



---

Excavations at the Cathedral of Haghia Sophia, Andravida, Greece

Author(s): Carl D. Sheppard

Source: *Gesta*, Vol. 25, No. 1, Essays in Honor of Whitney Snow Stoddard (1986), pp. 139-144

Published by: International Center of Medieval Art

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/766908>

Accessed: 12/03/2010 06:30

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=icma>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



*International Center of Medieval Art* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Gesta*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

# Excavations at the Cathedral of Haghia Sophia, Andravida, Greece

CARL D. SHEPPARD

*University of Minnesota, Minneapolis*

## *Abstract*

The purpose of the 1984 Minnesota-Andravida Project was to establish a plan of the ruins of the former Frankish, 13th-century Cathedral of Haghia Sophia, Andravida, Elis, Greece. The second objective was to gather information that would aid in interpreting the structure above ground, comprising a sanctuary flanked by two chapels and roofed by rib vaults. The complicated history of the ruins was investigated through archeological methods and art historical analysis.

The archeological investigations of Whitney Stoddard at Psalmodi have increased our knowledge of the Middle Ages, served as a training experience for committed students of the period, and provided a guide to others similarly oriented in their interests. His work at Psalmodi provided an incentive to the Minnesota-Andravida Project, undertaken at the ruins of the Cathedral of Haghia Sophia at Andravida, Greece (Figs. 1, 2). The purpose of the Project was to ascertain the plan of these ruins (Fig. 3) and to examine the still standing portion of the church to determine the history of its fabric.<sup>1</sup>

The Cathedral was the court church of the Principality of Achaia during the Latin occupation of the Peloponnesos from 1205 to 1427. From 1209 to 1380, the Morea was held by members of the de Villehardouin family, eventually under the control of the Angevin Kings of Naples. The Cathedral was the place the Prince met with his barons, where justice among them was carried out and where high social events took place. Although Patras, under Venetian influence, was the highest ecclesiastical see of the Latin Peloponnesos, Andravida was the political, religious center of the Principality. The town was unfortified and formed part of a well-planned triangle with the port of Kyllini or Clarence and the vast castle of Chelmoutzi, which still dominates the plain of Elis from its eminence near the Ionian Sea.

The Latin period of the Peloponnesos is the least studied of any in the long history of the peninsula.<sup>2</sup> There are many monuments from these centuries still extant in Greece; particularly dramatic are the ruins of the fortified heights of almost every pass. One of the priorities of the first season of the Project was the determination of Frankish building practices in order to sort out the history of these ruins. There are also the remains of four Frankish churches; the most extensive is that at Andravida.<sup>3</sup> The

rib-vaulted east end of the building still stands. In the early 13th century, during the reign of Prince Geoffrey I (1210–ca.1226), the original east end was probably unvaulted. Sufficient of the north and south walls survives to postulate a rather fortress-like appearance. The condition of the ruins suggests that vaulting was inserted at a later date, most probably during the rule of William II before he was made a prisoner in 1259. At some time during the

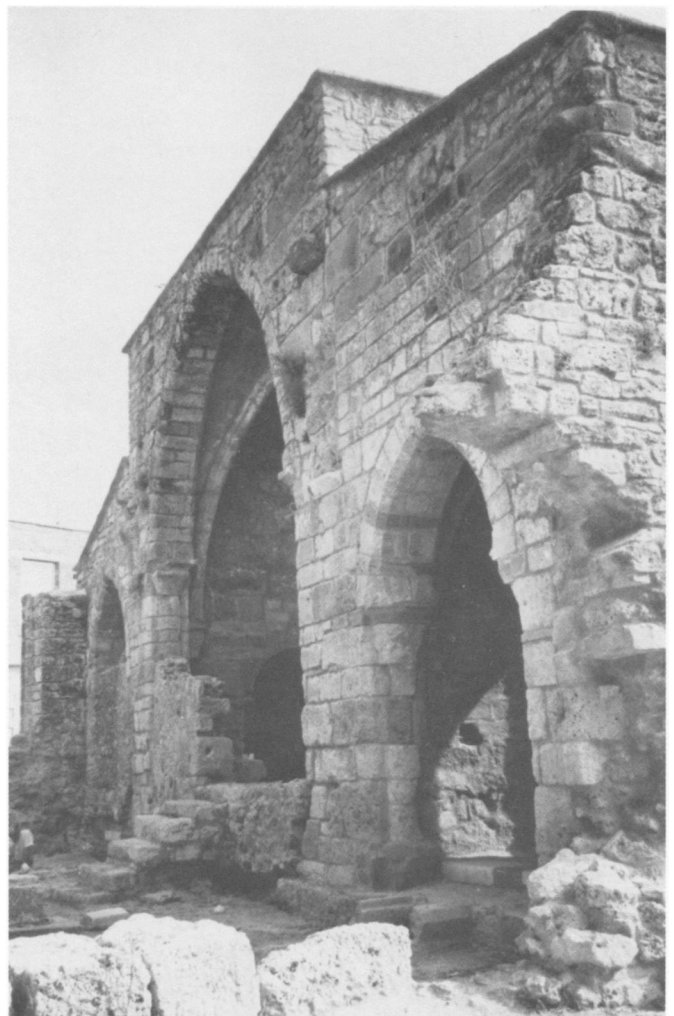


FIGURE 1. *Cathedral of Haghia Sophia, Andravida, sanctuary from the west (photo: Ann Zelle).*



FIGURE 2. *Cathedral of Haghia Sophia, Andravida, sanctuary from the south (photo: Ann Zelle).*

Turkish domination, the east end of the Cathedral was adapted to use again, probably as an Orthodox sanctuary. The western part of the building had already disappeared requiring various internal changes. In the 19th century, after Greek independence, the ruins were reworked to make an Orthodox oratory.

The attention of the Minnesota-Andravida Project during 1984 was concentrated on the west of the church. Three pier positions are now evident on the north colonnade which rested on a continuous rubble and cement foundation. The south colonnade does not rest on a continuous foundation but instead on irregular pourings of fine cement for each pier, which consisted of a classical sandstone block on which was placed a square base with a raised circular moulding for a column shaft (Fig. 4). Only one of these remains complete, probably because it was more deeply covered than any of the others by the fill in front of the Cathedral as seen in a photograph of 1892.<sup>4</sup> A total of three blocks are identifiable on the south colonnade. The other pier bases exist as cement depressions for blocks. The easternmost one on the north colonnade retains the impression made by a projecting tenon from a reused block (Fig. 5). The others are recognizable because of the presence of foundations and because of restorations around cement pours. The identified bases correspond generally to each other north and south and on average are 2.6 m. apart on center, giving the present south colonnade a length of eight intercolumniations, the north ten.

The perimeter of the building was paced out in 1923 by Ramsay Traquair.<sup>5</sup> He reported it to be 177 feet long or 53.37 m. and Antoine Bon<sup>6</sup> projected a similar distance. Our measurements from the eastern tip of the north

buttress to the road which cuts diagonally across the modern church precinct is, along the north wall, 134 feet or 41 m. At a distance of 47 m. to the west of the sanctuary façade along the line of the north wall and across the street, we dug down 76 cm. (Fig. 3-A). No trace of masonry was discovered. The foundation of the north wall was traced to within 4 m. of the precinct fence before it stopped, and that of the north pier wall was traced as far west as the fence (Fig. 3-B). The foundations revealed at these points and at another within 2 m. of the fence along the line of the south wall (Fig. 3-C) consisted of fine cement<sup>7</sup> poured into a dirt trench and covered by masonry of mortar, small blocks of cement, stones, and pebbles, later edged occasionally by tile fragments. The mortar has disintegrated near the surfaces of the wall so the latter has the appearance of dry construction, roughly put together, of small stones or rubble. The large sandstone blocks now piled along the north and south walls have nothing to do with the foundations and were probably put there in 1964 through the conservation efforts of A. K. Orlandos for the Byzantine Ephoreia.<sup>8</sup> The west end of the Cathedral certainly lies under the modern street.

In 1907, Rennell Rodd noted that, "Six of the grey granite columns which supported the arches of the nave were until recently lying on the site but four of them have been utilized to form the portico of the church in the neighboring village of Lekhaina."<sup>9</sup> The four columns are still at Lekhena and large sections of shafts of the same handsome material are on the site of Haghia Sophia. There is no reason to reject these as classical spoils once used along the naves. They do vary in dimensions and entasis, but these types of variation have not been an impediment to architects who simply adjusted bases or capitals and impost

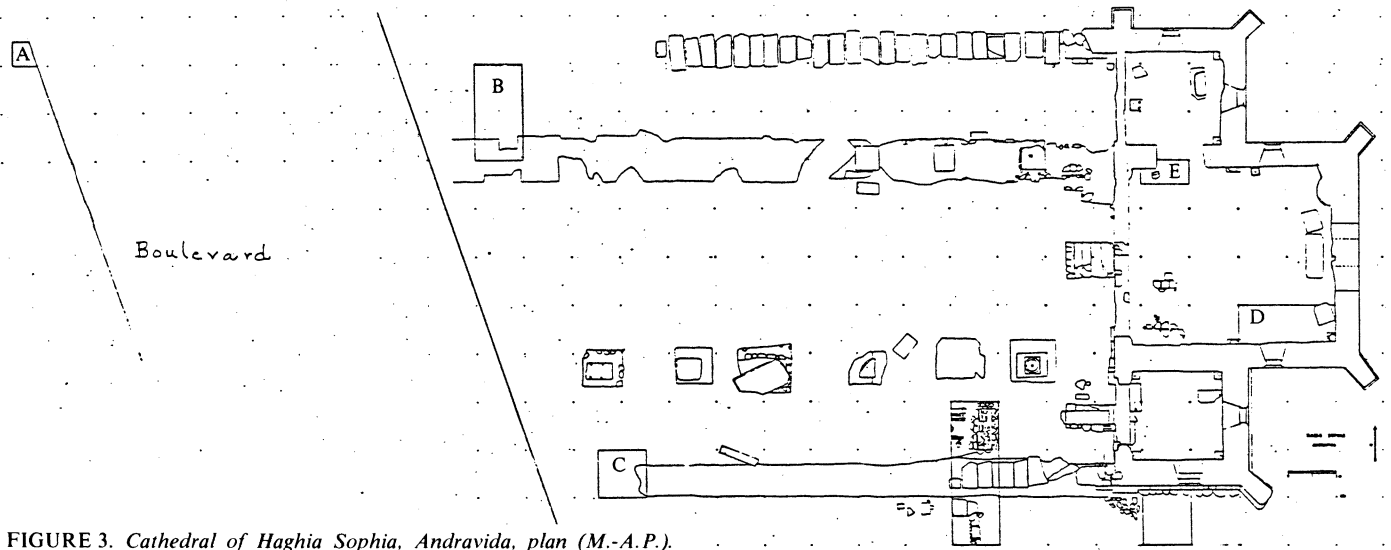


FIGURE 3. Cathedral of Haghia Sophia, Andravida, plan (M.-A.P.).

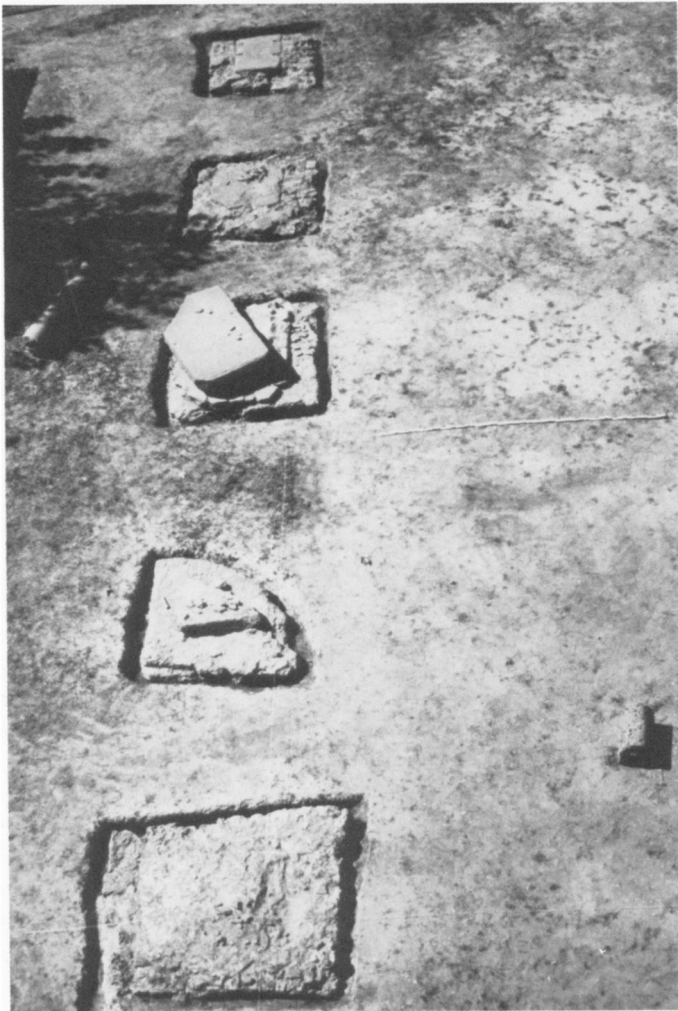


FIGURE 4. Cathedral of Haghia Sophia, Andravida, south pier bases of nave (photo: M.-A.P.)



FIGURE 5. Cathedral of Haghia Sophia, Andravida, north pier wall foundations and line of north exterior wall (photo: M.-A.P.)

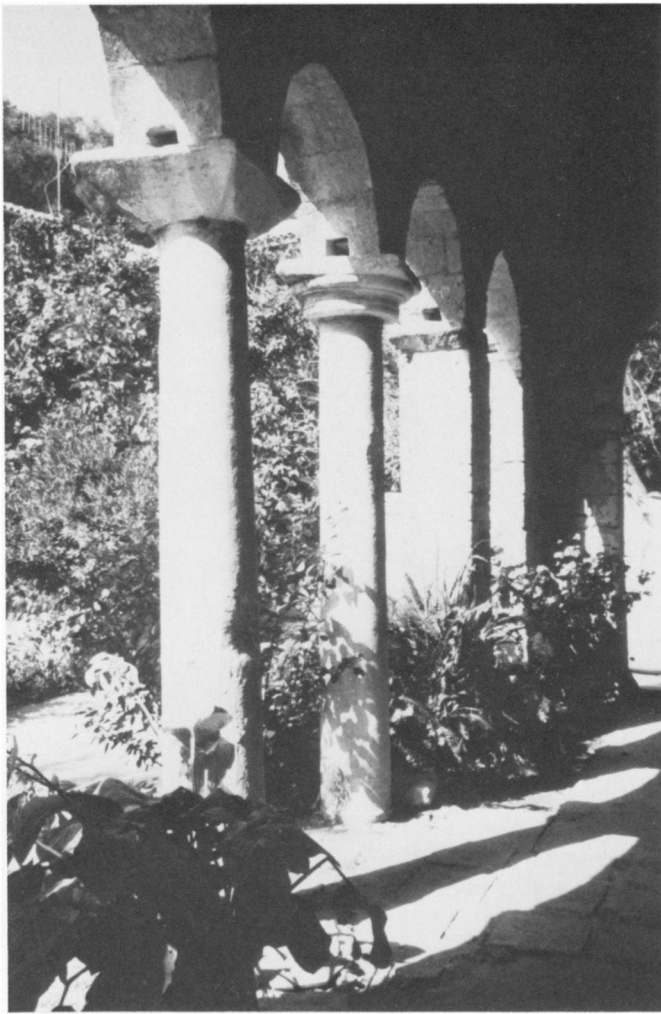


FIGURE 6. *Monastery of Vlacherna, Church of Our Lady, porch (photo: Ann Zelle).*

blocks, as at the 13th-century Frankish porch added to the Byzantine Church of Our Lady of the Monastery of Vlacherna, some three kilometers east of Kyllini (Fig. 6).<sup>10</sup>

It does seem strange that no trace of an engaged column or pier remains against the façade of the sanctuary. Only a set of blocks corresponding to the north and south colonnades shows where an arch was sprung above the piers. There is no indication that the eastern part of the naves was organized to give the impression of a transept. To the contrary, the colonnades seem to have abutted the walls of the chapels directly and continued regularly spaced to the west.

The Minnesota-Andravida Project uncovered the exterior foundations of the side aisles of the nave and of that along the side of the south chapel of the sanctuary. The south foundation was continuous, without interruption even under the now disappeared south buttress, and was placed at right angles to its contiguous wall as is the extant

corresponding north buttress. This condition indicates the east and west sections of the church were executed in a single campaign. Since no buttresses were found along the north and south exterior walls, it can be concluded that the naves were unvaulted, and were instead covered with wooden trusses, over both the central nave and the side aisles. The latter are thought to have been lower, because of the height of the existing side chapels.

The four buttresses against the east corners of the three chapels are each set at an angle against two walls, a most unusual and not one of the best methods of counteracting thrusts. Each is likewise bonded to each of its adjacent walls and is therefore contemporary with the first campaign of construction. Since the walls in question are not bonded, it might have been the architects' intention to do so by this treatment of the buttresses. In any case, vaulting had nothing to do with this handling of the matter. The buttress extant on the north side is at right angles to its supported wall and is not bonded.

Any hypothetical elevation of the naves must be based on the heights of the arch to the south chapel and of the arch to the sanctuary and on the blocks embedded in the piers separating the chapels and on the measurements of the remaining north wall, its partial window frame and the width of the intercolumniations. It seems from the present state of our knowledge, that the west portion of the original Cathedral was rather archaic looking, more like a strong rampart than an articulated wall because of the heavy masonry without buttressing. An idea of the appearance must be developed from the existing north and south walls of the Cathedral with tall narrow windows and stocky proportions.

Examination of the foundations<sup>11</sup> along the south interior wall of the sanctuary showed a narrow base projection of several centimeters beyond the large wall blocks (Fig. 3-D). The walls are approximately 1 m. thick, each face has blocks oriented along the wall as well as bonded through it. Repairs to the exterior walls have been so extensive above ground level as to give the construction a pseudo-cloisonné Byzantine effect. Originally no tile nor brick was used, only rather uniform classical blocks identifiable through construction markings.

It seems as if the whole east end was extensively redone during the early Latin period. The east window was enlarged and pointed, vaulting was added and the arches to the west were pointed. The remains of the north buttress and the point at which the north nave wall touches the chapel both indicate reworking of large sections. The north and south windows of the main apse are off center as much as that of the south windows of the south chapel. This detail, plus others mentioned above, are the evidence that rib-vaulting and pointing of the arches at the east and west were executed in a second campaign of construction which would have brought the church up-to-date instead of leaving it in an archaic condition. As mentioned, this was

probably done in the mid-13th century. At that time, the red sandstone moulding of the main chapel was inserted. Around the exterior of the apse at the level of the moulding, the blocks were cut in half. The upper section corresponding to the moulding has the fragmented appearance of being reset.

At the same time, the main apse of the sanctuary was fitted with four colonnettes at the corners visually running through the moulding, which is solid and billows out. These shafts were of red sandstone, similar to that of the moulding and were octagonal in section. The *tas-de-charge* of the ribs look like sheaths by which they are absorbed. They have octagonal sections also and reflect the shape of the corner colonnettes. When the portal between the north chapel and the sanctuary was cut, one of these upper shafts was embedded in its east jamb.<sup>12</sup> The polychromy of the renovated sanctuary must have been very pleasing with subdued light reflecting from the polished surfaces and absorbed by the yellow ochre blocks behind them.

Abandonment of the Cathedral might have occurred after 1427 when the Despot of Mistra extinguished the remnants of Frankish presence, or after 1460 when the Turks expunged Byzantine authority from the Peloponnesos. How long after 1427 or 1460 the building was left unattended cannot be known, but certainly open windows alone could not account for the amount of silt accumulated. The nave must have been dismantled or destroyed, the large openings to the west permitting the winds to swirl dust and debris into the empty rooms of the sanctuary.<sup>13</sup> The door between the north chapel and the sanctuary was cut through the original wall. A niche was carved into the south wall of the sanctuary and another was placed in the south wall of the south chapel; the east window was closed, and a smaller east window created. In all probability the vaults and roof were restored and some kind of closure arranged for the western openings of the chapels. Possibly at this time the north chapel was altered so that the vaults when rebuilt took on the cumbersome and unattractive proportions they now have. Neglect and earth tremors may have devastated this chapel more than the adjoining rooms.

The present floor of the north and main chapels reflects a third, less extensive, renovation of the building. At this time all the windows of the three apses were closed; walls at least as high as the springing of the vault were thrust across the west ends of the chapels. A door to the sanctuary and one to the south chapel were installed. The red sandstone moulding of the main apse was slit vertically on the north and south sides to afford slots for some kind of interior closure. Repairs to the general fabric were certainly undertaken at this time, too. Oral tradition at Andravida holds that a sanctuary, with chromolithographic icons, was arranged in the early 20th century. Religious use ceased in 1964 when the Byzantine Ephoreia took control of the building. Since that time the ruins began to serve as a lapidary for the area. The present mayor, Kostantine

Varvaressos, has taken responsibility for the material deposited, including the tombstone of the Princess Agnes, which has the most important Frankish inscription from the period of the Principality.<sup>14</sup>

The Cathedral of Andravida is a complete architectural intrusion in the Peloponnesos. For that matter, no other Gothic structure stands in Greece. The major Frankish buildings extant have no rib-vaulting, e.g., the Castle of Chlemoutzi. There are rib-vaults over the north and south bays of the narthex of the Church of Vlacherna but the building is Byzantine. It is doubtful whether the Frankish churches at Tripiti and Stymphalia were ever vaulted. There are several Latin additions to earlier buildings such as the west porch of the Monastery at Daphne. Andravida, however, stands as a unique instance of Gothic architecture in Greece. The original structure at Andravida was built for protective as well as religious needs. The Prince had to have a church for his Bishop, transferred from Olona, and he needed it built rapidly. Andravida was without protection, so the great rock pile of the Cathedral served in case of danger as a refuge. When the Principality became well established and wealthy, the building was upgraded. It still was not comparable to the contemporary churches of Naples or of Famagusta in Cyprus; it stands as a practical solution to problems of the Frankish conquerors.

#### NOTES

1. The Project was supported by grants from the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota, by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, and by matching funds from the Chemical Bank Foundation. Nancy K. Cooper was the Field Director, Katherine Kieffer, archeologist, Catherine Fels, artist, Mary Lee Coulson, historian, and Ianna Kakoliou, trainee.
2. R. Traquair, "Frankish Architecture in Greece," *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, XII (1923), 1-16, and XIII (1924), 73-81. Although short, it is excellent for analysis and plans. A. Bon, *La Morée Franque* (Paris, 1969), is magisterial and the best text available for information about source material, bibliography, typography, history and the arts.
3. C. Sheppard, "The Frankish Cathedral of Andravida, Elis, Greece," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (October, 1985). This is the report of the first season, 1983, of the Minnesota-Andravida Project. The report includes a review of the modern literature on the material and the few direct contemporary references relating to the Cathedral as well as the result of that year's work in the apse and along the south side of the nave. In 1984, the Project concentrated on the naves of the church.
4. *Ibid.*, fig. 11.
5. Traquair, "Frankish Architecture," 73.
6. Bon, *Le Morée Franque*, 548, n. 1. He also probably assumed the proportions were similar to foundations at Kyllini he identified as a church.
7. A vertical section of the foundations of the south wall shows the following measurements: 10 cm. dirt, 35 cm. rubble, and 44 cm. cement.

8. No extensive report exists, only a very brief notice in A. K. Orlandos, "Chronika," *Archaiologikon Deltion*, 19, pt. 2.2 (1964). Mary Lee Coulson, Project historian, adds the following information about the Cathedral of Santa Sophia and wishes to thank among others Reverend Protopresbyter Stephen Avramides, Undersecretary on Foreign Relations, Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, Athens, and the Reverend Constantine Kapetonopoulos, Parlia-Ioannidi. There are no records of Haghia Sophia in the Episcopal Library of Pirgos. She also cites G. Papandreou, *H. Hleia Dia Mseoy Ton Aionon* (Athens, 1924), 172, who states that a small reliquary box was recently found in the dirt of the sanctuary at Haghia Sophia. The box, now lost, was empty but preserved "clearly Byzantine" inscriptions of the names of Sts. Anopgyroi, Vassili, Procopius, Pantelemeon, Paraskevi, George and Demetrios. Coulson also cites the report in the *Bulletin de Correspondence Hellenique*, 86 (1962), 749, by G. Daux, "Chronique des fouilles, 1961": "Andravida, restorations. Dans l'église gothique de 'Ayia Sophia, les voutes ont été consolidées; la toiture a été restorée et l'étancheté des fondations assurée, par les soins de E. Stika."
9. R. Rodd, *Princes of Achaia*, 1 (London, 1907), 17. Rodd traced the perimeter of Haghia Sophia without giving any measurements. He did observe that, "The extra thickness of the western wall (facade) suggests some extra importance was given to the west front."
10. Bon, *La Morée Franque*, 561–74.
11. In both area "D" on the plan, worked in 1983, and area "E," worked in 1984, sets of post-holes were discovered. One set of 10 to 12 cm. in diameter was immediately below the first "Frankish" floor level; the second of 4 to 6 cm. in diameter pierced the first "Frankish" level from a few centimeters above. The two sets, of which the later had about triple the number of holes than the earlier, were close in date. We interpreted them as evidence of two different scaffolds. The earlier and larger were used for construction of the walls with the heavy Roman blocks.
12. The measurements of the shaft are so exact for a position between the moulding and a capital above that they cannot be coincidental. The shaft design is not western but seems more akin to Byzantine types, e.g., the two octagonal colonnettes at the north and south corners on the west of the large nave beneath the main dome of the Nea Moni, Chios, A. K. Orlandos, *Monuments Byzantins de Chio*, II (Athens, 1930), does not indicate these columns on his plan, pl. 18a, but the monastery was badly damaged and rebuilt. Delicate octagonal shafts now appear between the exterior windows of the drum of the dome over the nave.
13. In both the north and main chapels are a few 39 cm. square, dark red tiles which are part of the most recent floor covering. The dirt fill beneath this in the north chapel and the sanctuary is approximately 1 m. The level of the south chapel is only slightly above ground, having been established during the last two decades as seen in photographs. In 1984, the Minnesota-Andravida Project was able to dig around the western jamb of the portal between the north and main chapels and determined the level of the sill to be 30 cm. above the original foundations (Fig. 3-E).
14. A. Bon, "Dalle funéraire d'une princesse de Morée (XIII siècle)," *Monuments Piot*, XLIX (1957), 129–39.