Σχετικά με τη χρονολόγηση της Παναγίας Γοργοεπηκόου στην Αθήνα

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 REGARDING THE DATING OF THE CHURCH OF THE PANAGIA GORGOEPEKOOS IN ATHENS

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The church of the Panagia Gorgoepekoos in Athens is an unicum in Byzantine architecture and has been linked to a Byzantine “classicism”. Its dating has been a point of argument, as it has been dated from the ninth to the fifteenth century, but the end of the twelfth century has been proposed as the most probable period of its construction. It will be shown that there is evidence for dating the monument in the thirteenth century, during the period of Frankish rule.

The small church of the Panagia Gorgoepekoos1, dedicated to the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, stands in central Athens, close to the city’s Greek Orthodox cathedral (metropolis)2. Also known as the Little Metropolis or Hagios Eleutherios, the monument has been studied or referred to by several researchers, Greek and foreign, and was included by the late Professor Charalampos Bouras in two of his seminal monographs, one of them devoted to Byzantine Athens3.

There is no historical testimony relating to the erection of the church. In all probability it was the katholikon of a small monastery which existed as a dependency

1 This article is an expanded version of the paper presented at the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Belgrade, 22-27 August 2016.
2 For the epithet Gorgoepekoos (= Swift-hearing) and the icon of the Virgin Η ΑΘΗΝΑΙΑ ΓΟΡΓΟΕΠΗΚΟΟΣ, in the Museum Collection of the church of St George in Old Cairo, see D. Gr. Kampouroglous, «Η Παναγία τῶν Ἀθηνῶν», DChAE 2 (1894), 80-81. Iadem, Αἱ παλαιὲς Ἀθῆναι, Athens 1922, 221. I. Vitaliotis, «Η εικόνα της Θεοτόκου Γοργοεπηκοος του Καΐρου και η αρχαιολογία της βυζαντινής Αθήνας», Η Βυζαντινή Αθήνα, Διεθνές Συνέδριο, Byzantine and Christian Museum – University of Peloponnese, Abstracts of Communications, Athens 2016, 3-4.
3 First, we mention the old important publication of K. Michel – A. Struck, «Die mittelbyzantinischen Kirchen Athens», AM 31 (1906), 279-324, figs 5-29, pls XX-XXI. The numbering of the spolia by Michel – Struck is followed in this paper. Also see A. Grabar, Sculptures byzantines du Moyen Age, II (Xle – XIVe siècle), Paris 1976, 96-99, pls LXV-LXX. Ch. Bouras – L. Boura, Η Χρήση των Σπολιών και της Πρόκλησης στη Βυζαντίνη Παλαιότητα, Athens 2002, 44-49 and Ch. Bouras, Βυζαντινή Αθήνα, 10ος-12ος αι., Athens 2010, 158-165, with earlier bibliography, and recently B. Kiilerich, «Making Sense of the Spolia in the Little Metropolis in Athens», Arte Medievale IV (2005), 2, 95-114.

Keywords
Middle Byzantine period; Late Byzantine period; Frankish rule; architecture; sculpture; spolia, Athens; the church of the Panagia Gorgoepekoos in Athens.
type with dome and a narthex at the west⁶ (Figs 1-4). At the east end it terminates in an apse, which is semi-hexagonal on the outside. Semi circular barrel vaults cover the arms of the cross, the corner bays and the transverse-vaulted narthex. A single semi circular barrel vault covers the west arm of the cross and the longitudinal vault of the narthex. This unified construction also known from other Middle Byzantine churches in Athens, such as Prophet Elijah at the Staropazaro (second quarter of 11th century)⁷, St John in Plaka (probably late 12th or 13th century, wall-paintings 13th century)⁸ and St Nicholas Ragavas (mid-11th century).⁹ The vaults of the east corner bays and those of the prothesis and the diakonikon are also unified. The result is that the parts of the church are not seen as self-contained.

The illumination of the church is rather poor. There are eight single-lobed windows in the dome and one double-lobe window in the north, the south and the west arms of the cross. The narthex is additionally lit by a single-lobed window in both the north and the south side, and the sanctuary by a double-lobed window in the central apse and a single-lobed window in the wall of both the prothesis and the diakonikon.

The dome of the church is of the so-called “Athenian type”, with marble colonettes in the corners and harmonious proportions. The church stands on a pedestal and is built with carefully-dressed stone blocks with little mortar between them, thus giving the impression of ashlar masonry. The size of the stone blocks in the east wall varies considerably and large stone blocks have been set vertically. We do not know if all these stones are spolia. The cornices are ancient spolia with mouldings or new pieces that are copies of the ancient ones¹⁰.

Fig. 1, a, b. Athens, The church of the Panagia Gorgoepekoos. a. Plan and b. longitudinal section.

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¹ T. Neroutsos, Χριστιανικαὶ Ἀθῆναι, Athens 1899, 83, 84.
³ Bouras, Βυζαντινὴ Ἀθήνα, op.cit. (n. 3), 169-171.
⁴ Bouras, op.cit., 188.
⁵ Bouras, op.cit., 217.
⁷ Bouras, Βυζαντινὴ Ἀθήνα, op.cit. (n. 3), 199-201.
⁸ Bouras, op.cit., 188.
⁹ Bouras, op.cit., 217.
¹⁰ Bouras – Boura, Η Ἑλλαδικὴ ναοδομία, op.cit. (n. 3), 48. Bouras, Βυζαντινὴ Ἀθήνα, op.cit. (n. 3), 162.

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Fig. 2. Athens, The church of the Panagia Gorgoepikoos. The elevations of the church: east and west sides.

Fig. 3. Athens, The church of the Panagia Gorgoepekoos. The elevation of the church: north side.
Bricks are used only in the arches of the windows of the dome. The arches (pseudo-arches) of the rest of the windows have been carved out of solid stones or in relief.

As is usual in other Middle-Byzantine churches of Athens, harmonic divisions have been identified, as an aesthetic system organizing the façades of the church. The uniqueness of the monument lies in the extensive use and the organization of a large number of antique and Byzantine sculptures to embellish the exterior surface of the walls. These spolia are carved with figurative and decorative subjects or antique inscriptions. The sculptures originate from Classical, Roman, Early Christian and Middle-Byzantine monuments. Their positioning creates the impression of a Doric frieze with carved metopes and plain surfaces instead of tri-glyphs, which runs around all sides of the church. Special prominence has been given to the sculptures on the west and east sides of the church, and on the arms of the cross under the roof gables.

No Byzantine wall-paintings are preserved. Until 1862 Post-Byzantine wall-paintings survived in the interior of the church, which are known from Paul Durand's drawings. The dating of the church is difficult, due to the lack of any historical, epigraphic, or specific objective evidence, and is a much-debated issue. Dates ranging from the ninth to the fifteenth century have been proposed.

was read by Cyriacus of Ancona, who first visited Athens in 1436. Because he made no reference to the church of the Panagia Gorgoepekoos, it has been suggested that this inscription was elsewhere when he read it and that the church was built after 1436, probably after the Ottoman occupation of Athens, in 1456. However, it is known that Cyriacus’ information is not always reliable, as errors have been found both in the transcription of inscriptions and the location of monuments. With regard to the aforesaid Gorgoepekoos inscription, he failed to transcribe the first word. Moreover, Cyriacus does not seem to be accurate in his information about the location of the inscription that is to be found as the entrance pilaster in the church of St Nicholas in the cemetery at Mavromation, Messene. In addition, the quality of the construction and the overall morphology of the Gorgoepekoos church rule out such a late date.

Ch. Bouras, in his last study on Byzantine Athens, repeated his previous view that the monument dates from the late twelfth century and rejected Kiilerich’s proposal, although without commenting extensively on it.

However, the end of the twelfth century and specifically the years between 1182 and 1204 has been considered the most likely. This last dating is based on the Byzantine “classicism” of the church, evident in its construction, morphology and decoration. It was pre-eminent M. Chatzidakis who linked the erection of the church to the ideas and activity of Michael Choniates (1182-1204), the last Orthodox Bishop of Athens and a man of letters, almost twenty years before the Franks occupied the city.

Recently, B. Kiilerich proposed a date in the second half of the fifteenth century and challenged the idea of the church’s foundation by Michael Choniates. Her proposal is based mainly on the antique inscription on a block of an epistyle in the west corner of the south wall of the church: ΗΡΑΚΛΕΩΝ ΗΡΑΚΛΕΩΝΟΣ ΚΗΘΕΙ-ΣΙΕΥΣ ΔΩΡΟΘΕΑ ΙΣΙΓΕΝΟΥΣ/ ΜΥΡΡΙΝΟΥΣΙΟΥ ΘΥΓΑΤΗΡ (IG, II, 6419) (Fig. 5). This inscription was read by Cyriacus of Ancona, who first visited Athens in 1436. Because he made no reference to the church of the Panagia Gorgoepekoos, it has been suggested that this inscription was elsewhere when he read it and that the church was built after 1436, probably after the Ottoman occupation of Athens, in 1456. However, it is known that Cyriacus’ information is not always reliable, as errors have been found both in the transcription of inscriptions and the location of monuments. With regard to the aforesaid Gorgoepekoos inscription, he failed to transcribe the first word. Moreover, Cyriacus does not seem to be accurate in his information about the location of the inscription that is to be found as the entrance pilaster in the church of St Nicholas in the cemetery at Mavromation, Messene. In addition, the quality of the construction and the overall morphology of the Gorgoepekoos church rule out such a late date.

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Fig. 5. Athens, The church of the Panagia Gorgoepekoos. The inscription in the west corner of the south wall.


14 Chatzidakis, «Μεσοβυζαντινή Τέχνη», op.cit. (n. 13), 399.
15 Kiilerich, “Making Sense”, op.cit. (n. 3), 106 ff.
18 E. W. Bodnar, Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens (Collection Latomus, XLIII), Brussels – Berchem 1964, 179.
19 Kiilerich, “Making Sense”, op.cit. (n. 3), 108.
20 Bodnar, Cyriacus of Ancona, op.cit. (n. 18), 180.
21 A. Orlandos, «Ἐκ τῆς χριστιανικῆς Μεσσήνης», ABME 11/1 (1969), 113. Also see Bouras, Βυζαντινή Αθήνα, op.cit. (n. 3), 165.
22 Bouras, op.cit.
The church is obviously an example of “Athenian Byzantine classicism”\(^2\). It has harmonious proportions, it stands on a high pedestal and it has classicist architectural features, such as pediments and cornices with mouldings, as well as many antique sculptures incorporated into the exterior, which coexist with Christian ones. Thus, it is not the antique sculptures themselves that suggest “classicism” but the organization of all the sculptural elements, which evokes an antique Doric frieze.

Furthermore, on the exterior of the church, the walls of the arms of the cross are articulated in such a way as to evoke the form of a prostyle four-column ancient temple\(^2\). Last, the emphasis on the embellishment of the west and east sides of the church could refer to a similar enhancement of antique buildings with the sculptural decoration of the pediments. It appears that in the Gorgoepekoos there is a particular interest in emphasizing the external decoration of the church.

With regard to typology and morphology, the monument undoubtedly represents a mature phase of Byzantine architecture of the “Greek School” and cannot be dated earlier than the late twelfth century. However, the question is: can it be dated later and, if so, how much later?

The pedestal is certainly a feature of twelfth-century church architecture\(^2\). However, several monuments now considered to have been built during the period of Frankish rule and particularly in the thirteenth century, have a pedestal. We mention indicatively, the church of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary at Merbaka in the

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\(^24\) Poulimenos, Από τον χριστιανικό Παρθενώνα, op.cit. (n. 6), 99, fig. 60.

\(^{25}\) Bouras – Boura, Η ελλαδική ναοδομία, op.cit. (n. 3), 382.
Argolid\(^2\), the church of Christ the Saviour at Alepochori near Megara\(^7\), and the church of the Panagia Katholiki at Castouni in the western Peloponnese\(^8\).

Large, carved stone blocks laid in courses or vertically mounted in an \textit{opus pseudo-cloisonné} masonry or \textit{pseudo-isodomic} are known from monuments of the early thirteenth century and later in Greece, such as the churches of St Demetrios at Chania-Avlonari in Euboea\(^9\), St George (Omorphi Ekklesia) at Galatsi in Athens\(^10\), St Athanasios in Megara\(^11\), the Omorphi Ekklesia on Aegina\(^12\), the katholikon of the Hellenika monastery at Antheia in Messenia\(^13\), the exonarthex of Porta Panagia at Pyle of Trikkala in Thessaly\(^14\) and the Metropolis (St Demetrios) at Mistra\(^15\).

It has also been observed that the use of \textit{spolia} in the external walk of churches increased during the period of Latin rule\(^16\). Examples include monuments of greater

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Fig. 8. Athens, The church of the Panagia Gorgoepekoos. A slab from the south façade (§ 30).

Ekklesia on Aegina\(^17\), the katholikon of the Hellenika monastery at Antheia in Messenia\(^18\), the exonarthex of Porta Panagia at Pyle of Trikkala in Thessaly\(^19\) and the Metropolis (St Demetrios) at Mistra\(^20\).


\(^{21}\) D. Mousiki, \textit{Oι τοιχογραφίες του Σωτήρα κοντά στην Αλεξάνδρεια της Μεγαρίδος}. Athens 1978, 5-10, pl. 1.


\(^{23}\) Bouras – Boura, \textit{Ἡ ελλαδική ναοδομία}, op.cit. (n. 3), 334-335, fig. 388.


\(^{28}\) Bouras, \textit{Βυζαντινή και μεταβυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική}, op.cit. (n. 6), 189, 196-197.
or lesser importance, such as the church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Merbaka in the Argolid, of St John at Keria in Mani and of the Panagia at Vathia in Euboea.

A further characteristic of thirteenth-century and later church architecture in Greece is the carving of the window arches out of the same stone lintel as the masonry. We mention examples from Attica (Omorphi Ekklesia at Galatsi in Athens, St Athanasios, St George at Orkos and the church of Christ the Saviour in Megara), the church of Christ the Saviour at Alepochori), Aegina (Omorphi Ekklesia, possibly 13th century) and Thessaly (exonarthex of Porta Panaghia at Pyle of Trikkalos).

An important criterion for dating the Panagia Gorgoepekoos church is the sculptural decoration. However, apart from the old publication of K. Michel and A. Struck, there is no systematic study of the Christian sculptures, and the impression is that all the sculptural decoration of the church consists of spolia. It has been argued, especially by those who accept a dating of the

37 Bouras, Βυζαντινή και μεταβυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική, op.cit. (n. 9), 173, fig. 199. Sanders, «Use of Ancient Spolia», op.cit. (n. 26), 584, 598-599.
38 Bouras, op. cit., 189, fig. 226.
39 Bouras, op. cit., 198, fig. 233.
40 Vassilaki-Karakatsani, Οἱ τοιχογραφίες, op.cit. (n. 30), pl. 1.
41 Stoufi-Poulimenou, Βυζαντινές εκκλησίες, op.cit. (n. 31), figs 5, 28, 54, 55.
42 Bouras – Boura, Η ελλαδική ναοδομία, op.cit. (n. 3), 56, fig. 35.
church to the late twelfth century that the sculptures which date back to the twelfth century were created at the same time as the church. However, careful observation reveals convincingly that most of them are too *spolia*.

More than twenty sculptures from K. Michel and A. Struck’s list can be dated to the twelfth century, most of them toward the end of the century. We mention indicatively: on the west side of the church (a) A slab (W 14) with two sphinxes and two lions flanking the tree of life (Fig. 6). (b) A slab (W 17) with two large sphinxes positioned symmetrically to the right and left of the tree of life, on whose branches are represented two smaller lions with human heads. These two slabs are probably products of the same workshop. (c) Two slabs (W 12, W 19) of similar subject and style, which must come from the same monument, are decorated above with heraldic griffins flanking the tree of life, which grows out of a crock, and below with two eagles mauling snakes.

(d) The slab (W 6) adorned with a knitted cross.

On the east side (a) A slab (O 50) with a representation of a lion attacking an antelope (Fig. 7). (b) A slab (O 71) from closure panels (?) from the Stoa of Attalos in the Athenian Agora 1999, 153 no 209).


See the analogous decoration on the pseudo-sarcophagus in the church of the Holy Apostles in the Ancient Agora of Athens (Grabar, op.cit. Pazaras, op.cit.) and on a door frame in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, dated in the 12th century [Sklavou-Mavroeide, Λειτουργία, op.cit. (n. 45), 164-165 no 224].


The lion’s mane is rendered by schematic hatching, as on a closure panel in the Byzantine and Christian Museum, which has with a kourose inscribed in a rectangle and enclosing beautiful palmettes and interlacing circles with rosettes. (c) A slab (O 60) with a foliate cross beneath an arch.

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52 The rendering of the animals is similar, e.g. on a closure panel built into a wall of the church of St Demetrios (Megalí Panagia) in Thessé [Bouras – Boura, ‘Η Ἑλληνικὴ ναοδομία, op.cit. (n. 3), 152 fig. 161] and on a lintel from the Athenian Acropolis (M. Sklavou-Mavroeide, Λειτουργία του Βεζετυπευμένου Μνημείου Αθηνῶν, Athens 1999, 153 no 209).

53 The subject, with similar treatment of the sphinxes, is known also from closure panels (?) from the Ston of Attalos in the Athenian Agora, Sklavou-Mavroeide, Γλυπτά, op.cit. (n. 45), 117-118 no 157.

54 Bouras – Boura, ‘Η Ἑλληνικὴ ναοδομία, op.cit. (n. 3), 563-565, fig. 558, with examples.

55 The same accomplished workmanship of the knitted cross is encountered on the closure panels of a templon screen from the church of St John Makrouritis in Athens, today in the Byzantine and Christian Museum [A. Xhorooulos, Εικονογραφία τῶν Μεσαιωνικῶν Μνημείων τῆς Ελλάδος, 1. Μεσαιωνικὴ Μνημεία Αττικῆς (Ἀθηνάς καὶ περιχώρων), 2. Τὰ βεζετυπευμένα καὶ τουρυγιομένα τῶν Αθηνῶν, Athens 1929, 85-87. Sklavou-Mavroeide, Γλυπτά, op.cit. (n. 45), 130 no 176. Bouras – Boura, ‘Η Ἑλληνικὴ ναοδομία, op.cit. (n. 3), 36-38, fig. 15] where it is dated to the 12th century, and on another closure panel in the Byzantine and Christian Museum [Sklavou-Mavroeide, Γλυπτά, op.cit. (n. 45), 131 no 177].

56 The lion’s mane is rendered by schematic latching, as on a closure panel in the Byzantine and Christian Museum, which has been dated to the 12th century, Bouras – Boura, ‘Η Ἑλληνικὴ ναοδομία, op.cit. (n. 3), 40, 42, 43, fig. 22.

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can be dated to the twelfth century. The frames of the lateral doors of the inner narthex and the north entrance of the church, which are decorated with the same ornament, are probably also spolia (Fig. 9).

Consequently, it is very difficult to accept that all these sculptures were carved a few years before the erection of the Panagia Gorgoepekoos, for Athenian churches that were destroyed almost immediately after they had been built. It is likewise difficult to accept that the late twelfth-century sculptures are contemporary with the building of the church, when most of them are obviously spolia. Spolia lead us probably to a period after the twelfth century.

The monument’s connection with Michael Choniates is hypothetical. In his writings, Choniates expresses his disappointment with the Athens of his day and with its inhabitants, who seem to him uncouth peasants. Nothing reminds him of the ancient grandeur of the city.

It has been argued, correctly, that Choniates’ interest in the culture of antiquity was limited to ancient texts and ancient authors. There is no mention in his works of any ancient artist, not even Phidias, whose masterly sculptural decoration Choniates had the opportunity to admire on the Parthenon. He found solace in the Christian Parthenon because it was the church of the Virgin Mary. He mentions nothing about the ancient temple and its art. In the Eisbaterios he flatters his flock, saying that the Athenians are superior to their ancestors, because they are Christians. What he emphasizes most was the replacement of the cult of Athena by that of the Virgin Mary.

Therefore, we should look for other reasons regarding the classicism of the monument that makes it unique. It is evident that the church of the Panagia Gorgoepekoos seeks to give the impression of an ancient temple or, rather, of an ancient temple that was converted into a church. The employment of ancient figural reliefs, sometimes with quite bold subjects, yet carved with the cross, such as the satyr on the north side of the church, bears witness to the familiarity of Christian Athenian society with ancient sculpture. Perhaps the most important factor was that the Parthenon, the Erechtheion and other Athenian temples were functioning as churches. Perhaps Choniates did not really understand the Athenians, as he failed to realize that the classical tradition remained alive in the city even among what he called its “unpolished” inhabitants. This was an experiential, every day relationship of the Byzantine Athenians with the monuments and tradition of antiquity.

Perhaps the most important factor was that the Parthenon, the Erechtheion and other Athenian temples were functioning as churches. Perhaps Choniates did not really understand the Athenians, as he failed to realize that the classical tradition remained alive in the city even among what he called its “unpolished” inhabitants. This was an experiential, every day relationship of the Byzantine Athenians with the monuments and tradition of antiquity, quite unlike Choniates’ relationship with antiquity, which was an academic and scholarly one.

B. Kiilerich linked the church of the Panagia Gorgoe-

54 The decorative motifs can be compared with analogous 12th-century sculptures in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens [Sklavou-Mavroude, Πλευτά, op.cit. (n. 45), 185 no 285, with other examples from the 12th and 13th centuries], in the St Melcosion monastery on Kithairon [Orlandos, Η μνήμη τοῦ Οἰκου Μελέτιου, op.cit. (n. 53), 98, fig. 45] and in the church of St Nicholas at Messaria, Άνδρος [Bouras – Boura, Η ελλαδική ναοδομία, op.cit. (n. 3), 70-71, fig. 51, 52].

55 As B. Kiilerich, in our opinion, has rightly argued [Kiilerich, «Making Sense», op.cit. (n. 3), 98, 103-104]. It is ascertained mainly from the back of the horizontal door frame of the north entrance from the narthex to the nave. This is a common subject in the 11th-12th century, Sklavou-Mavroude, Πλευτά, op.cit. (n. 45), 153 no 209 and 168 no 229. Bouras – Boura, Η ελλαδική ναοδομία, op.cit. (n. 3), 570, fig. 562. According to A. Grabar, the frames of these doors were made at the same time as the church (12th century), Grabar, Sculptures byzantines, op.cit. (n. 3), 97. Even if they were made contemporaneously with the building of the church, they are not sufficient evidence for dating the church to the 12th century as the subjects of the 12th century are reproduced frequently in the 13th century. See e.g. B. Papadopoulos, «Αρτέα. Το βυζαντινό τέμπλο της Βυζαντίας», Αφιέρωμα στον Ακαδημαϊκό Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών, 2015, 181-192.

56 For the oeuvre of Michael Choniates as an author, see Sp. E. Lamprou, Μιχαήλ Χονιάτης τίς Στούφι, 1, Athens 1879 and 2, Athens 1880. F. Ch. Kolou, Μιχαήλ Χονιάτης: Συμφωνία στη μελέτη του βίου και του έργου του. Το Corpus των επιστολών (Πνευματικό Συμφόρον της Έλληνσ σε τις Ελληνικές Εκκλησίες), 1, Athens 1999. Eadem, Michaelis Choniatae Epistolarum (CFHB 41), Berlin – New York 2001. The co-existence of Christian morality and ancient Greek intellectualism (Christ in Humanism) is the spiritual stance characteristic of the work of Michael Choniatas, Kolou, Μιχαήλ Χονιάτης, op.cit. (n. 56), 296.
pekoos with the Christian Parthenon and claimed that it was built as a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary after the conversion of the Parthenon into an Ottoman mosque (maybe in 1460 or shortly thereafter)\textsuperscript{60}. It is possible that this highly attractive view could be argued for the case of the conversion of the Orthodox Parthenon into a Latin church, after 1204.

As we have seen, the architecture of the monument cleaves close to Middle-Byzantine church building and indeed of the twelfth century. Concurrently, the existence in the fabric of the church of spolia of the late twelfth century places its foundation probably after the twelfth century. So, although it is not always easy to distinguish churches built after 1204 from those of the late twelfth century, as previous construction methods and formats were reproduced, and some Western influences are not always visible, the erection of the church of the Panagia Gorgoepekoos during the period of Frankish rule, probably in the first half of the thirteenth century, would be probable. Thus, Alison Frantz’s view that most of the sculptures built into the walls of the church probably originated from churches destroyed by Leon Sgouros, when he invaded Athens (1204)\textsuperscript{61}, can be vindicated.

It is true that the construction of such a notable and costly monument, under the historical circumstances of Frankish rule, is perhaps difficult for us to accept. Nonetheless, we know that in the same period, in other Frankish-held regions, high-quality monuments were built or decorated with wall-paintings (e.g. the Omorphi Ekklesia at Galatsi or the church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Merbaka in the Argolid).

All of the above, of course, presupposes that the late twelfth-century sculptures are also spolia, as are the earlier ones. However, to the extent that some of the sculptures in question may have been new, the earlier dating of the church to the late twelfth century, which was accepted by Ch. Bouras, could be accepted by us too.

\textsuperscript{60} Kiilerich, «Making Sense», op.cit. (n. 3), 108.

\textsuperscript{61} Frantz, The Church of the Holy Apostles, op.cit. (n. 13), 32 note

1. For Sgouros, who put the lower town to the torch, see Ph. Vlachopoulos, Λέων Σγουρός: Ο βίος και η πολεμία του βυζαντινού αρχοντα της βορειοανατολικής Πελοποννήσου στις αρχές του 13ου αιώνα, Θεσσαλονίκη 2002. Also Kaldellis, The Christian Parthenon, op.cit. (n. 59), 162-165.

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Ιωάννα Στουφή-Πουλιμένου

ΣΧΕΤΙΚΑ ΜΕ ΤΗ ΧΡΟΝΟΛΟΓΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑΣ ΓΟΡΓΟΕΠΗΚΟΟΥ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΘΗΝΑ

Οι ναοί της Παναγίας της Γοργοεπηκοού στην Αθήνα, ανεμομενοί στην Κοιμήσεις της Θεοτόκου, βρίσκονται δίπλα στον νεότερο καθεδρικό ναό της πόλης. Δεν υπάρχει καμία ιστορική μαρτυρία σχετικά με την ανέγερσή του. Κατά πάσα πιθανότητα, στα μέσα του 17ου αιώνα ήταν καθολικό μιας μικρής μονής, που αποτελούσε μέρος της μονής Καισαριανής.

Πρόκειται για ένα εγγεγραμμένο σταυροειδές ναό με τρούλο, ημισύνθετο τετρακιόνι, με νάρθηκα στα δυτικά (Εικ. 1-4). Διαθέτει χρηστά και ψευδοϊσόδομη τοιχοποιία. Τα τόξα των παραθύρων, εκτός από αυτά του τρούλου, έχουν λαξευτεί σε ολόσωμους δόμους ή ανάγλυφα spolia. Το μνημείο αποτελεί unicum στη βυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική και σωστά έχει συνδεθεί με έναν βυζαντινό «κλασικισμό». Η μοναδικότητα του μνημείου έρεισται όχι απλά στη χρήση αλλά και στην οργάνωση ενός με γόλο αρμοθέματος από αρχαία και παλαιότερα βυζαντινά γλυπτά (spolia), με σκοπό την

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ανάδειξη των εξωτερικών όψεων του (Εικ. 2), όπως περίπου συμβαίνει σε έναν αρχαίο ναό ή μια εκκλησία που προήλθε από μια προηγούμενη αρχαία κατασκευή.

Τα spolia περιλαμβάνουν ανάγλυφα με εικονιστικά ή διακοσμητικά θέματα και αρχαίες επιγραφές. Προέρχονται από κλασικές, ρωμαϊκές, πρωτοβυζαντινές και μεσοβυζαντινές μνημεία. Ο τρόπος που έχουν χρησιμοποιηθεί, δημιουργούν την εντύπωση μιας δωρικής ζωφόρου με ακόμη και τρίγλυφους και ανάγλυφους μετόπες, που περιτρέχουν όλες τις όψεις της εκκλησίας. Κρατικά πλαίσια των σκελών του σταυρού, κάτω από την αετωματική διαμόρφωση των στεγών. Η χρονολόγηση του ναού αποτελεί σημείο διαφωνίας, καθώς έχει χρονολογηθεί από τον 9ο έως τον 15ο αιώνα. Παρ' όλα αυτά, το τέλος του 12ου αιώνα προτείνεται ως η επικρατέστερη χρονολόγηση του μνημείου.

Η πρόσφατα προτεινόμενη χρονολόγηση του μνημείου στον 15ο αιώνα στηρίχθηκε, κυρίως, σε μια αρχαία επιγραφή σε τμήμα επιστυλίου στη δυτική γωνία του ναού (Εικ. 5). Η επιγραφή αυτή διαβάστηκε από τον Κυριακό τον Αγκωνίτη, ο οποίος για πρώτη φορά επισκέφθηκε την Αθήνα στα 1436. Επειδή ο Κυριακός δεν έκανε καμία αναφορά στην εκκλησία, διατυπώθηκε η άποψη ότι η επιγραφή βρισκόταν κάπου αλλού, όταν αυτός τη διάβασε, και ως εκ τούτου η εκκλησία κτίστηκε μετά την πρώτη του επίσκεψη στην πόλη, κατά πάσα πιθανότητα μετά την κατάληψη της Αθήνας από τους Οθωμανούς το 1456.

Ωστόσο, ούτε αυτό το στοιχείο ούτε η μορφή και η ποιότητα της κατασκευής του μνημείου μάς επιτρέπουν να υποστηρίξουμε ότι η Παναγία η Γοργοεπούς ανεγέρθηκε σε μια τόσο όψιμη περίοδο. Έτσι, η χρονολόγηση του μνημείου φαίνεται να παραμένει ακόμα ένα ανοιχτό ζήτημα.