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Σχετικά με τη χρονολόγηση της Παναγίας
Γοργοεπηκόου στην Αθήνα

Ioanna STOUFI-POULIMENOU

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

Η εκκλησία της Παναγίας Γοργοεπηκόου στην Αθήνα αποτελεί ένα *unicum* στη βυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική και έχει συνδεθεί με τον βυζαντινό «κλασικισμό». Η χρονολόγησή της αποτέλεσε σημείο διαφωνίας, καθώς έχει χρονολογηθεί από τον 9ο έως τον 15ο αιώνα, με το τέλος του 12ου αιώνα να έχει προταθεί ως η επικρατέστερη περίοδος ανέγερσής της. Ωστόσο, στην εργασία μας θα προσπαθήσουμε να δείξουμε ότι υπάρχουν δεδομένα που θα μπορούσαν να χρονολογήσουν το μνημείο στον 13ο αιώνα, στη διάρκεια της φραγκικής κυριαρχίας.

Λέξεις κλειδιά

Μεσοβυζαντινή περίοδος, υστεροβυζαντινή περίοδος, φραγκοκρατία, αρχιτεκτονική, γλυπτική, *spolia*, Αθήνα, Παναγία Γοργοεπήκοος.

The church of the Panagia Gorgoepokoos 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.

Keywords

Middle Byzantine period; Late Byzantine period; Frankish rule; architecture; sculpture; *spolia*, Athens; the church of the Panagia Gorgoepokoos in Athens.

The small church of the Panagia Gorgoepokoos¹, 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

* Associated Professor, University of Athens, istoufh@theol.uoa.gr

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 Gorgoepokoos (= 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. Kampourougous, «Η Παναγία τῶν Ἀθηνῶν», *DChAE* 2 (1894), 80-81. Idem, *Αἱ παλαιαὶ Ἀθῆναι*, Athens 1922, 221. I. Vitaliotis, «Η εικόνα της Θεοτόκου Γοργοεπηκόου του Καΐρου και η αρχαιολογία της βυζαντινῆς Αθῆνας», *Η Βυζαντινὴ 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 (XIe - XIVe siècle)*, Paris 1976, 96-99, pls LXV-LXX. Ch. Bouras – L. Boura, *Ἡ ἑλλαδικὴ ναοδομία κατὰ τὸν 12ο αἰώνα*, Athens 2002, 44-49 and Ch. Bouras, *Βυζαντινὴ Ἀθήνα, 10ος-12ος αἰ.*, 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.

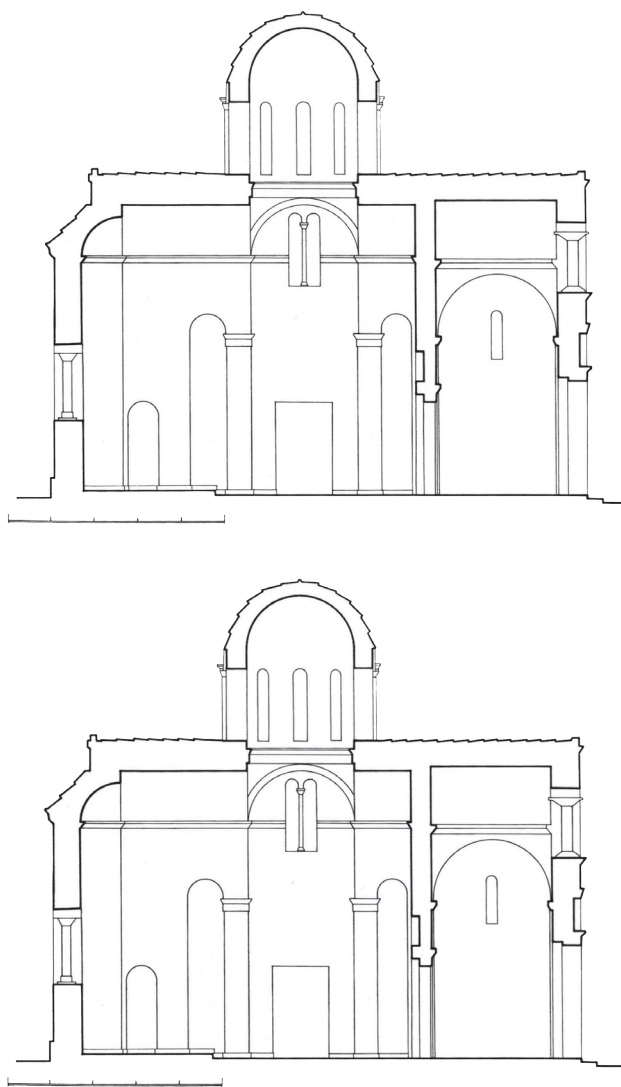


Fig. 1, a, b. Athens, The church of the Panagia Gorgoepekoos. a. Plan and b. longitudinal section.

(*metochion*) of the Kaisariani monastery in the mid-seventeenth century⁴. By the early eighteenth century it belonged to the Metropolitan See of Athens and, according to Barskij's drawing, was included in the residential complex of the bishop⁵.

The Panagia Gorgoepekoos is a cross-in-square church (7.32×11.38 m.) of semi-complex, four-columned

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.

⁶ For the architecture of the church see N. Gkioles, *Βυζαντινή ναοδομία (600-1204)*, Athens 1992, 145-146. Ch. Bouras, *Βυζαντινή και μεταβυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική στην Ελλάδα*, Athens 2001, 124-125. Bouras – Boura, *Ἡ ἐλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 46, 48. Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Ἀθήνα*, op.cit. (n. 3), 159-163. G. Poulimenos, *Ἀπό τον χριστιανικό Παρθενώνα στον Λύσανδρο Κανταντζόγλου*, Αθήνα 2006, 96-101. Kiilerich, "Making Sense", op.cit. (n. 3), 95.

⁷ Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Ἀθήνα*, op.cit. (n. 3), 169-171.

⁸ Bouras, op.cit., 188.

⁹ Bouras, op.cit., 217.

¹⁰ Bouras – Boura, *Ἡ ἐλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 48. Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Ἀθήνα*, op.cit. (n. 3), 162.

⁴ T. Neroutsos, *Χριστιανικὰ Ἀθήναι*, Athens 1899, 83, 84.

⁵ Bouras – Boura, *Ἡ ἐλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 44-46.

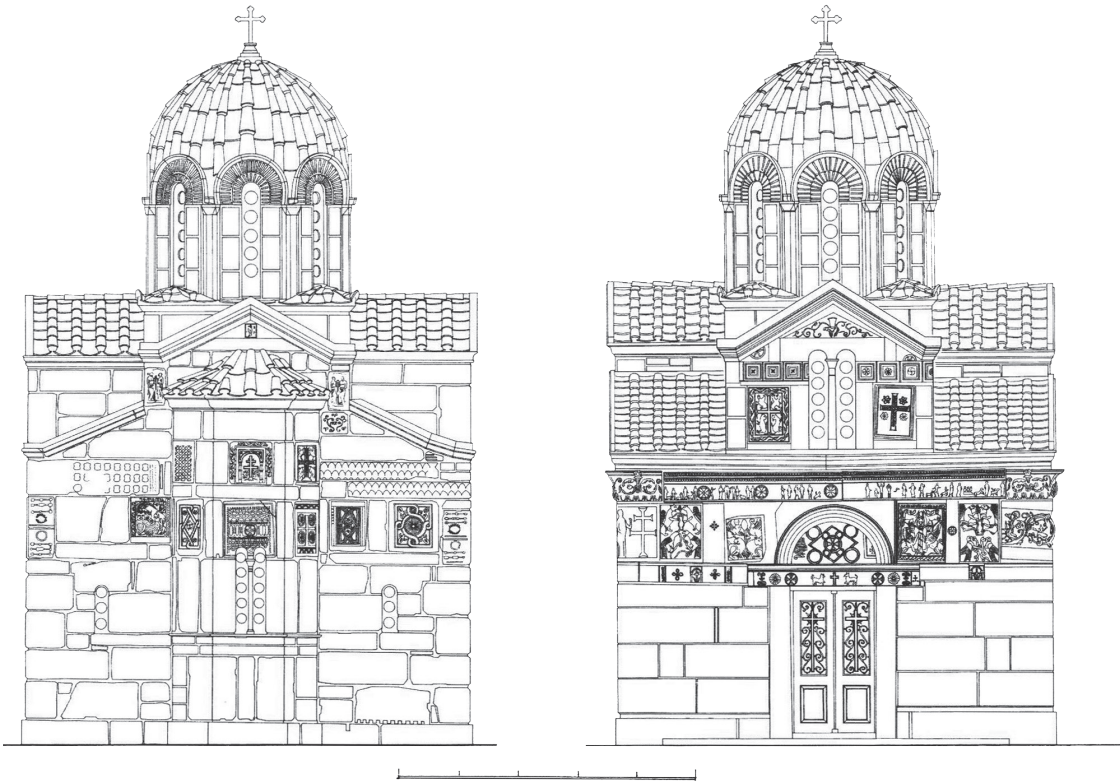


Fig. 2. Athens, The church of the Panagia Gorgoepekoos. The elevations of the church: east and west sides.

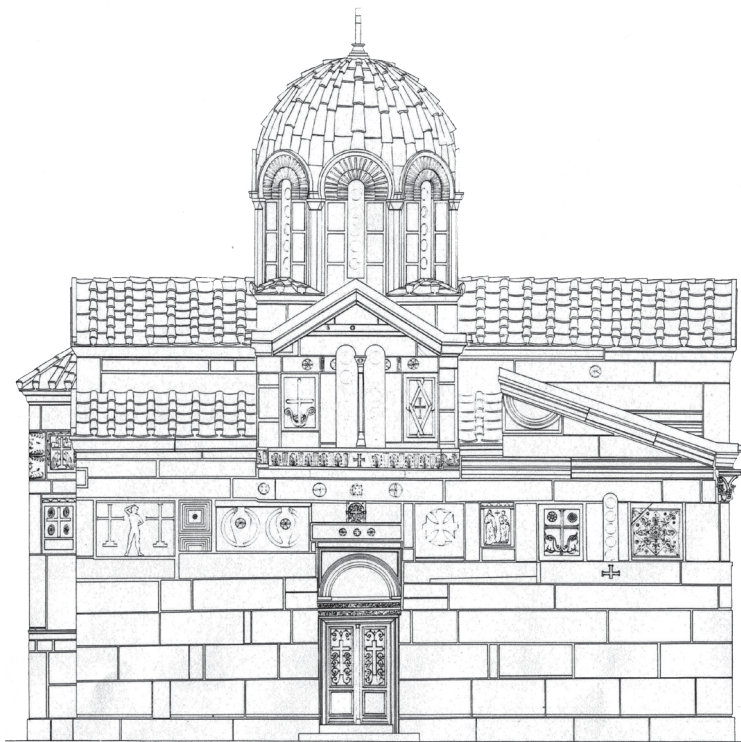


Fig. 3. Athens, The church of the Panagia Gorgoepekoos. The elevation of the church: north side.

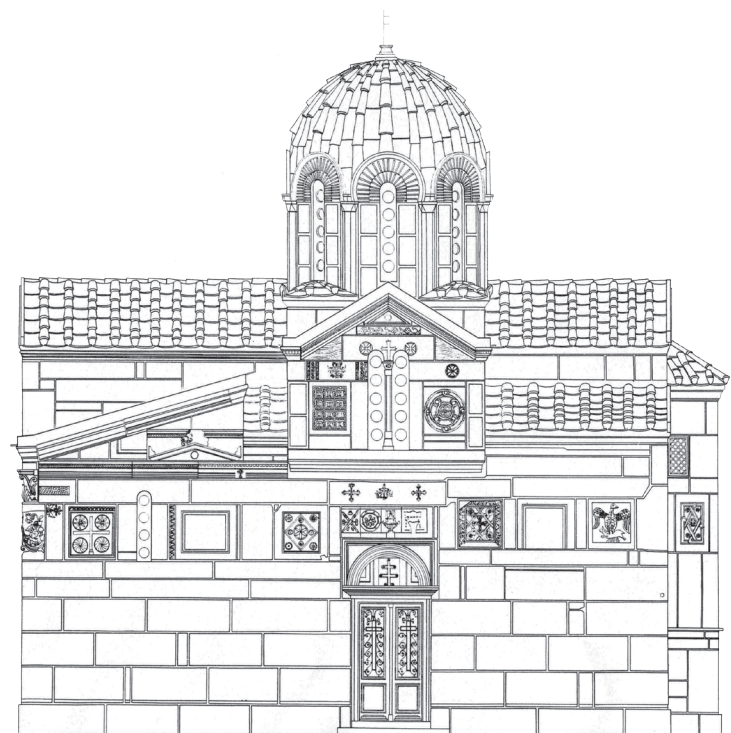


Fig. 4. Athens, The church of the Panagia Gorgoephekoos. The elevation of the church: south side.

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 church¹¹.

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 drawings¹².

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 proposed¹³.

¹¹ G. Poulimenos, «Harmonious sketches outside Byzantine churches in Greece», *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies (London 21-26 August 2006)*, III. *Abstracts of Communications*, London 2006, 316-317. Idem, *Από τον χριστιανικό Παρθενώνα*, op.cit. (n. 6), 91-92, fig. 53.

¹² T. Kalantzopoulou, «Σχέδια του Durand για τον διάκοσμο της Παναγίας Γοργοεπηκόου», *18th Symposium of the Christian Archaeological Society (Athens 1998)*, 28.

¹³ For the dating of the church, Michel – Struck, «Die mittelbyzantinischen Kirchen», op.cit. (n. 3), 321-322 (9th century). A. H. S. Megaw, «The Chronology of some Middle-Byzantine Churches», *BSA*, 32 (1931-1932), 100, 112 (into the 12th century). M. Chatzidakis, «Architectur», *Propyläen Kunstgeschichte*, III, Berlin 1968, 236. Idem, «Μεσοβυζαντινή Τέχνη», *IEE*, 9, Athens 1980, 399



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

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 decoration¹⁴. It was pre-eminently M. Chatzidakis who linked the erection of the church to the ideas and activity of Michael Choniates (1182-1204)¹⁵, 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 Choniates¹⁶. 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 ΚΗΦΕΙΣΙΕΥΣ. ΔΩΡΟΘΕΑ ΙΣΙΓΕΝΟΥΣ/ ΜΥΡΡΙΝΟΥΣΙΟΥ ΘΥΓΑΤΗΡ* (IG, II², 6419)¹⁷ (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 Gorgoepekoos¹⁸, 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 1456¹⁹.

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 word²⁰. 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, Messene²¹. 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 it²².

(12th century). Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines*, op.cit. (n. 3), 96-97 (12th century). A. Frantz, *The Church of the Holy Apostles at Athens* (The Athenian Agora XX), Princeton, N. J. 1971, 32 note 1 (after 1200). Gkioles, *Βυζαντινή ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 6), 146 (12th century). H. Maguire, “The Cage of the Crosses, Ancient and Mediaeval Sculptures on the Little Metropolis”, *Θυμίαμα στήν μνήμη της Λασκαρίνας Μπούρα*, I, Athens 1994, 169 (12th or early 13th century). Bouras – Boura, *Ἡ ἑλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 48. Bouras, *Βυζαντινὴ Ἀθήνα*, op.cit. (n. 3), 165 (12th century). Kiilerich, “Making Sense”, op.cit. (n. 3), mainly 108 (after 1456).

¹⁴ Maguire, «The Cage of the Crosses», op.cit. (n. 13).

¹⁵ Chatzidakis, «Μεσοβυζαντινὴ Τέχνη», op.cit. (n. 13), 399.

¹⁶ Kiilerich, «Making Sense», op.cit. (n. 3), 106 ff.

¹⁷ *Inscriptiones Graecae*, ed. Minor: Inscriptiones Atticae

Euclidis anno posterioris, III, 2, Berlin 1940, no 6419 (III 1736).

¹⁸ E. W. Bodnar, *Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens* (Collection Latomus, XLIII), Brussels – Berchem 1960, 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/I (1969), 113. Also see Bouras, *Βυζαντινὴ Ἀθήνα*, op.cit. (n. 3), 165.

²² Bouras, op.cit.



Fig. 6. Athens, The church of the Panagia Gorgoepekoos. A slab from the west façade (W 14).



Fig. 7. Athens, The church of the Panagia Gorgoepekoos. A slab from the east façade (O 50).

The church is obviously an example of “Athenian Byzantine classicism”²³. 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

²³ On the “classicism” of the monument, Michel – Struck, «Die mittelbyzantinischen Kirchen», op.cit. (n. 3). J. A. Hamilton, *Byzantine Architecture and Decoration*, London 1933, 100-102. Ch. Delvoye, *L’art byzantin*, Paris 1967, 206. Chatzidakis, «Μεσοβυζαντινή Τέχνη», op.cit. (n. 13), 398-399. Maguire, «The Cage of the Crosses», op.cit. (n. 13), 169. Bouras – Boura, *Ἡ ἑλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 48. Poulimenos, *Από τον χριστιανικό Παρθενώνα*, op.cit. (n. 6), 100-101, 118-119. A. Papalexandrou, «Memory Tattered and Torn: Spolia in the Heartland of Byzantine Hellenism», R. M. van Dyke – S. E. Alcock (eds), *Archaeologies of Memory*, Oxford 2003, 62. Kiilerich, «Making Sense», op.cit. (n. 3), 106.

as to evoke the form of a prostyle four-column ancient temple²⁴. 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 architecture²⁵. 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

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

²⁵ Bouras – Boura, *Ἡ ἑλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 382.

Argolid²⁶, the church of Christ the Saviour at Alepochori near Megara²⁷, and the church of the Panagia Katholiki at Gastouni in the western Peloponnese²⁸.

Large, carved stone blocks laid in courses or vertically mounted in an *opus pseudo-cloisonné* masonry or *pseudo-isodomum* are known from monuments of the early thirteenth century and later in Greece, such as the churches of St Demetrios at Chania-Avlonari in Euboea²⁹, St George (Omorphi Ekklesia) at Galatsi in Athens³⁰, St Athanasios in Megara³¹, the Omorphi



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

²⁶ G. Hadji-Minaglou, *L'église de la Dormition de la Vierge à Merbaka (Hagia Triada)*, Paris 1992, 82-83, figs 59-61. Bouras, *Βυζαντινή και μεταβυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική*, op.cit. (n. 6), 172-173, fig. 199. G. D. R. Sanders, «Use of Ancient Spolia to Make Personal and Political Statements: William of Moerbeke's Church at Merbaka (Ayia Triada, Argolida)», *Hesperia* 84 (2015), 599. Regarding the re-dating of the church to the 13th century see G. Nikolakopoulos, *Εντοιχισμένα κεραμικά. III. Τα κεραμικά της Παναγίας του Μέριπακα της Ναυπλίας*, Athens 1979, 37. K. Tsouris, *Ο κεραμοπλαστικός διάκοσμος των ύστεροβυζαντινών μνημείων της βορειοδυτικής Ελλάδος*, Kavala 1988, 102, 113-114. G. D. R. Sanders, «Three Peloponnesian Churches and their Importance for the Chronology of Late 13th and Early 14th. Century Pottery in the Eastern Mediterranean», *Recherches sur la céramique byzantine, Actes du colloque organisé par l'École française d'Athènes et l'Université de Strasbourg II (Athènes 8-10 avril 1987)*, eds V. Déroche – J.-M. Spieser, Paris 1989, 189-194. Bouras – Boura, *Η έλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 332-333.

²⁷ D. Mouriki, *Οι τοιχογραφίες του Σωτήρα κοντά στο Άλεποχώρι της Μεγαρίδος*, Athens 1978, 5-10, pl. 1.

²⁸ D. Athanasoulis, «Η αναχρονολόγηση του ναού της Παναγίας της Καθολικής στη Γαστούνη», *DChAE* 24 (2003), 64, fig. 1. Bouras – Boura, *Η έλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 107, figs 98, 99.

²⁹ Bouras – Boura, *Η έλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 334-335, fig. 388.

³⁰ A. Vassilaki-Karakatsani, *Οι τοιχογραφίες της Όμορφης Εκκλησίας στην Αθήνα*, Athens 1971, pl. 1β. Regarding the dating of the monument in the 13th century, see Bouras–Boura, *Η έλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 99-102, fig. 89. Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα*, op.cit. (n. 3), 154-157, figs 117-120. S. Kalopissi-Verti, «Relations between East and West in the Lordship of Athens and Thebes after 1204: Archaeological and Artistic Evidence», *Archaeology and the Crusades. Proceedings of the Round Table (Nicosia, 1 February 2005)*, eds P. Edbury – S. Kalopissi-Verti, Athens 2007, 18 note 46. St. Mamaloukos, «Architectural Trends in Central Greece around the Year 1300», *International Scientific Forum "Banjska Monastery and King Milutin Era" (Banjska – Kosovska Mitrovica, 22-25 September 2005)* (ΔΕΝ ΕΧΕΙ ΔΗΜΟΣΙΕΥΘΕΙ).

³¹ I. Stoufi-Poulimenou, «Ο ναός του Αγίου Αθανασίου στον

Εκκλησία on Aegina³², the katholikon of the Hellenika monastery at Antheia in Messenia³³, the exonarthex of Porta Panagia at Pyle of Trikkala in Thessaly³⁴ and the Metropolis (St Demetrios) at Mistra³⁵.

It has also been observed that the use of *spolia* in the external walls of churches increased during the period of Latin rule³⁶. Examples include monuments of greater

κάμπο των Μεγάρων», *DChAE* 26 (2005), 74, 76, figs 5, 6. Eadem, *Βυζαντινές εκκλησίες στον κάμπο των Μεγάρων*, Athens 2007, 50, figs 5, 8.

³² Bouras – Boura, *Η έλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 55-57, fig. 35.

³³ M. Καρπας, «Εκκλησίες της Μητροπόλεως Μεσσηνίας από το 1204 έως και το 1500», *Χριστιανική Μεσσηνία. Μνημεία και ιστορία της Ιεράς Μητροπόλεως Μεσσηνίας*, Kalamata 2010, 218-219, 222.

³⁴ According to St. Mamaloukos, the exonarthex of the Porta Panagia church probably dates to the early 13th century, Bouras – Boura, *Η έλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 273-274 note 9, fig. 315.

³⁵ Bouras, *Βυζαντινή και μεταβυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική*, op.cit. (n. 6), 184, fig. 218. G. Marinou, *Άγιος Δημήτριος. Η Μητρόπολη του Μυστρά*, Athens 2002, 213-214, pl. 75.

³⁶ Bouras, *Βυζαντινή και μεταβυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική*, op.cit. (n. 6), 189, 196-197.



Fig. 9. Athens, The church of the Panagia Gorgoepekoos. Spolia as lintel of the north entrance.

or lesser importance, such as the church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Merbaka in the Argolid³⁷, of St John at Keria in Mani³⁸ and of the Panagia at Vathia in Euboea³⁹.

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 Athens⁴⁰, St Athanasios, St George at Orkos and the church of Christ the Saviour in Megara⁴¹,

the church of Christ the Saviour at Alepochori), Aegina (Omorphi Ekklesia, possibly 13th century)⁴² and Thessaly (exonarthex of Porta Panaghia at Pyle of Trikkala)⁴³.

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. 6), 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, *Οί τοιχογραφίες*, op.cit. (n. 30), pl. 1.

⁴¹ Stoufi-Poulimenou, *Βυζαντινές εκκλησίες*, op.cit. (n. 31), figs 5, 28, 54, 55.

⁴² Bouras – Boura, *Ἡ ἑλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 56, fig. 35.

⁴³ Bouras – Boura, op. cit., 274, fig. 315. For morphological and constructional features of Byzantine church building in the 13th century, see also A. Louvi-Kizi, «Δυτικές επιδράσεις στους τρόπους δόμησης βυζαντινών ναών», *18th Symposium of the Christian Archaeological Society (Athens 1998)*, 37-38. St. Mameloukos, «Ο ναός του Αγίου Πολυκάριου στην Τανάγρα (Μπράτσι) Βοιωτίας», *DChAE* 25 (2004), 127-140.

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 century⁴⁴. 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 life⁴⁵ (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 workshop⁴⁶. (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 snakes⁴⁷. (d) The slab (W 6) adorned with a knitted cross⁴⁸.

On the east side: (a) A slab (O50) with a representation of a lion attacking an antelope⁴⁹ (Fig. 7). (b) A slab (O71)

with a lozenge inscribed in a rectangle and enclosing beautiful palmettes and interlacing circles with rosette⁵⁰.

(c) A slab (O 60) with a foliate cross beneath an arch⁵¹.

On the south side: (a) A panel (S 44) with the familiar motif of lozenge inscribed in a rectangle and enclosing small interlacing circles. On the frame too is a customary ornament of the twelfth century⁵². (b) A panel (S 30) with the familiar pattern of interlaced consecutive frames connected with a node (Fig. 8). The squares enclose palmettes. Both the subject and the well-drawn basket-weave ornament of the frame are attributed to the twelfth century⁵³.

Spolia used as lintels on the entrances of the narthex to the nave, as well as the north entrance of the church

been dated to the 12th century, Bouras – Boura, *Ἡ ἐλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 40, 42, 43, fig. 22.

⁴⁴ The treatment of the subject and the form of the frame (continuous bead-and-reel motif) recall epistyle fragments from the Sagmata Monastery in Boeotia, L. Bouras, «Architectural Sculptures of the twelfth and the early thirteenth centuries in Greece», *DChAE* 9 (1977-1979), 67-68, pl. 21 figs 11-13.

⁵¹ See for example, the pseudo-sarcophagus in the church of the Holy Apostles in the Ancient Agora of Athens [Frantz, *The Church of the Holy Apostles*, op.cit. (n. 13), 14. Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines*, op.cit. (n. 3), no 87, pl. LXXIXb. Th. Pazaras, *Ἀνάγλυφες σαρκοφάγοι καὶ ἐπιτάφιας πλάκες τῆς μέσης καὶ ὕστερης βυζαντινῆς περιόδου στὴν Ἑλλάδα*, Athens 1988, no 60, 46-47, pl. 49] and a lintel in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens [Sklavou-Mavroeide, *Γλυπτά*, op.cit. (n. 45), 153 no 209].

⁵² 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, *Γλυπτά*, op.cit. (n. 45), 164-165 no 224].

⁵³ As e.g. in sculptures from the katholikon of the Daou monastery on Penteli [F. Secchi Tarugi, «Il Monastero di Daou-Pendeli in Attica», *Palladio* 11 (1961), 154 note 32, figs 17-20. Bouras – Boura, *Ἡ ἐλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 255-257, figs 291, 292], the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens [Sklavou-Mavroeide, *Γλυπτά*, op.cit. (n. 45), 160 no 218. Bouras – Boura, *Ἡ ἐλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 40-41, figs 17, 18], the Hosios Meletios monastery on Kithairon [A. Orlandos, «Ἡ μονὴ τοῦ Ὁσίου Μελετίου καὶ τὰ παραλαύρια αὐτῆς», *ABME* 5 (1939-1940), p. 97 fig. 44, p. 101 fig. 48] and the monastery of St Nicholas Varson in Arcadia [I. Stoufi-Poulimenou, «Βυζαντινὰ ἀρχιτεκτονικὰ μέλη στὴ μονὴ Ἁγίου Νικολάου Βαρσῶν Ἀρκαδίας», *ΕΕΘΣΠΑ ΛΖ'* (2002), 712 note 21, with other examples, p. 714, 743, fig. 5, p. 744, figs 7, 8α, 8β, p. 755, figs 24α, 24β.

⁴⁴ Bouras – Boura, *Ἡ ἐλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 48. Also Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines*, op.cit. (n. 3), 96. Kiilerich, «Making Sense», op.cit. (n. 3), 103-104.

⁴⁵ The rendering of the animals is similar, e.g. on a closure panel built into a wall of the church of St Demetrios (Megali Panagia) in Thebes [Bouras – Boura, *Ἡ ἐλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 152 fig. 161] and on a lintel from the Athenian Acropolis (M. Sklavou-Mavroeide, *Γλυπτά του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου Αθηνών*, Athens 1999, 153 no 209).

⁴⁶ The subject, with similar treatment of the sphinxes, is known also from closure panels (?) from the Stoa of Attalos in the Athenian Agora, Sklavou-Mavroeide, *Γλυπτά*, op.cit. (n. 45), 117-118 no 157.

⁴⁷ Bouras – Boura, *Ἡ ἐλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 563-565, fig. 558, with examples.

⁴⁸ The same accomplished workmanship of the knitted cross is encountered on the closure panels of a templon screen from the church of St John Mangoutis in Athens, today in the Byzantine and Christian Museum [A. Xyngopoulos, *Ἐφρετήριο των Μεσαιωνικῶν Μνημείων τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, 1. *Μεσαιωνικά Μνημεῖα Ἀττικῆς (Ἀθηνῶν καὶ περιχώρων)*, 2. *Τὰ βυζαντινὰ καὶ τουρκικὰ μνημεῖα τῶν Ἀθηνῶν*, Athens 1929, 85-87. Sklavou-Mavroeide, *Γλυπτά*, op.cit. (n. 45), 130 no 176. Bouras – Boura, *Ἡ ἐλλαδική 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].

⁴⁹ The lion's mane is rendered by schematic hatching, as on a closure panel in the Byzantine and Christian Museum, which has

can be dated to the twelfth century⁵⁴. 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*⁵⁵ (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 writings⁵⁶, 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 city⁵⁷. It has been argued, correctly, that Choniates' interest in the culture of antiquity was limited to ancient texts and ancient authors⁵⁸. There is no mention in his works of any ancient artist, not even Pheidias, 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 Mary⁵⁹.

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, 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-Mavroeide, *Γλυπτά*, op.cit. (n. 45), 185 no 285, with other examples from the 12th and 13th centuries], in the St Meletios monastery on Kithairon [Orlandos, «Ἡ μονὴ τοῦ Ὁσίου Μελετίου», op.cit. (n. 53), 98, fig. 45] and in the church of St Nicholas at Messaria, Andros [Bouras – Boura, *Ἡ ἑλλαδική ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 3), 70-71, figs 51, 52].

⁵⁵ Just 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-Mavroeide, *Γλυπτά*, op.cit. (n. 45), 153 no 209 and 168 no 229. Bouras – Boura, *Ἡ ἑλλαδική 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 same subjects of the 12th century are reproduced frequently in the 13th century too. See e.g. B. Papadopoulou, «Ἄρτα. Το βυζαντινὸ τέμπλο τῆς Βλαχέρνας», *Αφιέρωμα στον Ακαδημαϊκὸ Παναγιώτη Λ. Βοκοτόπουλο*, Athens 2015, 181-192.

⁵⁶ For the oeuvre of Michael Choniates as an author, see Sp. P. Lamprou, *Μιχαὴλ Ἀκομινάτου τὰ Σωζόμενα*, 1, Athens 1879 and 2, Athens 1880. F. Ch. Kolovou, *Μιχαὴλ Χωνιάτης. Συμβολὴ στὴ μελέτη τοῦ βίου καὶ τοῦ ἔργου του. Τὸ Corpus τῶν ἐπιστολῶν* (Πονήματα. Συμβολές στὴν Ἔρευνα τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς καὶ Λατινικῆς Γραμματείας 2), Athens 1999. Eadem, *Michaelis Choniatae Epistulae* (CFHB 41), Berlin – New York 2001. The co-existence of Christian morality and ancient Greek intellectualism (Christian Humanism) is the spiritual stance characteristic of the work of Michael Choniates, Kolovou, *Μιχαὴλ Χωνιάτης*, op.cit. (n. 56), 296.

⁵⁷ For example, Letter 28: Kolovou, *Michaelis Choniatae*, op.cit. (n. 56), 38-39. Letter 52: Kolovou, *Michaelis Choniatae*, op.cit. (n. 56), 72-73.

⁵⁸ Poulimenos, *Ἀπὸ τον χριστιανικὸ Παρθενόνα*, op.cit. (n. 6), 119. Kiilerich, «Making Sense», op.cit. (n. 3), 106.

⁵⁹ Michael Choniates, *Εἰσβατήριος. Ὅτε πρῶτον τὰς Ἀθήνας ἐπέστη*, Lamprou, *Μιχαὴλ Ἀκομινάτου*, op.cit. (n. 55), 93-196. See also A. Kaldellis, *The Christian Parthenon, Classicism and Pilgrimage in Byzantine Athens*, New York 2009, 156-162.

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)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)⁶¹, can be vindicated.

⁶⁰ Küllerich, «Making Sense», op.cit. (n. 3), 108.

⁶¹ Frantz, *The Church of the Holy Apostles*, op.cit. (n. 13), 32 note

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.

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

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Fig. 1: NTU – Collection and Archive of Architectural Researches: D. Vlamis, K. Ioannou, G. Mavromatis, R. Travlou, 1959. Fig. 2: NTU – Collection and Archive of Architectural Researches: D. Vlamis, K. Ioannou, G. Mavromatis, R. Travlou, 1959 and G. Giaxoglou 1969). Figs 3-7: photos by Ioanna Stoufi-Poulimenou.

Ιωάννα Στουφή-Πουλημένου

ΣΧΕΤΙΚΑ ΜΕ ΤΗ ΧΡΟΝΟΛΟΓΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑΣ ΓΟΡΓΟΕΠΗΚΟΟΥ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΘΗΝΑ

Ο ναός της Παναγίας της Γοργοεπηκόου στην Αθήνα, αφιερωμένος στην Κοίμηση της Θεοτόκου, βρίσκεται δίπλα στον νεότερο καθεδρικό ναό της πόλης. Δεν υπάρχει καμιά ιστορική μαρτυρία σχετικά με την ανέγερσή του. Κατά πάσα πιθανότητα, στα μέσα του 17ου αιώνα ήταν καθολικό μιας μικρής μονής, που αποτελούσε μετόχι της μονής Καισαριανής.

Πρόκειται για ένα εγγεγραμμένο σταυροειδή ναό με τρούλο, ημισύνθετο τετρακίδιο, με νάρθηκα στα

δυτικά (Εικ. 1-4). Διαθέτει κρηπίδα 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 έγκειται όχι απλά στη χρήση αλλά και στην οργάνωση ενός μεγάλου αριθμού από αρχαία και παλαιότερα βυζαντινά γλυπτά (*spolia*), με σκοπό την

ανάδειξη των εξωτερικών όψεών του (Εικ. 2), όπως περίπου συμβαίνει σε έναν αρχαίο ναό ή μια εκκλησία που προήλθε από μετατροπή αρχαίου ναού.

Τα *spolia* περιλαμβάνουν ανάγλυφα με εικονιστικά ή διακοσμητικά θέματα και αρχαίες επιγραφές. Προέρχονται από κλασικά, ρωμαϊκά, πρωτοβυζαντινά και μεσοβυζαντινά μνημεία. Ο τρόπος που έχουν χρησιμοποιηθεί, δημιουργεί την εντύπωση μιας δωρικής ζωφόρου με ακόσμητα τρίγλυφα και ανάγλυφες μετόπες, που περιτρέχει όλες τις όψεις της εκκλησίας. Ιδιαίτερη φροντίδα έχει δοθεί στην τοποθέτηση γλυπτού διακόσμου στη δυτική και την ανατολική όψη της εκκλησίας, και στα τύμπανα 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 τελευταία αυτή χρονολόγηση στηρίχθηκε στον βυζαντινό «κλασικισμό» του ναού, ορατό στην κατασκευή, τη μορφολογία και τον διάκοσμό του, ο οποίος συνδέθηκε κυρίως με τις ιδέες και τη δράση του λόγιου μητροπολίτη των Αθηνών Μιχαήλ Χωνιάτη (1182-1204).

Η πρόσφατα προτεινόμενη χρονολόγηση του μνημείου στον 15ο αιώνα στηρίχθηκε, κυρίως, σε μια αρχαία επιγραφή σε τμήμα επιστυλίου στη δυτική γωνία του νότιου τοίχου 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 το πρώτο ταξίδι του Κυριακού 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 Γοργοεπήκοος ανεγέρθηκε σε μια τόσο όψιμη περίοδο. Έτσι, η χρονολόγηση του μνημείου φαίνεται να παραμένει ακόμα ένα ανοιχτό ζήτημα.

Είναι φανερό ότι το μνημείο, όσον αφορά στην τυπολογία, την κατασκευή και μορφολογία, αναμφισβήτητα εκφράζει μια ώριμη φάση της βυζαντινής αρχιτεκτονικής της «Σχολής Ελλάδος» και δεν μπορεί

να χρονολογηθεί πριν από τα τέλη του 12ου αιώνα. Μπορεί όμως να χρονολογηθεί μετά τον 12ο αιώνα, και πόσο μεταγενέστερα;

Η κρηπίδα είναι βέβαια χαρακτηριστικό της αρχιτεκτονικής του 12ου αιώνα. Όμως αρκετά μνημεία που σήμερα υποστηρίζεται ότι κτίστηκαν στη διάρκεια της φραγκικής κυριαρχίας, και ιδιαίτερα τον 13ο αιώνα, έχουν κρηπίδα. Μεγάλοι λαξευμένοι δόμοι, που τοποθετούνται οριζόντια ή κατακόρυφα, σχηματίζοντας ένα ατελές πλινθοπερίκλειστο ή ψευδοϊσόδομο σύστημα, είναι γνωστοί στην Ελλάδα από τις αρχές του 13ου αιώνα. Έχει, επίσης, παρατηρηθεί ότι η χρήση υλικού σε δεύτερη χρήση (*spolia*) αυξάνεται κατά την περίοδο της λατινικής κατάκτησης.

Ένα άλλο χαρακτηριστικό της εκκλησιαστικής αρχιτεκτονικής στην Ελλάδα κατά τον 13ο αιώνα είναι η λάξευση των τόξων των παραθύρων σε ολόσωμο λίθινο υπέρθυρο, που αποτελεί ταυτόχρονα και τμήμα της τοιχοποιίας.

Σημαντικό κριτήριο για τη χρονολόγηση της εκκλησίας της Παναγίας της Γοργοεπηκόου αποτελεί ο γλυπτός διάκοσμος που έχει ενσωματωθεί στην τοιχοποιία του ναού. Από τον γνωστό κατάλογο των Κ. Michel – Α. Struck, πάνω από 20 γλυπτά (*spolia*) είναι δυνατόν να χρονολογηθούν στον 12ο αιώνα, τα περισσότερα μάλλον στο τέλος του (Εικ. 6-8). *Spolia* επίσης που χρησιμοποιήθηκαν ως υπέρθυρα στις εισόδους από τον νάρθηκα στον κυρίως ναό, καθώς και στη βόρεια είσοδο της εκκλησίας, μπορούν να χρονολογηθούν στον 12ο αιώνα. Τα πλαίσια των πλαγίων θυρών του νάρθηκα και της βόρειας θύρας του ναού (Εικ. 9), τα οποία διακοσμούνται με το ίδιο θέμα, είναι επίσης πιθανότατα *spolia*. Τα *spolia* μας οδηγούν πιθανόν σε χρονική περίοδο ίδρυσης του μνημείου μετά τον 12ο αιώνα.

Αν και δεν είναι πάντα εύκολη η διάκριση μεταξύ των εκκλησιών που κτίστηκαν λίγες δεκαετίες μετά το 1204 από εκείνες του 12ου αιώνα, καθώς προηγούμενες μέθοδοι κατασκευής και μορφές αναπαράγονται και οι οποιοσδήποτε δυτικές επιρροές δεν είναι πάντα ορατές, η ανέγερση του ναού της Παναγίας της Γοργοεπηκόου την περίοδο της φραγκοκρατίας, και μάλλον στο πρώτο μισό του 13ου αιώνα, φαίνεται πολύ πιθανή.

Αναπληρώτρια καθηγήτρια ΕΚΠΑ
istouf@theol.uoa.gr