

Church Architecture in the Despotate of Epirus: The Problem of Influences

Panayotis L. Vocotopoulos

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The article deals with the various influences discernible in the ecclesiastical architecture of the Despotate of Epirus (XIIIth c.). According to the analysis given in the text, the antecedents of the church architecture of this byzantine state must be sought in the local tradition and in the Helladic school, but also in the architecture of Constantinople, Macedonia and the West.

A notable local school of architecture flourished in the thirteenth century in the state founded in western Greece after the dismemberment of the Byzantine Empire by the participants in the Fourth Crusade. That state, ruled by the Komnenos Doukas family related to the Byzantine emperors Isaakios II and Alexios III, and commonly called in modern research the Despotate of Epirus, had its capital in Arta, expanded very rapidly and almost succeeded in recapturing Constantinople from the Latins.¹ Few buildings are ascribed to the first three decades of the thirteenth century, the period of consolidation and expansion of the new state. An important building activity is witnessed during the reign of Michael II (c. 1231-1268), when the Despotate was gradually confined to western Greece and Thessaly, and that of his son Nikephoros (1268-1296), otherwise a period of decline. No noteworthy structures were erected after the fall of the Komnenodoukas dynasty in 1318.

If one excepts the pioneering but obsolescent articles of Friderikos Versakis and Demetrios Evangelidis, both classical archaeologists,² the foundations for the study of the architecture of the Despotate were laid by the prominent Greek architectural historian Anastasios Orlandos, who, however, published only books and articles on individual monuments.³ The publication or reassessment of various

monuments of that school proceeds thanks to the works of scholars such as Charalampos Bouras,⁴ Aleksander Meksi,⁵ Pirro Thomo,⁶ Myrtili Achimastou-Potamianou,⁷ Nikolaos Nikonanos (for the monuments of Thessaly),⁸ Horst Hallensleben,⁹ Lioba Theis,¹⁰ Evangelia Papatheophanous-Tsouri,¹¹ Aphrodite Pasali¹² and the author of the present paper,¹³ who also attempted short overall surveys of the architecture of the Despotate.¹⁴ They had been preceded by the entry "Epiros" of the late Professor Demetrios Pallas in the *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*,¹⁵ a survey of Byzantine architecture in the thirteenth century by the *Jubilar* of the present volume,¹⁶ and the relevant section of Cyril Mango's book on Byzantine architecture.¹⁷ George Velenis formula-

¹ On the history of the Despotate of Epirus see mainly D. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epiros*, Oxford, 1957; P. Soustal-J. Koder, *Nikopolis und Kephallenia* (TIB, 3), Vienna, 1981, 59-70; D. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epiros 1267-1479*, Cambridge, 1984; and idem in M. B. Sakellariou (ed.), *Epiros. 4000 Years of Greek History and Civilization*, Athens, 1997, 198-222.

² See e.g. F. Versakis, *Βυζαντινὰ καὶ ἐν Δελβίνω*, 'Αρχαιολογικὸν Δελτίον, 1, 1915, 28-44; D. Evangelidis, *Βυζαντινὰ μνημεῖα τῆς Ἠπείρου*, 'Ηπειρωτικὰ Χρονικά, 6, 1931, 258-274; idem, *Ἡ βυζαντινὴ ἐκκλησία τῆς Ἁγ. Κυριακῆς τοῦ Γαρδικίου (Παραμυθιάς)*, 'Αφιέρωμα εἰς τὴν Ἠπειρον εἰς μνήμην Χριστοῦ Σούλη, Athens 1956, 129-136.

³ Apart from his monograph on the Paregoritissa (*Ἡ Παρηγορήσισα τῆς Ἄρτης*, Athens 1963) and from the second volume of his periodical 'Αρχεῖον τῶν Βυζαντινῶν Μνημείων τῆς Ἑλλάδος, published in 1936 and devoted to the monuments of the region of Arta, see *Μνημεῖα τοῦ Δεσποτάτου τῆς Ἠπείρου. Ἡ Παναγία Βελλᾶς*, 'Ηπειρωτικὰ Χρονικά, 2, 1927, 153-169; *Ἐκ τοῦ βυζαντινοῦ κάστρου τῶν Ἰωαννίνων*, *ibid.*, 5, 1930, 7-8; *Ἡ Πόρτα Παναγιά τῆς Θεσσαλίας*, ABME, 1, 1935, 5-40; *Ὁ ἐν Ἀκαρνανίᾳ βυζαντινὸς ναὸς τῆς Παλαιοκατοῦνας*, ABME, 9, 1961, 21-42; *Τὸ φρούριον τοῦ Ἀγγελοκάστρου*, *ibid.*, 54-72.

⁴ Ch. Bouras, *Ἅγιος Στέφανος Ριβίου Ἀκαρνανίας*, 'Επιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς Πολυτεχνικῆς Σχολῆς Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης, 3, 1968, 41-56.

⁵ See e.g. his articles *L'architecture de l'église de Mesopotame*, *Monumentet*, 3, 1972, 47-94; *Les trois églises byzantines de Berat*, *ibid.*, 4, 1972, 59-102; *L'architecture de l'église de Perondi et sa restauration*, *ibid.*, 5-6, 1973, 19-42; *Nouvelles données sur l'église de Mesopotame*, *ibid.*, 10, 1975, 151-159.

⁶ P. Thomo, *Deux monuments de notre architecture médiévale. Les églises cruciformes à coupole de Kosine et de Berat*, *Studime Historike*, XXVI.4, 1972, 51-62.

⁷ M. Achimastou-Potamianou, *Νέα στοιχεία περὶ τῆς Μονῆς τοῦ Ἁγίου Νικολάου τοῦ Ντίλιου εἰς τὴν Νῆσον τῶν Ἰωαννίνων*, 'Αρχαιολογικὸν Δελτίον, 24, 1969, fasc. A, 152-175.

⁸ N. Nikonanos, *Βυζαντινοὶ ναοὶ τῆς Θεσσαλίας ἀπὸ τὸ 10ο αἰὼνα ὡς τὴν κατάκτηση τῆς περιοχῆς ἀπὸ τοὺς Τούρκους τὸ 1393*, Athens 1979.

⁹ H. Hallensleben, *Die architekturgeschichtliche Stellung der Kirche Sv. Bogorodica Peribleptos (Sv. Kliment) in Ohrid*, Musée Archéologique de Macédoine. Recueil des Travaux, VI-VII, 1967-1974 (Mélange Dimče Koco), 297-316.

¹⁰ L. Theis, *Die Architektur der Kirche Panagia Paregoretissa in Arta/Epirus*, Amsterdam 1991.

¹¹ E. Papatheophanous-Tsouri, *Ἡ ἐκκλησία τῆς Ἁγίας Αἰκατερίνης Νήσου Περιθείας στὴν Κέρκυρα*, 'Ηπειρωτικὰ Χρονικά, 24, 1982, 183-202.

¹² A. Pasali, *Ἡ Μεγάλῃ Παναγιά στὴν Παραμυθιά Θεσπρωτίας*, DChAE, 19, 1996-1997, 369-393.

¹³ P. L. Vocotopoulos, *Παρατηρήσεις ἐπὶ τῆς Παναγίας τοῦ Μπρυώνη*, 'Αρχαιολογικὸν Δελτίον, 28, 1973, fasc. A, 159-168; idem, *Ὁ ναὸς τοῦ Παντοκράτορος στὸ Μοναστηράκι Βονίτισης*, DChAE, 10, 1980-1981, 357-377; idem, *Ὁ ναὸς τῆς Παναγίας στὴν Πρεβέντζα τῆς Ἀκαρνανίας*, Byzantium. Tribute to Andreas N. Stratos, Athens 1986, 1, 251-275. Reports on the excavation of the very important Pantanassa near Philippias have appeared in AAA, V, VI and X (1972, 1973, 1976) and in Praktika 1977, 1987-1994, 1996.

¹⁴ P. L. Vocotopoulos, *L'architettura bizantina nella Grecia occidentale di terraferma*, in: A. Alpaço Novello-G. Dimitrakallīs (ed.), *L'arte Bizantina in Grecia*, Milano 1995, 8389; idem, *Local Schools in Middle and Late Byzantine Architecture*, in: Byzantium. Identity, Image, Influence, XIX International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Copenhagen 1996, 504-505; idem, *Art under the "Despotate" of Epirus*, in: Epiros. 4000 Years of Greek History and Civilization (as in note 1), 224-229.

¹⁵ RbK, 11, col. 257-283, 289-316, 323-326.

¹⁶ V. Korac, *L'architecture byzantine au XIII^e siècle*, L'art byzantin du XIII^e siècle. Symposium de Sopoćani 1965, Beograd 1967, 14-15.



Fig. 1 Arta, St Nicholas Rodias. Exterior from the southwest

ted sagacious remarks on the school of the Despotate,¹⁸ while Constantine Tsouris included a short history of the architecture of northwest Greece in his excellent doctoral thesis on the brick decoration of the monuments of that region during the Late Byzantine period.¹⁹ The latest survey of the architecture of the Despotate is to be found in the recent *Architecture of the Byzantine World* by Professors Vojislav Korać and Marica Šuput.²⁰

The architecture of the Despotate was rooted in the tradition of the Pre-Helladic school which flourished in the eighth, ninth and tenth century in southern Greece, the Peloponnese and Epirus²¹, but assimilated various influences, and affected in its turn neighbouring regions, such as Thessaly and Western Macedonia, which had been incorporated for shorter or longer periods in the state of the “Komnenodoukades”.²² My contribution to the volume of *Zograf* dedicated to Professor Korać will investigate the various influences discernible in the ecclesiastical architecture of the Despotate. //

The architecture of the Despotate of Epirus is characterized by the great variety of church types used. The more common ones are the cross-in-square, the cross-vaulted church and the aisleless chapel.

Most cross-in-square churches belong to the variant, where the dome is supported by the walls separating the sanctuary from the prothesis and diakonikon, and by two columns or piers. This variant, attested in St Nicholas Rodias near Arta (fig. 1),²³ St George at Angelokastron in Aitolia,²⁴ the church of the Pantokrator at Monastiraki in Akarnania,²⁵ the Panagia (Red Church) at Voulgareli,²⁶ and also in buildings of nearby regions imitating Epirote models, like the Omorphokklisia near Kastoria²⁷ or the Holy Trinity and the Vlacherna at Berat,²⁸ is typical of the Helladic school prevailing in southern Greece during the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries.²⁹ The Megali Panagia at

Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 4th revised edition, New Haven-London 1986, does not examine the monuments of the Despotate of Epirus as a separate group.

¹⁸ G. Velenis, *Hermeneia*, 41-44, 97-98, 126-127, 186-189, 270-273, 299-300; idem, *Thirteenth-Century Architecture in Epirus*, 279-285.

¹⁹ K. Tsouris, *Diakosmos*, 209-227.

²⁰ V. Korać - M. Šuput, *Arhitektura Vizantijskog Sveta*, Belgrade 1998, 318-328.

²¹ P. L. Vocotopoulos, *Architecture of the 7th-10th cent.*

²² See K. Tsouris, *Diakosmos*, 224-226, and P. L. Vocotopoulos, *Art under the “Despotate” of Epirus* (as in note 14), 229.

²³ A. K. Orlandos, ‘Ο Άγιος Νικόλαος τῆς Ροδιάς, ABME, 2, 1936, 131-147.

²⁴ Idem, Βυζαντινὰ μνημεῖα τῆς Αἰτωλοακαρνανίας, ABME, 9, 1961, 68-73.

²⁵ P. L. Vocotopoulos, ‘Ο ναός τοῦ Παντοκράτορος στὸ Μοναστηράκι Βονίτσας, DChAE, 10, 1980-1981, 357-377.

²⁶ H. Hallensleben, *Die architekturgeschichtliche Stellung der Kirche Sv. Bogorodica Peribleptos* (note 9), 304-315.

²⁷ E. Stikas, *Une église des Paéologues aux environs de Castoria*, BZ, 51, 1958, 100-112.

²⁸ A. Meksi, *Les trois églises byzantines de Berat*, Monumentet, 4, 1972, 59-102.

²⁹ The term “Helladic school” is to be preferred to the current “Greek school”, which has sometimes been misinterpreted as referring to a national Greek school, thereby implying that the buildings of other regions of the Byzantine realm, such as Constantinople, Asia Minor or Thrace were not built by Greeks. There is no up-to-date comprehensive

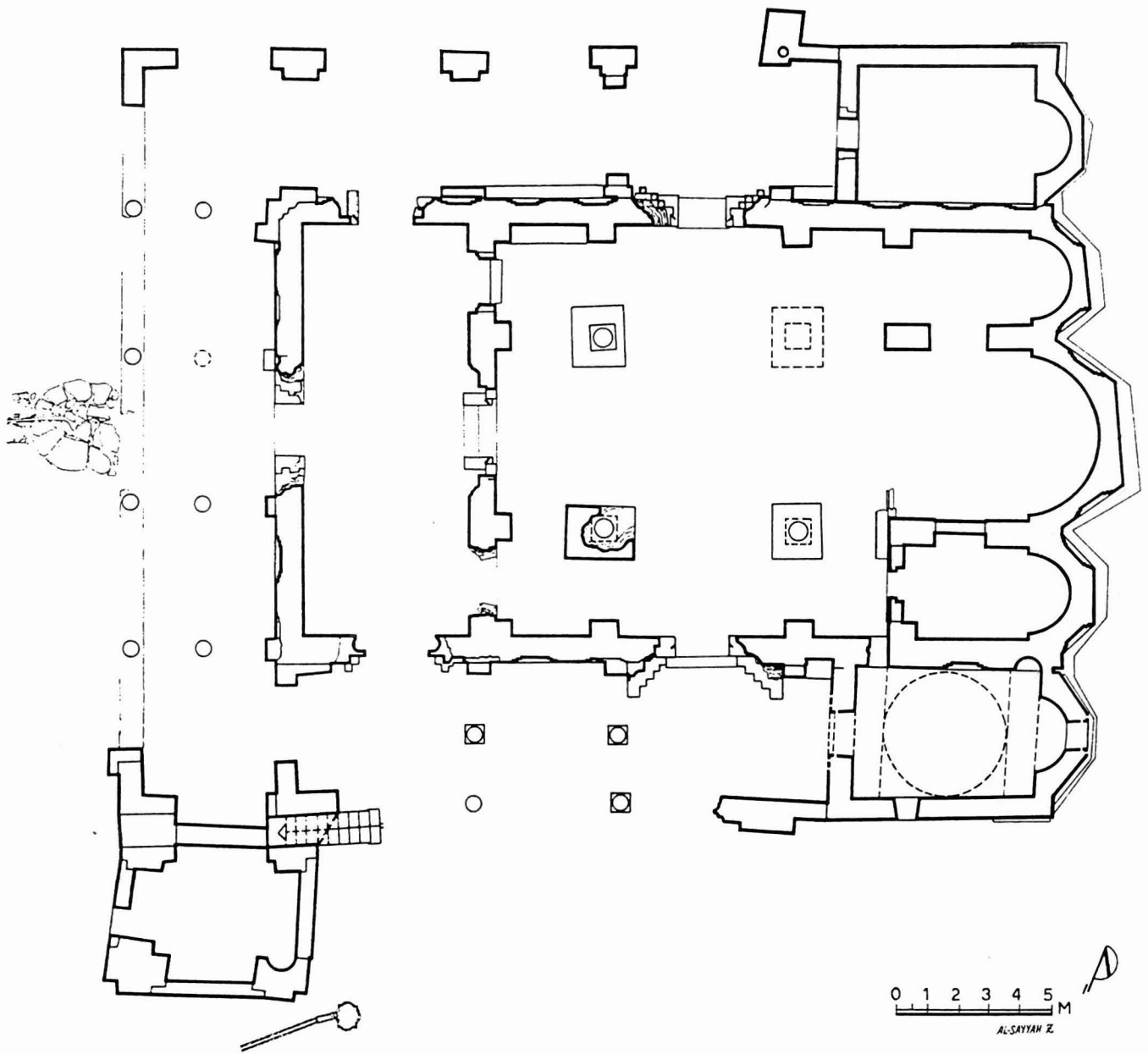


Fig. 2 Pantanassa. Ground plan

Paramythia also belongs to that type, but has a longitudinal barrel vault instead of a dome.³⁰ The corner bays are covered either by longitudinal barrel vaults, typical of the Helladic school, or by domical vaults, which are also often encountered in two-column cross-in-square churches in southern Greece.³¹ The type of the single-naved cross-in-square chapel of St Stephen at Rivion (Akarnania) is encountered mainly in the Aegean islands and Cyprus, but its masonry and formal elements imitate south Greek models.³² Two churches, the Pantanassa near Philippias (fig. 2) and the initial Paregoritissa,

belong to the composite four-column variant with extra bays for the sanctuary, characteristic of Constantinopolitan architecture.³³ Although there are also many examples of this variant in the Helladic school, other metropolitan features of these churches, e.g. the four subsidiary domes or the blind arches and niches articulating their exterior, point to the school of Constantinople. Velenis, however, suggests that the immediate models used by the Epirote builders must be sought not in the capital itself but in Lascarid architecture and more specifically in Church E of Sardis.³⁴

treatment of that school. One has to refer to G. Millet's pioneering work *L'école grecque dans l'architecture Byzantine*, Paris 1916, and to numerous articles by H. Megaw, A. Orlandos, Ch. Bouras and other scholars.

³⁰ A. Pasali, 'Η Μεγάλη Παναγιά στην Παραμυθιά Θεσπρωτίας, DChAE, 19, 1996-1997, 369-370, fig. 1-3,5-6.

³¹ S. Mamaloukos, Παρατηρήσεις στην διαμόρφωση των γωνιακών διαμερισμάτων των δικιωνίων σταυροειδών εγγεγραμμένων ναών της Ελλάδος, DChAE, 14, 1987-1988, 189-204. Barrel-vaults are used at St Nicholas Rodias, the Panagia at Voulgareli, the Omorphokklisia, the Megali Panagia; domical vaults in the Pantokrator near Monastiraki, St George at Angelokastron, the Holy Trinity at Berat.

³² Ch. Bouras, as in note 4.

³³ On the Pantanassa, founded by Michael II in the 1240s, see P. L. Vocolopoulos, in AAA and Praktika, as in note 13. On the Paregoritissa see A. K. Orlandos, *Paregoritissa* and L. Theis, op. cit. (note 10). G. Velenis, *Thirteenth-Century Architecture in Epirus*, 280-281, and L. Theis have proved that the existing building, dated to the early 1290s, incorporates the lower part of a mid-thirteenth century church. Theis and K. Tsouris (*Diakosmos*, 242 note 80) believe that the original Paregoritissa was a church on squinches, while Velenis argues that it was a composite cross-in-square structure. Mrs. B. Papadopoulou of the Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities of Ioannina informs me that trial trenches indicate that Velenis' view is the correct one.



Fig. 3 Arta, Kato Panagia. Exterior from the southeast

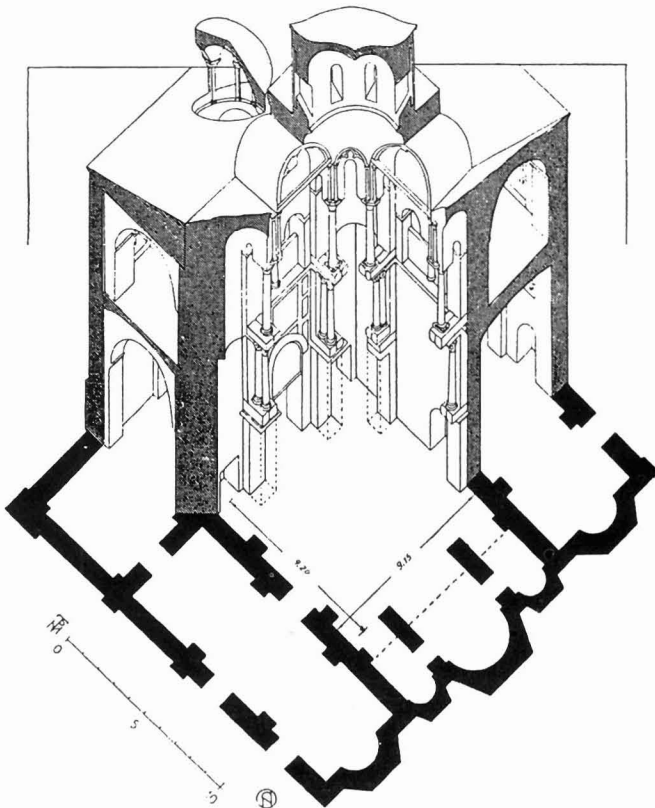


Fig. 4 Arta, Paregoritissa. Isometric view (after Orlandos)

Three of the eleven surviving three-aisled cross-vaulted churches with one pair of columns (the Panagia tou Bryoni near Arta,³⁵ the Taxiarches at Kostaniani³⁶ and St Demetrius in the region of Phanari³⁷), and the Kato Panagia in Arta, where the aisles are separated by three pairs of columns (fig. 3),³⁸ were erected in the Despotate of Epirus, while the Porta Panagia in Thessaly, which imitates the Kato Panagia, was built by the local ruler John Doukas, an illegitimate son of Michael II.³⁹ The Panagia tou Bryoni is dated to 1238, while the Kato Panagia (and also the single-naved cross-vaulted church of the Transfiguration near Ga-

³⁴ G. Velenis, *ibid.*, 281. On the Sardis church see H. Buchwald, *Sardis Church E. A Preliminary Report*, JÖB, 26, 1977, 264-299; *idem*, *Church E at Sardis and the Contribution of Asia Minor to the Architectural Vocabulary of the 13th Century*, Actes du XV^e Congrès International d' Études Byzantines, IIA, Athens 1981, 93-98.

³⁵ A. K. Orlandos, 'Η Παναγία τοῦ Μπρωῶνη, ABME, 2, 1936, 51-56; P. L. Vocotopoulos, *Παρατηρήσεις ἐπὶ τῆς Παναγίας τοῦ Μπρωῶνη*, Ἀρχαιολογικὸν Δελτίον, 28, 1973, fasc. A, 159-168. G. Velenis, *Thirteenth-Century Architecture in the Despotate of Epirus*, 279-280, identifies the original church as a cross-vaulted structure.

³⁶ D. Evangelidis, *Βυζαντινὰ μνημεῖα τῆς Ἠπείρου*, Ἠπειρωτικὰ Χρονικά, 6, 1931, 258-274.

³⁷ P. L. Vocotopoulos, 'Η πλίνθινη ἐπιγραφή τῆς Μονῆς τοῦ Ἁγίου Δημητρίου στὸ Φανάρι τῆς Ἠπείρου', Ἑλληνικά, 39, 1988, 164-167. A monograph on this monument is being prepared by the author of the present paper.

³⁸ A. K. Orlandos, 'Η Μονὴ τῆς Κάτω Παναγιάς, ABME, 2, 1936, 70-87. In this church the central bay of the transverse vault is raised above its lateral bays.

³⁹ *Idem*, 'Η Πόρτα-Παναγιά τῆς Θεσσαλίας, ABME, 1, 1935, 5-40.



Fig. 5 Arta, Paregoritissa. Exterior from the northeast

laxidi⁴⁰) were built by Michael II, probably in the 1240s; they therefore belong to the early examples of that type, which was confined to southern Greece, Epirus, Thessaly, the region of Ochrid and some Aegean islands.⁴¹ One might be tempted to assign to Epirus the invention of that church type, but examples in other regions, not dated by inscriptions or written sources – such as St George at Androussa in Messenia, dated by Bouras to the early thirteenth century⁴² – may be earlier than the firmly dated ones and there are hints of a possible Western origin of the type.⁴³

Aisleless chapels are usually timber-roofed, as was the rule during the preceding period in mainland Greece.⁴⁴ The type was mainly used for modest structures and most examples preserved are situated far from urban centres.

In the Paregoritissa, one of the most original creations of Byzantine architecture, combining an octagon with a cross-in-square, the central space is higher than it is wide, as is the



Fig. 6 Mesopotamon, St Nicholas.
Reliefs of a tree and a lion on the east façade

rule in Gothic buildings (fig. 4).⁴⁵ The exterior of the building does not correspond to the layout of the interior, contrary to Byzantine practice (fig. 5). The massive cubic structure, with flat surfaces and two rows of big double-light windows, recalls Italian *palazzi* of the Early Renaissance.

The church of St Nicholas at Mesopotamon is also unique in its plan. It is a two-aisled structure with two domes in each aisle, supported by a single column in the centre,

⁴⁰ P. L. Vocotopoulos, *Παρατηρήσεις στον ναό του Σωτήρος κοντά στο Γαλαξειδί*, DChAE, 17, 1993-1994, 199-210.

⁴¹ On cross-vaulted churches see A. K. Orlandos, *Οι σταυρεπίστεγοι ναοὶ τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, ABME, 1, 1935, 41-50; H. M. Küpper, *Der Bautypus der griechischen Dachtranseptkirche*, Amsterdam 1990; M. Doris, *Πρόταση για τὴν τυπολογία τῶν σταυρεπίστεγων ναῶν*, Athens 1991.

⁴² Ch. Bouras, *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γεώργιος τῆς Ἀνδρούσσης*, *Χαριστήριον εἰς Ἀναστάσιον Κ. Ὁρλάνδου*, 2, Athens 1964, 270-285.

⁴³ See for example H. M. Küpper, *op. cit.*, 90-91, 151-155.

⁴⁴ St Basil at Arta, the Alychniotissa near Vonitsa, St George near Stamna in Aitolia, St Nicholas Ntiliou on the island of Ioannina, the Kokkini Panagia near Konitsa, St Kyriaki in Gardiki, St Catherine in northern Corfu were all timber-roofed, while the Holy Apostles near Neromanna

in Aitolia is barrel-vaulted. On single-naved churches of the Middle Byzantine period see P. L. Vocotopoulos, *Architecture of the 7th-10th cent.*, 105-106.

⁴⁵ A. K. Orlandos, *Paregoritissa*, *passim*.



Fig. 7 Vlacherna. Upper part of the north apse from the southeast

and had originally two apses. A narthex covered by three domical vaults communicates with the aisles through a colonnade. The appearance of the building is even more clumsy than that of the Paregoritissa. The lower part of the exterior is faced with neatly hewn marble blocks, decorated with real and imaginary animals, carved in low relief in romanesque style (fig. 6).⁴⁶

Many churches did not originally have a narthex. When they do, it is generally of modest size. An exception is the katholikon of the monastery of the Panagia at Molyvdoskepastos, where the narthex is much larger than the triconch-shaped naos. The Molyvdoskepastos narthex is also exceptional because of its longitudinal cross-vaulted form.⁴⁷ Narthexes are usually tripartite, with lateral bays covered by transverse barrel vaults, as in the Helladic school, but in the central bay the higher longitudinal barrel-vault customary in southern Greece is usually replaced by a domical vault.

In four churches – the Kato Panagia, the Porta Panagia, the Megali Panagia at Paramythia and the church at Mesopotamon – the narthex is not separated from the naos by a wall.⁴⁸ Such an arrangement is attested in St Nicholas in Korthion on the island of Andros,⁴⁹ survives in the seven-

teenth-century St Menas at Monodendri in Epirus,⁵⁰ and was also used in Southern Serbia at Staro Nagoričino, Matejič, Psača and Markov Manastir.⁵¹

Many churches of the Despotate are flanked from the mid-thirteenth century onwards by porticos, which are either contemporary with the churches they flank, as in the second phase of the Paregoritissa and the church of the Virgin at Preventza (Akarnania), or were added later, as in the church of St Theodora at Arta, and at Pantanassa near Philippias. They may be symmetrical, as in the Paregoritissa and the church of Christ Pantocrator at Monastiraki, near Vonitsa, or they may not, as at Pantanassa (fig. 2) and St Demetrius in the region of Phanari. They are either open, as in the Pantanassa and in St Theodora at Arta, or closed, as in the Paregoritissa and the Panagia at Preventza. Chapels are often positioned at the East end of the lateral porticoes.⁵²

Ambulatories, lateral porticos and chapels are alien to the local tradition. Symmetrical lateral chapels appear in the early tenth century in the church of Constantine Lips in Constantinople; they are combined with lateral porticos or an ambulatory in the early churches of the Rus', which follow Constantinopolitan models,⁵³ and are attested during the Palaiologan period in the capital, Thessaloniki, Serbia and Mistra. The examples in Mistra, Thessaloniki and Serbia are later in date than those in Epirus. We therefore deal with a Constantinopolitan feature adopted by Epirote builders during the reign of Michael II, which became very popular under Nikephoros I.

A transverse vaulted passage may lead from the entrance of the loggia to a lateral door of the naos, e.g. at Preventza, Monastiraki, Mesopotamon and St Basil at Arta. The same happens at the Omorphokklisia near Kastoria. Such an arrangement is attested in the ruined church at Diliskelesi in Bithynia which, judging from its five-sided apses, should be dated after the eleventh century.⁵⁴ It is more probable that the monuments of the Despotate follow also in this respect a metropolitan tradition than vice versa.

Two masonry techniques prevail in the Despotate: The cloisonné technique on the one hand, and on the other roughly hewn stones in regular courses alternating with single brick courses, with horizontally laid brick fragments added to fill the vertical joints (fig. 3, 7). This masonry technique, rooted in the local tradition,⁵⁵ is practically confined to Epirus. Cloisonné, which is more widespread, employs dressed stones in regular courses, framed horizontally and

⁴⁶ A. Meksi, *L'architecture de l'église de Mesopotame*, Monumentet, 3, 1972, 47-94; idem, *Nouvelles données sur l'église de Mesopotame*, *ibid.*, 10, 1975, 151-159.

⁴⁷ Other cross-vaulted narthexes are those of St George at Sfaka in Phthiotis, and of the katholikon of the monastery of the Panagia Spitiotissa in the Zagori region north of Ioannina, dating however from 1665; see Ch. Bouras, 'Ο ναός τοῦ Ἁγίου Γεωργίου στήν Σφακά Φθιώτιδος', *Ἐκκλησίες στήν Ἑλλάδα μετὰ τήν Ἀλωση*, III, Athens 1989, 171-177; E. Konkhylaki, 'Ἡ Παναγία Σπηλαιώτισσα Ἀρίστης Ζαγορίου', *ibid.*, II, Athens 1982, 50, fig. 3-5.

⁴⁸ A. K. Orlandos, 'Ἡ Μονή τῆς Κάτω Παναγιάς', *ABME*, 2, 1936, 75, fig. 4; idem, 'Ἡ Πόρτα Παναγιά τῆς Θεσσαλίας', *ABME*, 1, 1935, 11, fig. 3-4; A. Pasali, 'Ἡ Μεγάλη Παναγιά στήν Παραμυθιά Θεσπρωτίας', *DChAE*, 19, 1996-1997, 370, 379 fig. 3.

⁴⁹ D. Vassiliadis, *Βυζαντινά μνημεῖα τῆς Ἀνδρου*, Ἀρχαιολογική Ἐφημερίς 1960, 18-19, fig. 2.

⁵⁰ P. L. Vocotopoulos, 'Ο ναός τοῦ Ἁγίου Μηνᾶ στό Μονοδένδρι τοῦ Ζαγορίου', *Ἐκκλησίες μετὰ τήν Ἀλωση*, 1, Athens 1979, 111, fig. 4.

⁵¹ A. Deroko, *Monumentaina i dekorativna arhitektura u srednjevekovnoj Srbiji*, Belgrade 1985, fig. 252, 257, 260, 262.

⁵² P. L. Vocotopoulos, 'Ο ναός τοῦ Παντοκράτορος στό Μοναστηράκι Βοιότης', *DChAE*, 10, 1980-1981, 370-373. L. Theis, *op. cit.* (note 10), 90-105, 108-109. Cf. Sl. Ćurčić, *Gračanica. King Milutin's Church and Its Place in Late Byzantine Architecture*, University Park-London 1979, 80-85.

⁵³ V. Lazarev, *Regard sur l'art de la Russie pré-mongole*, *Cahiers de Civilisation médiévale*, XIII, 1970, 196, 199, 201. C. Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, New York 1976, 324-329.

⁵⁴ Sl. Ćurčić, *op. cit.*, 82-83; P. L. Vocotopoulos, 'Ο ναός τοῦ Παναγίας στήν Πρεβέντζα τῆς Ἀκαρνανίας', *Byzantium. Tribute to Andreas N. Stratos*, Athens 1986, 1, 268-270.

⁵⁵ Idem, *Architecture of the 7th-10th cent.*, 143-145, 248. This technique, typical of the Pre-Helladic school, survives in several buildings of the Helladic school, where it is occasionally combined with cloisonné; see idem in *Ἑλληνικά*, 32, 1980, 379.

vertically by bricks; it is encountered all over the Despotate, often with double vertical bricks (fig. 5).⁵⁶ It is a hallmark of the Helladic school, but its origins may be traced to the Early Christian period⁵⁷ while its immediate antecedents are found in the late-ninth and early-tenth century churches of Kastoria, where, however, the stones are roughly hewn.⁵⁸ It is encountered in the southern parts of the Despotate already in the early eleventh century⁵⁹ and should be ascribed to the influence of the Helladic school.

The original core of the church of Pantanassa, built by Michael II of Epirus in the mid-thirteenth century, and the ruined and poorly documented St Demetrius at Molyvdoskepastos, are built of alternating courses of roughly hewn stones and of bricks.⁶⁰ This is a metropolitan feature, encountered only occasionally outside Constantinople and the neighbouring provinces of Bithynia and Thrace.⁶¹ The use of the recessed course technique, typical of Constantinopolitan architecture but already attested in Thessaloniki in the Panagia Chalkeon, dated 1028,⁶² has been observed in the brick courses of the Pantanassa,⁶³ the arches of the apse windows of the Koimesis at Molyvdoskepastos⁶⁴, and also in some arches and brick bands in the castle of Berat, belonging to the structures erected by the despot of Epirus Michael I (c. 1204-1215).⁶⁵

Barrel vaults, usually made of brick, predominate; groin vaults are encountered in some buildings, as the Paregoritissa, the narthex of the Megali Panagia at Paramythia, the West portico of the Pantanassa and the greater part of the ambulatory of St Theodora in Arta. In the Pantanassa and St Theodora the groin vaults have stone ribs, which are decorated in the Pantanassa by two convex mouldings, with a wedge-shaped projection between them.⁶⁶

Apses are usually three-sided, as in the Helladic school. Rounded apses, typical of the Pre-Helladic school,⁶⁷ survive in minor monuments, like St Nicholas Ntiliou on the island of the Lake of Ioannina or a chapel of the monastery

of St Demetrius in the plain of Phanari. In the Megali Panagia at Paramythia the central apse is three-sided while the lateral ones are rounded; this is a feature encountered in many churches of different periods in many regions.⁶⁸ In the church of Paramythia it was perhaps borrowed from the ruined St Photeine in nearby Photike.⁶⁹ In a few cases the apse has a different form in its lower and upper part: rounded and five-sided in the north apse of the Vlacherna near Arta, rounded and seven-sided in the church of St Demetrius at Molyvdoskepastos, five- and three-sided in the main apse of St Demetrius in the Phanari region. The five-sided apses of the original St Nicholas at Mesopotamon and of the Panagia at Molyvdoskepastos are probably inspired from Macedonian models.

It is noteworthy that the apses of the twin churches of St Nicholas and the Taxiarches at Mokista in Aitolia, of the late thirteenth century, are rectangular.⁷⁰ Three explanations have been advanced for the occurrence of this uncommon feature in some Byzantine churches: Western influence, although the rectangular apses of Frankish churches are much larger and have a different use, the imitation of Syrian models of the Early Christian period, and constructional considerations.⁷¹ In our case the reason for the adoption of that unusual form is probably the reuse of large ancient ashlar blocks.

Three-sided apses are often enlivened by blind arches in their lateral facets. This is a practice alien to the Pre-Helladic and the Helladic school. Three-sided apses with blind arches are first attested in Macedonia in the twelfth century (St. Demetrius at Aiani). In Epirus the lateral blind arches, current from the mid-thirteenth century onwards, are sometimes lower than the window of the central facet, imitating some three-sided apses in churches of the Despotate with windows on each facet, where the central window is higher, especially under Michael II.⁷² The three-sided apses of the Paregoritissa, articulated by blind arcades and niches in two tiers, are probably derived from Constantinopolitan models (fig. 5).

The churches of the Despotate have usually straight gables, as was the case in the Pre-Helladic and the Helladic school. Curved gables, reminiscent of metropolitan architecture, are encountered in the Red Church at Voulgareli (fig. 8), the church of St Demetrius at Phanari, and the church of the Virgin at Kosina near Premeti/Permet.⁷³ In some cases,

⁵⁶ Idem, 'Ο ναός τοῦ Παντοκράτορος σὺν Μοναστηράκι Βονίτισης (as in note 52), 374.

⁵⁷ Idem, in *Praktika* 1979, 123, pl. 87a.

⁵⁸ N. K. Moutsopoulos, 'Εκκλησίες τῆς Καστοριάς, Thessaloniki 1992, 96-100.

⁵⁹ E. g. in the church of the Panagia at Koronisia: P. L. Vocotopoulos, *Architecture of the 7th-10th cent.*, 54, pl. 35b.

⁶⁰ On the coursed masonry of the Pantanassa see P. L. Vocotopoulos in AAA, V, 1972, 92, fig. 93. The lower courses are built in cloisonné: idem in AAA, VI, 408, fig. 1. St Demetrius at Molyvdoskepastos, dated by D. Nicol to the eleventh century (*The churches of Molyvdoskepastos*, BSA, 48, 1953, 146-147), should be rather assigned to the Palaeologan period, as suggested by D. Pallas (RbK, 11, col. 302-303).

⁶¹ P. L. Vocotopoulos, *The Role of Constantinopolitan Architecture during the Middle and Late Byzantine Period*, JÖB, 31/2, 1981 (XVI. Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress, Akten, 1/2), 556.

⁶² On this technique cf. idem, *The Concealed Course Technique: Further Examples and a Few Remarks*, JÖB, 28, 1979, 247-260; R. Ousterhout, *Observations on the "Recessed Brick Technique" during the Palaeologan Period*, 'Αρχαιολογικὸν Δελτίον, 39, 1984, fasc. A, 163-170.

⁶³ P. L. Vocotopoulos in AAA, X, 1977, 154-15, fig. 4-4a; and in *Praktika* 1987, 123, pl. 92.

⁶⁴ Idem, *The Concealed Course Technique* (as in note 62), 257.

⁶⁵ A. Baçe, *La ville fortifiée de Berat*, Monumentet, 2, 1971, 47-50, 60, fig. 5, pl. III-IV. In two late-thirteenth century churches in Berat, the Holy Trinity and the Virgin Vlacherna in its original phase, one notices in some of the brick window frames intermediate thinner bricks which are recessed and were originally concealed by the mortar joints.

⁶⁶ P. L. Vocotopoulos, in AAA, VI, 1973, 409, fig. 7, and in AAA, X, 1977, 156, fig. 5.

⁶⁷ P. L. Vocotopoulos, *Architecture of the 7th-10th cent.*, 151.

⁶⁸ See e.g. Ch. Delvoye, *Études d'architecture paléochrétienne et byzantine*, II. *L'abside*, Byzantion, 32, 1962, 537 note 2, or P. L. Vocotopoulos, *Περὶ τὴν χρονολόγησιν τοῦ ἐν Κερκύρα ναοῦ τῶν Ἁγίων Ἰάσωνος καὶ Σωσιπάτρου*, DChAE, 5, 1966-1969, 159, 315.

⁶⁹ E. Tsigaridas, *Εἰδήσεις ἐκ Θεσπρωτίας*, AAA, II, 1969, 46.

⁷⁰ A. Paliouras, *Βυζαντινὴ Αἰτολοακαρνανία*, Athens 1985, 225, 226, fig. 232, 233.

⁷¹ S. Voyatzis, 'Ο ναός τοῦ Ἁγίου Χαράλαμπος Καλαμάτας, DChAE, 16, 1991-1992, 93; A. K. Orlandos, *Δύο βυζαντινὰ ἐκκλησία παρα τὸ Κακοσάλεσι*, ABME, 5, 1939-40, 150-152.

⁷² G. Velenis, *Thirteenth-Century Architecture in Epirus*, 282-283.

⁷³ Idem, *Hermeneia*, 277-278, pl. 17a, 100a. P. Thomo, *Deux monuments de notre architecture médiévale. Les églises cruciformes à coupole de Kosine et de Berat*, Studime Historike, XXVI.4, 1972, 61, fig. 11. The west gable of the nave in the Vlacherna appears to have been originally curved; see A. K. Orlandos, 'Η παρὰ τὴν Ἄρταν Μονὴ τῶν Βλαχερνῶν, ABME, 2, 1936, 17, fig. 11.

⁷⁴ A. K. Orlandos, 'Η Μονὴ Κάτω Παναγιᾶς, ABME, 2, 1936, 76, fig. 4-6; idem, 'Η Πόρτα Παναγιᾶ τῆς Θεσσαλίας, ABME, 1, 1935, 14-16, fig. 6; K. Tsouris, *Diakosmos*, fig. 54-55.

for instance at the Kato Panagia (fig. 3), Porta Panagia and Kostaniani, false pediments suggest that some gables are higher than they actually are.⁷⁴ This feature, which is not attested in the local tradition, is encountered in monuments of various periods and regions, such as the Panagia Chalkeon, the basilica of Kalambaka and the Vlacherna in Elis.

In the Kato Panagia (fig. 3, 9) and in the Porta Panagia in Thessaly, which imitates the former, pilasters linked by an arch enhance the tympana of the transverse vault.⁷⁵ This is a feature typical of the Helladic school, where it is encountered mainly in cross-in-square churches and complex churches on squinches.⁷⁶

common in the Helladic school,⁷⁹ also frame windows in buildings of the Despotate, e.g. at the Kato Panagia and St Basil in Arta (fig. 10).⁸⁰ Windows framed by semi-arches and inscribed in a big arch, which is the face of a barrel vault, such as those in the Red Church at Voulgareli (fig. 8), are apparently an invention of the architects of the Despotate.⁸¹ One should again ascribe to Helladic influence the stone arches and frames of many windows of the Kato and Porta Panagia (fig. 9) or St Demetrius in the plain of Phanari.⁸²

Windows influenced by Frankish forms are preserved in the apse of the Taxiarches at Mokista in Aitolia, dating to the late thirteenth century, terminating with a characteristic

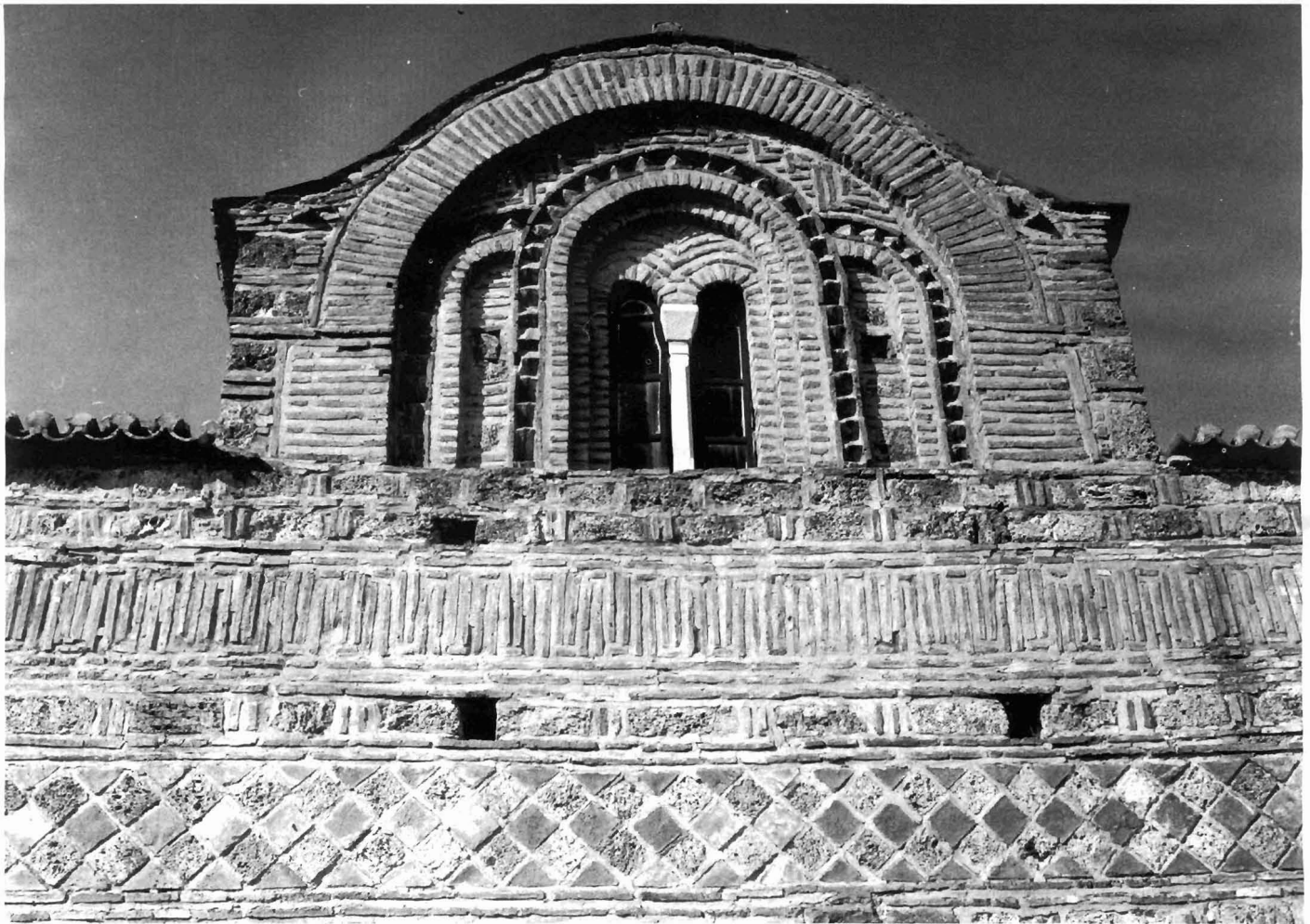


Fig. 8 Voulgarelli, Red Church. South gable of the naos

The Paregoritissa and probably the Pantanassa had five domes. Domes usually have eight-sided drums.⁷⁷ Sometimes their form recalls the Helladic school, as in St Stephen at Rivion in Akarnania, with its simple contours and drum built in cloisonné. The domes of the Vlacherna, Pantanassa and Paregoritissa, with brick colonnettes at the corners, are reminiscent of Palaiologan examples in Thessaloniki, but those of the first two monuments differ in the form of their cornice which is level, while in Thessaloniki it is rippling.⁷⁸ The very high cupola of the monastery of Molyvdoskepastos finds parallels in Macedonia. The surface of the interior of the domes is smooth, uninterrupted by ribs or gores, which, though very frequent in the school of the capital, are not attested in the Despotate.

Windows are arched. When they have two or three lights, these are inscribed in a brick or stone frame usually extending to the sill (fig. 5, 8, 10). Lateral semi-arches, quite

⁷⁵ A. K. Orlandos, 'Η Μονή Κάτω Παναγιάς, ABME, 2, 1936, 76, fig. 4, 6; idem, 'Η Πόρτα Παναγιά της Θεσσαλίας, ABME, 1, 1935, 11, fig. 1, 3, 5.

⁷⁶ S. Mamaloukos, *Ο πύλωνας της Μονής Αγίου Ιωάννου του Κυνηγιού στον Υμηττό, Αρμός*. Τιμητικός τόμος στον Καθηγητή Ν. Κ. Μουτσόπουλο, II, Thessaloniki 1991, 1113-1116.

⁷⁷ The large central dome of the Paregoritissa has twelve facets, the domes over the aisles of the Vlacherna six. The dome of the southern chapel of the Pantanassa has a cylindrical drum.

⁷⁸ Vlacherna: A. K. Orlandos, 'Η παρά την Άρταν Μονή τῶν Βλαχερνῶν, ABME, 2, 1936, 8-10, fig. 4, 6. Pantanassa: P. L. Vocotopoulos in AAA, VI, 1973, 405-406. Paregoritissa: A. K. Orlandos, *Paregoritissa*, 40-42; L. Theis, *op. cit.* (note 10), 53-54. The domes of the Paregoritissa originally had arched eaves lines.

⁷⁹ H. Megaw, *The Chronology of some Middle-Byzantine Churches*, BSA, XXXII, 1931-1932, 126-128; G. Velenis, *Hermeneia*, 262-271.

⁸⁰ P. L. Vocotopoulos, 'Ο ναός της Παναγίας στήν Πρεβέντζα της Άκαρνανίας, as in note 13, 274; G. Velenis, *Hermeneia*, 271-272.

⁸¹ G. Velenis, *loc. cit.*

⁸² Stone arches and frames are discussed by H. Megaw, *The Chronology of some Middle-Byzantine Churches*, as in note 79, 122-124, and by Ch. Bouras, *Βυζαντινά σταυροθόλια με νευρώσεις*, Athens 1965, 70-71.



Fig. 9 Arta, Kato Panagia. South gable of the transverse vault

trefoil arch (fig. 11), and in the narthex of St John at Eupalion in the province of Doris, from the same period, where there are convex mouldings at the angles of the stone frames.⁸³

The five monumental entrances to the naos and narthex of the Pantanassa are flanked by Gothic marble portals. Their pedestals, bases (fig. 12) and parts of unfluted columns are preserved. On the bases the corner of the plinth is occupied by a griffe.⁸⁴

Many buildings of the Despotate are very picturesque because of their variegated brick decoration (fig. 10). Some simple patterns are usually formed with plain bricks, e.g. su-

perposed angles or curves, zigzags, fishbones, lozenges, step-patterns, basketwork, sunbursts, crosses, branches,⁸⁵ while other designs consist of bricks shaped by cutting. Many of the motifs are modelled by incising various kinds of notches or simple lines on the edge of a brick. Most belong to the repertory of the Helladic school, as the disepsilon, zigzag, sawtooth, undulating line, contiguous lozenges (fig. 13), astragal, key-or S-shaped (fig. 9),⁸⁶ others are rooted in the local tradition, such as the zigzag bands,⁸⁷ or are apparently borrowed from Macedonia, such as basketwork covering large surfaces and concentric lozenges,⁸⁸ or appear for the first time in buildings of the Despotate, such as the basketwork bands,⁸⁹ meander or Z-shaped tiles, bricks with simple incisions, or tiles with two lentiloid recesses forming an inverted S, found in the Pantanassa excavation (fig. 14).⁹⁰ Flowers formed by modelled bricks adorn the Vlacher-na near Arta.⁹¹ The kufic letters common in southern Greece are practically absent; only a few bricks with kufesque patterns adorn the tympana above the window of the main apse in the Vlacher-na⁹² and above the central window of the west façade of the church at Mesopotamon (fig. 13).⁹³ Some

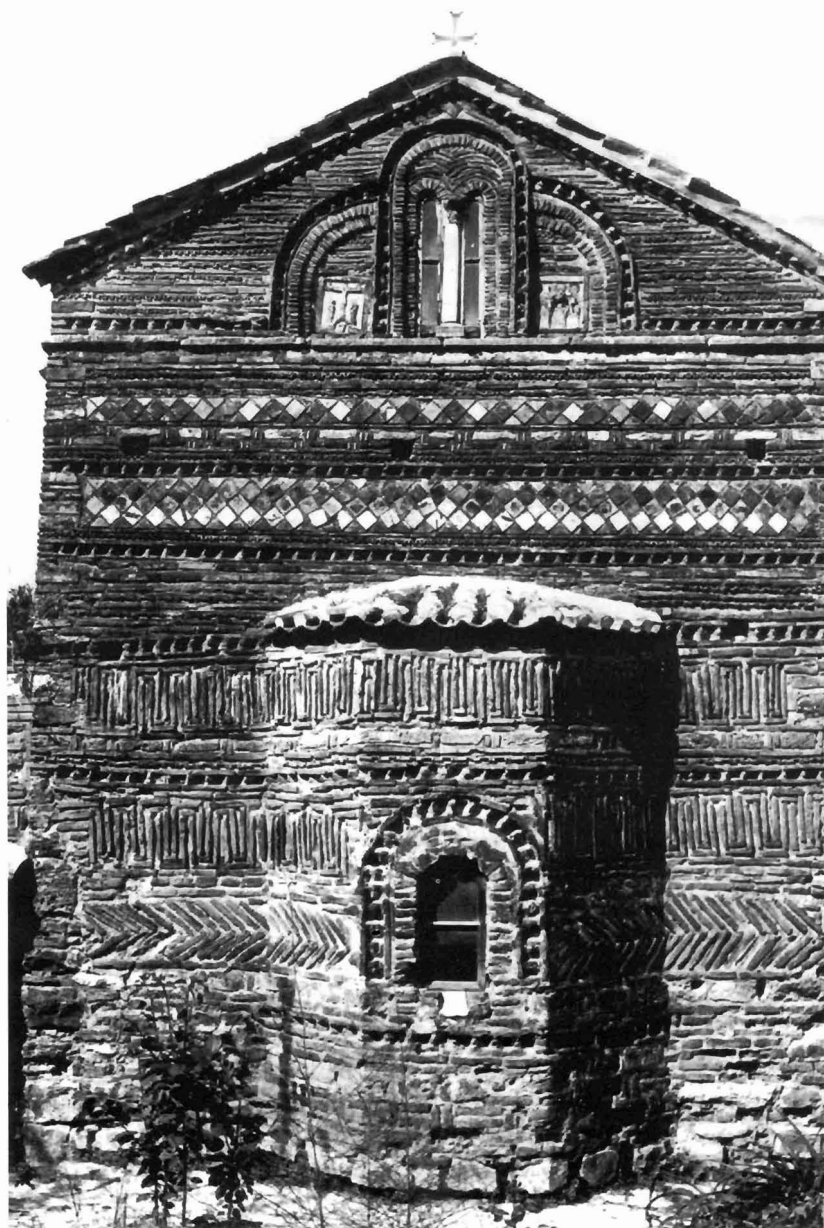


Fig. 10 Arta, St Basil. Exterior of the original one-aisled church from the east

⁸³ Mokista: S. Kalopissi-Verti, *Dedicatory Inscriptions and Donor Portraits in Thirteenth-Century Churches of Greece*, Vienna 1992, 57, fig. 17. Eupalion: A. K. Orlandos, *Ἡ Μονὴ Βαρνάκοβας*, Athens 1922, 41, fig. 29; V. Katsaros, *Ζητήματα ἱστορίας ἐνὸς βυζαντινοῦ ναοῦ κοντὰ στὸ Εὐπάλιο Δωρίδος*, Βυζαντινά, 10, 1980, 13.

⁸⁴ P. L. Vocotopoulos, in AAA, V, 1972, 92, 96, fig. 3, 11; VI, 1973, 408, 409, fig. 2, 6; X, 1976, 151-153, fig. 2-3; *Praktika* 1994, 213, pl. 85γ.

⁸⁵ K. Tsouris, *Diakosmos*, 139-144, 152-153, 162-176. The superposed angles and curves were taken from the Helladic school; see e. g. K. Tsouris, *op. cit.*, 175-176, or S. Mamaloukos, *Ὁ ναὸς τοῦ Ἁγίου Νικολάου τοῦ Νέου κοντὰ στὸ Παρόρι τῆς Βοιωτίας Ἐπετηρὶς τῆς Ἐταιρείας Βοιωτικῶν Μελετῶν*, 1, 1988, 515-516.

⁸⁶ K. Tsouris, *Diakosmos*, 117-130.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 166-167.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 169-170, 172.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 169-170.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 117-138. P. L. Vocotopoulos in *Praktika* 1988, 98, pl. 70b.

⁹¹ K. Tsouris, *Diakosmos*, 143-144, fig. 31-32.

⁹² A. K. Orlandos, *Ἡ παρὰ τὴν Ἄρτον Μονὴ τῶν Βλαχερνῶν*, ABME, 2, 1936, 16, fig. 10, 12; K. Tsouris, *Diakosmos*, 138-139. On kufic decoration in brickwork see e.g. B. Megaw, *The Chronology of some Middle-Byzantine Churches* (note 79), 104-109, 117; N. Nikonanos, *Κεραμοπλαστικές κουφικές διακοσμήσεις στὰ μνημεῖα τῆς περιοχῆς τῶν Ἀθηνῶν*, Ἀφιέρωμα στὴ μνήμη Στυλιανοῦ Πελεκανίδη, Thessaloniki 1983, 330-351.

⁹³ A. Meksi has already observed other similarities between these two churches (*Nouvelles données sur l'église de Mesopotam*, Monumentet, 10, 1975, 158). They should be much closer in date than usually suggested.



Fig. 11 Mokista, Taxiarches. Detail of apse window



Fig. 12 Pantanassa. Detail of the south portal of the narthex

of the designs made with uncut bricks, such as the step-pattern, cross or sunburst, may also be formed with cut bricks or with both. Cut bricks were first introduced by the ateliers of southern Greece and were extensively used during the Middle Byzantine Period in the Helladic school, from which they were adopted in the Despotate. They often form bands, replacing the dentil courses, both in late buildings of the Helladic school and in the Despotate (fig. 9-10) band monuments influenced by it.⁹⁴ They are unknown in the school of Constantinople and in Asia Minor, while they are extremely rare in Macedonia and Thessaly, where they were used mainly in buildings influenced by the architecture of the Despotate.⁹⁵

Apart from the bricks decorated on their edge, there are tiles where the pattern was modelled in champlévé on the face. Such tiles have been found in the Vlacherna and the Pantanassa.⁹⁶ Antecedents may be sought in the friezes with kufic, geometric and vegetal patterns by champlévé process of some Athenian churches⁹⁷ and in champlévé tiles with kufic and vegetal designs at St Charalampos in Kalamata and St Nicholas at Parori, Boeotia.⁹⁸ Clay disks encountered at Pantanassa and the church at Kosina where probably collected from ruined Roman baths.⁹⁹ They are also found in the church of St Vlasios in Valyra, Messenia, the Holy Apostles at Leontari and the second phase of the katholikon of the monastery of Myrtia in Aitolia.¹⁰⁰ On some of the disks found at Pantanassa a cross had been chiselled out, to be probably filled with some coloured substance.¹⁰¹ At Kato Panagia some clay disks bear twelve incised lines radiating from the centre.¹⁰²

The earthenware quatrefoils decorating the Paregoritissa and St George at Angelokastron in Aitolia are encountered during the Middle Byzantine and even more during the Palaiologan period in a very wide area, between Romania and Serbia on the one hand and Crete and Cyprus on the other. According to Tsouris, this pattern was probably adopted in the Despotate from southern Greek models¹⁰³. The same applies to the Greek fret (fig. 1, 5, 8, 10), a motif very widespread in Byzantine architecture, which appears at St Nicholas Rodias, a building influenced by the Helladic school, for the first time in northwest Greece (fig. 1),¹⁰⁴ and to the reticulate revetments, forming friezes or filling blind arcades in the Paregoritissa (fig. 5), the Pantanassa, the Red Church at Voulgareli (fig. 8) and in some other monuments.¹⁰⁵ This motif appears already in the Middle-Byzantine Monastery of Kozyli, near Nikopolis, which also betrays the influence of the Helladic school. In the Paregoritissa and the Red Church at Voulgareli red brick tiles are combined with white plaques to form a chequered pattern. The combination of two colours in the reticulate bands was apparently first introduced in Epirus; from there it spread to northern Macedonia – first to the Peribleptos in Ochrid and then to other buildings, such as St John Kaneo in the same town and St Demetrius at Veles.¹⁰⁶ In the church

⁹⁴ K. Tsouris, *Diakosmos*, 152-157.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 65-69, fig. 61-63. P. L. Vocotopoulos in AAA, V, 1972, 92, fig. 5; AAA, X, 1977, 157, fig. 8.

⁹⁷ H. Megaw, *The Chronology of some Middle-Byzantine Churches*, BSA, XXXII, 1931-1932, 105-106; K. Tsouris, *Diakosmos*, 66-68.

⁹⁸ S. Voyatzis, 'Ο ναός τοῦ Ἁγίου Χαρολάμπους Καλαμάτας, DChAE, 90, fig. 15, 17-18. S. Marnaloukos, 'Ο ναός τοῦ Ἁγίου Νικολάου τοῦ Νέου κοντά στό Παρόρι τῆς Βοιωτίας, (note 85), 492-493, 517-518, fig. 5, 20.

⁹⁹ P. L. Vocotopoulos in AAA, X, 1977, 156, and *Praktika* 1989, 172-173, pl. 122a. P. Thomo, *op. cit.* (note 6), fig. 4-5, 10, 12.

¹⁰⁰ A. Kavnadia - K. Tsouris, *Δύο βυζαντινές ἐκκλησίες στή Μεσσηνία, Ἀρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον*, 47, 1992, fasc. A, 270, fig. 2. G. Velenis, *Hermeneia*, 275, pl. 96a. A. K. Orlandos, *Βυζαντινά μνημεῖα τῆς Αἰτωλοακαρνανίας*, ABME, 9, 1961, 82, fig. 9.

¹⁰¹ P. L. Vocotopoulos in *Praktika* 1987, 124, pl. 93a.

¹⁰² K. Tsouris, *Diakosmos*, 66, fig. 60.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 69-74. Cf. also A. Kavnadia-K. Tsouris, *Δύο βυζαντινές ἐκκλησίες στή Μεσσηνία, Ἀρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον*, 47, 1992, 276-277.

¹⁰⁴ K. Tsouris, *Diakosmos*, 157-162.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 57-65.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.



Fig. 13 Mesopotamon, St Nicholas. The tympanon of the middle window of the west façade

of St Basil in Arta, usually dated in the late thirteenth century, the reticulate bands in three colours, unique in Byzantine architecture, where the green and white tiles are glazed, point to Italian influence (fig. 10).¹⁰⁷ The same church is notable for the inclusion in the decoration of its eastern façade of two earthenware glazed reliefs with representations of the Crucifixion and of the Three Hierarchs, which are embedded in the semi-arches flanking the gable window (fig. 10). Terracotta panels with geometrical, kufic, vegetal or figural representations are attested during the Middle Byzantine period in Constantinople, Thessaloniki and Bulgaria, and some of them apparently graced the exterior surfaces of churches – those in Thessaloniki are preserved *in situ* in the south façade of the Panagia Chalkeon–, but they bear little relation to those in Arta. According to Tsouris' thorough analysis, the Arta panels were made in that town by an Italian artist for the church of St Basil after its erection, probably in the first half of the fifteenth century.¹⁰⁸

The glazed bowls which grace the exterior of some churches, especially in the region of Arta –e.g. St Theodora, St Nicholas Rodias, the Vlacherna– but also the Panagia at Palaiokatouna in Akarnania, the Transfiguration at Galaxidi and some other monuments of the periphery, were very often embedded in churches of southern Greece from the eleventh century onwards. They appear rarely in Thessaly and Macedonia and are absent in the school of Constantinople and in Asia Minor.¹⁰⁹

In monuments of the Despotate and of adjacent areas, influenced by its architecture, cut-brick bands, instead of the usual dentils, often frame windows.¹¹⁰ Key-shaped bricks frame the windows of the central apse of the Vlacherna near Arta and of the transverse vault of the Kato Panagia (fig. 9),¹¹¹ disepsilons are encountered in St Nicholas at Kanalia and the Episkopi near Volos,¹¹² S-shaped bricks imitating a twisted cord in the Kato Panagia and at Megalovryso near Agia in Thessaly,¹¹³ both disepsilons and S-shaped bricks in the katholikon of the monastery of St Lavrentios on Mount Pelion,¹¹⁴ a step-pattern at the Omorphokklisia near Kastoria,¹¹⁵ quatrefoils in the Paregoritissa,¹¹⁶ interlace in the Paregoritissa and the Pantokrator church at Monastiraki,¹¹⁷ bricks with triangular notches at Platania near Ioannina¹¹⁸

¹¹⁰ G. Velenis, *Hermeneia*, 96-98; idem, *Thirteenth-Century Architecture in Epirus*, 282, fig. 3, 9-12, 14; K. Tsouris, *Diakosmos*, 153-154, fig. 19-25, 56.

¹¹¹ K. Tsouris, *Diakosmos*, fig. 19-22, 24-25.

¹¹² N. Nikonanos, *Βυζαντινοί ναοί της Θεσσαλίας από το 10^ο αιώνα ως την κατάκτηση της περιοχής από τους Τούρκους το 1393*, Athens 1979, 162, pl. 14, 75b.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 163-164, pl. 12a.

¹¹⁴ R. Leonidopoulou-Stylianou, *Παρατηρήσεις στο μοναστήρι του Αγίου Λαυρεντίου Πηλίου*, DChAE, 9, 1977-1979, 235, 237, fig. 3, pl. 94, 96a-b. The katholikon is here dated to the late twelfth century –in which case it must imitate south Greek models–, but it may perhaps date from the early thirteenth.

¹¹⁵ Ch. Barla, *Μορφή και εξέλιξις των βυζαντινών κωδωνοστασίων*, Athens 1959, pl. 3b.

¹¹⁶ A. K. Orlandos, *Paregoritissa*, 36, fig. 19d, 24.

¹¹⁷ P. L. Vocotopoulos, *Ο ναός του Παντοκράτορος στο Μοναστήρακι Βονίτσας*, (note 13), 376, pl. 102a, 103a. The interlace motif is not framed by bricks.

¹¹⁸ K. Tsouris, *Diakosmos*, 121.-122, fig. 56.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 63-65.

¹⁰⁸ K. Tsouris, *Diakosmos*, 76-95, fig. 66-71.

¹⁰⁹ See *ibid.*, 95-116.



Fig. 14 Pantanassa. Cut-brick with lentiloid recesses

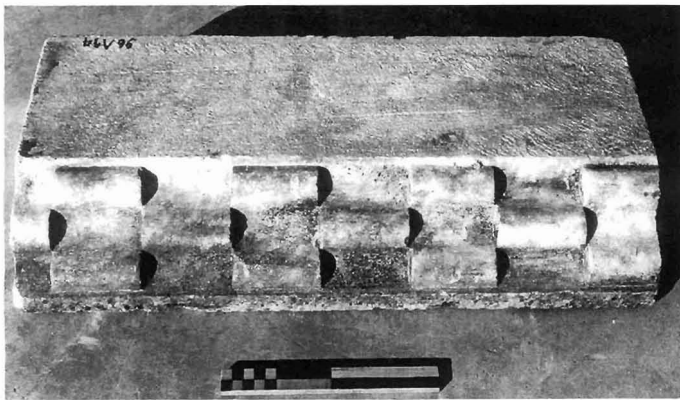


Fig. 15 Pantanassa. Fragment of cornice decorated with billets

and undetermined motifs in the church of Dyrrachion/ Durrës converted into the Fati mosque.¹¹⁹ The replacement of the dentil bands framing windows, doors and arches with cut-bricks is attested in a few examples situated in Attica, Boeotia, Euboea and the Peloponnese from the twelfth century onwards: the exonarthex of the katholikon of the monastery of St Meletios;¹²⁰ the narthex of the Zoodochos Pege near Dervenosalisi;¹²¹ the churches of St Nicholas near Parori, Boeotia,¹²² and in the cemetery of Kalamos, Attica;¹²³ St Demetrius at Lombarda on the Saronic Gulf;¹²⁴ the Taxiarches church at Kalyvia Karystou¹²⁵ and the Panagitsa of Vatheia,¹²⁶ both in Euboea; and the church on squinches of Christianou.¹²⁷ The practice of circumscribing window fra-

mes by bands of ceramic elements, adopted by Epirote masons from the Helladic school, was probably retransmitted by them to the Olympiotissa in Elasson, which otherwise imitates the architecture of Thessaloniki,¹²⁸ to Veroia¹²⁹ and to Milutin's realm; this feature is encountered in the churches of Bogorodica Ljeviška and Sv. Spas at Prizren, St George at Staro Nagoričino, and survives in the Holy Archangels at Kučevište.¹³⁰ The motif used in these buildings is the quatrefoil.¹³¹

Inscriptions on the exterior surface of the walls of some churches of the Despotate, which contribute to the overall decorative effect, are also fairly common in Macedonia. They were usually formed with letters made of separate pieces of brick embedded in the mortar, as was the rule in Byzantine architecture.¹³² At Pantanassa, however, the letters were engraved or modelled in relief on bricks set into the wall.¹³³ At St Catherine in northern Corfu letters engraved on the tiles of a reticulate band form the name of the donor.¹³⁴ Inscriptions on bricks are encountered also in the Bogorodica Ljeviška in Prizren;¹³⁵ they probably imitate models of the Despotate.

The interior of the churches was often articulated with a cornice at the springing of the vaults and the base of cupolas. Among the reliefs found during the excavations at Pantanassa are parts of cornices decorated with romanesque billets (fig. 15).¹³⁶ in the interior of the Paregoritissa the lower part of the walls was covered with slabs of marble, while reliefs, purely Italian in style, decorate the bases of the upper tier of columns and the arches under the central cupola.¹³⁷ The decoration of some of the capitals of the Paregoritissa and of St Basil in Arta betrays Italian influence.¹³⁸

The background of the architects and masons who worked in the Despotate is unknown, with one exception. According to a later source –the *Chronicle of Galaxidi*, written in 1703 but based on older documents– the church of the monastery of the Transfiguration above Galaxidi was built by a famous engineer, called Nikolos Karoulis (Niccolò Caruli), who had previously worked for the Franks. The masonry and forms of that church are not only purely Byzantine but have a provincial flavour, although the patron, according to the same source, was Michael II of Epirus.

¹¹⁹ A. Meksi, *Deux basiliques inconnues*, in: *Monumentet*, 13, 1977, 81, pl. 11.

¹²⁰ A. K. Orlandos, *Ἡ Μονὴ τοῦ Ὁσίου Μελετίου καὶ τὰ παραλάβρια αὐτῆς*, *ABME*, 5, 1939-40, 96, fig. 42.

¹²¹ Ch. Bouras, *Twelfth and Thirteenth Century Variations of the Single Dome Octagon Plan*, *DChAE*, 9, 1977-1979, 24, fig. 2, pl. 6.

¹²² S. Mamaloukos, *Ὁ ναὸς τοῦ Ἁγίου Νικολάου τοῦ Νέου κοντὰ στὸ Παρόρι τῆς Βοιωτίας* (as in note 85), 501, 520, 525, fig. 10, 21.

¹²³ E. Ginis-Tsofopoulou, *Ἁγιος Νικόλαος στὸ νεκροταφεῖο Καλάμου Ἀττικῆς. Νέα στοιχεῖα*, *DChAE*, 11, 1982-1983, 233-234, fig. 7.

¹²⁴ Ch. Bouras - A. Kaloyeropoulou - R. Andreadi, *Churches of Attica*, Athens 1970, 90-91, fig. 93.

¹²⁵ On this church see N. K. Moutsopoulos, *Ὁ Ταξιάρχης τῶν Καλυβίων παρὰ τὴν Κάρυστον*, *Ἀρχεῖον Εὐβοϊκῶν Μελετῶν*, 8, 1961, p. 204-248.

¹²⁶ A. K. Orlandos, *Σταυρεπίστυγοι ναοὶ Βάθειας Εὐβοίας*, *ABME*, 7, 1951, p. 116-117, fig. 7, 8.

¹²⁷ E. Stikas, *L'église byzantine de Christianou en Trilphylie (Péloponnèse) et les autres édifices de même type*, Paris 1951, 26, fig. 29. In the church of the Transfiguration at Nomitzi in the Mani, fragments of earthenware are carelessly embedded in the mortar above the arches of the south bilobed window.

¹²⁸ N. Nikonanos, *op. cit.* (note 112), 165, pl. 67b.

¹²⁹ G. Velenis, *Hermeneia*, 98, pi. 42b.

¹³⁰ A. Deroko, *Monumentalna i dekorativna arhitektura u srednjevekovnoj Srbiji*, Beograd, 3rd ed., 1985, fig. 182, 198-199, 224-226, 242-243, 245, 251. Sl. Ćurčić, *Two Examples of Local Building Workshops in Fourteenth-Century Serbia*, *Zograf*, 7, 1977, 46, 47, fig. 4-7. Cf. also quatrefoils around some arches in St. Nicholas, Prilep, and a zigzag motif framing the arch of the south door of the Archangels at Štip.

¹³¹ The framing of arches with brick ornaments, usually quatrefoils, is also attested in Mesembria and Tirnov; see K. Mijatev, *Die mittelalterliche Baukunst in Bulgarien*, Sofia 1974, fig. 159-160, 172, 175-176, 178-179, 192-194, 229, 238. Cf. also K. Tsouris, *Diakosmos*, 73.

¹³² K. Tsouris, *Diakosmos*, 145-148. G. Velenis, *Σχόλια καὶ παρατηρήσεις σὲ πολυτίτρες πλίνθινες ἐπιγραφές*, *Ἀντίφωνον*, Ἀφιέρωμα στὸν Καθηγητὴ Ν. Β. Δρανδάκη, Thessaloniki 1994, 266-269, 277-280.

¹³³ See e. g. P. L. Vocotopoulos in *AAA*, V, 1972, 92, fig. 4; *AAA*, VI, 1973, 409, fig. 5; *Praktika* 1988, 98, pl. 68γ; *Praktika* 1992, 151, fig. 60α.

¹³⁴ E. Papatheophanous-Tsouri, *Ἡ ἐκκλῆσια τῆς Ἁγίας Αἰκατερίνης Νήσου Περιθείας στὴν Κέρκυρα*, *Ἡπειρωτικὰ Χρονικά*, 24, 1982, 189, pl. 43γ.

¹³⁵ A. Deroko, *op. cit.*, 127, fig. 183.

¹³⁶ P. L. Vocotopoulos in *AAA*, V, 1972, 96, fig. 12; *idem* in *Praktika* 1996, 121, pl. 85.

¹³⁷ A. K. Orlandos, *Paregoritissa*, 66-103.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 54, fig. 48-49. A. K. Orlandos, *Ὁ Ἁγιος Βασίλειος τῆς Ἄρτης*, *ABME*, 2, 1936, 126-127, fig. 9.

One may conjecture that a local team worked there, and that Karoulis was responsible for the cross-vaulted plan of the church. The characteristics of some monuments have led to conjectures about the origin of the teams responsible for them. St Nicholas Rodias and the Kato Panagia have been ascribed to masons from southern Greece,¹³⁹ while sculptors from Italy were probably employed at Mesopotamon, Pantanassa and the Paregoritissa.¹⁴⁰

The architecture of the Despotate is uneven in quality, regardless of sponsorship and location. The more impressive structures are mostly located in or near the capital, Arta, but there are exceptions, such as the fine and expensive St Nicholas at Mesopotamon. Most buildings have a provincial, rustic quality, including the Panagia Bryoni near Arta, which was inaugurated by the Ecumenical Patriarch in person.¹⁴¹ Some churches, however, like the Kato Panagia, display a finish reminiscent of the four-column churches of the Argolid. Many churches are notable for their exuberant brick decoration, which is characterized by its variety and originality rather than by its quality (fig. 10).

It is clear from the previous discussion that the antecedents of the architecture of the Despotate of Epirus must be sought in the local tradition and in the Helladic school, but that it is, at the same time, influenced by the school of the capital, Macedonia and the West.

Local features which persist in the architecture of the Despotate include the prevalence of the barrel vault over the groin and domical vault, of timber-roofed over vaulted aisleless chapels, of plain surfaces over exteriors articulated with blind arches and niches, and of straight over curved gables. The careless masonry of roughly hewn stones with brick fragments in the vertical joints, alternating with single brick courses, is inherited from the local tradition as were, among the brick motifs used, the zigzag bands.

The influence of the Helladic school is overwhelming. The few churches in northwestern Greece datable to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when that school flourished, are undistinguished.¹⁴² It is natural that patrons in the new dynamic state based in Arta turned to the neighbouring regions of southern Greece, which had been occupied by the Latins, for models and in some cases invited teams of masons. It is no coincidence that St Nicholas Rodias and the church at Rivion, both attributed to the first decades of the thirteenth century, are closely related to the Helladic school. The two-column cross-in-square church type encountered in the school of the Despotate was borrowed from southern Greece, as were also the cloisonné masonry, three-sided apses, exterior pilasters linked by an arch, semi-arches flanking windows, stone arches and frames of doors and windows, the embedding of glazed bowls, and many brick patterns, such as the Greek fret, key- and S-shaped, disepilon, astragal, contiguous lozenges and kufesque. The reticulate revetments, tiles with decoration in *champlevé*, quat-

refoils, the framing of windows and arches with bands of cut-bricks or quatrefoils instead of dentils, and above all the geometric purity of the contours of the buildings, were all imitated from the Helladic school.

Constantinopolitan features include the rarely encountered type of the four-column inscribed cross church with five domes, porticos and chapels attached to the main body of churches, some polygonal apses and curved gables, the coursed masonry of the Pantanassa and St Demetrius at Molyvdoskepastos, the occasional use of the concealed course technique, the articulation of the east side of the Paregoritissa with blind arches and niches in two tiers. Most of these features are first attested in the last decades of the thirteenth century, when there were much closer relations with Constantinople, but some may have reached the Despotate earlier via Macedonia or the state of the Lascaris in western Asia Minor.

The architecture of nearby Macedonia appears to have had a smaller impact on the buildings of the Despotate. One may ascribe to Macedonian models the domes of the Vlacherna, Pantanassa and Paregoritissa, with brick colonnettes at the angles, and the very tall cupola of the Molyvdoskepastos. Three-sided apses with recessed blind arches at the lateral facets, fairly common in churches of the Despotate from the reign of Michael II onwards, appear earlier in Macedonia. Some brick patterns used in the Despotate, such as the concentric lozenges and basketwork extending on large surfaces, recall Macedonian rather than south Greek models.

Western influences in the architecture of the Despotate are both rare and late, and must be attributed to its close relations with Italy in the second half of the thirteenth century. The exterior appearance, interior proportions and most architectural sculptures of the Paregoritissa testify to the impact of Italian models. The same applies to the monumental portals of the Pantanassa, the exterior marble revetment of the Mesopotamon church, the architectural sculptures of, say, the Pantanassa, and the form of the windows in such minor monuments as the Taxiarches in Mokista and St John at Eupalion. The glazed terracotta reliefs of St Basil in Arta have been attributed to an Italian artist. The Western origin of the cross-vaulted type, which was popular in its three-aisled variant, has yet to be proven.

The architects of the Despotate of Epirus enriched the formal vocabulary which they borrowed mainly from the Helladic school: They introduced new brick patterns, chequered friezes in two colours, inscriptions incised on bricks, and covered whole walls with an exuberant tile decoration. They replaced the rippling eaves of cupolas with straight ones. They combined windows framed by semi-arches with the ends of the barrel vaults which are built over them. They were capable of inventing new daring solutions in church planning; the Paregoritissa and St Nicholas at Mesopotamon are highly original creations, which remain unique in the architecture of the Byzantine world. The Mesopotamon church was not solid enough to withstand repeated earthquakes and underwent extensive repairs, which have radically altered its appearance; the Paregoritissa, on the contrary, miraculously stands to this day, demonstrating the boldness and dexterity of the architects and masons of the Despotate of Epirus.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ D. Pallas in RbK, 11, col. 281.

¹⁴⁰ A. K. Orlandos, *Paregoritissa*, 93; K. Tsouris, *Diakosmos*, 19.

¹⁴¹ P. L. Vocotopoulos, *Παρατηρήσεις επί της Παναγίας τοῦ Μπρυώνη*, Ἀρχαιολογικὸν Δελτίον, 28, 1973, fasc. A, 159-168.

¹⁴² Idem, *Architecture of the 7th-10th cent.*, 208-210, 253. Idem, *Ἀγία Παρασκευή τοῦ Δράκου*, DChAE, 14, 1987-1988, 49-59.

¹⁴³ The assistance of Dr. K. A. Wardle in checking my English is gratefully acknowledged.

AAA: *Athens Annals of Archaeology*.

ABME: *Ἀρχεῖον τῶν Βυζαντινῶν Μνημείων τῆς Ἑλλάδος*.

DChAE: *Δελτίον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας*, 4th period.

Praktika: *Πρακτικά τῆς ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας*.

A. Orlandos, *Paregoritissa*: A. K. Orlandos, *Ἡ Παρηγορήτισσα τῆς Ἀρτης*, Athens 1963.

K. Tsouris, *Diakosmos*: K. Tsouris, *Ὁ κεραμοπλαστικὸς διάκοσμος τῶν ὑστεροβυζαντινῶν μνημείων τῆς Βορειοδυτικῆς Ἑλλάδος*, Kavala 1988.

G. Velenis, *Hermeneia*: G. Velenis, *Ἑρμηνεῖα τοῦ ἑξωτερικοῦ διακόσμου στὴ Βυζαντινὴ ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ*, Thessaloniki 1984.

G. Velenis, *Thirteenth-Century Architecture in Epirus*: G. Velenis, *Thirteenth-Century Architecture in the Despotate of Epirus: The Origins of the School*, Studenica et l'art byzantin autour de l'année e 1200, Belgrade 1988, 279-285.

P. L. Vocotopoulos, *Architecture of the 7th-10th cent.*: P. L. Vocotopoulos, *Ἡ ἐκκλησιαστικὴ ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ εἰς τὴν Δυτικὴν Στερεὰν Ἑλλάδα καὶ τὴν Ἠπειρὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ τέλους τοῦ 7^{ου} μέχρι τοῦ τέλους τοῦ 10^{ου} αἰῶνος*, 2nd edition, Thessaloniki 1992.

Црквена архитектура Епирског деспотата: проблем утицаја

Панајотис Л. Вокотопулос

Градитељска својства црква насталих у Епирском деспотату, ромејској држави образованој током XIII столећа у областима западне Грчке, представљају једно од најзначајнијих обележја позног раздобља византијске архитектуре. Аутор истражује различите утицаје који су довели до формирања особених дела ове градитељске школе.

У архитектури Епира у овом раздобљу најчешће се подижу цркве са основном уписаног крста, грађевине са надвишеним попречним сводом, као и једнобродне. Највећи број крстообразних храмова има куполу која почива на зидовима између олтарске апсиде и пастофорија, и пару стубова или стубаца на западној страни (Св. Никола Родијски код Арте, Св. Ђорђе у Ангелокастро у Етолији и друге). Две цркве, Пантанаса код Филипијаде и Паригоритиса у Арти, имају посебне травеје у којима је образован простор олтара, што је карактеристично за цариградске храмове. Ова и друге посебности споменутих грађевина указују на престонички утицај, вероватно посредован преко споменика династије Ласкариса (Сардис, црква Е). Поред црква уписаног крста, на некадашњој територији Епирског деспотата налазе се и четири од укупно једанаест сачуваних тробродних грађевина са надвишеним попречним сводовима (Панагија Бриони код Арте, Таксијарси код Костаниани, Св. Димитрије у области Фанари, као и Като Панагија у самој Арти). Интензивна примена овог решења наводи на помисао о његовом пореклу у Епиру, али је важно напоменути да у другим грчким покрајинама постоје и ранији такви примери (Св. Ђорђе у Андруси, Месенија). Коначно, једнобродне цркве најчешће су покривене дрвеним кровом, скромне и у највећем броју случајева саграђене изван средишта средњовековне епирске државе.

Многе епирске цркве првобитно нису имале посебан простор нартекса. Тамо где постоје, нартекси су троделни, са бочним травејима који су засвођени попречно постављеним полуобличастим сводовима, и средишњим који је покривен куполастим сводом. У Като Панагији, Порта Панагији, Мегали Панагији у Парамитија и цркви у Месопотаму припрате нису одвојене од наоса зидом.

Амбулаторијуми, бочни портици и капеле не припадају решењима преузетим из локалне традиције. И ту је, по свој прилици, реч о цариградским утицајима.

Две технике зидања препознају се на црквама епирског деспотата: cloisonné и зидање редовима камена које смењује по један ред опеке, са водоравно положеним деловима опека постављеним уз вертикалне спојнице. Први наведени поступак је чешће примењиван, док други потиче из ранијег локалног градитељског наслеђа. Првобитни део

храма Богородице Пантанасе (Филипијада), као и срушена, слабо истражена црква Св. Димитрија у Моливдоскепастос зидане су угледањем на цариградска остварења.

У горњим зонама епирских црква најчешћи су полуобличасти сводови изведени од опеке. Ребрасти сводови конструисани су у Паригоритиси, над припратом Мегали Панагије, над западним портиком Пантанасе и у највећем делу амбулаторијума Св. Теодоре у Арти. Петокуполно решење било је примењено у Паригоритиси и, вероватно, Пантанаси. Куполе епирских храмова обично су осомстране. Понекад својим изгледом подсећају на оне настале у токовима архитектуре "грчке школе" (Св. Стефан у Ривиону у Акарнанији). Куполе Влахерне, Пантанасе и Паригоритисе, са колонетама од опеке на угловима страна, модификован су одјек одговарајућих решења у градитељству Солуна, понегде и Македоније (изразито висока купола манастира у Моливдоскепастос).

Изразито обележје епирских црква из времена деспотата представљају фасаде покривене богатим украсом изведеним слагањем опеке. Мотиви су преузети из репертоара "грчке школе", локалне традиције, понекад и Македоније. Поједини су својствени и градитељству нешто удаљенијих области (Србија, Румунија). Јединствен је украс на фасадама цркве Св. Василија у Арти (касни XIII век), изведен емајлираним плочицама у три боје, под утицајем који вероватно допире из Италије.

Иако је порекло позносредњовековних епирских градитеља готово по правилу непознато, сачуван је важан податак који сведочи о присуству италијанских мајстора. Према једном знатно познијем писаном извору (из 1703. г.), насталом на основу вести из старијих докумената, цркву преображењског манастира изнад Галаксиди подигао је Николо Карули (Niccolò Caruli), који је претходно радио за франачке племиће. О деловању италијанских атељеа у Епиру посредно се закључује и по остацима архитектонске скулптуре цркве у Месопотаму, Пантанаси и Паригоритиси.

Архитектура црква Епирског деспотата настала је укрштањем различитих утицаја који су се на особен начин уклопили у токове традиционалног сакралног градитељства на овој територији. У простору, конструктивним решењима и декорацији епирских храмова препознају се поједина својства савременог грађења у Цариграду, Македонији и у Италији. Усвајајући их, епирски мајстори су створили значајну градитељску школу. Нека њихова остварења, попут Паригоритисе и цркве Св. Николе у Месопотаму, представљају јединствена дела у архитектури византијског света.