυζαντινή Αιτωλοακαρνανία*, fig. 234).
FIGURE 235. St. Nicholas and Taxiarchs, Mokista: View from the east (after Paliouras, *Βυζαντινή Αιτωλοακαρνανία*, fig. 233).

FIGURE 236. St. Nicholas and Taxiarchs, Mokista: Detail of the inscription (after Paliouras, *Βυζαντινή Αιτωλοακαρνανία*, fig. 231).
FIGURE 237. St. Nicholas and Taxiarchs, Mokista: The Roman inscription on the south façade of St. Nicholas (after Romaios, “Θέρμος,” fig. 2).
FIGURE 238. The heartland of the empire of Trebizond (after Janin, *Grands centres*, 296).

FIGURE 239. Trebizond in the thirteenth century (after Eastmond, *Hagia Sophia*, fig. 2).
FIGURE 240. Trebizond’s major churches and monasteries as recorded in 1958. Many have been demolished since (after Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” fig. 1).

FIGURE 242. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: View from the northeast.

FIGURE 243. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: View from the east.
FIGURE 244. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: View from the southwest.

FIGURE 245. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: North façade, porch, and minaret.
FIGURE 246. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: Uspenskij’s photograph of the church from the northeast. The four-columned structure in front of the apse (the tomb of the emperor Alexios IV?) and the fountain (front right) were demolished after 1918 (after Chrysanthos, Ἡ Ἐκκλησία Τραπεζοῦντος, fig. 18a).

FIGURE 247. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: The tomb of the emperor Alexios IV Komnenos (after Chrysanthos, Ἡ Ἐκκλησία Τραπεζοῦντος, fig. 23).
FIGURE 248. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: View into the apse and remaining wall revetments.

FIGURE 249 a-b. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: Details of the wall revetment of the north side of the apse.
FIGURE 250 a-b. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: Details of the wall revetment of the south side of the apse.

FIGURE 251. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: Detail of the wall revetment of the south side of the apse.
FIGURE 252. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: Carved lintel.

FIGURE 253. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: Marble lintel and doorjambs.
FIGURE 254. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: Marble lintel and doorjambs.

FIGURE 256. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: Section, plans at ground and gallery level (left) and section and plan of the northeast corner of the church with staircase leading to the gallery (top right) published by Baklanov, along with the earlier plan of the church (bottom right) published by Texier and Pullan (after Baklanov, “Deux Monuments byzantins de Trébizonde,” fig. 7).

FIGURE 259. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: View into the south transept and apse from the gallery level.
FIGURE 260. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: Interior view looking southwest to the narthex and gallery above.
FIGURE 262. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: View into the dome.

FIGURE 264. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: Detail of the reused sculptures and inscription of the north façade of the church, above the roof of the northeast annex.

FIGURE 265. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: Detail of the fragmentary inscription reused in the north façade.
FIGURE 266. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: Detail of the east façade, north of the apse.

FIGURE 267. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: Detail of the east façade, showing reused sculptures of the upper northeast chamber.
FIGURE 268. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: Interior view into the south transept. Arrows marking the positions of the corbels and the now blocked opening of the east upper wall of the transept.
FIGURE 269. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: Columns and capitals of the north transept.
FIGURE 270. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: Column and capital of the north transept.
FIGURE 271. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: The modern staircase leading to the north gallery.

FIGURE 273 a-b. Panagia Chrysokephalos, Trebizond: Interior view of the north porch, columns and capitals.
FIGURE 274. St. Anne, Trebizond: View from the southwest.

FIGURE 275. St. Anne, Trebizond: East façade.

FIGURE 277. St. Anne, Trebizond: Section looking east (after Ballance, “The Byzantine Churches of Trebizond,” fig. 9).
FIGURE 278. Hagia Sophia, Nicaea: View from the southeast (after Möllers, *Hagia Sophia*, pl. 1, fig. 2).

FIGURE 280. Hagia Sophia, Nicaea: Opus sectile floor of the nave (after Möllers, *Hagia Sophia*, pl. 48, fig. 2).

FIGURE 281. St. Demetrios (Metropolis), Mistra: Hypothetical section of the basilica, looking east (after Marinou, *Άγιος Δημήτριος*, drawing 18).
FIGURE 282. St. Demetrios (Metropolis), Mistra: Interior view looking east, from the gallery level (after Marinou, Άγιος Δημήτριος, pl. 10).
FIGURE 283. Portrait of St. Eugenios of Trebizond: Illuminated manuscript of St. Eugenios monastery Typikon, dated 1346. Vatopedi cod. 1199, fol. 315v (after Chrysanthos, Η Ἐκκλησία Τραπεζοῦντος, fig. 34).

FIGURE 286. Copper trachy of George Grand Komnenos (1266-80) with St. Eugenios (after Retowski, Die Münzen, pl. XV, fig. 2).
FIGURE 287. Copper follis of George Grand Komnenos (1266-1280), inscribed in Greek ΔΠΤ (Despot), after Retowski, *Die Münzen*, pl. XV, fig. 3.

FIGURE 288. Copper trachy of John II Grand Komnenos (1280-1297) with St. John the Forerunner (after Retowski, *Die Münzen*, 105, no. 149).


FIGURE 293. St. Eugenios, Trebizond: Uspenskij’s photograph of the church from the acropolis (after Chrysanthos, ‘Η Ἐκκλησία Τραπεζούντος, fig. 27).
FIGURE 294. St. Eugenios, Trebizond: View from the southeast.

FIGURE 296. St. Eugenios, Trebizond: View of the dome from the southeast.

FIGURE 297. St. Eugenios, Trebizond: View of the south transept.
FIGURE 298. St. Eugenios, Trebizond: North façade, porch and minaret.

FIGURE 299. St. Eugenios, Trebizond: West façade (currently inaccessible).

FIGURE 302. St. Eugenios, Trebizond: View into the dome from the west (after Baklanov, “Deux Monuments byzantins de Trébizonde,” fig. 1).

FIGURE 304. St. Eugenios, Trebizond: View into the north transept showing traces of its painted decoration on the north wall (after Baklanov, “Deux Monuments byzantins de Trébizonde,” fig. 4).
FIGURE 305. St. Eugenios, Trebizond: Diagram made by the Russian Archaeological Mission in 1917, showing the opus sectile pavement of the naos (after Talbot Rice, *Hagia Sophia*, fig. 54).

FIGURE 308. St. Eugenios, Trebizond: North porch, entrance leading to the interior of the church.

FIGURE 309. St. Eugenios, Trebizond: The blocked entrance of the south façade.
FIGURE 310. St. Eugenios, Trebizond: Detail of the sculptural cornice of the blocked south entrance to the naos.

FIGURE 311. St. Eugenios, Trebizond: The pentagonal apse.
FIGURE 312. St. Eugenios, Trebizond: Detail of the sculptural cornice of the pentagonal apse from the southeast.

FIGURE 313. St. Eugenios, Trebizond: Detail of the sculptural cornice of the pentagonal apse from the northeast.
FIGURE 315. The emperor Alexios III Grand Komnenos and St. John the Forerunner: Two-sided icon (front), ca. 1375. Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos (after Treasures of Mount Athos, cat. no. 2.29).
FIGURE 316. Saints Kanidios, Eugenios of Trebizond, Valerianos, and Akylas: Two-sided icon (back), ca. 1375. Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos (after Treasures of Mount Athos, cat. no. 2.29).

FIGURE 318. Church in Ispir Castle: Plan (after Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, fig. 121).

FIGURE 319. St. Eugenios, Trebizond: Inscriptions from Finlay’s MS, 1850 (after Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, fig. 62).

FIGURE 323. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: View of the main church from the southwest.

FIGURE 325. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: View of the foundations of the small church from the west.

FIGURE 327. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: Elevation of the north front, showing location of tombs (after Talbot Rice, *Haghia Sophia*, fig. 2).
FIGURE 328. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: View of the south porch from the southwest.

FIGURE 331. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: East façade.
FIGURE 332. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: View into the main apse.
FIGURE 333. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: Interior view looking northeast.
FIGURE 334. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: Interior view of the north wall of the naos.
FIGURE 335. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: View into the northwest corner bay of the naos.
FIGURE 336. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: Detail of the fresco decoration of the dome. Crucifixion (northeast pendentive); Anastasis (southeast pendentive); Baptism (southwest pendentive).

FIGURE 338. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: Detail of the opus sectile floor.

FIGURE 339. The central medallion from Hagia Sophia’s floor with eagle and hare (after Chrysanthos, Ἡ Ἑκκλησία Τραπεζοῦντος, fig. 53).

FIGURE 341. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: Room above narthex, view into the south bay (after Talbot Rice, *Haghia Sophia*, pl. 7D).
FIGURE 342. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: Detail of the south porch (after Alpatov, “Sainte-Sophie de Trébizonde,” fig. 16).

FIGURE 344 a-b. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: West porch’s capitals (after Eastmond, *Hagia Sophia*, figs. 50-51).


FIGURE 347. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: North porch. a) Line drawing of a slab with geometric patterns (after Talbot Rice, *Haghia Sophia*, fig. 38); and b) Slab with cross.
FIGURE 348. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: Detail of the main apse, showing the fine astragal moulding around the window and slab with eagle above.


FIGURE 357. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: View into the dome and west vault.


FIGURE 361. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: Christ Discoursing with the Doctors in the Temple; Christ Curing the Man Born Blind at the Pool of Siloam; and the Baptism. Vault and east wall of the south bay of the narthex (after Eastmond, *Hagia Sophia*, pl. 21).


FIGURE 370. St. John, Ephesos (left) and St. Mark, Venice (right): Plans (after Angelidi, “Περιγραφή Αγίων Αποστόλων,” fig. 5).


FIGURE 375. Donor’s portrait of emperor Manuel Komnenos recorded by Grigorii Gagarin and published in 1897 (after Eastmond, *Hagia Sophia*, fig. 96).
FIGURE 376. Portrait of Manuel II Palaiologos, dated 1409-11 (after Byzantium: Faith and Power, fig. 1.1).
FIGURE 377. Manuel II Palaiologos with his wife and children, dated 1403-5 (after Byzantium: Faith and Power, fig. 2.5).
FIGURE 378. Medallion of John VIII Palaiologos by Pisanello, Ferrara, ca. 1438-39 (after Byzantium: Faith and Power, fig. 2.8).

FIGURE 379. Portrait of John VIII Palaiologos, Cod. Sinai 2123, fol. 30v. The portrait and title were added to the manuscript in the sixteenth century (after Galavaris, Ζωγραφική Βυζαντινών Χειρογράφων, fig. 237).
FIGURE 380. Chilandar monastery, Mount Athos: Portraits of the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II and the ktetor king Milutin in the narthex of the katholikon, dated 1320-1321 (after Todić, Serbian Medieval Painting, fig. 22).

FIGURE 381. Theoskepastos monastery, Trebizond: The imperial portraits of Alexios III (1349-1390), his wife Theodora Kantakouzene, and his mother Eirene of Trebizond, the ktetor of the monastery (after Texier, Asie Mineure, pl. 64).
FIGURE 382. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: The bell-tower from the west porch.

FIGURE 383. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: Tower’s graffito inscription of the year 1426/27 (after Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, pl. 178a).
FIGURE 384. Hagia Sophia, Trebizond: Imperial portraits on the bell-tower (east façade) as recorded in 1961 (after Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, fig. 68).

FIGURE 386. Detail of Theodore Metochites’ portrait (after Ševčenko, “Palaiologan Learning,” 290).

FIGURE 387. Nea Moni, Chios: Prophet-kings David and Solomon. Detail of the Anastasis mosaic (after Mouriki, Τα ψηφιδωτά της Νέας Μονής Χίου, pl. 52).
FIGURE 388. St. Demetrios church, Markov Manastir, Skopje: View from the southeast. Donors’ portrait above the entrance, King Marko and his father Vukašin, dated 1376/77 (after Ćurčić, “Byzantine Input,” fig. 9).
FIGURE 389. St. Demetrios church, Markov Manastir, Skopje: South façade, above the entrance: David (a) and Solomon (b) converge on the Virgin and Child (after Gavrilović, “The Portrait of King Marko,” figs. 5-6).

FIGURE 392. The eastern castle (Kuruca Kale), Tripolis: View from the south (after Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, pl. 70b).

FIGURE 393. The eastern castle (Kuruca Kale), Tripolis: Plan of the site and church (after Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, fig. 27).


FIGURE 400. St. Philip, Trebizond: Exterior view of the dome from the northeast.

FIGURE 401. St. Philip, Trebizond: Detail of the sculptural cornices of the dome.
FIGURE 402. St. Philip, Trebizond: Interior view of the blocked west entrance to the church with reused columns and capitals (after Talbot Rice, "Notice," pl. 9).
FIGURE 403. St. Philip, Trebizond: Detail of the north capital and carved archivolt of the blocked west entrance (after Bryer and Winfield, Pontos, pl. 173c).
FIGURE 405. St. Michael, Platana (Akçaabat): View of the apse from the northeast (after Chrysanthos, 'Ἡ Ἑκκλησία Τραπεζοῦντος, fig. 102).


FIGURE 410. Nativity church, Bethlehem: Mosaic, Incredulity of Thomas (after Folda, Crusader Art, fig. 35).

FIGURE 411. The city of Jerusalem, 330-638 AD (after Lavvas, “Πολεοδομία,” 31, fig. 5).
FIGURE 412. The city of Jerusalem, before 1187 (after Marković, “The first Journey of St. Sava,” fig. 6).