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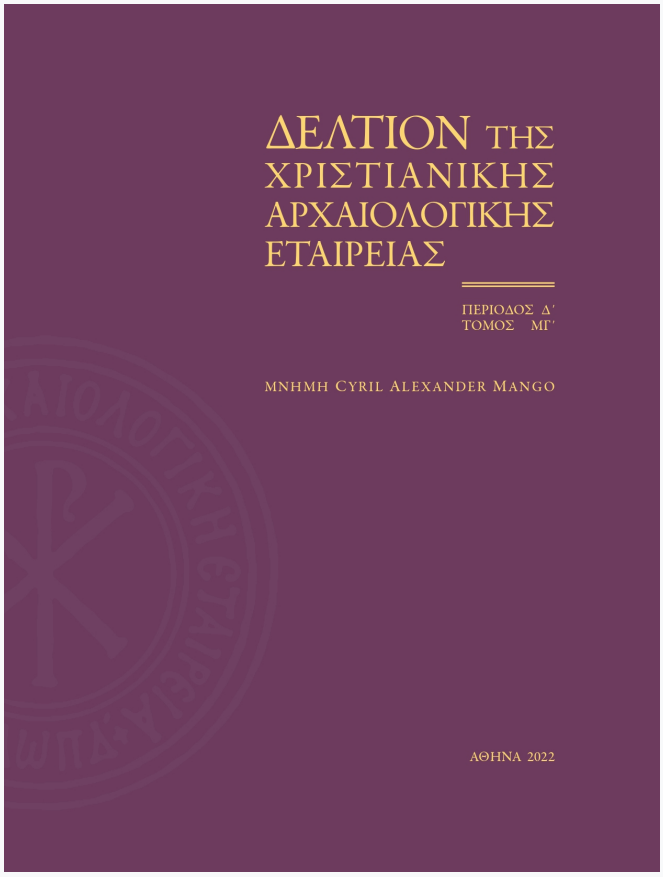

Recent evidence about the church of Panagia Scripou in Boeotia

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Sotiris Voyadjis

RECENT EVIDENCE ABOUT THE CHURCH OF PANAGIA SKRIPOU IN BOEOTIA

Η Παναγία Σκριπού είναι γνωστό βοιωτικό μνημείο που χρονολογείται με ασφάλεια το 873/74. Στην παρούσα εργασία παρουσιάζονται παρατηρήσεις που έγιναν το 2000-2001, κατά τις εκτεταμένες εργασίες αποκατάστασης και τις παράλληλες αρχαιολογικές έρευνες που πραγματοποιήθηκαν μετά την πυρκαγιά του 1995, η οποία προκάλεσε σοβαρές ζημιές στο κτήριο. Τα νέα ευρήματα, αν και δεν αλλάζουν την προηγούμενη οπτική για το μνημείο, φωτίζουν αρκετές από τις πτυχές του. Εξετάζεται η δομική διάταξη του κτηρίου καθώς και η τρωτότητά του στους σεισμούς που προκάλεσαν εκτεταμένες ζημιές στο παρελθόν. Εξακριβώνεται, επίσης, η ακριβής μορφή και θέση του τέμπλου του.

The Panagia Skripou is the well-known Boeotian monument securely dated in 873/74. In this paper we present observations made in 2000-2001 during the extensive restoration works and parallel archaeological research undertaken after the 1995 fire which seriously damaged the building. New findings illuminate several aspects of the monument, although they do not alter its former perspective. The structural arrangement of the building is examined and its vulnerability to the earthquakes that caused extensive damage in the past are also examined. Finally, the exact form and position of the church's templon was revealed.

Λέξεις κλειδιά

9ος αιώνας, μεσοβυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική, θολωτοί ναοί, Παναγία Σκριπού, Βοιωτία.

Keywords

9th century; middle Byzantine architecture; domed churches; Panagia Skripou; Boeotia.

The church of the Panagia Skripou, situated on the outskirts of the village Orchomenos of the prefecture of Boeotia, is a well-known and extensively studied monument of the 9th century[1], precisely dated by inscriptions in 873/74. In December 1995 a fire broke out in the narthex which burned down furniture and other vessels stored there, and seriously damaged the building by destroying the plaster and some of the sculpture decoration that was calcified[2]. Extensive restoration work was undertaken in the years 2000-2001, which covered the entire monument[3]. Parallel research revealed new evidence about its building history that will be discussed here[4].

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[1] The building was first detected after a long silent interval in the 19th century and appeared in J. Strzygowski, "Inedita der Architectur und Plastik aus der Zeit Basilios' I (867-886)", *BZ* 3 (1894) 1-17. Lately, Koilakou and Voltyraki published the findings during the works of 2000-2001: Ch. Koilakou – E. Voltyraki, "Ο ναός της Παναγίας Σκριπούς στον Ορχομενό μέσα από την αρχαιολογική έρευνα", *DChAE* 41 (2020), 93-111, where extensive bibliographical references can be found.

[2] Ch. Koilakou, "1η Εφορεία Βυζαντινών Αρχαιοτήτων", *AD* 51 (1996) [1968], B.1 Chronika, 76.

[3] This paper was first presented at the *21st Symposium of the ChAE (2001)*, 28-29. The restoration study of the monument was conducted by the author, who participated in the supervision team as a consultant responsible for the documentation. The paper complements the recent publication by Koilakou – Voltyraki, "Παναγία Σκριπού", op.cit. (n. 1).

[4] Despite the fact that the building seems to be generally intact, it has repeatedly suffered serious damages during its lifetime, described in greater analysis in S. Voyadjis, "Παρατηρήσεις στην οικοδομική ιστορία της Παναγίας Σκριπούς στη Βοιωτία", *DChAE* 20 (1998-1999), 126.

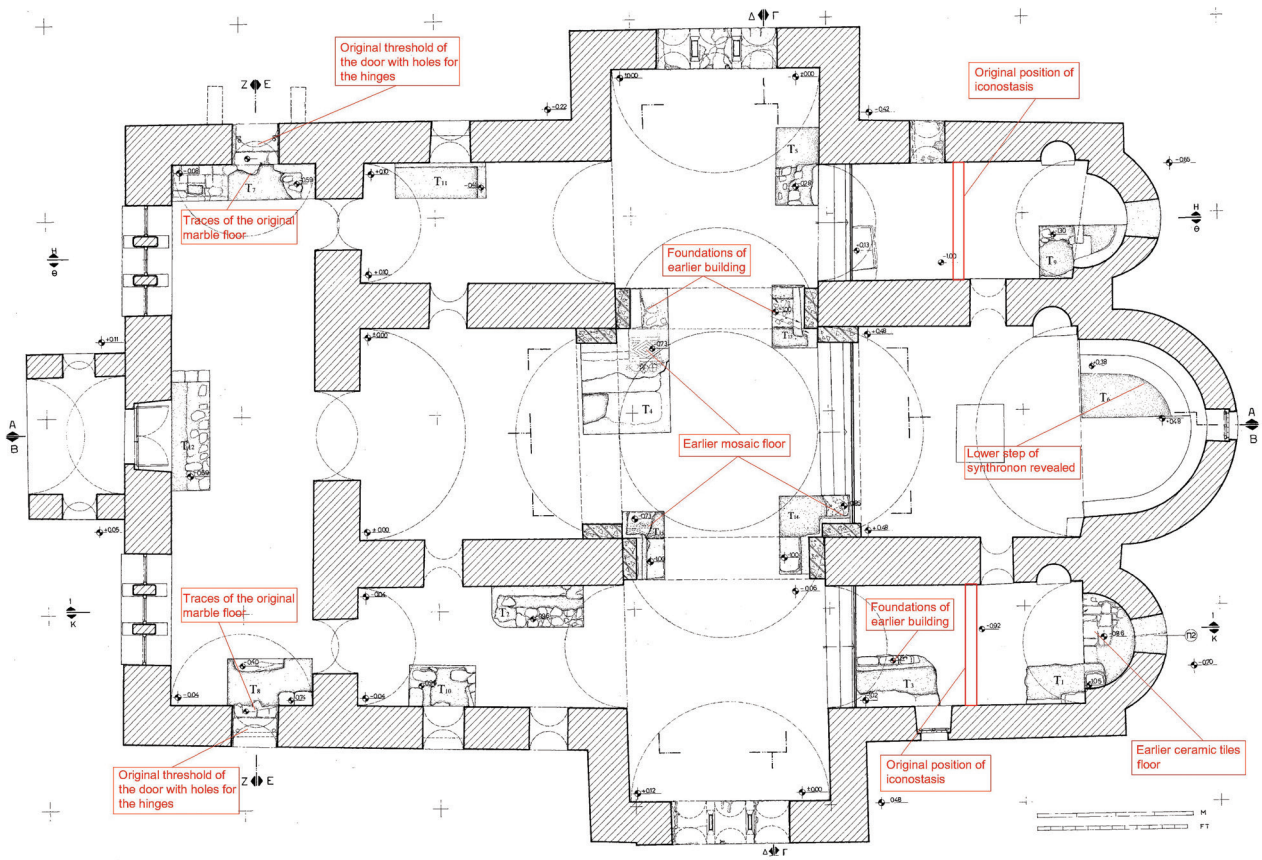

Fig. 1. Panagia Skripou. Plan with the findings of the excavations.

In brief, archaeological research (Fig. 1) concentrated on: (a) unblocking all the built-up openings: the north and south two-light windows of the upper tier of the narthex, as well as the doors beneath them, the trilobed windows at the end of the cross's arms, and the single-light windows of the prothesis and the diakonikon; (b) soundings made in different places of the floor of the naos to examine its foundations, while the entire holy bema was excavated; (c) the remaining plaster that was damaged by the fire, which was removed, apart from the frescoes (mostly in the bema and the diakonikon); (d) the tiles covering the roofs, which were removed, and the structure of the vaulting was revealed.

Structural Observations

The demolition of the fillings revealed the original arched openings, damaged by differential settlement but intact. The window arches were constructed of stone voussoirs, outlined by rows of dentils (Figs 2, 3). Only the east windows of the parabemata were made of bricks (Fig. 4)[5]. A timber tie-beam passes through the springing of all the lower-level openings. It survived intact only at the south door of the narthex, but its remains are visible in all openings (Figs 5, 6). Reused slabs of whitish ancient marble were used as thresholds of the doors. At the door jambs and most of the windows, poorly preserved frescoes reach the outer edge of the openings[6]. It is obvious that the intrados

[5] The construction of brick arches, which has not been observed in any other arched opening in the church, may have been preferred in the windows of the apses, because their circular plan creates conical forms not easily constructed in stone. The same arrangement (stone for all the openings, brick for the east windows) has been observed in the first phase of Panagia in Kalambaka, a fact that brings the two buildings very close: V. Sythiakakis-Kritsimallis - S. Voyadjis, "Redating the Basilica of Dormition, Kalambaka, Thessaly", *JÖB* 61 (2011), 221.
[6] Presented extensively in Koilakou – Voltyraki, "Παναγία Σκριπού", op.cit. (n. 1).

Fig. 2. Panagia Skripou. View of the south transept window after works.

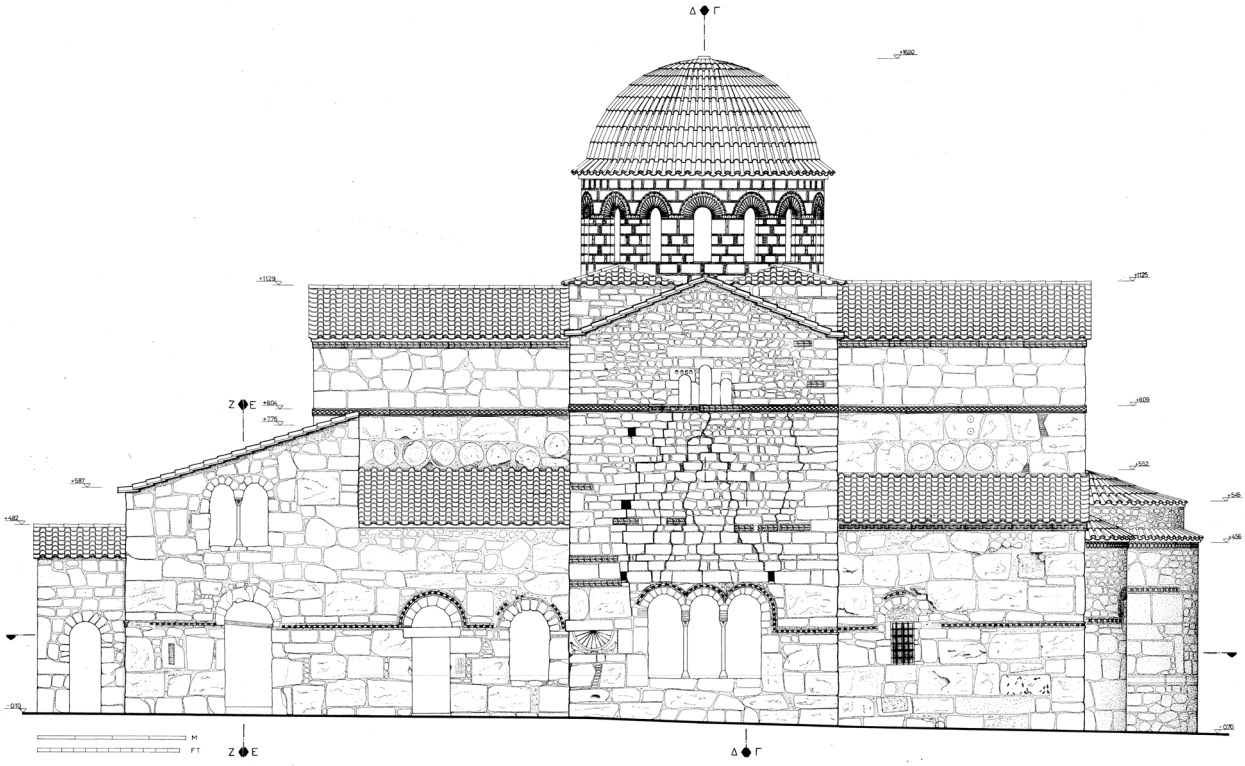

Fig. 3. Panagia Skripou. South elevation.

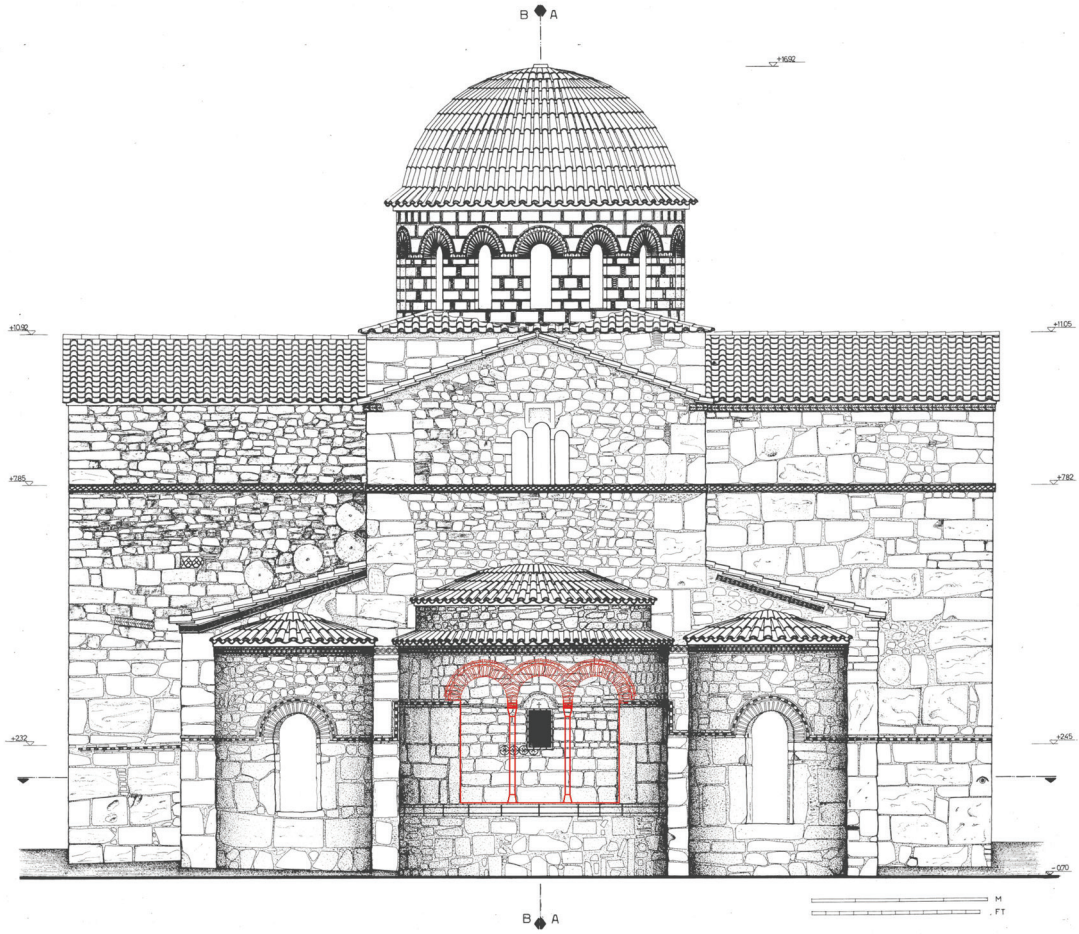

Fig. 4. Panagia Skripou. East elevation. The proposed graphical reconstruction of the apse window in red.

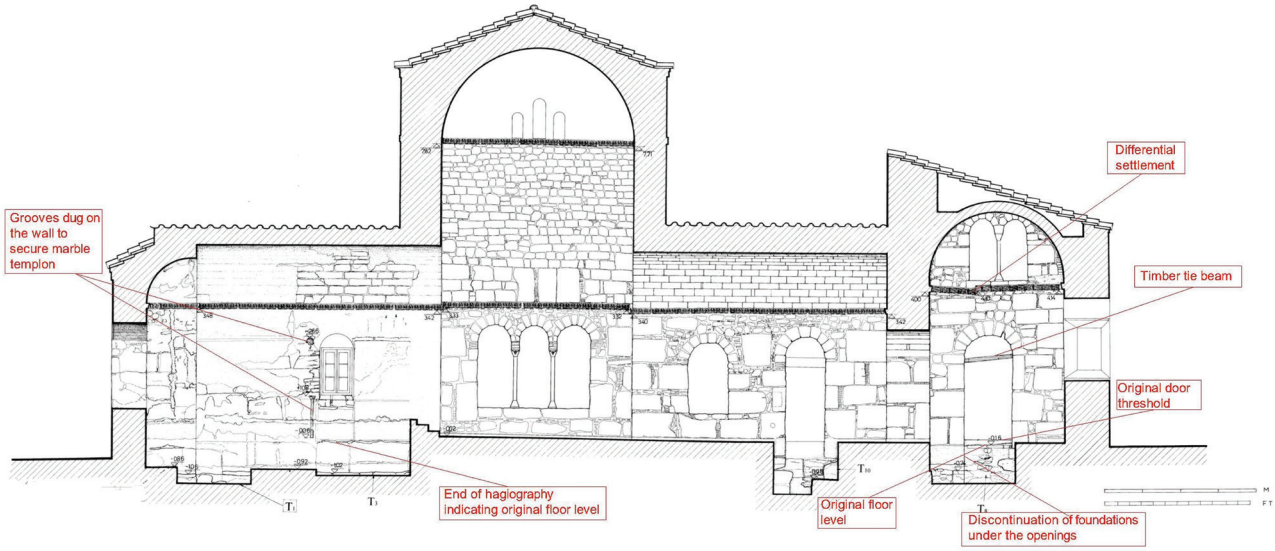

Fig. 5. Panagia Skripou. Longitudinal section through the south chapel.

Fig. 6. Panagia Skripou. Narthex, south door. (a) The remaining timber tie-beam and the frescoes covering the walls. (b) The threshold of the south door with parts of the original marble floor.

of the openings as well as all the external surfaces of the building were originally plastered and probably painted.

The lobes of the bilobed windows of the narthex and the trilobed ones of the transept are supported by slender marble colonettes (Fig. 2). They carry imposts with splayed ends decorated with rosettes and vine leaves in low relief. The jambs of the trilobed windows or the colonettes bear no marks of fixed panels. They were probably shut with wooden moving coverings. Unfortunately the tie beams or the thresholds, on which they would have been fixed, are all missing[7].

The apse window has been greatly disturbed since only the jambs remain. However, if we assume that the window was trilobed with its lobes equal to the eastern windows of the parabemata, then we can represent graphically the apse window (see Fig. 4). The arches were probably made of brick for the same reason as the windows of the parabemata[8]. The form fully corresponds to the respective trilobed windows of other 9th-10th-century monuments, such as the ones of Episkopi in Skyros[9], in the church in Zourtsa at Phigaleia[10], the Transfiguration of the Saviour in Koropi[11] and probably Episkopi in Eurytania[12].

Trenches were excavated in the floor of the Panagia church[13] (see above Fig. 1). At a depth of 15cm below the thresholds of doors, traces of the original marble floor were revealed, consisting of whitish marble 7-8cm thick, with polished upper surfaces (Fig. 6). The thresholds of doors are about only 10 cm higher than the present floor level, which means that the original floor would have been located slightly lower than the modern one.

Soundings beneath the nave floor proved that, under

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[7] Tie beams were also used to fasten windows in the church at Dereağzı: J. Morganstern, *The Byzantine Church of Dereağzi and its Decoration*, Tübingen 1983, 54-55.

[8] See above note 5.

[9] Ch. Bouras, "Ἡ ἀρχιτεκτονική τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς Ἐπισκοπῆς Σκύρου", *DChAE* 2 (1961), 58.

[10] Ch. Bouras, "Zourtsa. Une basilique byzantine au Péloponnèse", *CahArch* XXI (1971), 148, fig. 8.

[11] A. K. Orlandos, "Ο ἐν Εὐρυτανίᾳ βυζαντινός ναός τῆς Ἐπισκοπῆς", *ABME* 9 (1961), 11-13, 17, figs 9, 15, 18. Also Ch. Bouras, *Βυζαντινή και μεταβυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική στην Ελλάδα*, Athens 2001, 71, figs 55-57.

[12] Orlandos, "Ἐπισκοπή", op.cit., 8.

[13] The findings are extensively published in Koilakou – Voltyraki, "Παναγία Σκριπού", op.cit. (n. 1).

the doors and the arches connecting the internal spaces, the foundations were discontinued (Fig. 5), despite the fact that they all belonged to the same building phase. This shows the builders' great lack of expertise, which was probably the reason for the repeated collapses of different parts due to past earthquakes. The differential settlement between the lighter narthex and the heavier church is obviously the reason for the distortion of the north and south upper tier windows, as well as of other openings.

The removal of the roof tiles revealed no actual surprises. The barrel vaults covering the corner bays, the western cross arm and the narthex were undisturbed. They were constructed with large stone voussoirs in second use, placed with their long sides along the axis of the dome and left unfinished (Fig. 8).

The templon

The cleaning of the walls from plaster damaged by fire revealed that on the side walls of the prothesis and the diakonikon at a distance of 3.45 m from the western end of the arch, there were shallow vertical grooves dug into the wall 8-10 cm wide and 106 cm high (Figs 5, 7). Above the height of 90 cm the groove widens to 16 cm. The lowest end corresponds to the level of -0.54 m. It is now safe to assume that the original floor of the entire sanctuary was at this level. In a straight line above the groove at a distance of 1.40 m, there is a rectangular hole measuring 25×25 cm. Grooves or recesses in a similar position were not observed on the walls of the holy bema.

The above recesses were undoubtedly constructed to secure the initial marble iconostasis directly against the wall. The vertical groove was used for the closure slabs and the rectangular ones above for the architraves. It gives the total height of 2.70 m for the templon. The fact that no similar traces were found for the holy bema templon, can only mean that it was located at a more pronounced position, at the end of the side walls, probably flush with the exterior face of the arch and it is now hidden behind the concrete buttresses[14].

Fig. 7. Panagia Skripou. Grooves cut on the side walls of Saint Peter's chapel to attach the marble screen.

In the '60s, A. H. S. Megaw had proposed in his famous paper a very accurate reconstruction of the original 9th-century marble iconostasis of the church[15]. Additional marble fragments discovered alter Megaw's proposals only slightly and have therefore been added to his drawings. Two fragments (pieces *M* and *N*) are parts of the cornice of a closure slab with a trapezoidal cross section measuring 18×10 and a height of 16 cm (Fig. 8)[16]. They are decorated on both splayed surfaces with the motif of repeated lyre-shaped acanthus leaves containing

[14] The existence of burials east of this line in the Holy Bema is not a decisive argument against this proposal [Koilakou – Voltyraki, "Παναγία Σκριπού", op.cit. (n. 1), 104], since at least one burial was excavated east of the location of the templon in the north chapel.

[15] A. H. S. Megaw, "The Skripou Screen", *BSA* 61 (1967), 1-33.

[16] Arbitrarily placed at Saint Peter's iconostasis.

Fig. 8. Panagia Skripou. View of the roof of Saint Peter's chapel.

stylized buds, very similar to the architrave. The existence of a crowning cornice corresponds to the trapezoidal recesses observed on the side walls of the side chapels above the rectangular ones for attaching the slabs.

Discussion

From the above description some new facts can be established:

Structural facts. Few traces of the original marble pavement were revealed, but they were enough to establish precisely the level and the material it was constructed of. It consisted of thick marble slabs, possibly in second use, and it was located 15 cm deeper than the present level. It was probably similar to its almost contemporary church of Episkopi at Skyros[17]. There is enough evidence to suggest that there was no difference in level between the nave and the holy bema or its side chapels.

We have a fairly good idea of what the doors and the windows must have looked like, although none of them survive. The upper windows were originally closed by stucco transennae with round openings where tinted glass was used[18]. Less can be deduced for the doors. They were probably light wooden ones, having two leaves despite their small width, roughly attached to the tie-beam passing through the wall, while their load was carried by hinges inserted in the holes of the marble threshold. Above the tie beam, there was probably a fixed skylight probably of stucco.

It has been adequately proven that Skripou was plastered and probably painted on the outside as well as on the inside. Obviously, the architect had expected that the building would be plastered and therefore he used whatever building material, column shafts, gravestones, bases

[17] Bouras, "Ἐπισκοπή Σκύρου", op.cit. (n. 9), 59, and G. Fredrich, "Skyros" *Athenische Mitteilungen* XXXI (1906), 263.

[18] Pieces of yellowish glass panes were found in the debris.

of statues, was available in a haphazard way without any concern for the final appearance. The fact that the inner surface of the walls (which was without doubt plastered) is built with exactly the same concept as the outside, more than reinforces the argument. In Strzygowski's picture[19] there is external plaster on the upper parts of the walls[20]. Some of it could have been original. Also the 12th- century dome that was photographed before its demolition in 1938, was also plastered[21].

The construction of all arches and vaults with stone voussoirs (except the bema windows for special reasons mentioned above) and almost no bricks, differentiates the monument from later dated middle Byzantine buildings of the 10th and 11th centuries, or earlier Justinianic ones where domes and vaults consisted entirely of brickwork[22]. Even the domes of the ruined church of Saint Gregory the Theologian in Thebes, considered by Soteriou[23] to have been contemporary with the Panagia, were probably constructed exclusively by bricks, considering the number of bricks found during the excavation. The only other monument with vaulting constructed with stone is Panagia Katapoliani in Paros, a controversial building whose dating in the 6th century can be challenged[24], a fact that brings the two monuments closer. After the 12th century, building arches with stone voussoirs becomes the norm.

It seems that the Byzantine craftsmen in the case of Skripou preferred the use of the abundant material at their disposal from the nearby site of Orchomenos to the lightness of brick domes used in other early middle Byzantine monuments[25]. We can also assume that the original dome[26] was also built of stone, a rather heavy construction which probably led to its very early collapse.

The low level of technical expertise of the builders of the monument is amazing indeed. The building was constructed partly on older foundations that ensured the stability of the eastern part of the church, while the western part was built on new foundations that were interrupted under the doors and arches, causing differential settlement to the narthex. The almost fatal mistake of discontinuing the foundation beneath the openings proves that despite the high level of its funding and design, probably connected to the capital, the builders were local craftsmen. If we add to this the construction with column shafts placed horizontally as main building material, which in case of an earthquake would move like wheels, and the use of only one timber tie-beam at the springing of the lower-level openings, we can very well understand why the building suffered severe damage a few years after its construction. Even if more tie-beams on the upper level are discovered, their use for the doors and windows would certainly have reduced their ability to withstand the forces of an earthquake. Moreover, the laying of reused stone blocks in vertical layers that resulted in their lamination at a depth of 10-15 cm, the supporting of window arches of heavy stone voussoirs on flimsy marble mullions and the overall roughness of construction, are a few of the points that prove that the construction crew was provincial, insufficient for such a major task.

We know that iron and timber were used in major structures such as the Hagia Sophia[27] but unfortunately the use of timber tie-beams in structures contemporary with the Skripou has not been properly recorded[28]. However,

[19] Strzygowski, "Inedita", op.cit. (n. 1), pl. 1.

[20] Lightheartedly removed by the first modern restorers of the monument.

[21] S. Voyadjis, "Τρούλλοι με δεκαεξάπλευρο τύμπανο", *DChAE* 39 (2018), 242, fig. 5.

[22] N. D. Karydis, *Early Byzantine vaulted construction in churches of the Western coastal plains and river valleys of Asia Minor* (BAR International Series 2246), Oxford 2011, 98.

[23] G. Soteriou, "Ὁ ἐν Θήβαις ναός τοῦ Γρηγορίου τοῦ Θεολόγου", *AE 1924* [1927], 5. Although lately his views are being revised [Koilakou, "1η Εφορεία", op.cit. (n. 2), 81-83 and eadem, "1η Εφορεία Βυζαντινών Αρχαιοτήτων", *AD* 52 (1997) [2002], B.1 Chronika, 118-119]. Doubts regarding the dating of the building were already expressed by Megaw ["Skripou Screen", op.cit. (n. 15), 4 note 14].

[24] This is well beyond the scope of this paper. See forthcoming publication.

[25] The abundance of ready-to-use spolia was, according to Karydis [*Vaulted construction*, op.cit. (n. 22), 98 note 312], the reason for their use in the construction of the vaulting of Katapoliani.

[26] Which Papalexandrou (A. Papalexandrou, *The church of the Virgin of Skripou. Architecture, sculpture and inscriptions in ninth century Byzantium*, PhD thesis, Princeton 1998, 238) and Voyadjis ["Παρατηρήσεις", op.cit. (n. 4), 125] agree was probably ribbed.

[27] R. Mainstone, *Hagia Sophia. Architecture, Structure and Liturgy of Justinian's Great Church*, London 1988, 70-71.

[28] Athanasios Koumantos seems to suggest that wooden tie beams were not in use from the 6th to the 9th century (A. Koumantos,

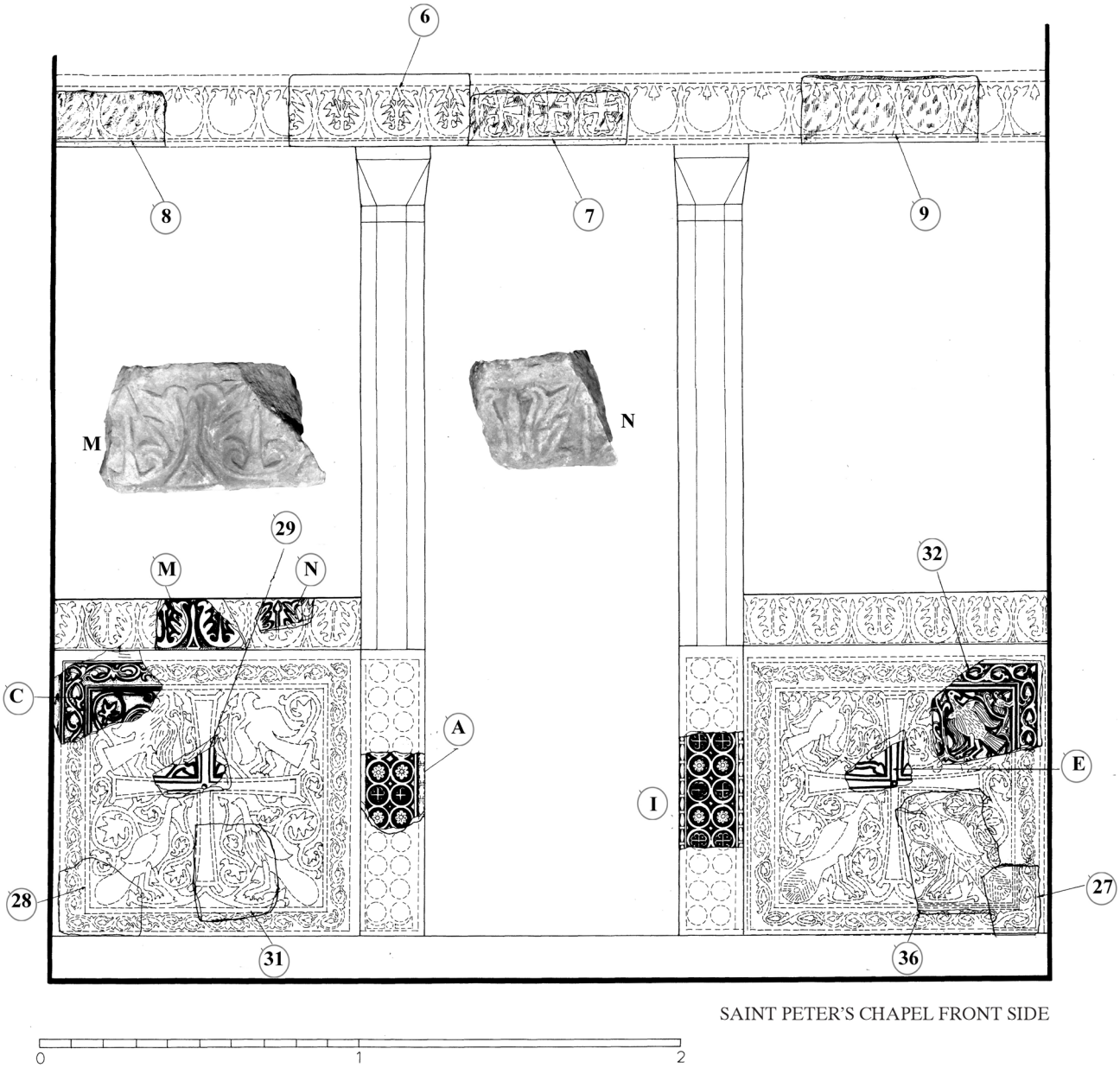

Fig. 9. Panagia Skripou. Saint Peter's marble screen. Front side. Marble pieces of the screen discovered randomly presented (marble members recorded by Megaw are marked with a number, extant ones in heavier line, missing in dashed. Newly discovered ones are marked with letters).

Ξύλινες δομικές ενισχύσεις στη βυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική: διερεύνηση και ερμηνεία της διάταξης και χρήσης τους, unpublished PhD Thesis, posted at: https://www.didaktorika.gr/eadd/handle/10442/45086, University of Patras, Patras 2018). Also, idem, "Ξύλινες δομικές ενισχύσεις στη βυζαντινή ναοδομία", *39th Symposium of the ChAE (2019)*, 109-110. Therefore, it is not surprising that the builders were unacquainted with their proper use. if we consider the tentative incorporation of only one timber tie beam in the entire building, together with the mistakes in the foundations and elsewhere, it seems that seismic protection was not a skill that the builders had mastered. There is nothing to compare with the light but sturdy constructions with multiple layers of tie-beams that we encounter a century later, for example in Mount

Athos at the katholika of the Greatest Lavra[29] or Vatopedi monasteries[30], to name only two of the multiple examples that have withstood serious earthquakes almost unscathed.

After discovering more fragments of the marble templon and determining its exact position, we can have a clearer picture of its original form (see Fig. 9). Megaw had two main concerns about the form of the screen: its height and its position. Both have been accurately established. The position of the templon of the parabemata was anticipated by Megaw and other scholars[31] since he had hypothesized that the chapels would need the space of a holy bema and a naos, even in very small scale, to accommodate the liturgy, but it had not been proven until now[32].

Conclusions

The latest findings, while they do not alter the basic facts established by earlier scholars concerning the monument, they can clarify its overall picture. From whatever angle one views the Skripou, the basic suggestion by Pallas that it is a transitional building remains strong. The size of the building, its timing in the beginning of what we call the middle Byzantine era and the title of the sponsor, protospatharius Leo, betray top-level financing and intentions[33]. It is certain that it was part of a major church building project inaugurated by Basil I in "disputed" provinces, like the Greek ones. The evidence from the sculpture has already pointed to a uniform approach throughout the empire and especially in the Greek provinces[34]. Recent research has shown that the erection of Panagia at Skripou by the last quarter of the 9th century is not an isolated event but coincides with a relatively flourishing period of construction and reconstruction of Christian buildings in the Greek mainland that does not appear to be accidental. The dating of the churches of the Dormition in Kalambaka, Thessaly [35], Episkopi Mastrou[36], Saint Achillios in Larissa and Saint George in Domenikon, Elassona,[37] in the late 9th- early 10th century, form a compact group with similar characteristics that fill the space between the end of the early Christian and the beginning of the middle Byzantine period in Greece.

It also reinforces the recent argument, that the obscurity of that intermediate period was not caused by the absence of monuments, but mostly by their erroneous dating. A series of monuments dated or re-dated to that period proves that the lack of monuments in the period before the "official" beginning of the middle Byzantine period is perhaps accidental and could be explained by the abundance of 6th-century monuments that remained in use over the following centuries, the economic decline from the second half of the 6th century onwards, the insecurity caused by invasions, and the severe perturbations caused by Iconoclasm. Perhaps in the future, careful research of other controversial monuments will reveal, hidden by plastering and later repairs, earlier building phases that may shed more light on the yet unknown architecture of that very early Byzantine period[38].

However, the low level of technical expertise in the construction of the monument was not on a par with the intent and financial status of the ktetor. The instability of the structure, despite the enormous thickness (1 m) of the walls, the minimum use of timber tie-beams and the discontinuity of the foundations are proofs of this suggestion[39]. Moreover, the use of marble and stucco spolia to build up the windows and the doors of the narthex

[29] S. Voyadjis, *Το καθολικό της Ιεράς Μονής Μεγίστης Λαύρας στο Άγιον Όρος. Ιστορία και Αρχιτεκτονική*, Athens 2019, 19.

[30] S. Mamaloukos, *Το καθολικό της Μονής Βατοπεδίου. Ιστορία και Αρχιτεκτονική*, Athens 2001, 110.

[31] S. Ćurčić, "Architectural Significance of Subsidiary Chapels in Middle Byzantine Architecture", *JSAH* 36 (1977), 100-101.

[32] This leaves no ground for Papalexandrou's proposition [*Skripou*, op.cit. (n. 26), 66] that the entire side aisles served as a naos for the chapels, while the marble templon was located at the position of the later wooden iconostasis.

[33] N. Oikonomides, "Pour une nouvelle lecture des inscriptions de Skripou en Béotie", *TM* 12 (1994), 489.

[34] Megaw, "Skripou Screen", op.cit. (n. 15), 21.

[35] Sythiakakis – Voyadjis, "Dormition", op.cit. (n. 5), 221.

[36] P. Vocotopoulos, *Ἡ ἐκκλησιαστική ἀρχιτεκτονική εἰς τήν Δυτικήν Στερεάν Ἑλλάδα καί τήν Ἤπειρον ἀπό τοῦ τέλους τοῦ 7ου μέχρι τοῦ τέλους τοῦ 10ου αἰῶνος*, Thessaloniki 1975, 135.

[37] S. Voyadjis – V. Sythiakakis-Kritsimallis, "Ο ναός του Αγίου Γεωργίου στο Δομένικο Ελασσώνος", *DChAE* 35 (2014), 39.

[38] As was implied by G. Dimitrokallis, "La genèse de l'église en croix grecque inscrite", *Βυζαντινά* 23 (2002-2003), 219-231.

[39] Therefore, Papalexandrou's comment that "[...] a highly skilled team of masons and architects [...]" is probably no longer valid [*Skripou*, op.cit. (n. 26), 334].

and the cross arms, especially the stucco ones which are easily perishable, probably indicates that the structural problems of the church were very quickly realized and an attempt (in the right direction) was made to rectify them by reducing the openings. The inclusion of pieces of the templon shows that it was originally destroyed during the early major damages, which were dated before the 12th century[40], and never repaired. What kind of screen was used in later times before the construction of the 19th-century iconostasis is open to speculation[41].

Therefore, we are tempted to go back to Strzygowsky's original proposal[42] suggesting that this low level of expertise determined the overall heavy design and the use of walls instead of piers to support the dome. A few years earlier, around the turn of the 9th century, according to latest research, the basilica of Saint Titos in Gortys[43], Crete, was built with triple openings between the side aisles and the nave, while a few years later, in the Dormition in Kalambaka[44] and Saint George in Domenikon, Elassona,[45], we can see piers alternating with columns and generally a lighter construction that, however, retains the basic forms established by Skripou: the large polylobe windows, the multiple entrances that were later reduced to only a western one, etc. Although it has been proven that the use of columns, piers, or walls pierced by arched openings in the aisles of late basilicas mostly depended on the possibility of acquiring ready to use material in an era when most of the quarries were closed[46], it is also possible that the use of a more "solid" separation between the aisles was due to a change in liturgical practices, with the establishment of the "Great Entrance". It appears that by the end of the early Christian era the stylobates of the basilicas were remarkably raised, while in some of the early-middle Byzantine buildings with simple colonnades, closure slabs were used to block the communication between the nave and the side aisles[47].

This does not apply to the sculpture. Apparently, the sculptural decoration was made by a local significant workshop that was able to execute a large commission with hundreds of marble items, either simply repetitive, such as cornices, or composite, like the screen and the inscriptions. Although Grabar downplayed the abilities of the craftsmen involved[48], lately new observations have established that the importance of the so-called "Theban workshop" exceeded the narrow boundaries of the area of Thebes and Orchomenos and influenced the sculpture of Central Greece probably reaching to the 10th century[49], while older scholars have looked for remote oriental influences[50].

A lot of ink has been spilled over the use of the projection of the transept beyond the main body of the church. It is highly probable that an extension of the north and south arms had some specific use that we can only speculate about. The same use probably dictated the addition of a conch at the same spot in other earlier or later buildings such as Saint Titos in Gortys[51] or the katholikon of the Greatest Lavra in Mount Athos[52]. Was it to house a chorus of monks as it is commonly

[40] Voyadjis, "Παρατηρήσεις", op.cit. (n. 4), 114-115.

[41] Probably incorporating pieces of the 9th-century templon, since in the 18th-19th centuries, when the buildings of the Skripou monastery were constructed, they were still obviously lying around, not incorporated in earlier buildings as so many of the church's sculptures were. If they had been scattered around for 800-900 years, they would have certainly been lost.

[42] Strzygowski, "Inedita", op.cit. (n. 1), 10.

[43] V. Sythiakakis-Kritsimallis, "Προκαταρκτική παρουσίαση των αποτελεσμάτων της αρχαιολογικής έρευνας στον ναό του Αγίου Τίτου Γόρτυνας κατά τα έτη 2013-2015", *DChAE* 40 (2019), 80-81.

[44] Sythiakakis – Voyadjis, "Dormition", op.cit. (n. 5), 227.

[45] Voyadjis – Sythiakakis, "Δομένικο", op.cit. (n. 37), 40.

[46] Bouras, "Zourtsa", op.cit. (n. 10), 148.

[47] This is the case of the basilica of Saint George in Domenikon near Elassona, where the ionic bases of the colonnades are cut to receive a closure slab. A similar groove can be observed on the base of the southeast column in the basilica in Kalambaka. The groove today is turned towards the South, but the colonnades have been rearranged at least once [Sythiakakis – Voyadjis, "Dormition", op.cit. (n. 5), 209].

[48] A. Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines de Constantinople (IVe-Xe siècle)*, Paris 1963, 92.

[49] G. Pallis, "Η διάδοση της τεχνοτροπίας των γλυπτών του λεγόμενου 'θηβαϊκού εργαστηρίου' (β΄ μισό 9ου αι.). Μερικές παρατηρήσεις", *ΑΕΘΣΕ* 4 (2012), II, 803-810. Also, idem, "Η αρχιτεκτονική γλυπτική των μεταβατικών χρόνων στην Ελλάδα: Μία αποτίμηση", *31st Symposium of the ChAE (2011)*, 62-63.

[50] Strzygowski, "Inedita", op.cit. (n. 1), 16. M. Soteriou, "Ὁ ναός τῆς Σκριπούς στή Βοιωτία", *AE 1931* [1933], 132.

[51] Sythiakakis-Kritsimallis, "Άγιος Τίτος", op.cit. (n. 43), 69. St. Mamaloukos, "Ζητήματα αναπαράστασης της αρχικής μορφής του ναού του Αγίου Τίτου στην Γόρτυνα", *DChAE* 34 (2013), 16, fig. 4.

[52] Voyadjis, *Λαύρα*, op.cit. (n. 29), 112.

believed, based on its present day use[53], was it to house relics?[54] We do not really know. However, the solution the architect of Panagia gave, proved highly unstable at an earthquake and resulted in repeated collapses of the specific area, while the rest of the church was damaged but remained comparatively intact[55]. This is probably the reason why it rarely appeared again[56] and remains a unicum in early middle Byzantine architecture, while the side conches independently added to the body of the cross-in-square church became a major element in monastic churches, in what we call the Athonite type.

In conclusion, it appears therefore that the specific conditions of high sponsorship and in situ material abundance, despite the low technical capacity of the local builders, created an important monument that only partly affected subsequent course of Byzantine architecture. Panagia Skripou belongs to a group of several buildings dated in the 7th-9th to early 10th centuries that, although may fall short of being referred to as a "school"[57], share some similar characteristics. This first attempt of the new reality developing in Greece in the early middle Byzantine era[58], which is proof of the new dynamism of the local community, while based on earlier forms, sought to find its character.

[53] I. Papaggelos "Ὁ ἀρχιτεκτονικός ὅρος 'Χορός' καί ὁ ὅσιος Ἀθανάσιος ὁ Ἀθωνίτης", *5th Symposium of the ChAE (1985)*, 73-74.

[54] S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans. From Diocletian to Suleyman the Magnificent*, New Haven – London 2010, 303.

[55] The first phase of the Old Metropolis at Veroia has been recently dated in the 7th or 8th century (G. Skiadaresis, *Η Παλαιά Μητρόπολη της Βέροιας στο πλαίσιο της βυζαντινής αρχιτεκτονικής*, unpublished PhD. thesis, posted at: https://www.didaktorika.gr/eadd/handle/10442/39320, Thessaloniki 2016, 155). The plan is similar to Skripou, although Skiadaresis argues for a timber-roofed basilical type. The remains are meagre, but we cannot exclude the possibility of a Katapoliani type oval dome.

[56] The three similar churches with projecting transepts in Crete (Ai-Kyr Giannis at Alikianos, Chania, Hagios Demetrios at Hagios Demetrios and Panagia Lampini, Rethymnon) are remote, local examples, dated in the 11th-12th centuries, not connected with Skripou (see M. Andrianakis, "Τα χριστιανικά μνημεία της επαρχίας Αγίου Βασιλείου", *Πρακτικά του Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου, Η επαρχία Αγίου Βασιλείου από την αρχαιότητα μέχρι σήμερα*, v. 2, Rethymnon 2014, 21. E. Theocharopoulou, *Συμβολή στη μελέτη των σταυροειδών εγγεγραμμένων ναών της Κρήτης από τον 10ο μέχρι τον 13ο αιώνα*, unpublished PhD thesis, posted at: https://www.didaktorika.gr/eadd/handle/10442/16142), Athens 2000, 249.

[57] P. L. Vocotopoulos, "The role of Constantinopolitan Architecture during the Middle and Late Byzantine Period", *JÖB* 28 (1979), 551-573.

[58] Therefore it makes no sense to seek Bulgarian (R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, Middlesex 1975, 315) or oriental influences since it is now commonly accepted that during the middle Byzantine period, Constantinople was the dominant center for the production of new forms and cultural goods in general.

Illustration credits

Figs 1-9: Photographs and drawings by Sotiris Voyadjis.

Σωτήρης Βογιατζής

ΝΕΑ ΔΕΔΟΜΕΝΑ ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑ ΣΚΡΙΠΟΥ ΣΤΗ ΒΟΙΩΤΙΑ

Ο ναός της Παναγίας Σκριπούς, που βρίσκεται στις παρυφές του χωριού Ορχομενός της Βοιωτίας, είναι ένα γνωστό και συστηματικά μελετημένο μνημείο του 9ου αιώνα, χρονολογημένο με επιγραφές το 873/74. Τον Δεκέμβριο του 1995 ξέσπασε πυρκαγιά στον νάρθηκα, η οποία έκαψε έπιπλα και άλλα σκεύη που ήταν αποθηκευμένα εκεί, και προκάλεσε σοβαρές ζημιές στο κτήριο, καταστρέφοντας τα επιχρίσματα και μέρος από τη γλυπτή διακόσμηση. Εκτεταμένες εργασίες αποκατάστασης έγιναν κατά τα έτη 2000-2001, οι οποίες κάλυψαν ολόκληρο το μνημείο. Παράλληλες έρευνες αποκάλυψαν νέα στοιχεία για την οικοδομική ιστορία του, που θα συζητηθούν εδώ.

Η αρχαιολογική έρευνα επικεντρώθηκε σε: (α) διάνοιξη όλων των φραγμένων ανοιγμάτων· (β) ανασκαφικές τομές σε διάφορα σημεία του δαπέδου τού κυρίως ναού και στο ιερό βήμα (Εικ. 1)· (γ) αφαίρεση υπολειπόμενου επιχρίσματος, εκτός από τα σημεία που σώζονταν τοιχογραφίες· (4) αφαίρεση των κεραμιδιών που κάλυπταν τις στέγες, και αποκάλυψη της δομής των θόλων και του τρούλου.

Η διάνοιξη των κτισμένων παραθύρων και θυρών αποκάλυψε τα αρχικά τοξωτά ανοίγματα, πληγωμένα από τη διαφορική καθίζηση αλλά σχετικά ανέπαφα (Εικ. 2). Τα τόξα των παραθύρων ήταν κατασκευασμένα από πέτρινους τοξόλιθους, συνήθως σε δεύτερη χρήση, και περιβάλλονται από οδοντωτές ταινίες (Εικ. 3). Μόνο τα ανατολικά παράθυρα των παραβημάτων ήταν από πλίνθους (Εικ. 4). Ως κατώφλια των θυρών χρησιμοποιήθηκαν πλάκες από υπόλευκο μάρμαρο σε δεύτερη χρήση. Σώζονται εγκοπές για τους στροφείς των θυρών, που σε συνδυασμό με αντίστοιχες αυλακώσεις στους ελκυστήρες χρησιμοποιήθηκαν για τη στερέωση των φύλλων της πόρτας.

Στους λαμπάδες των θυρών και των περισσοτέρων παραθύρων διατηρήθηκαν τοιχογραφίες σε πολύ κακή κατάσταση, που φτάνουν στο εξωτερικό άκρο των ανοιγμάτων (Εικ. 7). Είναι προφανές ότι τα εσωτερικά ανοίγματα καθώς και όλες οι εξωτερικές επιφάνειες του κτηρίου ήταν αρχικά επιχρισμένες και πιθανώς χρωματισμένες. Το παράθυρο του ιερού έχει διαταραχθεί πολύ, αφού έχουν μείνει μόνο οι λαμπάδες, ενώ τα τόξα του λείπουν εντελώς. Ωστόσο, αν υποθέσουμε ότι το παράθυρο ήταν τρίλοβο με τους λοβούς του ίσους με τα ανατολικά παράθυρα των παραβημάτων, τότε μπορούμε να αναπαραστήσουμε γραφικά το παράθυρο της αψίδας (βλ. Εικ. 4). Τα τόξα ήταν πιθανώς κατασκευασμένα από τούβλο για τον ίδιο λόγο με τα παράθυρα των παραβημάτων.

Σε ανασκαφικές τομές στο δάπεδο της εκκλησίας της Παναγίας αποκαλύφθηκαν σε βάθος 15 εκ. κάτω από τα κατώφλια των θυρών ίχνη του αρχικού μαρμάρινου δαπέδου, αποτελούμενα από υπόλευκο μάρμαρο πάχους 7-8 εκ. με γυαλισμένη την άνω επιφάνεια (Εικ. 5). Τα κατώφλια των θυρών είναι περίπου 10 εκ. υψηλότερα από το σημερινό επίπεδο του δαπέδου, πράγμα που σημαίνει ότι το αρχικό δάπεδο θα ήταν ελαφρώς χαμηλότερα από το σύγχρονο. Οι τομές κάτω από το δάπεδο του νάρθηκα απέδειξαν ότι κάτω από τις πόρτες και τις καμάρες που συνδέουν τους εσωτερικούς χώρους, τα θεμέλια διακόπτονταν, παρά το γεγονός ότι όλα ανήκαν στην ίδια φάση κατασκευής.

Στα πλευρικά τοιχώματα της πρόθεσης και του διακονικού, σε απόσταση 3,45 μ. από το δυτικό άκρο της αψίδας, υπήρχαν ρηχές κάθετες εγκοπές που είχαν σκαφτεί στον τοίχο για να στερεωθεί το τέμπλο. Εγκοπές ή εσοχές σε παρόμοια θέση δεν παρατηρήθηκαν στους τοίχους του βήματος. Νέα μαρμάρινα τμήματα του τέμπλου ανακαλύφθηκαν αλλάζοντας ελαφρώς τη γραφική αποκατάσταση του που προτάθηκε από τον Megaw τη δεκαετία του ’60 (Εικ. 9).

Από την παραπάνω περιγραφή μπορούν να διαπιστωθούν ορισμένα νέα δεδομένα. Αποκαλύφθηκαν περιορισμένα ίχνη από το αρχικό μαρμάρινο δάπεδο, αλλά ήταν αρκετά για να καθοριστεί ακριβώς το επίπεδο

και το υλικό από το οποίο ήταν κατασκευασμένο. Αποτελούνταν από χοντρές μαρμάρινες πλάκες και βρισκόταν 15 εκ. βαθύτερα από το σημερινό επίπεδο, ενώ δεν υπήρχε διαφορά στο επίπεδο μεταξύ του κυρίως ναού και του ιερού βήματος ή των παρεκκλησιών του. Αποδείχθηκε, επίσης, χωρίς αμφιβολία ότι η Σκριπού χτίστηκε πάνω στα ερείπια ενός παλαιότερου κτηρίου που καταλάμβανε αυτόν τον χώρο.

Έχουμε μια αρκετά καλή εικόνα για το πώς πρέπει να έμοιαζαν οι πόρτες και τα παράθυρα, αν και κανένα δεν σώζεται. Τα επάνω παράθυρα έκλειναν αρχικά από γύψινα διαφράγματα με στρογγυλά ανοίγματα, στα οποία είχε χρησιμοποιηθεί κιτρινωπό γυαλί. Οι πόρτες ήταν μάλλον ελαφρές ξύλινες, με δύο φύλλα, παρά το μικρό τους πλάτος, προσαρτημένες πρόχειρα στην ξυλοδεσιά που περνούσε μέσα από τους τοίχους (Εικ. 6).

Έχει αποδειχθεί επαρκώς ότι η Σκριπού ήταν επιχρισμένη και πιθανώς χρωματισμένη τόσο εξωτερικά όσο και εσωτερικά. Μετά την ανακάλυψη περισσότερων θραυσμάτων του μαρμάρινου τέμπλου και την ακριβή θέση του, μπορούμε να έχουμε μια σαφέστερη εικόνα της αρχικής του μορφής. Η κατασκευή όλων των καμαρών και των θόλων με πέτρα, σχεδόν καθόλου χωρίς τούβλα (Εικ. 8) –σπάνιο τεχνικό χαρακτηριστικό– φέρνει πιο κοντά τη Σκριπού στην Παναγία Καταπολιανή στην Πάρο, ένα κτήριο του οποίου η χρονολόγηση βρίσκεται υπό αναθεώρηση. Η διακοπή των θεμελίων κάτω από τα ανοίγματα, η αραιή χρήση ξυλοδεσιών και αρκετές άλλες τεχνικές λεπτομέρειες αποδεικνύουν το χαμηλό επίπεδο τεχνικής εμπειρίας των κατασκευαστών του μνημείου.

Τα τελευταία ευρήματα, ενώ δεν αλλάζουν τα βασικά γεγονότα που έχουν διαπιστώσει παλαιότεροι μελετητές σχετικά με το μνημείο, μπορούν να διευκρινίσουν λεπτομέρειες της συνολικής εικόνας του. Πρόσφατη έρευνα έδειξε ότι η ανέγερση της Παναγίας Σκριπούς το τελευταίο τέταρτο του 9ου αιώνα δεν είναι μεμονωμένο γεγονός, αλλά συμπίπτει με μια σχετικά ανθηρή περίοδο κατασκευής και ανακατασκευής χριστιανικών κτηρίων στην ηπειρωτική Ελλάδα, που δεν φαίνεται να είναι τυχαία. Ενισχύει το πρόσφατο επιχείρημα ότι η αφάνεια εκείνης της ενδιάμεσης περιόδου δεν προκλήθηκε από την απουσία μνημείων αλλά κυρίως από τη λανθασμένη χρονολόγησή τους. Ωστόσο, το χαμηλό επίπεδο τεχνικής στην κατασκευή του ναού δεν ταυτίζεται με την πρόθεση και την οικονομική κατάσταση του κτήτορα. Επομένως, πιθανόν να πρέπει να επιστρέψουμε στην αρχική πρόταση του Strzygowsky, που πιθανολογεί ότι αυτό το χαμηλό επίπεδο οικοδομικής καθόρισε τη συνολική βαριά σχεδίαση και τη χρήση τοίχων αντί πεσσών για τη στήριξη του θόλου. Επιπλέον, όποια και αν ήταν η χρήση των προεξοχών των πλευρικών κεραιών, ήταν μια λύση πολύ ασταθής και δεν επαναλήφθηκε ποτέ. Ανεξάρτητες πλευρικές κόγχες πήραν τη θέση τους σε μεταγενέστερες εκκλησίες.

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