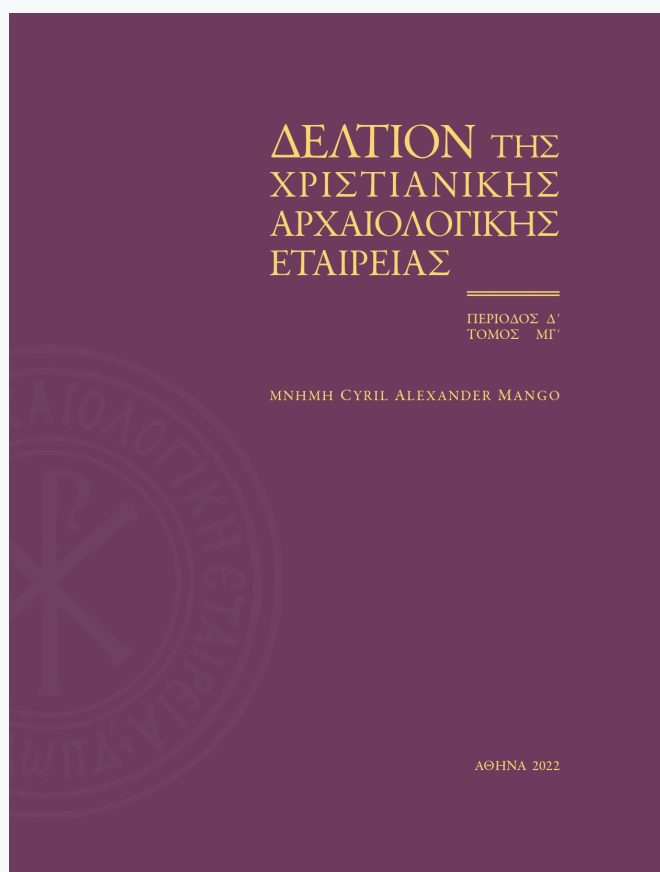


## Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας

Τόμ. 43 (2022)

Δελτίον ΧΑΕ 43 (2022), Περίοδος Δ'



Και πάλι περί της πρωτοτυπίας της βυζαντινής  
αρχιτεκτονικής του 11ου αιώνα: Ο ναός της  
Παναγίας των Χαλκέων στη Θεσσαλονίκη

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doi: [10.12681/dchae.34373](https://doi.org/10.12681/dchae.34373)

### Βιβλιογραφική αναφορά:

ZAKHAROVA, A. (2023). Και πάλι περί της πρωτοτυπίας της βυζαντινής αρχιτεκτονικής του 11ου αιώνα: Ο ναός της Παναγίας των Χαλκέων στη Θεσσαλονίκη. *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας*, 43, 81–94. <https://doi.org/10.12681/dchae.34373>

## ONCE AGAIN ON THE ORIGINALITY OF BYZANTINE ARCHITECTURE IN THE 11<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: THE CHURCH OF PANAGIA CHALKEON IN THESSALONIKI

Στηνεργασία αναλύεται η αρχιτεκτονική σύνθεση της Παναγίας των Χαλκίων και υπογραμμίζεται η πρωτοτυπία της, εντοπίζοντας τις πιθανές πηγές της στην Κωνσταντινούπολη, τη Θεσσαλονίκη και στο Άγιον Όρος. Καταδεικνύεται ότι ο διώροφος νάρθηκας καθόρισε τα ιδιαίτερα χαρακτηριστικά του ναού και πρωτίστως το μεγάλο ύψος του, που απετέλεσε τον κύριο λόγο εμφάνισης του ραδινού τυμπάνου με δύο ζώνες παραθύρων στον κεντρικό τρούλο, των υπερυψωμένων αετωμάτων κ.λπ. Ως αποτέλεσμα, η αρχιτεκτονική σύνθεση στο σύνολό της είναι δυναμική και εκφραστική, χωρίς ακριβή παράλληλα αλλού.

*The paper analyzes the architectural composition of the Panagia Chalkeon, tracing its possible sources in Constantinople, Thessaloniki, Mount Athos, and underlining its originality. It is demonstrated that the two-storied twin-domed narthex defined the particular features of the church, first and foremost its great height. It became the main reason for the appearance of the two-tiered drum of the dome, the heightened gables etc. As a result, the architectural composition on the whole is dynamic and expressive, without exact parallels elsewhere.*

### Λέξεις κλειδιά

11ος αιώνας, βυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική, Παναγία των Χαλκίων, Θεσσαλονίκη.

### Keywords

11th century; Byzantine architecture; Panagia Chalkeon; Thessaloniki.

In his writings, Cyril Mango marked the 11th century as the time of new flourishing of Byzantine architecture, which during this period was characterized by a large number and large scale of buildings, the significant role of monasteries and originality<sup>1</sup>. I would like to examine

more closely the latter aspect in the example of an outstanding work of Byzantine architecture of this time – the church of Panagia Chalkeon in Thessaloniki.

It is known from the inscription above the entrance that this church was built in 1028 by the *katepano* of Laguardia *protospatharios* Christopher<sup>2</sup>. The ktetor of Panagia Chalkeon is identified with protospatharios Christopher, a katepano of Thessaloniki and Bulgaria, who is known from the seal dated between 1018 and 1028<sup>3</sup>. Apparently, he began to build the church at that time and finished it when he was in a new position and

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\*\* The research was prepared with the financial support of the Russian Science Foundation, grant no. 20-18-00294, at the Research Institute for Theory and History of Architecture and Town Planning, branch of the Central Research and Project Institute of the Construction Ministry of Russia (Moscow). I would like to thank my colleagues and friends Michalis Kappas, Ioannis Chouliaras, Georgios Foustieris and Stavros Mamaloukos for their recommendations and help in preparing this article.

<sup>1</sup> C. Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, New York 1976, 198, 206. Idem, “Les monuments de l’architecture du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle et leur signification historique et sociale”, *TM* 6 (1976), 351-365.

<sup>2</sup> On the inscriptions in Panagia Chalkeon, see W. Hörandner – A. Rhoby – A. Paul, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein nebst Addenda zu den Bänden 1 und 2: Byzantinische Epigramme in Inschriftlicher Überlieferung Band 3, Teil I und II*, ed. A. Rhoby, Vienna 2014, 384-388 (with bibliography).

<sup>3</sup> “Christophoros”, *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit Online*, Berlin – Boston 2013: <https://www.degruyter.com/document/database/PMBZ/entry/PMBZ23481/html> (accessed April 1, 2021).

designated it for his own burial, which was arranged in the northern arm of the cross, in an arcosolium<sup>4</sup>.

There are books by D. Evangelidis, K. Papadopoulos, and A. Tsitouridou dedicated to the architecture and paintings of this church<sup>5</sup>. Panagia Chalkeon is included in the general works on the Byzantine architecture<sup>6</sup> and Byzantine art of Thessaloniki<sup>7</sup>. Its architectural features have been studied in more detail by A. Xyngopoulos, P. L. Vocotopoulos, G. Velenis, M. Paissidou, M. Kappas and some other researchers<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> M. Paissidou, "The church 'Panagia Chalkeon in Thessaloniki': a different approach of a monastic institution and its founder", *Siris. Studi e ricerche della Scuola di specializzazione in beni archeologici di Matera* 15 (2015), 124.

<sup>5</sup> D. E. Evangelides, *Ἡ Παναγία τῶν Χαλκῶν*, Thessaloniki 1954. K. Papadopoulos, *Die Wandmalereien des XI. Jh. in der Kirche Παναγία τῶν Χαλκῶν in Thessaloniki* (Byzantina Vinobonensia 2), Graz – Köln 1966. A. Tsitouridou, *The Church of the Panagia Chalkeon*, Thessaloniki 1985.

<sup>6</sup> G. Millet, *L'école grecque dans l'architecture byzantine*, Paris 1916, 148, 183-185, 195-197, 200-201, 236. Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, op.cit. (n. 1), 205-206. R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture. Revised by R. Krautheimer and S. Ćurčić*, New Haven – London 1986, 373-374. Ch. Bouras, *Βυζαντινὴ καὶ μεταβυζαντινὴ ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ στὴν Ἑλλάδα*, Athens 2001, 114. S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans from Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent (ca. 300 – ca. 1550)*, London – New Haven 2010, 371-372. R. Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture. The Building Traditions of Byzantium and Neighboring Lands*, New York 2019, 407-408, and other.

<sup>7</sup> Ch. Mavropoulou-Tsioumi, *Byzantine Thessaloniki*, Thessaloniki 1993, 104-110. E. Kourkoutidou-Nikolaïdou – A. Tourta, *Wandering in Byzantine Thessaloniki*, Athens 1997, 177-182. D. Nalpanthes (ed.), *Byzantine and Postbyzantine Monuments of Thessaloniki*, Thessaloniki 1997, 86-91.

<sup>8</sup> A. Xyngopoulos, "Ὁ ναὸς τῆς Θεοτόκου τῶν Χαλκῶν", *Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς* 2 (1918), 562-567. P. L. Vocotopoulos, "The Role of Constantinopolitan Architecture during the Middle and the Late Byzantine Period", *JÖB* 31/2 (1981), 555-558, 561. Idem, "Οἱ μεσαιωνικοὶ ναοὶ τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης καὶ ἡ θέση τους στὰ πλαίσια τῆς βυζαντινῆς ναοδομίας", *Ἡ Θεσσαλονίκη μεταξύ Ανατολῆς καὶ Δύσης. Πρακτικὰ Τεσσαρακονταετηρίδος τῆς Εταιρείας Μακεδονικῶν Σπουδῶν* (30 Σεπτεμβρίου – 1 Νοεμβρίου 1980), Thessaloniki 1982, 98, 102-105. A. J. Wharton, *Art of Empire. Painting and Architecture of the Byzantine Periphery. A Comparative Study of Four Provinces*, University Park – London 1988, 108-110. G. Velenis, "Ἡ ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ σχολὴ τῆς Μακεδονίας κατὰ τὴν μέση καὶ ὕστερη βυζαντινὴ περίοδο", *Σύναξη* 63 (1997), 51-52. Idem, "Ἡ βυζαντινὴ ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης.

The question that has been most discussed in the scientific literature in connection with the architecture of Panagia Chalkeon is the combination of Constantinopolitan and regional features in it (Figs 1, 2, 5, 7). On the one hand, the church belongs to the metropolitan inscribed cross typology with a bema (Fig. 3), rare for Macedonia of that time. Many other features are similar to Constantinopolitan churches of the Middle Byzantine period. The walls inside and outside are articulated with pilasters corresponding to the four columns inside. Above the narthex, there is the second floor opening through an arched window into the western arm of the cross. The close similarity between Panagia Chalkeon and the Myrelaion, erected around 920-922 by emperor Romanos Lacapinus<sup>9</sup>, has also been repeatedly noted. In both churches, the walls were built exclusively of brick and the facades are richly articulated with the use of semi-columns (Figs 2, 4). The masonry technique of Panagia Chalkeon with the use of the concealed course was common among the metropolitan masters of the 11th century.

On the other hand, there are many differences between Panagia Chalkeon and its Constantinopolitan contemporaries in the nuances of technique, style and composition, such as the triangular pediments over the cross arms, the small single-light windows, etc.<sup>10</sup>. Some scholars

Αισθητικὴ προσέγγιση", *Αφιέρωμα στὴ μνήμη τοῦ Σωτήρη Κίτσα*, Thessaloniki 2001, 3-13. Idem, *Μεσοβυζαντινὴ ναοδομία στὴ Θεσσαλονίκη*, Athens 2003, 16-18, 25-26, 30-33, 69, 94-96, 116. M. Paissidou, "Παναγία τῶν Χαλκῶν / Panagia ton Chalkeon", A. Mentzos – A. Pliota (eds), *Αποτυπώματα. Ἡ βυζαντινὴ Θεσσαλονίκη σε φωτογραφίες καὶ σχέδια τῆς Βρετανικῆς Σχολῆς Ἀθηνῶν (1888-1910) / Impressions. Byzantine Thessalonike through the photographs and drawings of the British School at Athens (1888-1910)*, Thessaloniki 2012, 126-135. Eadem, "The church 'Panagia Chalkeon in Thessaloniki'", op.cit. (n. 4), 121-133 (with complete bibliography). M. Kappas, "The architectural idiom of Thessaloniki during the Middle and Late Byzantine Periods: similarities and differences from Constantinople", S. Ivanov – A. Vinogradov (eds), *Byzantium and Byzantium: the provincialism of the center and the centrality of the provinces*, Saint-Petersburg 2020, 133-137.

<sup>9</sup> C. L. Striker, *The Myrelaion (Bodrum Camii) in Istanbul*, Princeton, N. J. 1981. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, op.cit. (n. 6), 356-361. R. Ousterhout, *Master builders of Byzantium*, Princeton, N. J. 1999, 16-22. Idem, *Eastern Medieval Architecture*, op.cit. (n. 6), 306-310. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, op.cit. (n. 6), 275-277.

<sup>10</sup> Wharton, *Art of Empire*, op.cit. (n. 8), 110. Ousterhout, *Master builders*, op.cit. (n. 9), 175. Idem, *Eastern Medieval Architecture*,





*Fig. 1. Thessaloniki, Panagia Chalkeon, 1028. View from north-east.*





*Fig. 2. Thessaloniki, Panagia Chalkeon, 1028. View from south-west.*



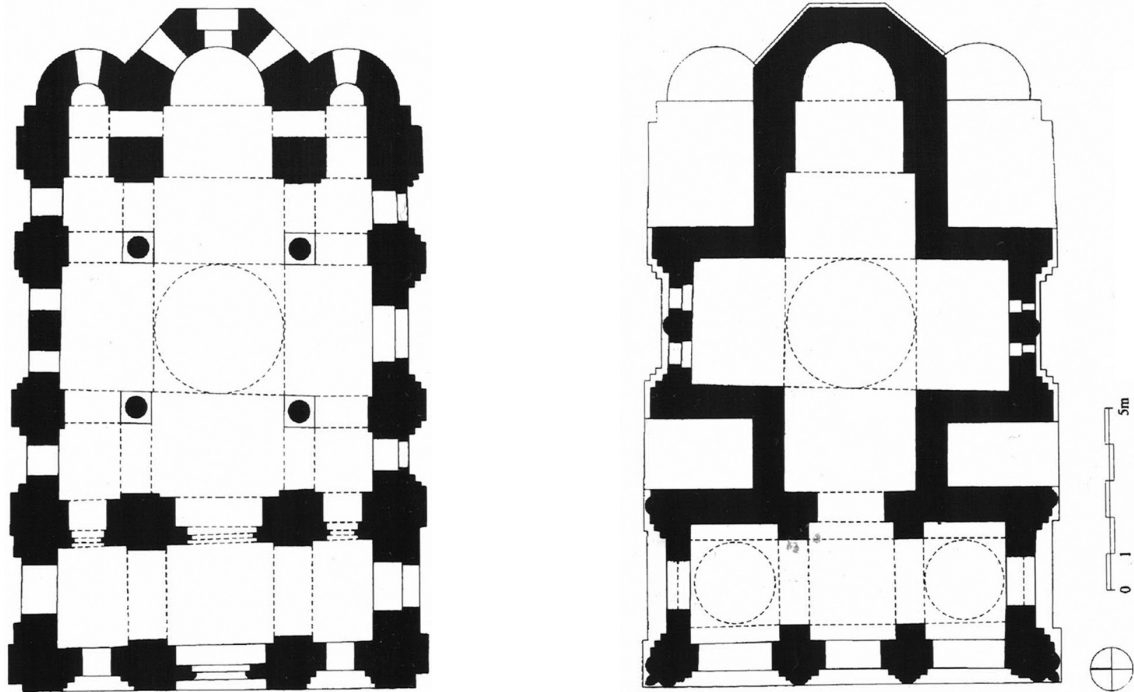


Fig. 3. Thessaloniki, Panagia Chalkeon, 1028. Ground level and gallery, plans.

tend to consider this church a rare representative of the architectural tradition of Thessaloniki, the development of which in the Middle Byzantine period is still almost unknown due to the paucity of surviving monuments<sup>11</sup>. This point of view is most fully represented in the works of G. Velenis. Among the features of local originality, he refers to the peculiarities in the use of the concealed course technique and in the articulation of the facade with niches. Furthermore, professor Velenis considers some rare motifs, such as the combination of the central faceted and side semicircular apses and the two tiers of windows in the drum of the main dome, to be a conscious reproduction of the forms of the church of Saint Sofia in Thessaloniki<sup>12</sup>. This opinion was shared by M.

op.cit. (n. 6), 407-408. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, op.cit. (n. 6), 371-372.

<sup>11</sup> Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, op.cit. (n. 6), 373. Paissidou, "Παναγία των Χαλκέων / Panagia ton Chalkeon", op.cit. (n. 8), 131.

<sup>12</sup> Velenis, "Η ἀρχιτεκτονική σχολή της Μακεδονίας", op.cit. (n. 8), 51-52. Idem, "Η βυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική της Θεσσαλονίκης", op.cit. (n. 8), 3-13. Idem, *Μεσοβυζαντινή ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 8), 16-18, 25-26, 30-33, 69, 94-96, 116.

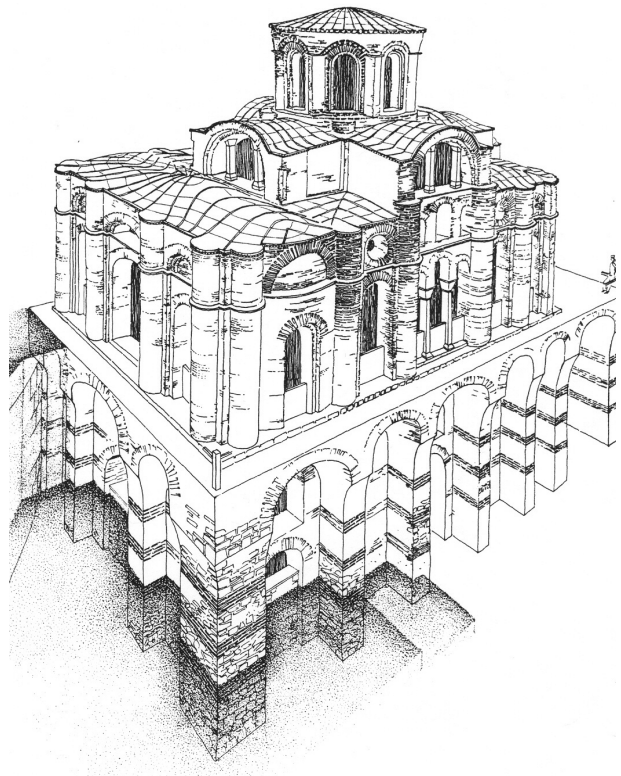


Fig. 4. Constantinople, Myrelaion, ca. 920-922. Reconstruction.



Kappas<sup>13</sup>. Other researchers also noted the similarity of the two-storey narthex with the Athonite katholika, which was also interpreted as evidence of the adherence of the Panagia Chalkeon to the regional tradition<sup>14</sup>. The main topic of discussion, however, has been the purpose of the second floor premises<sup>15</sup>.

There is no doubt that Panagia Chalkeon is an example of an original synthesis of metropolitan and regional elements that has no exact analogues. It seems to us useful to analyze the architectural features of this monument once more and to try to understand the logic that guided the architect who combined heterogeneous elements in creating this unique work of art.

Let us turn again to the comparison of Panagia Chalkeon and the Myrelaion. It seems that the patron of Panagia Chalkeon wanted to reproduce not only the characteristic details of the facades of this particular imperial burial church, but also its special two-tiered structure. At the same time, the orientation towards a specific Constantinople model did not result in its literal reproduction, but became the starting point for the experiment of a talented architect from Thessaloniki who creatively rethought the original impulse.

In both churches, the two-storey structure was conceived by the architects as a special artistic task. The Myrelaion has a completely two-tiered structure, since it had to match the level of the palace built over the 5th

century rotunda (Fig. 4). The funerary destination of the church is attested by the written sources, though no archaeological evidence thereof has been discovered so far<sup>16</sup>. The substructure features an arcade with strongly protruding pilasters, which axes coincide with the semi-columns of the upper church. The side facades of the upper church were divided by cornices, which correspond to the heels of the small and large vaults inside the church and divide the windows placed above each other into three tiers. The precise proportions of all the elements, the constructive conditionality of the verticals and horizontals, the clear rhythm of the protruding ductile semi-columns, and the wide openings between them –all this creates the impression of classical tectonics with a clear ratio of the supporting and supported elements.

Panagia Chalkeon reproduces not only the rare motif of the semi-columns on the facades (Fig. 2), which in itself is already remarkable. So far, only one other such example is known –the church no. 1 excavated in Bjal Bryag near Preslav (first half of the 10th century)<sup>17</sup>. The church in Thessaloniki repeats the motif of the two-tiered arcade, where the half-columns of the upper tier correspond to the pilasters in the lower tier. However, in Panagia Chalkeon, only the narthex is two-storied. Therefore, the arcade motif, although continuing on the side facades of the naos, is modified. In the lower tier, the regular alternation of high arched niches and profiled pilasters is observed only on the southern facade<sup>18</sup>. On the north side, an arcosolium is embedded in the sequence of arched niches and pilasters.

The facade of the narthex of Panagia Chalkeon resembles a triumphal arch, with its solemn rhythm of a triple arcade in two tiers, topped by two proportioned domes above the side spans, between which, when viewed from afar, the high central dome was visible. The western facade is the pride of the ktetor, a testament to his

<sup>13</sup> Kappas, "The architectural idiom", op.cit. (n. 8), 133-137.

<sup>14</sup> Xyngopoulos, "Ο ναός της Θεοτόκου", op.cit. (n. 8), 563. N. Stanković, *At the Threshold of the Heavens: the Narthex and Adjacent Spaces in Middle Byzantine Churches of Mount Athos (10th-11th Centuries)*. Architecture, Function, and Meaning, Ph.D. Diss., Princeton 2017, 141-148, 463, 474.

<sup>15</sup> S. Ćurčić, "Architectural significance of subsidiary chapels in middle Byzantine churches", *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 36 (1977), 106-108. Idem, "The Twin-domed Narthex in the Paleologan Architecture", *ZRVI* 13 (1971), 337-338. S. Mamaloukos, *Το καθολικό της Μονής Βατοπεδίου. Ιστορία και αρχιτεκτονική*, διδακτορική διατριβή, Athens 2001, 154-155. Paissidou, "The church 'Panagia Chalkeon in Thessaloniki'", op.cit. (n. 4), 127-128. Velenis, "Η βυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική της Θεσσαλονίκης", op.cit. (n. 8), 8-9 (in the opinion of G. Velenis, the two-storey narthex of Panagia Chalkeon was modeled on that of Saint Sophia). A. Tantsis, *Το υπερώο στη βυζαντινή ναοδομία* (unpublished PhD diss, open access at: <https://www.didaktorika.gr/eadd/handle/10442/23727>), Thessaloniki 2008, v. 1, 151, 170 and v. 2, 227-228, no. 151.

<sup>16</sup> Striker, *The Myrelaion*, op.cit. (n. 9), 6, 11.

<sup>17</sup> V. Ivanova, "Dve c'rkvi ot Bjal brjag v Preslav", *Razkopki i proučvanija na narodnija arheologičeski muzej v Sofia* 3 (1948), 149-155. N. Čaneva-Dečevska, *Church Architecture of the First Bulgarian State*, Sofia 1984, 78-93.

<sup>18</sup> The upper parts of the south façade were reconstructed after the earthquake of 1933: Evangelides, *Η Παναγία των Χαλκέων*, op.cit. (n. 5), 6-9; Paissidou, "Παναγία των Χαλκέων / Panagia ton Chalkeon", op.cit. (n. 8), 129.

high position and direct connection with the metropolis.

In the church of Panagia Chalkeon, the first and second tiers are separated by a cornice running around the entire perimeter of the building and having a fairly large beam. Thus the entire upper part is perceived as a superstructure standing on powerful arched substructures. To a large extent, this impression is also facilitated by the visual union of the naos and the narthex when viewed from the side: the height of the domes above the narthex, as well as the height and width of its vaults is comparable to the shapes and sizes of the central dome and the arches of the cross arms. On the western facade, the cornice does not correspond to the level of the interstorey floors in the narthex, but to the heels of their arches<sup>19</sup>. This visually increases the height of the second tier. All these features indicate a desire to imitate a two-tiered structure, apparently associated with the Myrelaion.

The similarity of the church to its Constantinopolitan model is largely achieved by the energetic articulation of the walls. On the western facade of Panagia Chalkeon, large arched niches are accentuated by three skewbacks in the lower tier and four skewbacks in the upper one. Similar profiling of windows and niches is also used on the side facades, visually uniting both tiers. These techniques, which were not typical for the 10th century, but common in the next century, create a rich game of chiaroscuro. It is similar to the Myrelaion facades, which plasticity is provided in other ways –mainly due to the abundance of large openings and convex forms.

In addition to profiling and semi-columns in Panagia Chalkeon, another method of plastic articulation of the wall with niches was actively used. These niches adorn the drums of the domes above the narthex, where they alternate with windows, and the western facade, where they are placed under larger arched windows in the upper and lower tiers.

However, the builders of Panagia Chalkeon do depart from the metropolitan practice in many details, rejecting the logic of classical tectonic. This is most evident in the interpretation of the side facades (Fig. 5). The semi-columns on the western facade were placed between niches with triple profiling and seem to carry a triple arcade

uniting them, which creates a fourth skewback on the top of these niches, whereas there is no fourth profile on the side facades of the narthex. As a result, the semi-columns on the side facades do not carry anything: they do not reach the heels of the arch marked by the segments of the double dogtooth frieze, and there is a void above their capitals. An equally atectonic approach is found in the design of the central part of the side facades. The vaults of the cross arms are interpreted as an arched niche, in which a composition of two smaller niches separated by a half column is inscribed. In each small niche, there are pairs of arched windows above each other, and another one is cut in the tympanum above the half column. Instead of one large or triple window, adopted by Constantinopolitan architecture, a non-classical composition with five small arched windows was created here. One of the reasons for this decision could be the presence of the arcosolium in the center of the northern wall, above which two small single-light windows were made, which set the module for the rest of the windows of the lower tier, as well as for the windows of the upper tiers.

However, the main factor that influenced almost all the features of the appearance of the church of Panagia Chalkeon is the height associated with the presence of a two-storey twin-domed narthex. In proportion, Panagia Chalkeon is the tallest of all the cross-in-square churches with four columns known in the Balkans<sup>20</sup>.

Primarily the great height of the construction caused an increase in the thickness of the walls. Usually in provincial buildings, this leads to a reduction in the number and size of openings, heaviness of all forms, tightness and darkening of the interior. The builders of Panagia Chalkeon tried to at least partially avoid these shortcomings. The facades received a complex articulation, which visually reduces the massiveness of the walls, and the number of window openings was almost doubled. However, in the interior, the illumination remains insufficient, and the increased proportions of the building are accentuated by the absence of a cornice at the level of the heels of the large arches, which was common for the churches of the metropolitan region.

It was the need to raise the main dome above the over-

<sup>19</sup> Evangelides, *Ἡ Παναγία τῶν Χαλκείων*, op.cit. (n. 5), pl. 1a and γ. Ćurčić, “Architectural significance”, op.cit. (n. 15), 106. Velenis, “Ἡ βυζαντινὴ ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης”, op.cit. (n. 8), 3.

<sup>20</sup> N. Moutsopoulos, “Harmonische Bauschnitte in der Kirchen vom Typ kreuzförmigen Innenbaus im griechischen Kernland”, *BZ* 55 (1962), 290-291, fig. 33.





Fig. 5. Thessaloniki, Panagia Chalkeon, 1028. View from north-west.

the-narthex domes that led to the extension of the drum and the appearance of the second tier of windows<sup>21</sup>. G. Velenis explained this feature of Panagia Chalkeon by suggesting that it followed the example of the church of Saint Sophia in Thessaloniki. According to his reconstruction, there were a number of niches above the windows

on the cubic pedestal of its dome<sup>22</sup>. However, it seems to us that even if there was such a reason, it was less important than the main one –the great height of the drum of Panagia Chalkeon. Tall drums were quite common for the Byzantine architecture during the Macedonian dynasty. An additional row of niches in the upper part

<sup>21</sup> Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, op.cit. (n. 1), 205.

<sup>22</sup> Velenis, “Η βυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική της Θεσσαλονίκης”, op.cit.

was sometimes used to strengthen their construction, as in the church of Saint John the Baptist in Nessebar (end of the 10th – beginning of the 11th century)<sup>23</sup>, the Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kiev (around 1037)<sup>24</sup>, the church of Saint John in Zemen (11th century)<sup>25</sup> and others. However, the most common structural and decorative element in the design of the drums of Byzantine domes in the 11th century is the semi-columns leaning against the sides, which carry an arcade encircling the top of the drum. This motif is also used in the unusual drum of the main dome of Panagia Chalkeon, which

allowed the architect to create another visual reference to the design of the narthex: both have the motif of an arcade on semi-columns, which are inscribed with high profiled niches and arched openings placed one above the other. The great height of the three domes of Panagia Chalkeon led to the appearance of triangular pediments on the eastern and lateral facades. These elements, well known in Byzantine provincial architecture, were given an unusually elongated shape here. On the east facade, another gable was added above the bema. The three-faceted central apse was made higher than the semicircular side apses; like the dome, it received a second row of windows with a raised central window. Everything seems to be pulled up under the domes of the narthex, which are visible from behind the vaults of the side arms of the cross when viewed from a distance. All together, these forms prepare the powerful rise of the large central dome.

The raised gables of the triangular pediments play a similar role on the side facades. The vaults in the naos are slightly lower than in the second floor above the narthex, which is reflected in the height of the arched niches of the facades<sup>26</sup>. In order to achieve a visual preponderance of the naos over the narthex, the architect of Panagia Chalkeon increased the height of the arms of the cross with the help of decorative gables. Where Constantinople would certainly have marked the springing of large vaults with a cornice or at least the arrangement

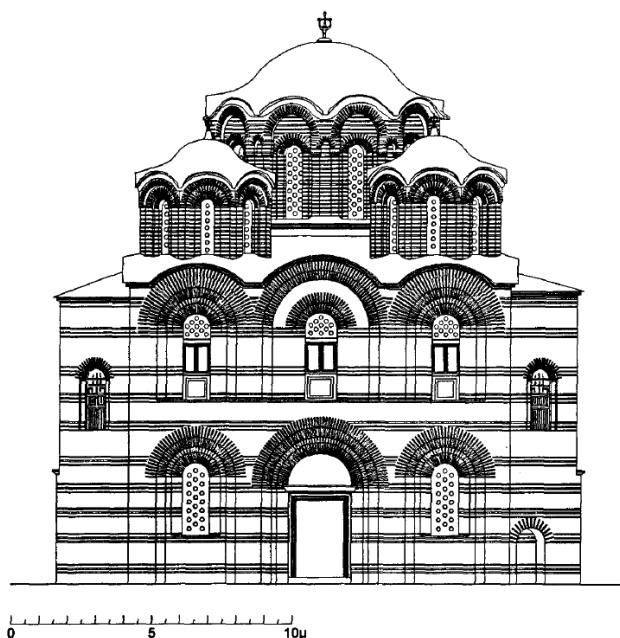


Fig. 6. Mount Athos, *katholikon* of Vatopedi monastery, ca. 980. Narthex elevation. Reconstruction.

of windows, the master from Thessaloniki created an unusual composition directed upwards. The niche with five windows seems to break the imaginary “cornice” of the triangular pediment, from which only the segments on the sides accentuated by a double curb remain. They look not so much like the capitals of pilasters bearing a gable, but rather like the angles of an upward-pointing arrow, on the axis of which there are a half-column and a fifth window above it. Thus, the principles of classical tectonics are sacrificed to the need to strengthen the vertical dynamics of the composition.

From all that has been said, it follows that it was the narthex with its second floor, its domes, and its solemn facade that determined, if not everything, very much in the appearance of Panagia Chalkeon. Where did this unusual narthex come from?

Researchers have rightly pointed out the similarity of the two-storey twin-domed narthex of Panagia Chalkeon with the *katholika* of the Athonite monasteries<sup>27</sup>. Its

(n. 8), 10 note 13. Idem, *Μεσοβυζαντινή ναοδομία*, op.cit. (n. 8), 94-96.

<sup>23</sup> A. Rachénov, *Églises de Mésevmria*, Sofia 1932, 89-98.

<sup>24</sup> Ju. S. Aseev, *Arkhitektura drevnego Kieva*, Kiev 1982, 58-61.

<sup>25</sup> L. Mavrodinova, *Zemenskata c'rkva. Istorija, arhitektura, живопис*, Sofia 1980.

<sup>26</sup> Evangelides, *Ἡ Παναγία τῶν Χαλκέων*, op.cit. (n. 5), pl. 1α.

<sup>27</sup> Xyngopoulos, “Ο ναὸς τῆς Θεοτόκου”, op.cit. (n. 8), 563. Ćurčić, “Architectural significance of subsidiary chapels”, op.cit. (n. 15), 107. Stanković, *At the Threshold of the Heavens*, op.cit. (n. 14), 141-148, 463, 474.





Fig. 7. Thessaloniki, Panagia Chalkeon, 1028. View from the South.

closest parallels are indeed the late 10th-century katholika of the monasteries of Vatopedi and Iviron which belong to the so-called Athonite type, based on a complex version of the cross-in-square composition, with side conches on the sides of the domed square. Both churches show all the most important signs of the works of the Constantinopolitan circle<sup>28</sup>. The two-storey, twin-domed narthexes of Vatopedi (Fig. 6) and Iviron were conceived and built in such forms initially, at the end of the 10th century. In the case of Panagia Chalkeon, the purpose of the second-floor rooms is not exactly known. In Vatopedi, the rooms under the domes of the narthex now function as chapels with niches in their eastern walls. In Iviron, as

in Panagia Chalkeon, there are no such niches, but this, does not exclude a similar purpose of the premises<sup>29</sup>.

In the katholikon of the Great Lavra, the western parts were rebuilt. Their configuration may have been similar to Vatopedi and Iviron, and there is information about their functions from written sources<sup>30</sup>. It is known

<sup>28</sup> Mamaloukos, *Το καθολικό της Μονής Βατοπεδίου*, op.cit. (n. 15), 233-234.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 54-58, 154-155. Stanković, *At the Threshold of the Heavens*, op.cit. (n. 14), 65, 73-74, 144-145, 353, 364, 462-463. For the discussion on the functions of the upper storey and getting there in Panagia Chalkeon, see Paissidou, "The church 'Panagia Chalkeon in Thessaloniki'", op.cit. (n. 4), 127-128.

<sup>30</sup> P. Mylonas, "Le plan initial du catholicon de la Grande-Lavra au Mont Athos et la genèse du type du catholicon athonite", *CahArch* 32 (1984), 95-103. S. Voyadjis, *Το καθολικό της Ιεράς Μονής Μεγίστης Λαύρας στο Άγιον Όρος. Ιστορία και αρχιτεκτονική*, Athens 2019,

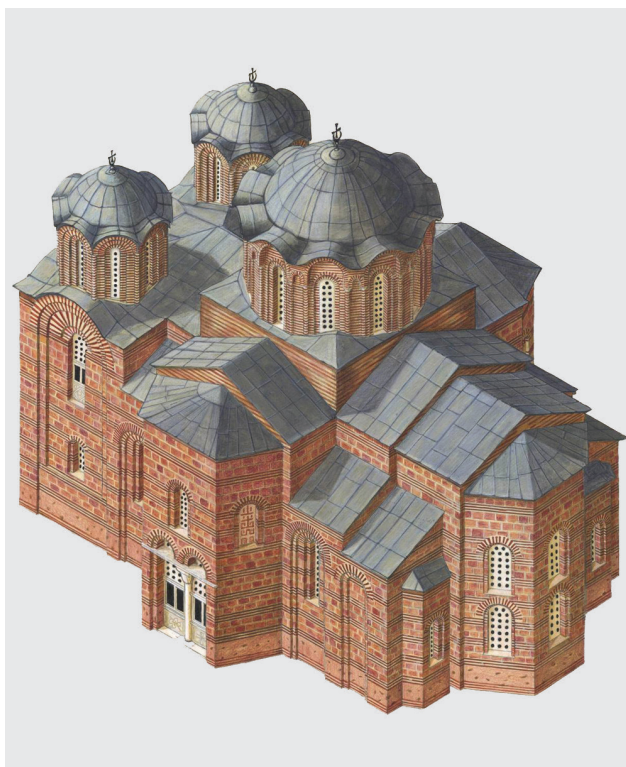


Fig. 8. Mount Athos, katholikon of Vatopedi monastery, ca. 980. Reconstruction.

that in the katholikon of the Lavra, there was a lodge-like room –the so-called *catechumenion* above the narthex which communicated with the naos through a triple opening. It has been suggested that the Great Lavra catechumenion was intended for St Athanasius himself or other members of the community who temporarily retired to indulge in vigil and constant prayer. From the pilgrims descriptions, it is known that to the north of the catechumenion there was the cell of St Athanasius and the library, and to the south, the chapel of the Five Martyrs of Sebaste. On the first floor, the original narthex was flanked by two domed chapels, in one of which St Athanasius accepted confessions and was later buried.

90-94, 103, drawings 35, 36, 39, 42. Stanković, *At the Threshold of the Heavens*, op.cit. (n. 14), 49-83, 331-333, 342-385, 407-433. Idem, "Tradition, innovation and individual creation in monastic architecture: the case of St Athanasius the Athonite and the katholikon of his great Lavra", A. Zakharova – O. Ovcharova – I. Oretskaia (eds), *Art of the Byzantine World. Individuality in Artistic Creativity. A Collection of Essays in Honour of Olga Popova*, Moscow 2021, 536-542.

The connection of the narthex and sometimes the chapels located in it or next to it with burials has been a well-known phenomenon in Middle Byzantine architecture<sup>31</sup>. This is how Slobodan Ćurčić tried to explain the appearance of the twin-domed narthex: in his opinion, in the rooms above the narthex, marked by domes, there should have been chapels for memorial services<sup>32</sup>. He and other researchers<sup>33</sup> considered very likely that at least one of the rooms on the second floor in Panagia Chalkeon was intended for this purpose, while the second one could have been used as a library, by analogy with the Great Lavra.

On the other hand, researchers rightly draw parallels between the two-storey narthex of the Athos churches and some metropolitan buildings, such as the northern church of the Lips Monastery<sup>34</sup>. In this church, there were two chapels over the pastophoria and two chapels over the narthex, which could have been crowned with small domes<sup>35</sup>. No less important is another possible purpose of the rooms on the second floor: to accommodate the ktetor during the service or any of the members of the monastic community who held a special position. This was probably the case in Eski Imaret Camii<sup>36</sup>. Researchers quite reasonably associate this purpose of the second

<sup>31</sup> F. Bache, "La fonction funéraire du narthex dans les églises byzantines du XIIe au XIVe siècle", *Histoire de l'art* 7 (1989), 25-33. V. Marinis, "Tombs and Burials in the Monastery *tou Libos* in Constantinople", *DOP* 63 (2009), 147-166. Idem, *Architecture and Ritual in the Churches of Constantinople, Ninth to Fifteenth Century*, New York 2014, 73-76.

<sup>32</sup> Ćurčić, "The Twin-Domed Narthex", op.cit. (n. 15), 333-344. For the critics of this hypothesis, see Tantsis, *To υπερώο*, op.cit. (n. 15), v. 1, 150-151.

<sup>33</sup> Velenis, "Η βυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική της Θεσσαλονίκης", op.cit. (n. 8), 6-9. Paissidou, "The church 'Panagia Chalkeon in Thessaloniki'", op.cit. (n. 4), 126-128; Tantsis, *To υπερώο*, op.cit. (n. 15), vol. 1, 151, 170.

<sup>34</sup> Ćurčić, "Architectural significance", op.cit. (n. 15), 109-110. Idem, "The Twin-Domed Narthex" op.cit. (n. 15), 339-340. Stanković, *On the Threshold of the Heavens*, op.cit. (n. 14), 109-113, 340.

<sup>35</sup> The reconstruction with five domes [A. H. S. Megaw, "The Original Form of the Theotokos Church of Constantine Lips", *DOP* 18 (1964), 279-298] is possible, but has no firm grounds. See V. Marinis, *The Monastery tou Libos. Architecture, Sculpture, and Liturgical Planning in Middle and Late Byzantine Constantinople*, PhD Diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 2005, 61-63.

<sup>36</sup> On the function of the upper floor in Eski Imaret Camii and other middle Byzantine churches, see Tantsis, *To υπερώο*, op.cit.



floor rooms in the Middle Byzantine churches of Constantinople with the long tradition of allocating a special place for the emperor in the church during divine services, which became the privilege of many other noble ktetors in the churches they built<sup>37</sup>. If in the Athonite katholika, there is reason to assume the use of the second-floor rooms for recluses, in the urban monasteries this was hardly the main reason for the appearance of such rooms above the narthex. The need to accentuate social distance, including through visual analogies with the imperial ceremonial, may have been of greater importance<sup>38</sup>.

Whatever the purpose of the second floor above the narthex of Panagia Chalkeon, from our point of view, it is not so much the functional as the formal connection of its twin-domed narthex with the Athonite tradition that is important. In Panagia Chalkeon, the tripartite composition, similar to the narthexes of Vatopedi and Iviron, led to a similar structure of the design of the western facade with three niches in each tier, with window openings and a door at the bottom in the middle (Figs 2, 6). Two domes, borrowed from Mount Athos, helped to deal with the massiveness and pomposity of the two-storey facade, which arose from the desire to imitate the imperial church-tomb. Thus, the focus on the Athos churches somewhat tempered the exorbitant ambitions of the ktetor.

It seems that some other features of the composition of the facades of Panagia Chalkeon also go back to the katholika of Vatopedi and Iviron. These are the placement of the windows of the main apse in two tiers, the triangular gables over the arms of the cross, and the location of all the main elements on the side facade in general, including the placement of windows in its western and central parts. A double opening with a column in the middle and an arched window above it in the side apses of Vatopedi and Iviron could be the prototype of an unusual composition of five windows with a semicolumn at the ends of the northern and southern arms of the cross of Panagia Chalkeon (Figs 7, 8).

Finally, it will not be superfluous to recall that, with rare exceptions, the churches of the complex cross-in-

square type in the 10th – first half of the 11th century in Macedonia are known, mainly on Mount Athos and in its vicinity<sup>39</sup>.

Thus, Panagia Chalkeon is an example of the original creative processing by the master of Thessaloniki of ideas that go back to different sources in Constantinople, Thessaloniki, and on Mount Athos. The metropolitan typology was taken as a basis, though important changes were made to it. A two-storey twin-domed narthex appeared in the urban church, which led to a number of other features associated with the great height of the building. The typology of the narthex goes back to the katholika of the oldest Athos monasteries of the late 10th century built by the masters of the metropolitan circle. From there, the master of Thessaloniki also drew some original ideas in the design of the facades of Panagia Chalkeon. Other forms are associated with the Constantinopolitan tradition, and there is a focus on a specific example – a two-storey imperial church-tomb, Myrelaion. A number of features of Panagia Chalkeon are associated with the local tradition, namely, with the reproduction of the forms of the church of Saint Sophia in Thessaloniki. However, from all these elements, the talented architect created a unique work that has no parallels either in Constantinople, Thessaloniki, or on Mount Athos.

<sup>39</sup> P. L. Vocotopoulos, “Ο βυζαντινὸς ναὸς τῆς Ὀλύνθου”, *Διεθνὲς Συμπόσιο Βυζαντινὴ Μακεδονία 324-1430 μ.Χ. (Θεσσαλονίκη, 29-31 Οκτωβρίου 1992)*, Thessaloniki 1995, 45-56. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, op.cit. (n. 6), 410-412. A. Tantsis, “Η χορηγία εκκλησιαστικῶν ιδρυμάτων στη Μακεδονία τον 11ο και 12ο αιώνα. Μία επεναξέταση των δεδομένων”, *Γ' Επιστημονικό συμπόσιο «Βυζαντινὴ Μακεδονία». Θεολογία, Ιστορία, Φιλολογία, Δίκαιο, Αρχαιολογία, Τέχνη (Θεσσαλονίκη, 14-15 Μαΐου 2016)*, Thessaloniki 2019, 501-503. Mamaloukos, *Το καθολικό της Μονῆς Βατοπεδίου*, op.cit. (n. 15), 277-295. Idem, “Παρατηρήσεις στην αθωνική βυζαντινὴ ναοδομία”, *International Symposium in Honour of Emeritus Professor George Velenis, Thessaloniki (Amphitheatre of Ancient Agora, 4-7 October 2017)*, *Proceedings*, Athens 2021, 619-625.

#### Illustration credits

Figs 1, 2, 5, 7: Photographs by Anna Zakharova. Fig. 3: Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, op.cit. (n. 6), fig. 395. Fig. 4: Striker, *The Myrelaion*, op.cit. (n. 9), fig. 28: reconstruction by C. Bozkurt. Figs 6, 8: Mamaloukos, *Το καθολικό της Μονῆς Βατοπεδίου*, op.cit. (n. 15), figs 69.7, 70: reconstruction by Stavros Mamaloukos.

(n. 15), v. 1, 160-172, 189-190. Stanković, *On the Threshold of the Heavens*, op.cit. (n. 14), 118-123, 338-385 (with bibliography).

<sup>37</sup> Tantsis, *Το υπερώο*, op.cit. (n. 15), v. 1, 162, 165-167.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 242.

## ΚΑΙ ΠΑΛΙ ΠΕΡΙ ΤΗΣ ΠΡΩΤΟΤΥΠΙΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΗΣ ΑΡΧΙΤΕΚΤΟΝΙΚΗΣ ΤΟΥ 11ου ΑΙΩΝΑ: Ο ΝΑΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑΣ ΤΩΝ ΧΑΛΚΕΩΝ ΣΤΗ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗ

Ο Cyril Mango στα γραπτά του χαρακτήρισε τον 11ο αιώνα ως εποχή νέας άνθησης της βυζαντινής αρχιτεκτονικής, η οποία, κατά τη διάρκεια αυτής της περιόδου, χαρακτηρίζεται από μεγάλη πρωτοτυπία. Στην παρούσα μελέτη εξετάζεται μια πτυχή αυτής της αρχιτεκτονικής με το παράδειγμα του ναού της Παναγίας των Χαλκίων στη Θεσσαλονίκη, του έτους 1028 (Εικ. 1, 2, 5, 7).

Το θέμα που έχει συζητηθεί περισσότερο, αναφορικά με την αρχιτεκτονική της Παναγίας Χαλκίων, είναι ο συνδυασμός κωνσταντινουπολίτικων και περιφερειακών χαρακτηριστικών. Αφενός, ο ναός ανήκει τυπολογικά στον μητροπολιτικό τύπο του σύνθετου σταυροειδούς εγγεγραμμένου ναού (Εικ. 3), το οποίο είναι σπάνιο για την εποχή αυτή στη Μακεδονία, και έχει παρατηρηθεί η στενή του ομοιότητα με τον ναό του Μυρελαίου (π. 920-922) (Εικ. 4). Και στις δύο εκκλησίες οι τοίχοι χτίστηκαν αποκλειστικά με πλίνθους και έχουν πλούσια διάρθρωση των όψεων με τη χρήση ημικίωνων. Αφετέρου, υπάρχουν πολλές διαφορές μεταξύ της Παναγίας των Χαλκίων και των κωνσταντινουπολίτικων σύγχρονών της παραδειγμάτων, όσον αφορά στην τεχνική, στο ύψος και στη σύνθεση, όπως τα υπερυψωμένα αετώματα, τα μικρά μονόλοβα παράθυρα κ.ά.

Δεν υπάρχει αμφιβολία ότι η Παναγία των Χαλκίων παρουσιάζει πρωτότυπη σύνθεση μητροπολιτικών και περιφερειακών στοιχείων, η οποία δεν έχει ακριβή παράλληλα. Μέσα από την ανάλυση της αρχιτεκτονικής της σύνθεσης θα προσπαθήσουμε να κατανοήσουμε την επιλογή του αρχιτέκτονα να συνδυάσει ετερογενή στοιχεία δημιουργώντας αυτό το μοναδικό έργο τέχνης.

Επιστρέφοντας στη σύγκριση με το Μυρέλαιο, θεωρούμε ότι ο κτίτορας της Παναγίας των Χαλκίων ήθελε να αναπαράγει όχι μόνο τις χαρακτηριστικές λεπτομέρειες των όψεων αυτού του αυτοκρατορικού ταφικού ναού αλλά και την ιδιαίτερη δομή του. Το Μυρέλαιο είναι διώροφο κτήριο, καθώς η στάθμη του ναού στον όροφο έπρεπε να ταυτιστεί με το επίπεδο του παρακείμενου παλατιού που χτίστηκε πάνω από

τη ροτόντα του 5ου αιώνα. Ο ταφικός προορισμός του ναού μαρτυρείται από τις γραπτές πηγές, αν και δεν έχουν ανακαλυφθεί μέχρι στιγμής αρχαιολογικά τεκμήρια. Στις όψεις του κατώτερου τμήματος του ναού αναπτύσσεται στοά με έντονα προεξέχουσες παραστάδες, οι άξονες των οποίων συμπίπτουν με τους ημικίονες του άνω τμήματος (Εικ. 4).

Η Παναγία των Χαλκίων εμφανίζει στις όψεις της τον τύπο της στοάς δύο επιπέδων, με τους ημικίονες της άνω ζώνης να αντιστοιχούν στις κάτω παραστάδες (Εικ. 2). Η δυτική πρόσοψη παραπέμπει σε θριαμβική αψίδα τριών τόξων σε δύο επίπεδα, ενώ στα πλάγια ο τύπος της στοάς τροποποιείται. Η πρώτη και η δεύτερη βαθμίδα χωρίζονται από ένα προεξέχον μαρμάρινο γείσο, οπότε ολόκληρο το άνω τμήμα γίνεται αντιληπτό ως υπερκατασκευή που εδράζεται σε ισχυρές θολωτές υποδομές. Ωστόσο, στην Παναγία των Χαλκίων μόνο ο νάρθηκας είναι διώροφος. Στη δυτική πρόσοψη το γείσο δεν αντιστοιχεί στο επίπεδο του ενδιάμεσου δαπέδου αλλά στη γένεση της θολοδομίας του κάτω ορόφου. Η συγκεκριμένη επιλογή δίνει την εντύπωση ότι ο όροφος έχει μεγαλύτερο ύψος από το πραγματικό. Όλα αυτά τα χαρακτηριστικά υποδηλώνουν την επιθυμία μίμησης μιας δομής δύο επιπέδων, προφανώς εμπνευσμένη από το Μυρέλαιο.

Ωστόσο, η Παναγία των Χαλκίων διαφέρει από τους ναούς της Κωνσταντινούπολης από πολλές όψεις. Ο κύριος παράγοντας που επηρέασε σχεδόν όλα τα άλλα χαρακτηριστικά, είναι το ύψος της. Αναλογικά, η Παναγία των Χαλκίων είναι η ψηλότερη από όλους τους τετρακίονιους σταυροειδείς εγγεγραμμένους ναούς των Βαλκανίων. Κυρίως το μεγάλο ύψος της κατασκευής απαίτησε την αύξηση του πάχους των τοίχων. Συνήθως αυτό οδηγεί σε μείωση του αριθμού και του μεγέθους των ανοιγμάτων, βαριές φόρμες και υποφωτισμένο εσωτερικό. Οι κατασκευαστές της Παναγίας των Χαλκίων προσπάθησαν να παρακάμψουν αυτά τα μειονεκτήματα. Οι προσόψεις έλαβαν μια

σύνθετη διάρθρωση, η οποία μειώνει οπτικά τον όγκο των τοίχων, ενώ ο αριθμός των παραθύρων και των κογχών σχεδόν διπλασιάστηκε. Η ανάγκη ανύψωσης του κεντρικού τρούλου πάνω από τους τρούλους του νάρθηκα οδήγησε στην υπερύψωση του τυμπάνου με δύο επίπεδα παραθύρων. Το μεγάλο ύψος των τριών τρούλων οδήγησε στη λύση των υπερυψωμένων τριγωνικών αετωμάτων στην ανατολική και στις πλευρικές κεραίες (Εικ. 1, 2, 5). Με τον τρόπο αυτό τονίζεται η δυναμική της σύνθεσης κατά τον κατακόρυφο άξονα.

Από αυτό προκύπτει ότι ο διώροφος νάρθηκας με τους τρούλους και τη θριαμβική πρόσοψή του καθόρισε κατά πολύ την εμφάνιση της Παναγίας των Χαλκέων. Έχει σημειωθεί ότι είναι παρόμοιος με τους νάρθηκες των καθολικών των μονών Βατοπεδίου (Εικ. 6) και Ιβήρων στα τέλη του 10ου αιώνα. Και τα δύο καθολικά ανήκουν στον λεγόμενο αθωνικό τύπο, βασισμένο σε μια σύνθετη παραλλαγή του σταυροειδούς εγγεγραμμένου ναού. Όπως και στην περίπτωση της Παναγίας των Χαλκέων, η αρχική χρήση των χώρων του δεύτερου ορόφου στους νάρθηκες των καθολικών των μονών Βατοπεδίου και Ιβήρων δεν είναι ακριβώς γνωστή. Όποια και αν είναι η λειτουργία του δεύτερου ορόφου πάνω από τον νάρθηκα της Παναγίας των Χαλκέων, η τυπολογική σύνδεση του στεγασμένου με δίδυμους τρούλους νάρθηκα με την αθωνική παράδοση είναι προφανής. Στην Παναγία των Χαλκέων η τριμερής σύνθεση της διώροφης δυτικής πρόσοψης είναι επίσης παρόμοια με αυτήν του Βατοπεδίου και της Ιβήρων, αλλά και άλλα χαρακτηριστικά, όπως τα δύο επίπεδα παραθύρων στην κεντρική αψίδα του ιερού βήματος, τα τριγωνικά αετώματα στις πλευρικές όψεις και η ιδιαίτερη διάταξη των παραθύρων στα σκέλη του σταυρού. Η διάταξη του διβήλου παραθύρου, που επιστέφεται από

ένα μονόλοβο στις πλευρικές αψίδες του Βατοπεδίου (Εικ. 8) και της Ιβήρων, θα μπορούσε να είναι το πρότυπο, βάσει του οποίου δημιουργήθηκε η ασυνήθιστη σύνθεση των πέντε παραθύρων με τον ημικύονα στις πλευρικές όψεις της Παναγίας των Χαλκέων (Εικ. 7).

Έτσι, η Παναγία των Χαλκέων είναι ένα παράδειγμα πρωτότυπης δημιουργικής επεξεργασίας από έναν ταλαντούχο θεσσαλονικέα αρχιτέκτονα ιδεών που ανάγονται σε διαφορετικές πηγές: στην Κωνσταντινούπολη, τη Θεσσαλονίκη και στο Άγιον Όρος. Αν και η μητροπολιτική τυπολογία ελήφθη ως βάση, έγιναν σημαντικές αλλαγές σε αυτήν. Η επιλογή ενός διώροφου νάρθηκα με δίδυμους τρούλους προκάλεσε σειρά άλλων χειρισμών που σχετίζονται με το μεγάλο ύψος του κτηρίου. Η τυπολογία του νάρθηκα ανάγεται στα καθολικά των παλαιότερων μοναστηριών του Άθωνα, που χρονολογούνται στα τέλη του 10ου αιώνα. Από εκεί ο αρχιτέκτονας άντλησε επίσης μερικές πρωτότυπες ιδέες στον σχεδιασμό των προσόψεων της Παναγίας των Χαλκέων. Άλλες μορφές συνδέονται με την παράδοση της Κωνσταντινούπολης, και πιο συγκεκριμένα με τον διώροφο αυτοκρατορικό ταφικό ναό του Μυρελαίου. Μια σειρά από χαρακτηριστικά της Παναγίας των Χαλκέων συνδέονται με την τοπική παράδοση της Θεσσαλονίκης. Ωστόσο, από όλα αυτά τα στοιχεία ο αρχιτέκτονας δημιούργησε ένα μοναδικό έργο, που δεν έχει ανάλογα ούτε στην Κωνσταντινούπολη, ούτε στη Θεσσαλονίκη, ούτε στο Άγιον Όρος.

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