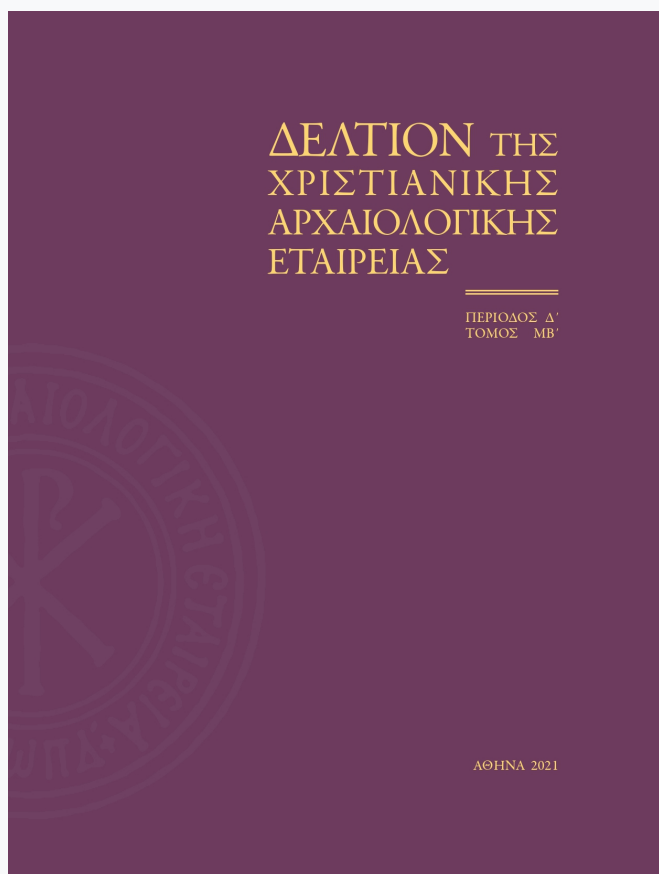


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### Charalambos Bouras, The Architecture of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas

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Χαράλαμπος Μπούρας, *Η αρχιτεκτονική της Μονής του Οσίου Λουκά*, Εκδοτικός Οίκος Μέλισσα, Αθήνα 2015, 151 σ., 85 εικόνες, 22 πίνακες, βιβλιογραφία, ευρετήριο, 28×38 εκ. ISBN: 978-960-204-350-9.

Charalambos Bouras, *The Architecture of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas*, Melissa Publishing House, Athens 2018, 151 pp., 85 figures, 22 plates, bibliography, index, 28×38 cm. ISBN: 978-960-204-371-4.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE MONASTERY of Hosios Loukas is the culmination of the life-long study of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas by Charalampos Bouras, the distinguished scholar of Byzantine architecture who passed away five years ago. In this final seminal work, Bouras presents the knowledge acquired through many years of study, enriched with new observations and conclusions reached during the last years of his life. The book was first published in Greek in 2015, shortly before our beloved teacher passed away, followed by the English version in a faithful translation by Freya Evenson three years later. Sadly, Bouras himself did not live to see the translated text. Christina Pinatsi and I undertook the scientific editing of the English text, closely collaborating with the translator so that the author's ideas and interpretations come through as clearly as in the original Greek text. The presentation here largely derives from the one I had the great honor to deliver, at the author's invitation, along with Professor Nano Chatzidakis, at the book launch for the Greek edition.

As Charalampos Bouras himself notes in the introductory chapter of the book, the architectural studies of the monuments of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas are not proportional to the quality, originality and significance of the buildings themselves. He summarizes and critiques the information published so far about the monastery, making it clear which of the numerous ideas circulating about the monuments are based on incontrovertible evidence or grounded arguments, which ideas are based on hypothetic assumptions and can therefore be accepted with some degree of reservation, and which must be rejected as outdated or unfounded to begin with. This important critical overview is only part of the book's contribution; it also comprises an analytical description of each individual building making up the monastic compound, presented in the author's uniquely methodical way, offering a great deal of new evidence for their original form, construction phases, function and interpretation. Finally, he integrates the architecture of this monumental compound into the historical and artistic context of Byzantine architecture in Greece as well as more generally, based on our contemporary understanding and perceptions.

The book comprises 151 large-format pages, measuring 28×38 cm. The dimensions were chosen so that the plates of plans and drawings by Schultz and Barnsley, reprinted with permission from the British School at Athens, could be included without altering their original scale. The text unfolds across the first 96 pages, which also include 85 images: photographs, reprinted plans, and original drawings by the author. These are followed by the plates by the British architects, an extensive bibliography and indexes of principal names, places and monuments.

The first chapter comprises a brief critique of previous studies regarding the history and architecture of the monastery in general, beginning with the collected sources published by Kremos in 1880 and continuing with the studies by E. Stikas in 1969 and M. Chatzidakis in 1970, which clarified the order in which the two churches of the Monastery were erected and the dating of the latter, as well as the subsequent studies by Oikonomidis and Sophianos. Next is an extensive discussion of the monographs written on the compound's architecture, namely the fundamental work by Schultz and Barnsley issued in 1901, which included their exceptional drawings, the valuable study by Stikas published in 1970 with a wealth of new drawings and meaningful observations, undertaken during restoration works in the monumental compound, and finally the monograph by Pavlos Mylonas published in 2005.

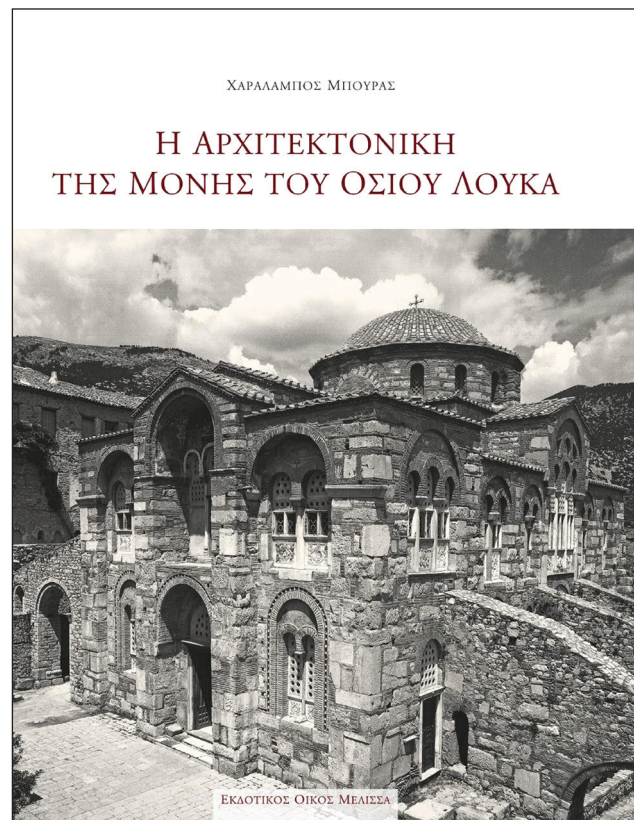
Chapter Two focuses on the person of Hosios Loukas, the foundation of the monastery and its wider impact during the Middle Byzantine period. The Hosios' reputation for miraculous healing, before his death, is discussed in connection to the existence of chapels and murals dedicated to other healing saints, the Agioi Anargyroi and Agia Varvara, at the monastery. Hosios Loukas' asceticism is also described in this chapter, along with his and his followers' lack of schooling, the connection between the monastery and local notables, and the possibility that the great local eminence of the Hosios exposes a latent rivalry between the province and the capital.

The next chapter analyzes the topography and society of Boeotia during the period from the foundation of the Monastery until its rise to a significant pilgrimage site, or from

the middle of the 10th until the middle of the 11th century. There is a brief discussion of the settlements and ports as well as the overland and sea routes linking the area with the large urban centers of the period. Information is then presented regarding the consolidation of Byzantine domination with the integration of foreign elements, and the general religious regeneration in the province driven by the growing worship of local saints. To understand the conditions prevalent in society at the time, information is drawn from the Lives of Saints active in Greece, as well as from textual sources that survive by chance, such as the land registry from the area of Thebes, the *Praktikon* of landholdings in Athens and the charter of the religious confraternity of Panagia Naupaktiotissa. Based on these, the regimes for land ownership and cultivation are analyzed, along with subjects such as taxation, military conflicts, revolts, the population and their level of education; all are discussed in relation to the enormous building program undertaken at the Monastery.

The fourth chapter discusses the history and dating of the individual buildings of the Monastery, the donors, and the estates and dependencies (*metochia*) of the monastery. Stikas' study, the first to recognize that the church of Panagia predates the katholikon and should be identified with the church of Agia Varvara built by General Krenites mentioned in the Life of Hosios Loukas, dated to 950, is briefly mentioned. Subsequently, the conclusions drawn by M. Chatzidakis are presented, who managed to date the katholikon to 1011 or 1022 based on information contained in the Life. There is also a discussion of the donors responsible for the katholikon and its connection to the wealthy local Leovachos family, as well as the likelihood of imperial sponsorship. After presenting the scanty information regarding the monastery in the sources, the estates belonging to the Monastery are briefly examined, along with its dependencies in Boeotia and Euboea.

The analytical presentation of the architecture of the monastery begins in Chapter Five. This chapter is devoted to the general arrangement of buildings. Firstly, the location is analyzed: the monastery was situated on the spot of Hosios Loukas' tomb, with its nearby natural spring, but the strong slope of the ground made it necessary to construct a vaulted substructure for the foundation of the buildings. Next, the general layout of the monastery during its various phases is presented. The first phase begins in 950 with the construction of the church of Panagia, initially dedicated to Agia Varvara, and ends in 1011 with the construction of the katholikon. The second period lasts until 1460, when the monastery is abandoned. The monastery was resettled by monks in 1523,



inaugurating its third phase. Chapter Five also discusses the original form of the enclosure wall in the first phase, the siting of the church of Agia Varvara in relation to the tomb of Hosios Loukas, the form of the wings of cells on the north and west, the position of the northeast gate and the existence of two courtyards, one on the east and another on the west. Questions are raised regarding the freedom of movement between the two courts by pilgrims, and the exact boundaries of the monastery on the south and east. Subsequently, the development of the monastery during the second phase is presented, with the erection of the katholikon, the refectory and the cistern, as well as the construction of a lateral wall to clearly divide the west and east court, the former being used exclusively by monks while the latter remaining free to the pilgrims. Finally, the changes made to the monastery during the third period are analyzed, based on evidence from building remains and old drawings, such as the one by Barskij.

The next three chapters analyze the church of Panagia in detail. Chapter Six discusses issues of typology, with particular attention to the idiosyncrasies of the building arising from its being built on sloping ground and its function as a pilgrimage church. As a pilgrimage church, it was necessary to construct a large colonnaded narthex, usually



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called a *lite*, and a portico to the west of this, which extends southward to provide access to the underground *eukterion* built on the spot of Hosios Loukas' tomb. Next, the typology of the composite cross-in-square church is analyzed, with references to older and contemporary bibliography. Particular emphasis is placed on the *lite* and its function as a waiting area and passage for pilgrims on both the ground level and the upper floor, which also likely served as the women's quarters. The author goes on to clarify that all the above were built at the same time. Finally, there is an analysis of the large ramp to the south of the church that gave access to the pilgrimage spaces, as well as the means of accessing the west portico and *eukterion* from the *lite*, clearly presented through analytical reconstruction drawings.

Chapter Seven considers the architectural morphology and decoration of the church of Panagia. The peculiarities and original elements in the monument are discussed, as well as the impact that the decoration of the church of Panagia had on later architectural development in southern Greece, demonstrating its significance in shaping the architecture of the so-called Helladic School. Issues that are of fundamental importance for the overall tone of the building and the subsequent evolution of Middle Byzantine church

building in Greece are thoroughly analyzed with a wealth of comparative material. These include the symmetry of façades, the difference between the prominent north façade and the south, invisible façade, the saddleback gables, the three-sided apses, the superimposed windows, the so-called Athenian dome with its exceptional marble decoration and its later modification, the horseshoe arches, the cloisonné masonry, the pseudo-Cufic ceramic decoration (the direct eastern origins of which are questioned), the dentil courses, the marble string courses, the types of brick arches around windows, the façade of the *lite*, the marble doorways and the window colonnettes, the masonry on the interior of the church, the capitals, the *proskynetaria* (icon frames), the *templon*, and the pavement. The marble decoration of the church, which was examined by the late Laskarina Boura in her doctoral dissertation, is also briefly discussed.

Chapter Eight examines the construction of the church of Panagia. The church is compared to its contemporary examples in Greece, demonstrating how innovative it was for local architecture. The vaulted substructure under the building was built according to the Constantinopolitan system. Next, the static function of the cross-in-square church is analyzed, along with the available evidence for timber reinforcements. There is also an analysis of constructional details, with special reference to the perfection of the façade as this became apparent after the excavation of the *katholikon* gallery, which revealed an entirely intact portion of the south façade of the church of Panagia, and elements such as the roofing, construction of vaults and arches, the cross-vaults with diagonal ribs (rib vaults), the columns and the use of material from older buildings. Particular mention is made of the west portico vaulting, rebuilt when the *katholikon* was erected so that the floor of the upper story would be at the same level as the floor of the *katholikon* gallery, facilitating the movement of pilgrims. Reinterpreting evidence that had been misconstrued in the past, the book also documents the modified vaulting with new analytical drawings. An equally analytical discussion of the sculpture follows, with references to the craftsmen's techniques and manner of working. Taken together, the constructional details demonstrate the meticulous skill with which the building was planned.

The next three chapters focus on the *katholikon*. Chapter Nine examines typological issues of the *katholikon*, beginning with a study of the particularities of the so-called Mainland domed octagon type and the outdated theories regarding its eastern provenance. After making it clear that the *katholikon* of Hosios Loukas was modelled on buildings of the capital, three monuments in Constantinople are

examined, which, although later, have been associated with Hosios Loukas: Agios Ioannis of Petrion, Panagia Perivleptos and Agios Georgios of Mangana. However, only the second shows evidence of such a relationship. The author draws the conclusion that in terms of type and structural organism, the katholikon has no precedent in any monument in Constantinople and is therefore a building of exceptional innovation. Its originality is connected to the desire to construct as large a dome as possible, a general trend noted in all monuments from the first half of the 11th century in Constantinople and elsewhere. The remarkable pioneering efforts of the skilled architect that make the katholikon stand out are also recognizable in the now-ruined church at Antikyra and the chapel upon which the bell-tower of the monastery was built, which Bouras himself had published in 1963. Its façade is depicted on the book's back cover. Next, the virtues of the katholikon's interior space are discussed, considered the most intricate and at the same time refined church interior after that of Agia Sophia in Constantinople. The typological analysis continues with a detailed presentation of the form and function of the church's secondary spaces: the corner bays, which served as a passageway towards Hosios Loukas' relics, funerary chapel, baptistery and sacristy (*skeuophylakeion*); the narthex; the gallery; the sanctuary; the underground funerary chapel of Agia Varvara; and the now-ruined exonarthex added in the 12th century.

The tenth chapter is devoted to the architectural forms and decoration of the katholikon. Not surprisingly, it is the most extensive chapter in the book. Discussion of the morphological elements of the katholikon is thorough. It begins by analyzing matters such as the general tone of the building, the symmetry of its façades, the articulation of its western façade with the projecting arch flanked by blind arches emphasizing the entrance, the stepped arrangement of roofs, the dome and its restoration by Orlandos in 1929, who created a new shell to cover the original. Next, the analysis moves to details such as the different masonry systems, the scant decorative brickwork elements, the recent –but unsubstantiated– opinion that the entire façade was coated in plaster, the particular form of the bema apse cornice, the dentil courses, the delineation of the four barrel vaults with arches, the non-loadbearing screens, the issue of the brick quadrant arches (imported to Greece with the katholikon), the “grouped type” windows (according to the classification by A. H. S. Megaw), the windows reaching down to the level of the floor. Particular attention is paid to the marble decoration. The column capitals and impost

are discussed, as are the mullions –which appear to revive ancient techniques– and the marble panels. In a rare case, the fragile gypsum plaster transennae have survived and are analyzed in the chapter. Additional details discussed in Chapter Ten include the conches created on the north side to remove mass from the walls, the marble doorways, the open plan of the interior space achieved through the use of non-loadbearing *tribela*, the marble revetments on the ground floor –which also display a revival of ancient types– and the painted imitation of marble in the galleries, the marble floor, the *templon*, which was visibly modified during the construction and addition of cornices in the parabemata in the 12th century, and finally, the *ciboria* over the Holy Altar and reliquary. The chapter ends with a general discussion of the interior space, impressive for its dynamism as well as its rhythmic order.

The next chapter, as in the case of the church of Panagia, treats matters relating to the construction of the katholikon. The structural system of the building is analyzed, including a discussion of the problems created by the sloping ground and the likely failures that led to the construction of the massive buttresses on the south side. From a constructional point of view, the masonry system and the careful design of the building are analyzed. The hypothesis that the dome collapsed in 1593 is rejected, but evidence is presented regarding its modification. Particular emphasis is given to the provenance, geometry and construction of the squinches. Next, the constructional details of individual elements are examined, such as the tie-beams that functioned simultaneously as struts, the marble revetments (which apparently arrived to the building site as finished or nearly finished plaques), the opus-sectile pavements, the gypsum plaster transennae with their inserted glass discs, and the mosaics. Glass elements most likely came from workshops in Constantinople, while the marble, the types of which are enumerated in detail, came from several quarries that must have been operational during the period of construction. At the end of the chapter is a discussion of the craftsmen themselves, concluding that there were likely crews of local and non-local technicians, posing the question as to the origins of those who brought the technique of ornamentation with Cufic and pseudo-Cufic letters.

Chapter Twelve presents the other buildings of the monastery in brief, but with numerous new observations. The most significant of these is of course the refectory, built at the same time as the katholikon. Correcting older misinterpretations, the author determines that the refectory collapsed during the period of abandonment, between 1460

and 1523, and was rebuilt directly afterwards, certainly before 1568. In the more recent history of the monastery, the refectory was abandoned and again suffered damages during the bombardment in 1943. An analytical presentation of the so-called “Tower” of the east side is made, accompanied by new drawings. A building of the 11th or 12th century, it had a central pier on the ground floor and a semi-open space on the upper story. It was revealed in 1960 and immediately reconstructed based on insufficient evidence. An extensive report on the southeast building of the monastery is presented along with reconstruction drawings. The building was partially and hastily excavated in the early 1960s. Stikas believed it was a hospital. Charalampos Bouras, after an extensive analysis, proposes that it was a wing of cells, likely constructed during the 12th century when the number of monks increased dramatically due to social conditions at the time, which drove the region’s rural population to take refuge in monastic life. The chapter closes with a brief report of the north, west and east wings of the monastery and the various interventions made to them, as determined by their current state and using the valuable evidence provided in Barskij’s 1745 drawing.

The last chapter includes several general remarks on the monumental compound of Hosios Loukas. Here, Charalampos Bouras summarizes his conclusions regarding the link between the monastery and the art of Constantinople, as well as its significance in the development of Helladic church building and sculptural decoration. Further, after he underscores the aesthetically pleasing stylistic contrast between the Panagia, with its “Ionic grace”, and the katholikon, distinguished for its “Doric monumentality”, he reiterates the great skill of the architect of the katholikon, who managed to “[achieve] a unique Byzantine architectural monument that simultaneously integrated into its existing

built environment with the harmonic conjoining of the two churches”.

The well-known virtues of the author are apparent throughout the book: absolutely clear structure, dense prose –nothing extraneous yet extremely precise descriptions– with a didactic use of words and terms, economy of expression and illustration, extensive references and bibliography, and a characteristic symmetrical approach to the topic –devoting the appropriate attention to each individual topic in accordance with its significance. One could say that the virtues ascribed by the author to the architecture of Hosios Loukas, dynamism and rhythmic order, also characterize the book itself. But that which makes this book stand out, even though the author tries to restrain it, is his clear love and admiration for the object of study. It is not just the artistic significance of the monument, which indeed leaves no one unmoved, but a multitude of personal memories and experiences, which began in the 1960s and continued for many, many years, that make the relationship of the late Professor Charalampos Bouras with the Monastery of Hosios Loukas so special, so readily apparent in this book.

From the outset, the author states that he hopes this work will stimulate scientific interest in the monument. Indeed, with his brief critical presentation of the scholarship to date, he places the study on modern footing. At the same time, through a wealth of new evidence on matters of function, construction, dating and historical interpretation, he opens new paths for further research. The book, therefore, is invaluable not only for the study of this important building compound, but for Byzantine architecture in general.

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Σωτήρης Βογιατζής, *Το καθολικό της Ιεράς Μονής Μεγίστης Λαύρας στο Άγιον Όρος. Ιστορία και αρχιτεκτονική*. Συνεργασία: Βασιλική Συθιακάκη-Κριτσιμιάλλη, *Ο γλυπτός διάκοσμος του καθολικού της Μονής Μεγίστης Λαύρας*, Εκδόσεις Καπόν, Αθήνα 2019, 272 σ., 179 εικ. και 45 αρχιτεκτονικά σχέδια (αγγλική περίληψη, σ. 219-243, ρωσική περίληψη, σ. 245-267, βιβλιογραφία, σ. 268-271), 22×28 εκ. ISBN: 13 9786185209520.

ΠΑΡΑ ΤΗΝ ΑΝΑΜΦΙΣΒΗΤΗΤΑ ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΣΗΜΑΣΙΑ που έχει η αθωνική ναοδομία για τη μελέτη της βυζαντινής εκκλησιαστικής αρχιτεκτονικής εν γένει, αυτή αναμφίβολα

παραμένει ως σήμερα ελλιπώς μελετημένη. Η σχετική με το θέμα βιβλιογραφία περιλαμβάνει ελάχιστες συνθετικές μελέτες και έναν περιορισμένο αριθμό μελετών μεμονωμένων