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Παρατηρήσεις στον γλυπτό διάακοσμο και το τέμπλο του καθολικού της Αγίας Μονής Αρειας Ναυπλίου

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SOME REMARKS ON THE SCULPTED DECORATION AND THE TEMPLON OF THE KATHOLIKON OF HAGIA MONI IN AREIA, NAUPLION

Στην Αγία Μονή Αρείας Ναυπλίου διατηρούνται διάσπαρτα θραύσματα αρχιτεκτονικών γλυπτών, ορισμένα από τα οποία φέρουν ιδιαίτερα περίτεχνο ανάγλυφο ή επιπεδόγλυφο διάκοσμο, χαρακτηριστικό του 12ου αιώνα. Μεταξύ αυτών διακρίνονται θραύσματα από τρεις πεσσίσκους και έναν κοσμήτη τέμπλου. Με βάση τα παραπάνω, μπορεί να προταθεί η αναπαραστάση της αρχικής μορφής του τέμπλου του καθολικού. Δυστυχώς δεν υπάρχουν πλήρη στοιχεία, αλλά τα σωζόμενα αποδίδουν μια εικόνα του γλυπτικού συνόλου που άλλοτε κοσμούσε το σπουδαίο αυτό μνημείο.

Several fragments of architectural sculptures are preserved in the monastery of Hagia Moni in Areia, Nauplion. Some of them have particularly elaborate relief or champlévé decoration, pertaining to the 12th century. Among them are noted the fragments of three small piers and a cornice, attributed to the marble altarscreen of the church. Based on these, a reconstruction of the templon is attempted. Unfortunately the evidence is not complete, but the surviving fragments give a vivid image of the sculptural work that used to decorate this significant monument.

Λέξεις κλειδιά

Μεσοβυζαντινή περίοδος, 12ος αιώνας, γλυπτική, τέμπλο, Μέριμπακας, Χώνικας, Αργολίδα, Αγία Μονή στην Άρεια, Ναύπλιο.

Keywords

Middle-Byzantine period; 12th century; sculpture; templon; altarscreen; iconostasis; Merbaka; Chonika; Argolis; Agia Moni in Areia, Nauplion.

The katholikon of Hagia Moni in Areia, Nauplion is one of the most striking 12th-century monuments, a large church of the complex cross-in-square type with a narthex and exonarthex, its façades formed by meticulous cloisonné masonry with bricks carved to form

thin straight lines, and adorned with elegantly arranged ceramic decorations, carved with precision. The church was erected, according to the marble inscription embedded in its west façade, in 1149 by Leon, Bishop of Argos¹.

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** The opportunity to study the sculpted fragments came about on the occasion of the recent conservation project, designed with Prof. Y. Kizis and Dr. K. Aslanidis. The works were carried out by the 25th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities, under the direction of Dr. D. Athanasoulis and the supervision of K. Boudouris, with the participation of C. Karpanou and E. Malamateniou, and subsequently by the Ephorate of Antiquities of Argolis directed by Dr. A. Papademetriou. I thank all the aforementioned colleagues and directors for our excellent collaboration and for permission to study the sculptures. I also thank Dr. A. Konstantinidou, Dr. G. Tsekes and Dr. A. Vassileiou for sharing with me their valuable

insight on various aspects. Finally, I thank Freya Evenson for editing and correcting the text.

¹ The term “Αργεῖων” fits the dodecasyllable of Leon, and perhaps alludes to ancient texts studied by Constantinopolitan scholars. The fact that only Argos and not Nauplion is mentioned is no paradox, and not just due to poetic license. Nauplion was incorporated in the Bishopric of Argos. Whether Nauplion was ever added to the title officially or unofficially in the Byzantine period, and in what order, or whether it was added by later copiers of Middle-Byzantine sources, is a question addressed by historians. The title including both cities appears in the *Hypomnema* of Leon (1144) and some *Brachea Chronika* (*Short Chronicles*) shortly afterwards (1165, 1189), preserved in later manuscripts, but also

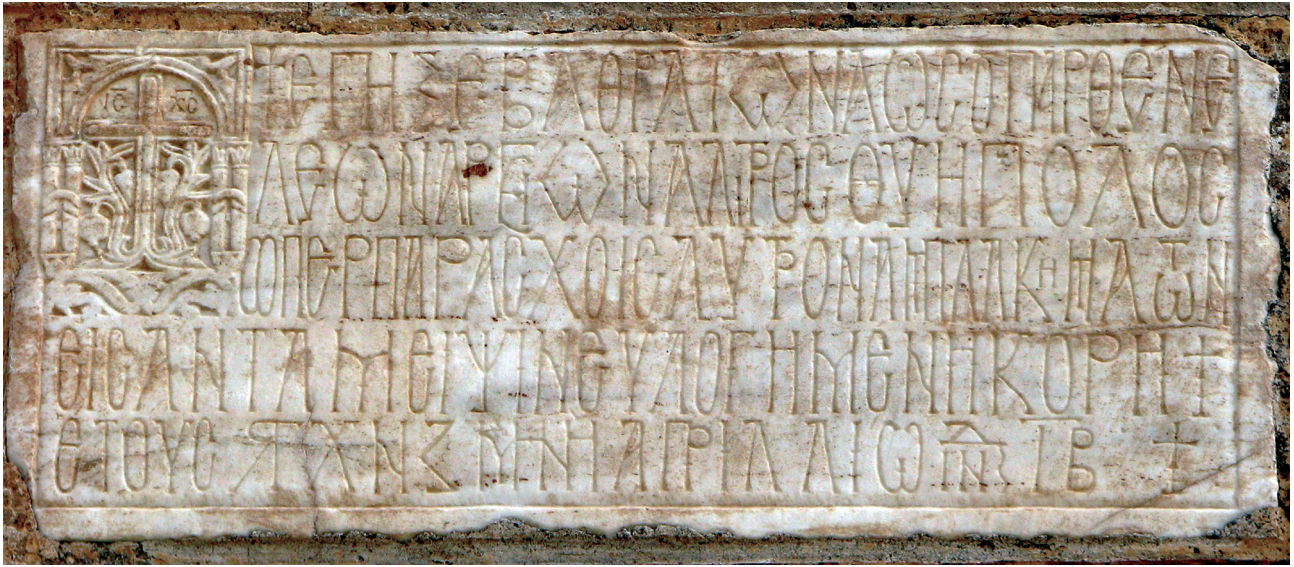


Fig. 1. Nauplion, Areia. Hagia Moni. Katholikon, west façade, the donor inscription.

The inscription is metrical, and its scholarly language and the good carving of letters and relief demonstrate the special education of the founder² (Fig. 1). On the upper left corner it has a relief cross flanked by pomegranate trees, under a ciborium which rests on scrolls carved in the champlévé technique. The motif is elegant and similar in style, execution and repertoire to the rest

in the 1174 donor inscription of the Panagia at the castle of Argos, see *Βυζαντινό Μουσείο Αργολίδας. Κατάλογος Μόνιμης Έκθεσης*, eds D. Athanasoulis – A. Vasileiou, Athens 2016, inv. no. APΓ. 1928/Λ2, cat. no. and fig. 104 p. 103. The matter is however of no implication to the essence of the history of the monastery; whatever the official title, Nauplion was definitely under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Bishop and later the Metropolitan of Argos during the 12th century [V. Konti, “Το Ναύπλιο και οι σχέσεις του με την επισκοπή Αργους κατά τη μέση βυζαντινή περίοδο”, *Byzantina Symmeikta* 15 (2002), 131-148].

² A. Struck, “Vier byzantinische Kirchen der Argolis, Plataniti, Chonika, Merbaka und Areia”, *AM* 34 (1909), 228-29. G. Choras, *Ἡ Ἁγία Μονή Ἀρείας ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησιαστικῇ καὶ πολιτικῇ ἱστορίᾳ Ναυπλίου καὶ Ἀργους*, Athens 1975, 50-52. Ch. Bouras – L. Boura, *Ἡ ἑλλαδική ναοδομία κατὰ τόν 12ο αἰώνα*, Athens 2002, 84. I. Drpić, “The Patron’s ‘I’: Art, Selfhood, and the Later Byzantine Dedicatory Epigram”, *Speculum* 89/4 (2014), 899-901. A. Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme in Inschriftlicher Überlieferung*, 3. *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein nebst Addenda zu den Bänden 1 und 2* (Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung 35), Wien 2014, 310-312, cat. no. GR93, fig. XXXVIII.

of the sculpted architectural members preserved *in situ* in the church, namely three impostes of window mullions (Fig. 2). The remaining original marble decoration of the church is not preserved *in situ*, as in its long history the monument has gone through repairs and alterations. During the 19th- and early 20th-century interventions, the interior decoration acquired a neoclassical character. The iconostasis of this period was masonry-built, with morphological features in gypsum plaster.

However, several fragments of architectural sculptures are found in the monastery, dispersed or incorporated into later constructions. The sculptural fragments are known in the bibliography, since photographs of them were published in the monograph by G. Choras³. Some are presented again and identified in the more recent study by Ch. and L. Bouras⁴.

Among the fragments are some that undoubtedly belong to the katholikon marble door frames (Fig. 3), bearing decoration of winding scrolls forming heart-shaped palmettes⁵, a typical 12th-century pattern. The style of the carving and the scale of their decoration are similar

³ Choras, *op.cit.* (n. 2), pls 11-14, 16.

⁴ Bouras – Boura, *op.cit.* (n. 2), 81-82, figs 73, 74.

⁵ Choras, *op.cit.* (n. 2), pls. 13α-δ. Bouras – Boura, *op.cit.* (n. 2), fig. 74α.



Fig. 2. Nauplion, Areia. Hagia Moni. Katholikon, the window mullion impostes.

to that of the sculptures preserved in situ, but also to the slab incorporated into the north porch (see below Fig. 7). By contrast, the reliefs on some other fragments employ a completely different scale and their carving is not reminiscent of the refined technique used in the members securely attributed to the katholikon⁶, or are preserved too fragmentarily⁷. Therefore, their identification is problematic and they will not be examined.

Three fragments of templon posts with integrated octagonal colonnettes attract interest. They present brilliant craftsmanship and belong to the same sculptural composition. From the point of view of the motifs, the scale of the decoration and the quality of craftsmanship, they match the church's sculpture mentioned above, although they have champlévé decoration, which may be seemingly different⁸ as the relief is necessarily lower

⁶ Choras, *op.cit.* (n. 2), pls. 11β, 12δ, 12ε, 13ε.

⁷ This is the case for two fragments depicting foliage of a bird (*ibid.*, pl. 12α), which could indeed belong to a 12th-century altar-screen panel, but they are too small to allow for a secure representation of the panel's original form and dimensions.

⁸ The technique and perhaps quality difference of these members may indicate the work of a different craftsman, but definitely not a different date from the church's architectural sculptures. The



Fig. 3. Nauplion, Areia. Hagia Moni. Katholikon, a fragment of a door frame.



Fig. 4. Nauplion, Areia. Hagia Moni. Katholikon, fragment of a templon post (front and side view).

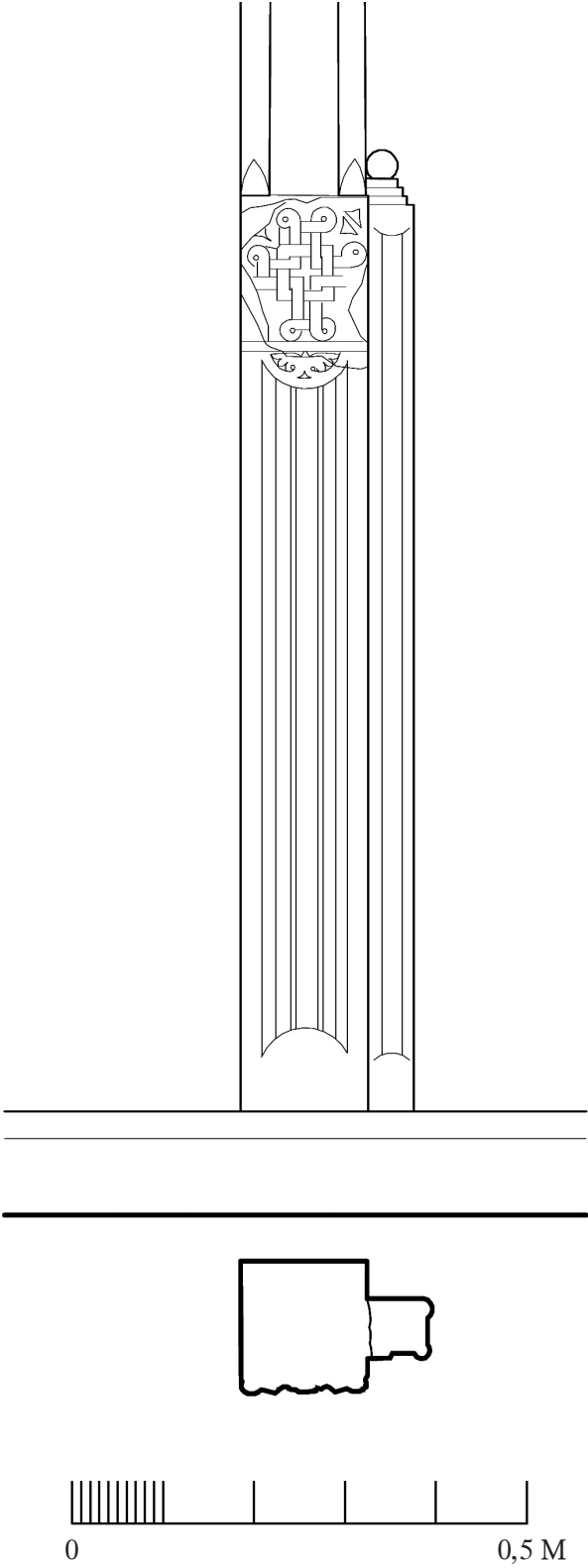


Fig. 4a. Drawing of the fragment and reconstruction of a templon post.



Fig. 5. Nauplion, Areia. Hagia Moni. Katholikon, fragment of a templon post (front and back view).

and the bands of the motifs are flat. However, the mix of techniques, a characteristic of the 12th century is also found on the inscription. Two of these templon posts⁹ have equal width, 14 cm. They both have champlévé decoration on their upper part.

The first, which used to have an integral jamb and is hence attributed to the bema door, is decorated with

more skilled craftsman in the same workshop or even a different workshop could have been chosen for the altarscreen, but the style and taste of all sculptures is that of an integral group, typical of the mid-12th century.

⁹ Ibid., pls 11γ, ε, 12β. The latter was referred to by Choras as part of a panel, but this is justified, given that his study does not focus on the sculpture.

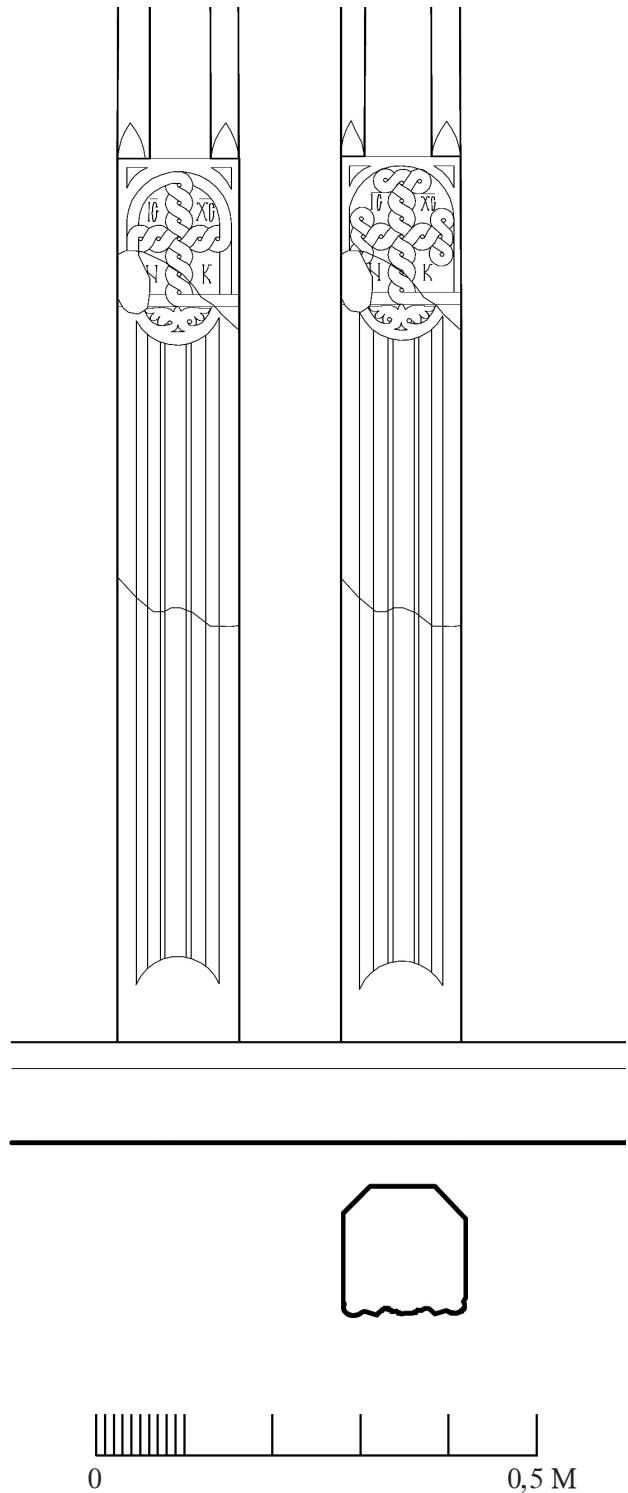


Fig. 5a. Drawing of the fragment and reconstruction of a templon post.



Fig. 6 Nauplion, Areia. Hagia Moni. Katholikon, fragment of a templon post (front and side view).

a cross formed by an interlacing band (Figs 4, 4a). Discernible right below the cross is the edge of a palmette, just above the lower broken end of the member.

The second post (Figs 5, 5a), which does not have a doorjamb and is therefore attributed to a side support, is decorated on its upper part with a cross, formed by a guilloche, characterized by the correct geometric tracing of the circles of which it is formed. Unfortunately, only the base of the cross is preserved, knotted to the external frame of the motif. On the left of the cross we distinguish the letter *N*, from the usual abbreviation *IC XC N K*. Underneath is a champlévé palmette, identical to the one which is barely discernible on the previous member. Below the palmette the templon post is decorated with vertical frames. On the back side, the octagonal section of the overlying colonnette is continued. There is no doubt that both fragments belong to the altarscreen.

The third templon post¹⁰ (Figs 6, 6a) has the same

¹⁰ Bouras – Boura , op.cit. (n. 2), fig. 73.

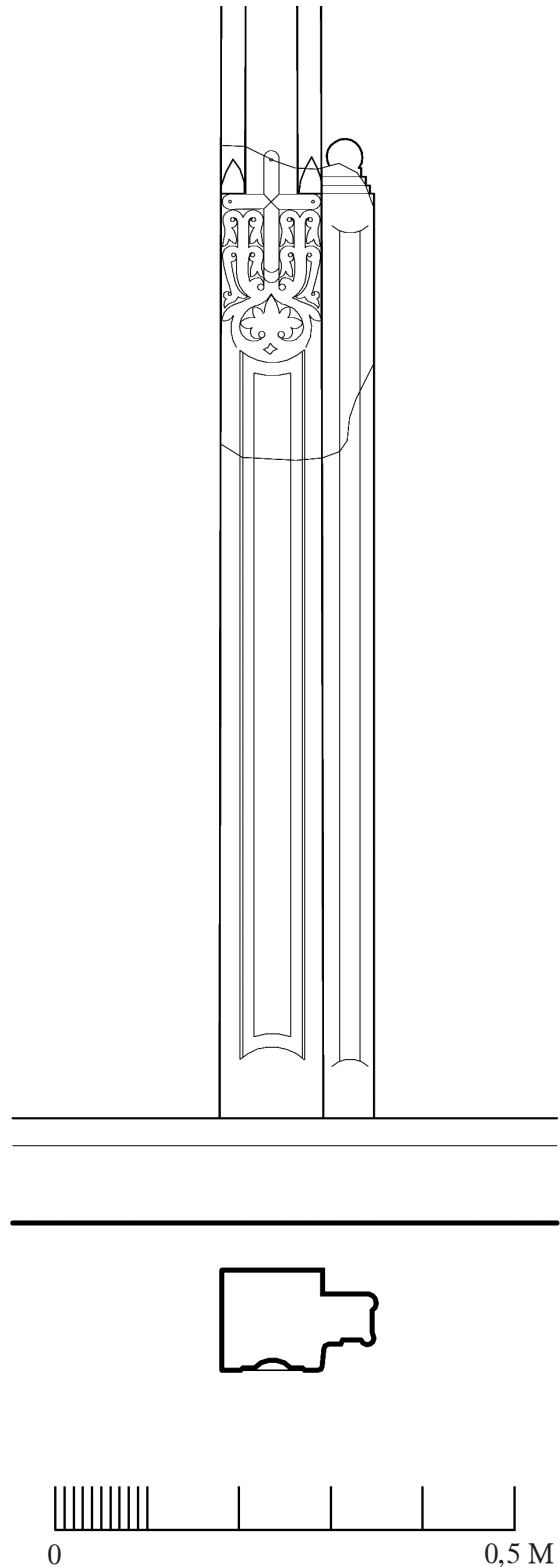


Fig. 6a. Drawing of the fragment and reconstruction of a templon post.

arrangement of forms and motifs, with homologous frames on its front face and a champlévé foliate cross above them, and the same style of carving. The centers of helices of the vegetal decoration are accentuated with a drill, as are the centers of the semicircular ends of the cross arms. The use of the drill has also been used to help the tracing and to accentuate the geometry of the helices of scrolls and the centers of circles on the previous templon posts, as well as the door frames, the cornice and the panel that will be presented below. This characteristic is a sign of the sophisticated yet discreet mannerisms which are distinctive of the 12th century, as are the shallow lines forming an *X* at the intersection of the cross arms (also present at the marble slab embedded in the north porch, described below). The pier has a door jamb on its side and an integral octagonal colonnette on the upper part, but is narrower than the two previous fragments (11 cm.). It can therefore be attributed to the prothesis or the diakonikon. Two fragments of octagonal colonnettes can also be attributed to the altarscreen supports.

Two fragments of relief slabs were incorporated into the later chapel of Saint Charalampos¹¹ and the north porch of the katholikon¹² respectively.

The first, a panel with integral cornice, differs in style and scale from the rest of the sculptures attributed to the katholikon, and is rather narrow for its altarscreen, so it belonged to another building (maybe the chapel itself?). The second panel (Figs 7, 7a) was embedded in the north porch of the katholikon during a much later repair, at which time the northeast corner of the porch was completely replaced, as can be ascertained by the masonry of the east façade of the porch. The upper part of its main façade was also rearranged, as is made clear by the interruption of the impeccable thin line of bricks outlining the arch: this line of bricks has been interrupted and roughly patched using thicker bricks under the marble slab in question and the triangular stone on its left. This slab had been attributed by Ch. and L. Bouras to the katholikon screen with a question mark¹³, which will probably continue to remain

unanswered. Its decoration comprises small rectangles formed by tripartite bands, knotted to each other and to an external frame. Each rectangle is decorated by relief patterns; the surviving ones are vegetal scrolls and a cross formed by an interlacing band (similar –although here the band is tripartite– to the cross on the bema post, and even with small palmettes filling the corners on both pieces). The arrangement with knotted rectangles is common in the 12th century, and the style of the carving resembles the sculptures of the church (the foliate cross of the inscription and the mullion impost), as well as the decoration of the marble frames of the Katholikon doors; it therefore appears that it was indeed part of the original decoration of the monument. The interlacing band cross on the bema post is similar, albeit composed of a single band because of its smaller size and champlévé technique, but it can be noted that even the small palmettes filling the corners of the rectangle on the panel, existed with a similar arrangement at the cross of the bema post, unfortunately very damaged at the corners. However, after the removal of the panel from the wall during recent works, the slab appears to be rather thick (13 cm) in relation to the templon posts, and it is carved on a different type of marble. Templon panels of considerable thickness are not rare¹⁴ and the ready availability of marble for re-use could justify its divergence from the required thickness and the different material, so its provenance from the altarscreen cannot be excluded, but with reservation. Its backside is roughly carved with the point. On the other hand, the piece does not portray the usual themes and arrangement found on pseudo-sarcophagi plaques, such as the one which would have blocked the front side of the arcosolium of the narthex.

Finally, during the restoration works, a fragment of a particularly elaborate chamfered cornice was detected (Figs 8, 8a). It bears continuous relief decoration of alternating winding scrolls that form palmettes, related in style and carving technique to the rest of the architectural sculptures of the church. Its bottom side is not smooth, but rather seems to have been resting on an underlying member. Its size, profile and decoration also indicate that it could be a cornice placed above

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

¹² Choras, *op.cit.* (n. 2), pl. 16a. Bouras – Boura, *op.cit.* (n. 2), fig. 74β.

¹³ Bouras – Boura, *op.cit.* (n. 2), 74.

¹⁴ I thank M. Kappas for this observation.



Fig. 7. Nauplion, Areia. Hagia Moni. Katholikon, the fragment of a slab incorporated into the north porch.

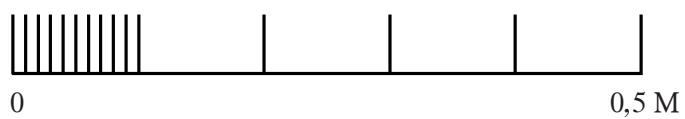
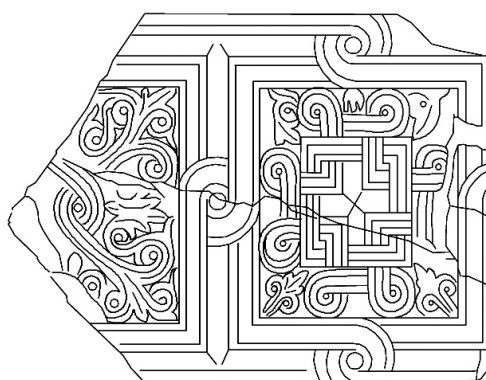


Fig. 7a. Drawing of the fragment of a slab.



Fig. 8. Nauplion, Areia. Hagia Moni. Katholikon, fragment of a cornice.

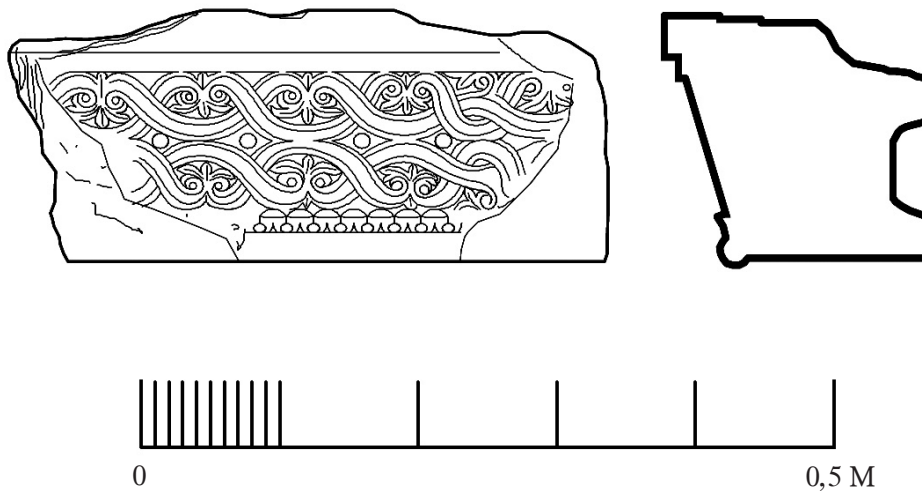


Fig. 8a. Drawing of the fragment of a cornice.

the architrave of the altarscreen. It is also made of the same marble with greyish veins as the templon posts. It is possible, based on the size of the supports, that the architrave and its cornice may have been rather heavy, executed in two-level technique or some other mixed technique, as is the case in other altarscreen of the 12th century (Amfissa¹⁵, Samarina¹⁶). The cornice could also

have initially stood above the west door frame of the church¹⁷, but it is made of a different type of marble, similar to that of the templon posts, and particularly elaborate.

Based on all the above, a graphic representation of the church's altarscreen was attempted (Figs 9, 10),

¹⁵ K. Aslanidis – C. Pinatsi, “Το τέμπλο του ναού Μεταμορφώσεως στην Αμφισσα”, *DChAE* 24 (2003), 163-170.

¹⁶ Bouras – Boura, *op.cit.* (n. 2), 295.

¹⁷ I thank Dr. G. Tsekas and the paper reviewers for this observation.

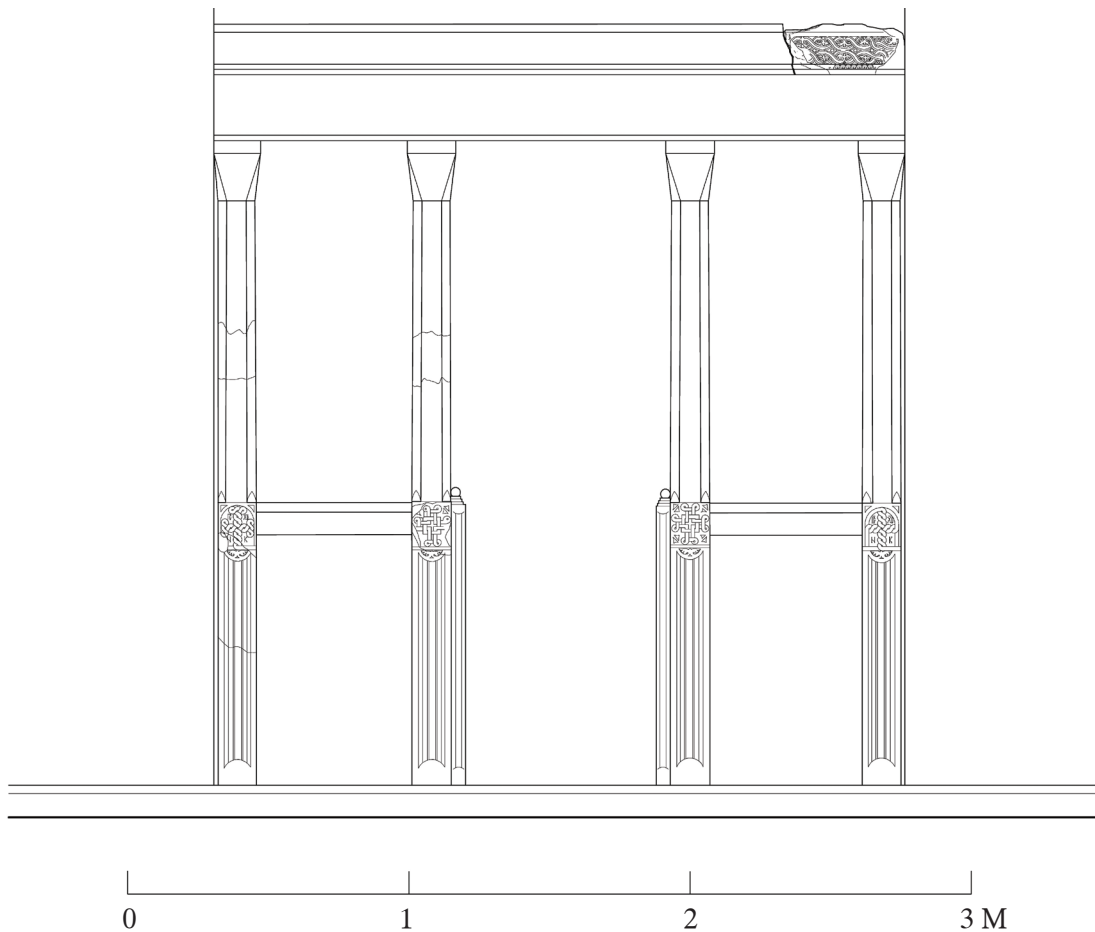


Fig. 9. Nauplion, Areia. Hagia Moni. Katholikon, representation of the bema altarscreen.

unfortunately without evidence for the capitals and architraves, or certainty about the panels' decoration. With the proposed position of the supports, the panels at the bema would be 55-57 cm wide, and the doors approximately 65-70 cm wide, whereas. Traces on the stylobate or the side walls have been destroyed by later interventions.

As is common in Middle Byzantine sculpture the material is in secondary use. The use of recycled marble is also attested by the inscription, whose corners were obviously broken from the start: the upper right corner of the frame around the text is curved and lowered, contrary to the other three, in order to fit within the shape of the damaged marble. Similarly, the width of the frame is reduced skilfully in order to avoid its interruption at the lower left corner, making use of the design of the

relief ciborium¹⁸. The broken corners of the inscription have been used as evidence of its provenance from an older building, in order to uphold a chronology in discord to the one mentioned¹⁹. However, it is clear that this hypothesis does not withstand scrutiny. It must also be pointed out that there is no discrepancy²⁰ either

¹⁸ The displacement of the line of the frame at this point may be due to the slanted base of the ciborium, but it may also be using this feature in order to adjust to the broken shape inconspicuously.

¹⁹ G. Sanders, "William of Moerbeke's Church at Merbaka. The use of Ancient Spolia to Make Personal and Political Statements", *Hesperia* 84 (2015), 618.

²⁰ A. Louvi-Kizi, "Modes de construction occidentaux dans le Péloponnèse après la conquête franque", S. Brodbeck – A. Nicolaidès

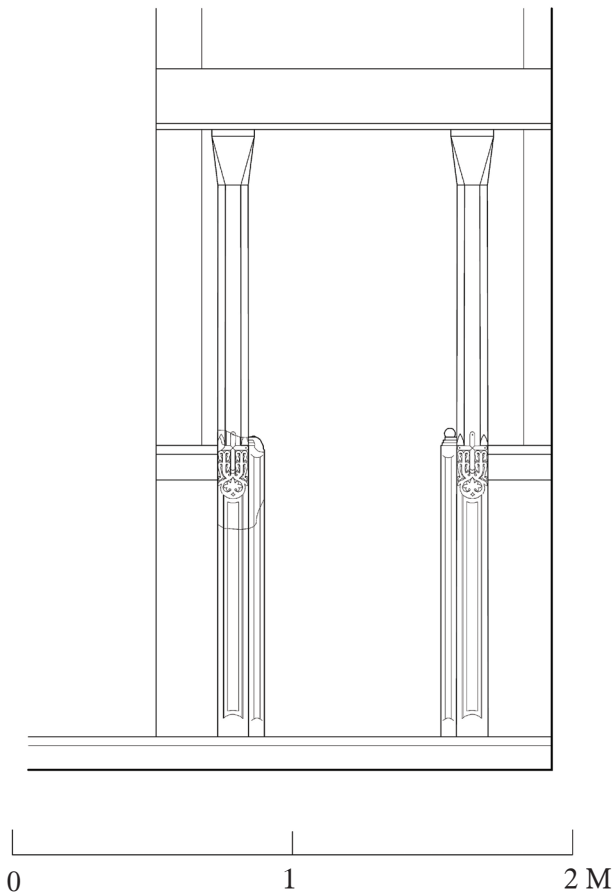


Fig. 10. Nauplion, Areia. Hagia Moni. Katholikon, representation of the parabemata altarscreen.

between the date of the inscription (1149) and that of the *Hypomnema* of Leon (1143)²¹, as the latter refers to the foundation of the monastery (“φροντιστήριον”)²²

– P. Pagès – B. Pitarakis – I. Rapti – E. Yota (eds), *Mélanges Cathérine Jolivet-Lévy* (TM 20/2), Paris 2016, 348.

²¹ The *Hypomnema* has reached us in a 16th-century copy [Konti, op.cit. (n. 1)], so the inscription is actually more reliable, and the style of letters and decoration confirm it. Moreover, the spelling error at the month of the inscription does not mean that the inscription is not genuine; Leon would have given the poem to the sculptor, relying on him or the abbot to add the date once construction was complete [Bouras – Boura, op.cit. (n. 2), 85 note 3]. From the palaeographic point of view, there is no doubt as to the carving of the inscription in 1149 [Rhoby, op.cit. (n. 2), 310].

²² H. Liddell – R. Scott, *Λεξικὸν τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Γλώσσης*, Athens 2006 (1st edition: 1901).

and not the erection of the church. It is very logical that six years would have passed before the katholikon was completed²³.

An additional probable cause for further suffering of the marble during the erection of the church, instead of the supposed replacement of the entire building after a few decades, is proposed by A. Louvi²⁴, who perspicaciously notices an alteration of design confined to the west façade, during the construction of the church: under the windows are visible the lower parts of structural crosses, similar to those of the Chonika church, which were not completed; instead, the windows were opened²⁵. It cannot be ruled out that the position of the inscription was changed then and moved to the sole available visible surface left on the west façade, given the position of the windows and the provision for the construction of a porch above the west door. It must also be noted that the quoin which has an L shape to accommodate the inscription, is neither roughly carved (definitely not carved in situ on the wall) for a posterior placement of the inscription, nor bizarre²⁶, as this solution has been given to many of the quoins of the church in order to adjust them to the courses of the cloisonné masonry, to dentil courses and the like, which are not at the same straight line as the joints of the quoins.

Returning to the marble fragments presented here, from the point of view of the repertoire and technique, the sculptures described are typical of 12th-century Greece. The ciborium motif of the inscription (Fig. 1) is common on architraves and lintels. The intricate vegetal scrolls on the mullion impost and the panel recall sculptures of the Taxiarches of Messaria, Andros (1158)²⁷, although the latter are somewhat more advanced in their plasticity, and also a motif at the door lintel of Hosios Meletios²⁸.

²³ Rhoby, op.cit. (n. 2), 311.

²⁴ Louvi-Kizi, op.cit. (n. 18), 352.

²⁵ Perhaps in order to add more light to the exonarthex, which was separated by walls from the narthex, as has recently been revealed and published by D. Athanasoulis [“Σημείωμα για την αργολική βυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική”, *Βυζαντινὸ Μουσείο Αργολίδας*, op.cit. (n. 1), 91].

²⁶ Sanders, op.cit. (n. 17).

²⁷ L. Boura, “Architectural Sculptures of the Twelfth and the Early Thirteenth Centuries in Greece”, *DChAE* 9 (1977-1979), 65-67, figs 2-5.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 70, fig. 27.

The interlacing band cross, found on the slab (Fig. 7) as well as the post (Fig. 4), slightly different in its execution (giving the impression more of basket-weave), appears on an architrave from the collection of Hosios Loukas, dated to the 12th century²⁹. An interlacing band cross in perforated technique is also the central motif at the 12th-century proskynetaria of the Panagia of Hosios Loukas³⁰. One more interlacing cross is found on the cabochon of the templon architrave of the neighbouring church of Saint John Eleemon at Ligourio³¹. A parallel is also found on a slab at Saint John the Fore-runner at Argos³², somewhat more archaic. By contrast, the crosses found in the Andromonastiro sculptures³³ are carved in more vivid relief, have harder outlines, and seem posterior.

The pomegranate tree on the mullion impost (Fig. 2c) is very similar to the one that appears on the donor's inscription. The heart-shaped palmettes of the door frames (Fig. 3) are similarly arranged to those on the templon posts of the church of the Savior at Amfissa³⁴ and a templon post from Hosios Loukas³⁵. The champlévé palmette of the parabemata post (Fig. 6) is slightly reminiscent of the ones on the architrave from Dryalos (1103/4)³⁶, which is much more archaic in style. Finally, the use of mixed techniques, characteristic of the 12th century, is also found on a panel with two peacocks from Nauplion³⁷, but the execution is not similar to that at Hagia Moni.

The three posts are characterized by elegant design and skillful carving. Their Middle Byzantine date is obvious because of their typology, size and carving technique. The accuracy of the design and the geometric clarity of the vertical frames conveys a classicizing mood and reproduces Early-Christian forms, a trend characteristic of the 12th century. The same pattern with

homologous frames appears on the templon posts of the altarscreen of Hosios Loukas, where it has also been attributed to an intentional turn towards ancient paradigms³⁸. Similar examples, can be found in the sphere of influence of the Capital: at Edirne (Adrianople) - in secondary use in the Beyazid II mosque, dated to the Dark Ages (in which case we could consider this a survival rather than revival)³⁹; in the 9th or 10th-century Lower City church at Amorion⁴⁰; at the bema door jambs of the marble altarscreen of Vatopedi monastery⁴¹; at the Nea Moni on Chios⁴². In the Helladic area, we can mention the church by the sea-wall of Monemvasia⁴³ and the Asomatos at Kakovouno⁴⁴, both very simplistic in their profile and execution, compared to the equivalent work at Hagia Moni. Here, we do not have just an isolated element, following a trend of the time or the mere resonance of features introduced by Hosios Loukas. As in Hosios Loukas, it is part of the entire concept of the monument, which presents "classical" Byzantine style, elegance, quality of construction and most probably some Constantinopolitan influence⁴⁵, albeit in a manner typical of the so-called Helladic school. Indeed, in the Hagia Moni katholikon, nothing attests to provincial taste⁴⁶. This becomes apparent in the architecture of the

²⁹ Ibid., 70, figs 29, 30. Bouras – Boura, op.cit. (n. 2), figs 245β, δ.

³⁰ Bouras – Boura, op.cit. (n. 2), fig. 244.

³¹ C. Bouras, "Ο Άγιος Ιωάννης Ήλεήμων Λιγουριού Άργολίδος", *DChAE* 7 (1973-1974), pl. 5γ.

³² Bouras – Boura, op.cit. (n. 2), fig. 62.

³³ S. Vojadjis, "Ο γλυπτός διάκοσμος του Ανδρομονάστηρου Μεσσηνίας", *DChAE* 30 (2009), 132-133, figs 2, 4.

³⁴ Aslanidis – Pinatsi, op.cit. (n. 14), fig. 2.

³⁵ Bouras – Boura, op.cit. (n. 2), fig. 245α.

³⁶ N. Drandakis, *Βυζαντινά γλυπτά της Μάνης*, Athens 2002, 143-148.

³⁷ Bouras – Boura, op.cit. (n. 2), fig. 288.

³⁸ C. Bouras, *Η αρχιτεκτονική της Μονής του Όσίου Λουκά*, Athens 2015, 75.

³⁹ Y. Ötügen – R. Ousterhout, "Notes on the monuments of Turkish Thrace", *Anatolian Studies* 39 (1989), 125-128, pl. 27. I thank Dr. G. Pallis for bringing this article to my attention.

⁴⁰ E. Ivison, "Middle-Byzantine sculptors at work: evidence from the lower city church at Amorion", *La sculpture byzantine. VIIe-XIIe siècles. Actes du colloque international organisé par la 2e Éphorie des antiquités byzantines et l'École française d'Athènes* (*BCH Suppl.* 49), eds C. Pennas – C. Vanderheyde, fig. 16.

⁴¹ T. Pazaras, "Το μαρμάρινο τέμπλο του καθολικού της Μονής Βατοπεδίου", *DChAE* 18 (1995), 16, fig. 2.

⁴² C. Bouras, *Nea Moni on Chios; History and Architecture*, Athens 1982, 124, figs 128, 130.

⁴³ R. Etzeoglou, "Μεσοβυζαντινό τέμπλο στην Κάτω πόλη της Μονεμβασίας", *La sculpture byzantine. VIIe-XIIe siècles*, op.cit. n. 40, figs 1, 5, 7-9.

⁴⁴ Drandakis, op.cit. (n. 36), 64-65, figs 99, 100, 106.

⁴⁵ Not in the sense of a direct loan of means of construction or crews of workers, but in the choices of a formal character and urbane taste, practised within local experience and expediency.

⁴⁶ The fact that the church matches the quality of Constantinopolitan parallels has been noticed by D. Athanasoulis ("Some Notes

church: its complex cross-in-square type; the conchs in the side walls of the bema, a feature found in the Katholikon of Hosios Loukas, the monuments imitating its plan and a few other monuments⁴⁷ in the Helladic area⁴⁸, whereas it is common in Constantinople; the high quality imported ceramic bowls⁴⁹. These elements must be attributed to choices made by the founder, who is known to have belonged to the aristocratic Constantinopolitan Antzas family, and to have been educated in the intellectual environment of the Capital, a fact reflected in his texts and the inscription itself. It seems that he kept contact with the Capital even later, as he participated in the local Council of Constantinople in 1157⁵⁰.

A “classicism” of Middle-Byzantine taste has been observed in pictorial arts, in the sense of a turn to ancient models for inspiration⁵¹. The same can be said for opus sectile floors, which were re-flourishing in Middle Byzantine times throughout the Empire, including Southern Greece, where they had been forgotten during

on the Impact of Constantinople on the Byzantine Architecture of the Aegean and the Peloponnese”, *Proceedings of the Symposium on City Ports from the Aegean to the Black Sea. Medieval – Modern Networks (22nd-29th August 2015)*, eds Fl. Karagianni – U. Kocabaş, Istanbul 2015, 175).

⁴⁷ Four of which in the Argolis (Hagia Moni, Chonika, Merbaka, Argos cemetery), definitely not by coincidence, but due, for the churches at Chonika and Areia, to their almost contemporaneous erection by the same founder, whereas for the 13th-century church at Merbaka to the imitation of the plan and design of its earlier prototypes (see below n. 53). The church at Argos cemetery has also been dated by Bouras to the 12th century [Bouras – Boura, op.cit. (n. 2), 78-79], whereas Athanasoulis discerns a possibly earlier date [Athanasoulis, op.cit. (n. 22), 89].

⁴⁸ Bouras – Boura, op.cit. (n. 2), 358-359.

⁴⁹ I thank Dr. A. Konstantinidi for information on the bowls. Also see: A. H. S. Megaw, “Glazed bowls in Byzantine Churches”, *DChAE* 4 (1964-1965), 146 note 4. G. Berti – L. Tongiorgi, “Ceramiche decorate (XI-XIV secolo) di importazione di vari centri del mediterraneo e di produzione locale sulla base della documentazione in Toscana”, *La ceramica medievale en Méditerranée occidentale (Xe-XVe siècles)*, Paris 1980, 84, 86, figs 3, 4.

⁵⁰ Choras, op.cit. (n. 2), 52-70, 239-252. For the Antzas family see also: J. Nesbitt – W. Seibt, “The Anzas Family. Members of the Byzantine Civil Establishment in the Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth Centuries”, *DOP* 67 (2013), 189-207.

⁵¹ K. Weitzmann, “The Classical in Byzantine Art as a mode of individual expression”, *Βυζαντινή τέχνη - Ευρωπαϊκή τέχνη / Byzantine Art - An European Art. Lectures*, Athens 1966, 151-177.

the so-called Dark Ages. A similar trend in sculpture, which can be seen at Hagia Moni, has also been remarked in the re-appearance of perforated sculptures in the 12th century⁵², or the two-level technique with protruding elements, such as acanthus leaves, where the artist exhibits his dexterity and alludes to Early Christian forms.

A comparison to the more than a century later neighboring church at Merbaka, also a work of the highest intentions reflecting the personality of its own classicist founder⁵³, is particularly revealing of the regression of marble sculpture in the Peloponnese during the 13th century, which has been observed by D. Athanasoulis⁵⁴. Although the church built by the Latin Bishop de Moerbeke⁵⁵ is a conscious copy of the churches of Leon⁵⁶, the “facsimile” of a Byzantine church that Sanders suggests was intended for ideological and semantic purposes⁵⁷, the divergence of elements that inevitably express on every building its own time is evident⁵⁸, such as the general style, eclectic and decorative at Merbaka, as opposed to the classical and austere style of Hagia Moni, the interpretation of particular decorative features⁵⁹, and the

⁵² C. Bouras, “Διάτρητα μαρμάρινα μεσοβυζαντινά γλυπτά στην Ελλάδα”, *La sculpture byzantine. VIIe-XIIIe siècles*, op.cit. (n. 40), 473-475.

⁵³ Sanders, op.cit. (n. 17).

⁵⁴ Athanasoulis, op.cit. (n. 22), 99.

⁵⁵ Struck, op.cit. (n. 2), 234-236. Sanders, op.cit. (n. 17).

⁵⁶ In particular, the church of Merbaka follows the plan of the Dormition at Chonika, which is identical to the katholikon of Hagia Moni in terms of style and quality of construction, therefore it could very well be the katholikon of the second monastery built by Leon almost simultaneously, according to the sources. [Choras, op.cit. (n. 2), 55-56]. For the obliterated Byzantine toponym mentioned in the sources see: V. Konti, “Αργολικά Σημειώματα”, *Symmeikta* 9 (1994), 259-261.

⁵⁷ The insightful observation by Sanders [op.cit. (n. 17)] is fortified by the fact that the church of the Latin Bishop is not simply following the Byzantine tradition or just any church, but of a specific one, much appreciated in the area.

⁵⁸ A. H. S. Megaw, “The chronology of some Middle-Byzantine churches”, *BSA* 32 (1931-1932), 129. G. Nikolakopoulos, *Έντοιχισμένα κεραμικά. ΙΙΙ. Τα κεραμικά της Παναγίας του Μέρμπακα της Ναυπλίας*, Athens 1979, 37. Bouras – Boura, op.cit. (n. 2), 333.

⁵⁹ As is often the case in a copy, the artist tends to overemphasize specific elements of his model; at the same time he fails to achieve

methods of construction. Sculptural decoration can be added to these differences. The few parts that have been preserved from the altarscreen of the Merbaka church⁶⁰ are of a totally different character: a. one marble capital with extremely unsophisticated vegetal decoration, similarly to the window mullion impost; b. porous stone icon frames with capitals of Gothic morphology, perhaps similar to those of the dome which are adorned with crockets; c. ribs forming the window frames with decoration of schematized oak leaves, typical of 13th-century Gothic morphology and entirely different from the chamfered cornices surrounding the arches of the

the refinement of the prototype in the imitated features, whereas he successfully adds and perfectly executes forms from the Frankish repertoire.

⁶⁰ Studied by S. Mamaloukos, whom I thank for the information and material. I expect that some of these elements may have been presented by Mary Lee Coulson in her doctoral thesis about the monument, but unfortunately I have not been able to find a copy of it in most libraries.

windows at Hagia Moni; d. the sole door that does not have a ribbed frame of Gothic style, inherent to the masonry, makes use of a fluted column, instead of a properly shaped marble frame, as those of Areia.

In conclusion, the existing fragments of the Hagia Moni altarscreen demonstrate that this was an outstanding composition, on a par with the first-class architecture of the church it adorned. The study of the altarscreen sculpture confirms the inference already expressed by Ch. Bouras that “we stand in front of one of those rare cases of Byzantine church building, where we can observe in a direct way how the personality of the founder influenced the quality of the architectural work”⁶¹. And of course this coincided with a time of excellence and maturity of the art and craftsmanship in Greece.

⁶¹ Bouras – Boura, *op.cit.* (n. 2), 84.

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ΠΑΡΑΤΗΡΗΣΕΙΣ ΣΤΟΝ ΓΛΥΠΤΟ ΔΙΑΚΟΣΜΟ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΤΕΜΠΛΟ ΤΟΥ ΚΑΘΟΛΙΚΟΥ ΤΗΣ ΑΓΙΑΣ ΜΟΝΗΣ ΑΡΕΙΑΣ ΝΑΥΠΛΙΟΥ

Το καθολικό της Αγίας Μονής στην Άρεια, κοντά στο Ναύπλιο, είναι κτισμένο, σύμφωνα με μαρμαρίνη κτητορική επιγραφή στη δυτική του όψη, το έτος 1149 από τον επίσκοπο Άργους Λέοντα. Η έμμετρη με λόγιο ύφος επιγραφή υποδεικνύει την ιδιαίτερη μορφή του κτήτορα (Εικ. 1). Στην άνω αριστερή γωνία της φέρει ανάγλυφο σταυρό, περιστοιχισμένο από ροδιές, μέσα σε κιβώριο λαξευμένο με κομψότητα. Η αμφισβήτηση της αρχικής τοποθέτησης της επιγραφής στη θέση αυτή από τον G. Sanders δεν επιβεβαιώνεται, καθώς το πλαίσιο της προσαρμόζεται στην άνω δεξιά γωνία στο σχήμα του θραυσμένου μαρμάρου σε δεύτερη χρήση, γεγονός που επιβεβαιώνει τη λάξευση της επιγραφής στο ήδη θραυσμένο μάρμαρο. Επίσης, η διαφορά των έξι περίπου χρόνων από την ημερομηνία του *Υπομνήματος* με αυτήν της επιγραφής δεν αποτελεί ασυνέπεια, καθώς το *Υπόμνημα* αναφέρεται στην ίδρυση της Μονής («φροντιστήριο»), και είναι λογικό η ολοκλήρωση της ανέγερσης του καθολικού να έπεται κατά κάποια έτη. Το ανάγλυφο της επιγραφής είναι παρόμοιο σε τεχνοτροπία και θεματολογία με τα επιθήματα των αμφικιονίσκων των παραθύρων. Τα υπόλοιπα στοιχεία του αρχικού μαρμαρίνου διακόσμου του ναού (τέμπλο, θυρώματα, δάπεδο) δεν διατηρούνται στη θέση τους. Ωστόσο, σώζονται διάσπαρτα ή εντοιχισμένα θραύσματα αρχιτεκτονικών γλυπτών, από παλιά γνωστά στη βιβλιογραφία, αφού φωτογραφίες τους έχουν δημοσιευθεί από τον π. Γ. Χώρα στη μονογραφία του για το μοναστήρι. Στην πιο πρόσφατη μελέτη των Χ. και Λ. Μπούρα για τον 12ο αιώνα, επίσης παρουσιάζονται και αναγνωρίζονται ορθότερα μερικά από τα γλυπτά.

Με την ευκαιρία της μελέτης αποκατάστασης του μνημείου δόθηκε η δυνατότητα αναλυτικής αποτύπωσης και εκ νέου παρατήρησης των γλυπτών. Το έργο αποκατάστασης που πραγματοποιήθηκε από την αρμόδια Εφορεία Αρχαιοτήτων, συνεισέφερε νέες πληροφορίες. Ευχαριστώ όλους τους συναδέλφους και

τους προϊσταμένους των αρμοδίων υπηρεσιών για την άριστη συνεργασία.

Μεταξύ των διάσπαρτων θραυσμάτων που φυλάσσονταν στο αρχονταρίκι της Μονής, αρκετά προέρχονται από τα μαρμαρίνα πλαίσια των θυρών του καθολικού, με διάκοσμο από ελισσόμενους βλαστούς που σχηματίζουν καρδιόσχημα ανθέμια (Εικ. 3).

Ενδιαφέρον παρουσιάζουν τρία θραύσματα πεσίσκων τέμπλου με συμφυείς κιονίσκους, που χαρακτηρίζονται από εξαιρετική επεξεργασία, ανήκουν στο ίδιο γλυπτικό σύνολο και από πλευράς ύφους και επεξεργασίας συνάδουν με τη γλυπτική του ναού, παρότι φέρουν επιπεδόγλυφο διάκοσμο.

Οι δύο από τους πεσίσκους έχουν πλάτος 14 εκ. Ο πρώτος έφερε θραυσμένο σήμερα σταθμό βημοθύρου και αποδίδεται στην Ωραία Πύλη, ενώ ο δεύτερος σε ακραίο στήριγμα. Δεν υπάρχει αμφιβολία ότι ανήκουν στο ίδιο τέμπλο (Εικ. 4, 5). Ο τρίτος πεσίσκος παρουσιάζει ίδια διάταξη μορφών και θεμάτων (με κατακόρυφες γλυφές και επιπεδόγλυφο σταυρό πάνω από αυτές) και τεχνοτροπία. Φέρει συμφυή οκταγωνικό κιονίσκο στο άνω μέρος και σταθμό βημοθύρου στο πλάι, ωστόσο είναι στενότερος από τους προηγούμενους (11 εκ.). Αποδίδεται στην πύλη ενός των παραβημάτων (Εικ. 6). Δύο θραύσματα οκταγωνικών κιονίσκων επίσης αποδίδονται στα στηρίγματα του τέμπλου.

Οι τρεις πεσίσκοι χαρακτηρίζονται από κομψότητα στο σχέδιο και επιδεξιότητα στη λάξευση. Παρότι από την τυπολογία και τη λάξευσή τους είναι σαφής η μεσοβυζαντινή χρονολόγηση των μελών, η ακρίβεια της χάραξης και η γεωμετρική απλότητα των γλυφών αποπνέουν μια «κλασικιστική» διάθεση και την αναπαραγωγή παλαιοχριστιανικών μορφών, τάση χαρακτηριστική του 12ου αιώνα. Η ίδια μορφή με τις γλυφές εμφανίζεται στους πεσίσκους του τέμπλου του καθολικού του Οσίου Λουκά, όπου επίσης έχει αποδοθεί σε ηθελιμένη στροφή προς αρχαιότερα πρότυπα. Παραδείγματα

απαντούν στη σφαίρα επιρροής της πρωτεύουσας, στους σταθμούς των βημοθύρων του μαρμάρινου τέμπλου του καθολικού της μονής Βατοπεδίου καθώς και στη Νέα Μονή Χίου. Στον ελλαδικό χώρο μπορούν να αναφερθούν ευάριθμα παραδείγματα, πολύ απλοϊκότερης εκτελέσεως. Στην Αγία Μονή, ωστόσο, δεν πρόκειται απλώς για ένα μεμονωμένο στοιχείο του διακόσμου που ακολουθεί μια τάση της εποχής ή τα πρότυπα που εισήγαγε ο Όσιος Λουκάς. Όπως και στον ίδιο τον Όσιο Λουκά, εντάσσεται στο σύνολο του σχεδιασμού του μνημείου, που παρουσιάζει κλασικό ύφος, κομψότητα, αυστηρότητα, ποιότητα στην κατασκευή και πιθανότατα άμεσες επιρροές από την πρωτεύουσα, καθώς στο καθολικό της Αγίας Μονής τίποτε δεν μαρτυρεί επαρχιακό γούστο. Αυτό καθίσταται εμφανές και στην αρχιτεκτονική του ναού, και κυρίως στον τύπο, στη διαμόρφωση αβαθών κογχών στους πλευρικούς τοίχους του ιερού βήματος, κάτι που εμφανίζεται και στον Όσιο Λουκά, στα μνημεία που τον αντιγράφουν και σε ευάριθμα άλλα μνημεία του ελλαδικού χώρου, ενώ συνηθίζεται στην Κωνσταντινούπολη, στα ανώτερης ποιότητας εισηγμένα πινάκια κ.ο.κ. Τα στοιχεία αυτά δεν μπορούν παρά να αποδοθούν σε επιλογές του κτήτορος, ο οποίος γνωρίζουμε ότι προερχόταν από την αριστοκρατική οικογένεια Αντζά της Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, στο πνευματικό περιβάλλον της οποίας είχε λάβει τη μόρφωσή του, γεγονός που αντικατοπτρίζεται στα σωζόμενα κείμενά του και στην επιγραφή, όπως είδαμε προηγουμένως. Σχέσεις με την πρωτεύουσα, άλλωστε, φαίνεται ότι διατηρούσε και μετέπειτα, αφού συμμετείχε στην ενδημική Σύνοδο του 1157.

Το θραύσμα θωρακίου που εντοιχίστηκε κατά τη διάρκεια μεταγενέστερης επισκευής στο βόρειο πρόπυλο, έχει αποδοθεί με επιφύλαξη στο αρχικό τέμπλο του ναού (Εικ. 7). Ο διάκοσμος θυμίζει τα επιθήματα αμφικιονίσκων και τα θυρώματα, και φαίνεται πως ανήκει στο ίδιο σύνολο. Ωστόσο, πρέπει να τηρηθούν επιφυλάξεις για την ταύτισή του.

Τέλος, κατά τις αποξηλώσεις, εντοπίστηκε ένα επίμηκες θραύσμα λοξόμητου κοσμήτη με συνεχή διάκοσμο διπλού ελισσόμενου βλαστού που σχηματίζει ανθέμια, τεχνοτροπικά συγγενές με τα λοιπά γλυπτά του ναού (Εικ. 8). Πιθανότατα προέρχεται από κοσμήτη πάνω από το επιστύλιο του τέμπλου.

Με βάση τα παραπάνω, έγινε προσπάθεια αναπαράστασης του τέμπλου του ναού, δυστυχώς χωρίς στοιχεία για τα κιονόκρανα και το επιστύλιο, ούτε βεβαιότητα για τον διάκοσμο των θωρακίων (Εικ. 9, 10). Ωστόσο, τα υπάρχοντα θραύσματα μαρτυρούν ότι επρόκειτο για ένα πολύ αξιόλογο σύνολο, αντάξιο της αρχιτεκτονικής του σπουδαίου ναού. Στη σύγκριση με τον κατά έναν αιώνα μεταγενέστερο γειτονικό ναό στον Μέριμπακα, επίσης έργο με υψηλότερες προθέσεις που αντανάκλα την προσωπικότητα του δικού του κτήτορα και συνειδητά επαναλαμβάνει το σχέδιο του «δίδυμου» ναού της Αγίας Μονής στον Χώνικα, στις διαφοροποιήσεις, που νομοτελειακά εκφράζουν σε κάθε μνημείο την εποχή του και που έχουν επανειλημμένως επισημανθεί ως προς επιμέρους στοιχεία της κατασκευής και του διακόσμου και το εν γένει ύφος, μπορεί πλέον να προστεθεί και η γλυπτική, με βάση τα λίγα στοιχεία που έχουν διατηρηθεί από το τέμπλο και τα πώρινα προσκυνητάρια του Μέριμπακα. Η μελέτη των γλυπτών του τέμπλου της Αγίας Μονής επιβεβαιώνει το συμπέρασμα που έχει ήδη εκφραστεί από τον Χαράλαμπο Μπούρα, ότι δηλαδή «είμαστε μπροστά από τις σπάνιες εκείνες περιπτώσεις της βυζαντινής ναοδομίας όπου μπορούμε με τρόπο άμεσο να δούμε πώς η προσωπικότητα του κτήτορα επηρέασε την ποιότητα του αρχιτεκτονικού έργου». Και βέβαια συνέπεσε με μια εποχή ακμής και ωριμότητας της τέχνης και εξαιρετικής ικανότητας των συνεργείων και στον ελλαδικό χώρο.

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