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## The Byzantine bell-tower in Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos (1427)

*The sculpted decoration and its significance\**

*With 24 figures*

Abstract: The present paper focuses on the marble architectural members inserted into the bell-tower of Vatopedi monastery. Their study enriches our knowledge about the sculpted decoration especially in the middle and late Byzantine period; moreover, an aspect of the nature and organization of the marble decoration in a non-ecclesiastical Athonite building, erected just a few years after the Ottoman Occupation of Mount Athos, is provided. Additionally, the reused *spolia* render some enquires about their provenance necessary; this question remains open and only hypotheses can be expressed.

In the courtyard of Vatopedi monastery on Mount Athos, a few meters southwest of the katholikon, stands an impressive bell-tower, about 24 m in height (fig. 1). As we know from the inscription in the northern façade, it was built in 1427<sup>1</sup>; also, in the same façade an epigram is written in brickwork<sup>2</sup>. Recent research and restoration works indicate that this structure replaced another, probably an earlier Byzantine tower, from which the lower part is distinguished in the base of the building. The roof was repaired in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>3</sup>. An arcosolium was added in the 16<sup>th</sup> century on the left side of the entrance; from this is maintained the springing of the eastern arch, initially with painted decoration, now only partially preserved (fig. 2)<sup>4</sup>. According to the monastery's tradition

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\* For the first presentation of this subject see D. LIAKOS, Παρατηρήσεις στον γλυπτό διάκοσμο του βυζαντινού κωδωνοστασίου της μονής Βατοπεδίου, in: 33ο symposio byzantines kai metabyzantines archaeologias kai technes. Programma kai perilepseis eisegeseon kai anakoinoseon. Athens 2013, 63–64. Restoration works were carried out on the bell-tower by the 10<sup>th</sup> Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities (now Ephorate of Antiquities of Chalkidike and Mt Athos / Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs, Greece) during the years 2005–2008. Ploutarchos Theocharides, architect, who supervised the restoration works, provided me with valuable information about some issues of the monument's architecture. Also, my friend and colleague George Pallis, Lecturer of Byzantine Archaeology and Art at the Department of History and Archaeology, University of Athens, helped with his precious remarks to improve this paper. To both of them I express my sincerest thanks. Finally, I would like to thank my friend and colleague Vangelis Maladakos, who helped me with the final English text and the paper's referees for their valuable observations.

<sup>1</sup> G. MILLET – J. PARGOIRE – L. PETIT, Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de l'Athos. Première partie. Paris 1904 (Reprint Thessalonike 2004), no 115b. For a short reference to the bell-tower see CH. BARLA, Μορφή και εξέλιξις των βυζαντινών κωδωνοστασίων. Athens 1959, 31, 34–36, 45.

<sup>2</sup> MILLET – PARGOIRE – PETIT, Recueil, no 115a. An analysis of the epigram offers A. RHOPY, Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein nebst Addenda zu den Bänden 1 und 2 (= Byzantinische Epigramme in inschriftlicher Überlieferung, III/1–2, hrsg. von W. Hörandner – A. Rhoby – A. Paul) (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Kl., Denkschriften 474 = Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung 35). Wien 2014, 181–182.

<sup>3</sup> P. THEOCHARIDES, Renewal of building stock (Construction on Mount Athos in the 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries), in: Mount Athos in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Spiritual Life – History – Art. Thessalonike 2011, 108, 116, 126–127.

<sup>4</sup> The arcosolium could not be securely identified with one of the two tombs mentioned in the written sources: neither with the one in the right part of the katholikon (έν τῷ δεξιῷ μέρει τῆς ἐκκλησίας), in which the Ecumenical Patriarch Maximos was buried in 1502 (K. CHRYSOCHOIDES, Από την Οθωμανική κατάκτηση έως τον 20<sup>ο</sup> αιώνα, in: Iera megiste mone Batopediou. Paradosē – istoria – technē. Mount Athos 1996, I 59 and note 22) nor with the other near phiale, in which the former Metropolitan of Thessaloniki, Makarios Papageorgopoulos, was buried in 1546 (CHRYSOCHOIDES, Από την Οθωμανική 59 and note 22; MILLET – PARGOIRE – PETIT, Recueil, no. 114).

the construction of the bell-tower is attributed to Andronikos Palaeologos, Despot of Thessalonike (1408–1423)<sup>5</sup>.

This unique Byzantine bell-tower on Mount Athos has an interesting decoration, consisting of painted crosses, decorative brick ornaments (fig. 3), built-in vessels<sup>6</sup> (fig. 4) and a group of marble architectural members impacted in four double-light wall-openings on the upper floor and in the outer northern façade as well. The restoration works gave me the opportunity to register the whole decorative elements in the bell-tower, what previously was impossible<sup>7</sup>.

The present paper focuses on the above mentioned marble architectural members<sup>8</sup>. The analysis of techniques and stylistic traits leads to recognize the known artistic trends, but also to distinguish two individual groups. As we will see below, in the first one are included the architectural members, which were carved *ad hoc*, namely in order to adorn the bell-tower, whereas the other group consist of reused spoils (*spolia*). Furthermore, the examination of the reused material raises important enquiries about their provenance, but also permits us to underline the affinities between them and the marble architectural members from the other monastic buildings, mainly the katholikon, in which the marble decoration is especially rich.

On the upper floor of the bell-tower, in four double-light wall-openings, the columns (2.75 m in height) (fig. 5) as well as their bases (fig. 6) are reused. The latter have a crosscut almost identical to that of the bases in the columns on the floor of the lite in the katholikon, which have been dated to the beginnings of the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>9</sup>. On the columns were adjusted undecorated capitals with inherent impostes (fig. 7). The configuration of exergue circular surfaces in the lower part of the capitals, with a diameter similar to that at the top of the columns (0.22 m), indicates that the capitals were carved in order to be placed on these columns.

Two parts of a door-frame (1.20 × 0.40 m each one) have been incorporated in the northern wall-opening, in the intrados of two arches (fig. 8, 9). Both of them have a similar crosscut with successive moldings and a rib (βεργίον); the latter is very common in the sculpture of the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>10</sup> and thus indicative that these parts could be dated to this period. At the time of their incorporation in the bell-tower, probably the rib was scraped in the visible external side.

Two marble fragments (1.20 × 0.22 m each one) are impacted at the eastern wall-opening, in the intrados of the southern arch; the sculpted decoration has not been completed in the left part (fig. 10). It is obvious that both of them have a common origin and must come from the same marble artwork, apparently a cornice on a door frame, decorated with vine tendrils symmetrically springing up from a cross, however unfinished. The sculpted decoration in these fragments is similar to the architrave in

<sup>5</sup> *PLP IX 21427*. THEOCHARIDES, Renewal 116. On the relations of Andronikos Palaeologos with Vatopedi and his gift-giving activity generally see N. MELVANI, Ο δεσπότης Θεσσαλονίκης Ανδρόνικος Παλαιολόγος και το Άγιον Όρος, in: Το Άγιον Όρος στον 15ο και 16ο αιώνα. Thessalonike 2012, 418–426, with older bibliography.

<sup>6</sup> A glazed jug and eight glazed bowls are built-in in the upper part of the walls. One of them (fig. 4) belongs to the „Pula type” (third quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> – beginnings of the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries), while the majority of the rest belongs to the Iznik type; their placement may be associated with some kind of repair in the upper part of the monument in the Post-Byzantine period. The pottery group will be the subject of another paper.

<sup>7</sup> A perimetric scaffold was constructed for the needs of the restoration works under the responsibility of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Chalkidike and Mt Athos.

<sup>8</sup> The architectural members impacted in the northern façade could be seen only from distance, due to the great height in which they have been placed. BARLA, Μορφή και εξέλιξις 31, 35–36 briefly mentions the columns and the capitals in the wall-openings, as well as the architectural members in the eastern wall-opening. Also P. ANDROUDIS, Τα μεσοβυζαντινά γλυπτά στην ααλή της Μονής Βατοπεδίου Αγ. Όρους, in: St’ synantese byzantinologon Ellados kai Kyprou, University of Athens, 22–25 September 2005 (unpublished communication), generally discusses the marble decoration of the bell-tower.

<sup>9</sup> TH. PAZARAS, Τα βυζαντινά γλυπτά του καθολικού της μονής Βατοπεδίου. Thessalonike 2001, 79 (fig. 109 and sch. 32).

<sup>10</sup> On similar examples see PAZARAS, Τα βυζαντινά γλυπτά 50–51 (fig. 59, 63); A. GRABAR, Sculptures Byzantines du Moyen Age, II (XIe–XIVe siècle). Paris 1979, pl. XXc, LXVa, b, LXVIa, LXVIIb.

the Protaton altar screen (second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>11</sup> and other sculptures of the 10<sup>th</sup> century<sup>12</sup>; therefore, the aforementioned marble fragments in the bell-tower could be dated to the same period.

A part (1.24 × 0.22 m) from a cornice (fig. 11) is impacted at the eastern wall-opening, in the intrados of the northern arch. The technique and the patterns of decoration (double winding stem with enclosed palmettes in alternation and inserted lotus flowers) are commonly found in the sculpture of the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>13</sup>.

Undecorated cornices (their length ranging from 1.15 to 1.20 m, but with equal height of 0.22 m) are impacted at the wall-openings in the western and southern façades, in the intrados of arches (southern and northern, eastern and western respectively) (figs. 12, 13). The lack of sculpted ornaments sets a reasonable question whether they are older architectural members with unfinished decoration, reused in the bell-tower or whether they are cornices, sloppily – perhaps hastily – created in order to be incorporated in this building. Their construction from the same – at least visually – kind of marble with that of the capitals, which have been curved for the bell-tower, could support the second hypothesis. The other marble architectural members, discussed in this paper, adorn the outer northern façade of the bell-tower.

Two other parts of cornice (0.98 × 0.18 m the eastern part, 1.20 × 0.18 m the western part) (figs. 14, 15) are impacted in the height of the arches' springing in the northern wall-opening, symmetrically to the aforementioned reused fragments of a door frame. The sculpted decoration is similar to that in the cornice's fragment impacted in the southern arch of the eastern wall-opening. Although it is unknown whether these three architectural members belong to the same cornice, yet it is obvious that they were produced by the same workshop.

A cornice, constituted of two parts with the same sculpted decoration, is impacted in the cill of the northern wall-opening (total dimensions 2.60 × 0.21 m) (fig. 16). It is adorned by successive jagged acanthus, rendered with high and low relief in alternation and with the use of open work. This pattern and the simultaneous use of different techniques are features known from many examples dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> and the beginnings of the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries either on Mount Athos (fig. 17)<sup>14</sup> or in other areas<sup>15</sup>. The striking likeness with the southern part of the cornice on the door frame of the lite in

<sup>11</sup> Θεσσαυροί του Αγίου Όρους (Exhibition Catalogue). Thessaloniki 1997, 268–269, no. 6.1 (Th. Pazaras).

<sup>12</sup> M. SKLABOU-MAVROEIDE, Γλυπτά του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου Αθηνών. Athens 1999, no 132.

<sup>13</sup> Compare similar examples in PAZARAS, Τα βυζαντινά γλυπτά 59, 60 (fig. 74), 61, 91, 92 (fig. 133, 134).

<sup>14</sup> I cite as comparative examples the southern part of the cornice on door frame in the lite of the katholikon (PAZARAS, Τα βυζαντινά γλυπτά 56 [fig. 70], 57) and the cornices in the nave of the kyriakon of St Demetrios' skete (cf. P. ANDROUDES, Le catholicon du monastère byzantin de Saint-Démétrios [Chalkéôs] au Mont-Athos [actuel kyriakon de la Skite de Saint-Démétrios de Vatopédi]. *DChAE* 29 [2008] 203, who proposes, however, to date it to the early Christian period). TH. PAZARAS, Τα γλυπτά του κυριακού της βατοπεδινής σκίτης του Αγίου Δημητρίου, in: *Meletes gia ta byzantina glypta tou Agiou Orou*. Thessalonike 2014, 407 proves that the aforementioned cornices in the kyriakon of skete of St Demetrios are dating in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Also, an unpublished part of a cornice reused into the stone-built krepis in kyriakon is similar (see the fig. 17); the latter was carefully removed from the krepis by the conservators of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Chalkidike and Mt Athos, in the framework of the restoration works a few years ago.

<sup>15</sup> The type of this sculpted decoration has been attributed to the early Christian period by G. SOTIRIOU, Βυζαντινά μνημεία της Θεσσαλίας II' και ΙΑ' αιώνος. 2. Η μονή της Παναγίας και του Αγίου Δημητρίου παρά το Τσάγαιζι. *EEBS* 5 (1926) 366 and fig. 18. This point of view was espoused by ANDROUDES, Le catholicon 203. However, convincing documentation exists that it can be dated to the Middle Byzantine era (with this aspect I agree), as it is evidenced by the following bibliography concerning similar examples from various locations; BR. SCHULZ, Die Kirchenbauten auf der Insel Torcello. Berlin – Leipzig 1927, 22–23, pl. 14 (drawing), 15; H. BUCHWALD, The carved stone ornament of the high Middle Ages in San Marco, Venice. *JÖBG* 13 (1964) 144–147; J. KRAMER – U. PESCHLOW, Corpus der Kapitelle der Kirche von San Marco zu Venedig (*Forschungen zur Kunstgeschichte und christlichen Archäologie* 12). Wiesbaden 1981, no 89, 90, pl. 7; R. FARIOLI-CAMPANATI, La scultura artistica nelle regioni bizantine d' Italia dal VI all' XI secolo, in: *I Bizantini in Italia*. Milano 1982, 416, no 238, fig. 317; M. AGAZZI, L' architettura della basilica alla svolta del 1008, in: *Torcello. Alle origini di Venezia tra occidente e oriente*, a cura

the *katholikon*<sup>16</sup> arouses particular interest; the northern part of the latter was supplemented in 1426, when the *lite* was repaired<sup>17</sup>. Moreover, one should note the similarity of the dimensions between the later addition in the cornice on *lite*'s door frame (which replaced the lost part of the Middle Byzantine cornice) and the eastern cornice's fragment reused in the bell-tower, 1 m in length and 0.21 m in height. One might assume, in my point of view, that the latter is the lost part of the initial cornice on *lite*'s door frame.

A marble panel decorated with the patriarchal cross and leaves, adorns the upper part in the bell-tower's northern exterior façade (0.50 × 0.95 m) (fig. 18). The form of the cross, with horizontal arms equal in length, is rather unusual. However, crosses with strapped arms in several variations are frequently depicted in many examples, dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> and the beginnings of the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, the foliate ornaments but also the half-palmettes, which germinate from the ends of the cross arms and the base respectively, are especially common in 11<sup>th</sup> century sculpture<sup>19</sup>. Additionally, the carving technique used in the half-palmettes, is frequently found in many examples from the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>20</sup>. The long narrow rectangular shape and the dimensions leave no doubt that the panel comes from an altar screen in a small chapel, similar to that of St Nikolaos annexed to the southern side of the *katholikon* in Vatopedi monastery<sup>21</sup>.

A zoomorphic mask (0.19 × 0.19 m) is depicted in the marble brick beneath the bell-tower's inscription (fig. 19). The close affinity with the respective motives on the gateposts in the *lite* of the *katholikon* at the same monastery, dated to the beginnings of the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>22</sup>, indicates that they are contemporary works. However, in both of the sculptures some differences in terms of quality can be observed.

Two other small slabs embedded in the outer northern façade, complete the bell-tower's marble decoration. In the first one (0,40 × 0,40 m.) a cross surrounded by two cypresses and the inscription Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς Χ(ριστὸ)ς Νικᾷ (fig. 20) is depicted. The slab is broken at the right and the lower side, thus the form of the cross's base is unknown. The motive of a cross surrounded by cypresses, in different variations, is particularly common in the Middle Byzantine sculpture<sup>23</sup>, but because of the unfinished decoration, mainly what regards the cypresses, this slab cannot be dated with accuracy. I believe that the Middle Byzantine slab was unfinished, when it was inserted into<sup>24</sup> the bell-tower in the period of its construction (1427); at the same period the inscription was engraved, as it is indicated by its execution and the palaeographical data<sup>25</sup>.

di G. Caputo. Venezia 2009, 57–58; V. ΣΥΤΗΙΑΚΑΚΙΣ-ΚΡΙΤΣΙΜΑΛΛΙΣ, Τα γλυπτά του καθολικού της μονής Αγίου Δημητρίου στο Στόμιο (Τσάγγεζι), in: Agios Demetrios Stomίου. Istoría – techne – istorike geographia tou monasteriou kai tes perioches ton ekbolon tou Peneiou, epimeleia St. Gouloulis – St. Sdrolia. Larisa 2010, 135–136 and fig. 18. PAZARAS, Τα γλυπτά του κυριακού 407.

<sup>16</sup> PAZARAS, Τα βυζαντινά γλυπτά 57.

<sup>17</sup> S. ΜΑΜΑΛΟΥΚΟΣ, Το καθολικό της μονής Βατοπεδίου. Ιστορία και αρχιτεκτονική. Athens 2001, 71; PAZARAS, Τα βυζαντινά γλυπτά 56–57; MILLET – PARGOIRE – PETIT, Recueil, no 46.

<sup>18</sup> GRABAR, Sculptures Byzantines II, pl. XXXVIb; SKLABOU-MAVROIDE, Γλυπτά 148, no. 202; E. ΜΑΝΟΛΕΣΣΟΥ, Γλυπτά από τη συλλογή της τράπεζας του Οσίου Λουκά, in: La sculpture Byzantine, VIIe–XIIe siècles, ed. Ch. Pennas – C. Vanderheyde (BCH Supplément 49). Athènes 2008, 331.

<sup>19</sup> GRABAR, Sculptures Byzantines II, pl. LVIIb; Y. ÖTÜKEN, Neue Aspekte zur Datierung der mittelbyzantinischen Bauplastik in Kleinasien, in: La sculpture Byzantine, VIIe–XIIe siècles 114–115, 121 (fig. 8); SKLABOU-MAVROIDE, Γλυπτά 148, no. 202.

<sup>20</sup> GRABAR, Sculptures Byzantines II 42, 44, 48.

<sup>21</sup> PAZARAS, Τα βυζαντινά γλυπτά 89–93.

<sup>22</sup> PAZARAS, Τα βυζαντινά γλυπτά 56–57.

<sup>23</sup> On other examples see TH. PAZARAS, Ανάγλυφες σαρκοφάγοι και επιτάφιας πλάκες της μέσης και ύστερης βυζαντινής περιόδου στην Ελλάδα. Athens 1988, 135.

<sup>24</sup> On the topic of unfinished sculptures generally see CH. BOURAS, Ημίεργα αρχιτεκτονικά μέλη σε μεσοβυζαντινούς ελληνικούς ναούς, in: 22o symposiou byzantines kai metabyzantines archaiologias kai technes. Programma kai perilepseis eisegeon kai anakoinoseon. Athens 2002, 70–71.

<sup>25</sup> See the similar shaped A in Late Byzantine inscriptions; RHOBY, Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein 152–154 and 919, VIII; T. ΠΑΠΑΜΑΣΤΟΡΑΚΙΣ, Pictorial Lives. Narrative in thirteenth-century vita icons. *Museio Mpenaki* 7 (2007) 52 (fig. 24).

In the other slab (0.30 × 0.30 m) the whole decoration, namely a cross on a base accompanied by the inscription Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς Χ(ριστὸ)ς Νικᾶ (fig. 21), is preserved. The simple form of the cross on a plain base and the careless elaboration should be considered as evidence of a later dating, at a period in which the flourishing of the sculpture had ceased and many craftsmen created plain ornamental forms, as we know from other cases<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, I believe that this slab was carved in order to be impacted into the northern façade of the bell-tower in 1427. Moreover, the paleographical evidence supports the dating to this period<sup>27</sup>.

In summary, the bell-tower in Vatopedi monastery has a plain and discreet marble decoration, constituted mainly by earlier material (reused *spolia*) and a few contemporary architectural members. On the contrary to the other kinds of decoration (painted and ceramoplastic, but also the built-in vessels) dispersed in all façades, the majority of the marble architectural members is concentrated on the northern façade, the side immediately visible from the most frequented part of the courtyard, that between the katholikon and the refectory. Moreover, the intention for uniformity is achieved both by carving similar capitals adjusted to the columns in all wall-openings, and by placing similar architectural members in the arches' intrados, namely the two fragments of (the same) door frame in the northern wall-opening (on the most visible side) and the undecorated cornices in the southern and western wall-openings.

The marble members (capitals and undecorated cornices) that were carved to be embedded in the bell-tower, can be added to the few sculptures from the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century; they are not characterized by any artistic merit. On the other hand, the reused spoils (*spolia*), predominating the whole marble decoration, reflect the known stylistic trends and techniques in the Middle Byzantine sculpture. Also, some of them, as we have ascertained, are similar to other marble sculptures of the katholikon. This fact suggests that these spoils could have been carved by the same workshop. Additionally, from the examination of the aforementioned architectural members some useful enquiries regarding their provenance may be raised, as mentioned above.

Research on the Byzantine sculpture on Mount Athos has so far confirmed two different cases about the origin of reused architectural members found in many Athonite churches; either from the earlier monastic buildings or from the other edifices in dependencies (ἐξαρτήματα) of the monasteries, which may or may not be located on the Athonite peninsula. After the desolation or abandonment of the latter a large number of marble architectural members were transferred to the leading monasteries<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> PAZARAS, *Ανάγλυφες σαρκοφάγοι 150–151*. Another similar example, which can be dated, in my point of view, to the Late Byzantine period, exists in Dionysiou monastery, Mt Athos; on the reused column at the lower part of the monastery's bell-tower, constructed in the first half of 16<sup>th</sup> century (see PL. THEOCHARIDES, *Παρατηρήσεις στην οικοδομική ιστορία και την οχύρωση της Μ. Διονυσίου Αγ. Όρους κατά το 16<sup>ο</sup> αιώνα*. *Makedonika* 22 [1982] 446), is depicted a plain cross surrounded by the inscription Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς Χ(ριστὸ)ς Νικᾶ. The pattern and the inscription were mentioned by S. KADAS, *Η Ιερά Μονή Αγίου Διονυσίου*. Mount Athos 1997, 99, who proposed, however, no specific dating. Moreover, one can see the preserved part of the dedicatory inscription (1416) of the non-surviving chapel of the Saints Constantine and Helen in Vatopedi, with fragmentarily preserved sculpted decoration (on the inscription see MILLET – PARGOIRE – PETIT, *Recueil*, no 148); the slab, in which the hands of the Saints holding the Holy Cross are depicted, is kept in the sacristy of Vatopedi (the photograph is unpublished). D. LIAKOS, *Unpublished Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Inscriptions on Mt Athos*, in: *Inscriptions. Their contribution to Byzantine and Post-Byzantine History and History of Art*. International Symposium. Ioannina, 26–27 June 2015 (forthcoming in *Proceedings*).

<sup>27</sup> The same type of the letter A is found in late Byzantine inscriptions; indicatively see A. WEYL CARR – S. KALOPISSI-VERTI, *Inventory of paleographic forms in the thirteenth and fourteenth century murals*, in: *Asinou across time. Studies in the architecture and murals of the Panagia Phorbiotissa, Cyprus*, ed. A. Weyl Carr and A. Nikolaïdès. Washington, D.C. 2012, 372.

<sup>28</sup> TH. PAZARAS, *Η βυζαντινή γλυπτική στο Άγιον Όρος*, in: *Thesauri tou Agiou Orous 263*. The research about this issue certainly needs to register all of the marble architectural members reused in Athonite buildings, in combination with studying the written sources, in order to identify, as far as possible, their provenance in each case. In many monastic buildings are

Therefore, within this general framework we may not exclude the assumption that some marble architectural members were transferred from abandoned buildings to Vatopedi monastery at an unknown time; some of them could have been embedded into the bell-tower in 1427, as was recently discussed<sup>29</sup>. Actually, the ancient practice of reusing *spolia*<sup>30</sup> is well documented in the Athonite architecture<sup>31</sup>; therefore, some of the aforementioned architectural members impacted in the bell-tower could have been transferred from ruined dependencies near Vatopedi (sketes, cells etc), even from distant metochia<sup>32</sup>. Moreover, the possibility that some of them have been transported as merchandise cannot be denied, since we know that the commerce of marbles was a usual practice in the Middle and Late Byzantine era<sup>33</sup>. Additionally, I quote below another case of reused architectural members, probably derived from the pre-existing monastic buildings.

According to the patriographic tradition of Mt Athos, St Athanasios the Athonite pointed out to the founders of the monastery (which came from Adrianople) a desolate monastic establishment and recommended them to reconstruct and inhabit it<sup>34</sup>. According to the historical evidence the first

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found sculptures or architectural members dated to the pre-Christian period, which apparently were transferred from buildings in the small towns that are mentioned in the written sources and attested by archaeological material in several areas on the Athonite peninsula. However, we cannot exclude the possibility that some of them could have been transferred from other areas in Chalkidike, where monasteries had dependencies (*metochia*). I quote some representative pre-Christian sculptures impacted in various buildings at the monasteries of Xeropotamou (two marble heads in the bell-tower, Late Roman period), Pantokrator (funerary relief slab above the entrance of the refectory, Late Antiquity), Koutloumous (funerary relief slab in the northern wing, Late Antiquity), Iberon (ionical capital, north wall of Timios Prodromos chapel) etc. Also, the practice of reusing parts from the marble Byzantine altar screens, which were partially or entirely removed after the 16<sup>th</sup> century in many Athonite churches (D. LIAKOS, Η ξυλογλυπτική στο Άγιον Όρος το 16<sup>ο</sup> αιώνα. *DChAE* 34 [2013] 325–326) is another typical case. I briefly mention the panels from the Byzantine altar screens in the katholika of Lavra, Vatopedi and Iberon, which have been embedded in the phiale, in the porticus of the exonarthex of the katholikon and in the northern side of the fountain next to refectory, in each monastery respectively; see S. VOYADJIS, The initial phase of the katholikon of the Greatest Lavra Monastery, Mount Athos through evidence of its phiale, in: Proceedings of the 22<sup>nd</sup> International Congress of Byzantine Studies. Sofia 2011. Volume III: Abstracts of free communications. Sofia 2011, 113; PAZARAS, Τα βυζαντινά γλυπτά 36; IDEM, Το μαρμάρινο τέμπλο του καθολικού της Μονής Ιβήρων, in: Agion Oros. Physe – latreia – techne, I. Thessalonike 2001, 169.

<sup>29</sup> ANDROUDES, Τα μεσοβυζαντινά γλυπτά (unpublished communication).

<sup>30</sup> On the content of the term *spolia* (from the Latin word *spolium* meaning war loot) see D. KINNEY, The Concept of *Spolia*, in: *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. C. Rudolph. Oxford 2006, 233–252. On the use and significance of *spolia* see D. KINNEY, Rape or Restitution of the Past? Interpreting *Spolia*, in: *The Art of Interpreting*, ed. S. C. Scott. University Park, Pa. 1995, 52–67; B. BRENK, *Spolia from Constantine to Charlemagne: Aesthetics versus Ideology*. *DOP* 41 (1987) 108–109; G. GOODWIN, The Reuse of Marble in the Eastern Mediterranean in Mediaeval Times. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1977) 17–30; CH. BOURAS, Master Craftsmen, Craftsmen, and building Activities in Byzantium, in: *The Economic History of Byzantium: from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century, I–III*, ed. A. Laiou. Washington, D.C. 2002, 552–553.

<sup>31</sup> From the large number of cases, I indicatively mention a few: the recently revealed templon parts (architrave and colonette) in the bell-tower of the katholikon at Iberon monastery (11<sup>th</sup> century, unpublished) and a part of a marble slab immured in the south-west wing (external) at the Xeropotamou monastery (11<sup>th</sup> century, unpublished).

<sup>32</sup> On the transportation of marble *spolia* from distant dependencies to Athonite monasteries see D. LIAKOS, Διαδρομές έργων τέχνης από τα μετόχια στις αθωνικές μονές κατά τη βυζαντινή και μετά την Άλωση περίοδο. Η μαρτυρία των πηγών και των αντικειμένων, in: Mount Athos: Spreading the light to the Orthodox world: the metochia. Thessalonike, November 21–23, 2014 (forthcoming in Proceedings). Also see S. PALIOMPEES, Η Αρχαιολογική Συλλογή της Μονής Βατοπαιδίου, in: Agion Oros kai palaiochristianike archaioteta. Thessalonike 2006, 124.

<sup>33</sup> On the trade of spoils see BOURAS, Master Craftsmen 552–553. A very interesting example is the sculpted slab with a peacock and a funerary epigram (10<sup>th</sup> century) immured above the monumental entrance at the Xeropotamou monastery; as indicated, it was derived from Constantinople: Θησαυροί του Αγίου Όρους 273–274, no 6.5 (Th. Pazaras); RHOBV, Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein 187–189, with an exhaustive analysis of the epigram. Moreover, on the trade of marbles see E. F. CASTAGNINO BERLINGHIERI – A. PARIBENI, Byzantine Merchant Ships and Marble Trade. *New Data from the Central Mediterranean. Skyllis* 11 (2011) 64–75.

<sup>34</sup> See the unpublished codex Vatopedinus no 690 (16<sup>th</sup> century), 56r, 56v (I extend my gratitude to the Archimandrite Ephraim, abbot of the monastery, for giving permission to study the codex, but also to the sacristan father Ioseph for providing me with a digital copy). Cf. S. LAMPROS, Τα Πάτρια του Αγίου Όρους. *NE* 9 (1912) 210; V. BARSKII, Τα ταξίδια του στο Άγιον Όρος,

founder and abbot of the monastery was the monk Nikolaos; from the year 985 the first signature of him is recorded<sup>35</sup>. The rebuilt establishment was rapidly developed in the following decades, so that in the Typikon of Konstantine Monomachos (1045) it is referred to as crowded<sup>36</sup> and certainly it had the appropriate building infrastructures. The monastery's complex with the precinct, which had already been shaped in the Middle Byzantine period, the preserved Byzantine buildings and other building traces hidden in the newer masonries<sup>37</sup>, the inscriptions of some missing structures, such as that from the rebuilt refectory and olive-press (1320)<sup>38</sup> and, lastly, the old churches (some of which do not exist today) registered in written sources or depicted in old engravings<sup>39</sup>, reveal the monastery's prosperity and show an important – though fragmentary – aspect of it in the Byzantine era.

The above mentioned documentation can be enhanced, as far as possible, by the archaeological evidence. Some years ago (2000–2001) the excavation which was carried out in the surrounding area of the katholikon, revealed a part of an early Christian basilica and confirmed the monastic tradition of the existence of an older church<sup>40</sup>. In the following years (2004–2008) the excavation works were continued within the monastery complex: in the southern wing (κόρδα), in the surrounding areas of the larder (δοχείον) and the bell-tower, but also in the Chandler's workshop (a later structure added at the eastern side of the bell-tower)<sup>41</sup>. The excavations around the bell-tower and within the Chandler's workshop, despite of the small scale, brought to light a part from an earlier precinct (probably 10<sup>th</sup> century), but also the fragmentary remains of the Middle Byzantine buildings and other important findings (marble architectural members, glazed bowls, coins etc)<sup>42</sup>. The density of the revealed building ruins, the quality and – in several occasions – the size of the masonries, actually confirmed a serious constructional activity, in accordance to the aforementioned data. Moreover, among the most important findings is included a lead seal, which can be dated between 950 and 980. Although the accurate year of the monastery's foundation is still unknown, this lead seal is an important evidence for a pre-existing (before 985) monastic establishment, as mentioned in the patriographic tradition<sup>43</sup>.

Based on evidence of the written sources and the archaeological material, we speculate that some of the reused marble architectural members came from the missing structures of the earlier monastic

1725–1726, 1744–1745 (με τη φροντίδα και τα σγόλια του ακαδημαϊκού Παύλου Μυλωνά). Thessalonike 2009, 390; Actes de Vatopédi, I. Des origines à 1329, ed. J. BOMPAIRE – J. LEFORT – V. KRAVARI – CH. GIROS (*Archives de l'Athos* 21). Paris 2001, 5–8.

<sup>35</sup> Actes d'Iviron, I, ed. J. LEFORT – N. OIKONOMIDÈS – D. PAPACHRYSSANTHOU (*Archives de l'Athos* 14). Paris 1985, no. 7, vers. 5, 63. Actes de Vatopédi I 9.

<sup>36</sup> PH. MEYER, Die Haupturkunden für die Geschichte der Athosklöster. Leipzig 1894 (Reprint Amsterdam 1965), 157. According to the Typikon of Constantine Monomachos (1045), the Vatopedi monastery holds the second position in Athonite hierarchy. Due to this position, Vatopedi held the right to have a ship, but also to use a couple of oxen in order to knead bread: N. OIKONOMIDES, Βυζαντινό Βατοπαίδι: Μια μονή της υψηλής αριστοκρατίας, in: Iera megiste mone Batopaidiou. Paradosē – istoria – techne, I. Mount Athos 1996, 44–46.

<sup>37</sup> PL. THEOCHARIDES, Το συγκρότημα του περιβόλου, in: Iera megiste mone Batopaidiou 148–157.

<sup>38</sup> The inscription was impacted into the western façade of the exonarthex in the katholikon, MAMALOUKOS, Το καθολικό 266–267, with older bibliography.

<sup>39</sup> The old chapels of the monastery are mentioned in the codex Vatopedinus no 690, 77v, 78r, 78v.

<sup>40</sup> The early Christian basilica's excavation reports remain still unpublished; for a very short mention see I. PAPANGELOS – ST. PALIOMPEES, Προχριστιανικές αρχαιότητες στον Άθω. *To archaiologiko ergo ste Makedonia kai Thrake* 16 (2002) 394, 403; I. PAPANGELOS, Τα πήλινα αγιοπότηρα της Μονής Βατοπεδίου, in: Το Αγιον Ορος στο 15ο και 15ο αiona 367–368, 372 (fig. 1), 373 (sch. 1).

<sup>41</sup> On the results of the excavation works in the southern wing, in the surrounding area of the bell-tower and in the Chandler's workshop see D. LIAKOS, Παλαιά και νέα ευρήματα από τις ανασκαφικές έρευνες στις αγιορειτικές μονές Βατοπαϊδίου, Φιλοθέου και Αγίου Παύλου. *To archaiologiko ergo ste Makedonia kai Thrake*, 28e synantese. Thessalonike, 5–7 March 2015 (forthcoming in Proceedings).

<sup>42</sup> LIAKOS, Παλαιά και νέα ευρήματα (forthcoming).

<sup>43</sup> The lead seal will be published in collaboration with Christos Stavrakos under the title: New evidence about early history in Vatopedi monastery on Mount Athos. Unpublished sigillographical material.

establishment (before 985), but also from the buildings erected by the first founder and abbot Nikolaos and the successors of him; these buildings had obviously collapsed for various reasons or were demolished in order to be replaced by others. In this framework Theocharis Pazaras associated the reused door frame (9<sup>th</sup> century) in the southern entrance of the nave in the katholikon with the earlier monastic establishment<sup>44</sup>. Thus, it is very attractive to assume that the columns impacted in the wall-openings of the bell-tower could be considered as the reused remains of the rediscovered early Christian basilica; as we know, the reuse of columns from ruined early Christian buildings was an especially common practice in the Middle and Late Byzantine period, when many quarries were no more operating<sup>45</sup>.

To the group of reused Middle Byzantine architectural members in Vatopedi monastery also many others belong, such as the marble templon colonettes with inherent square piers (10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries)<sup>46</sup> reused in the fountain next to the bell-tower<sup>47</sup> (fig. 22), two mullions (11<sup>th</sup> century) placed as vertical elements in the marble throne in the exonarthex of katholikon<sup>48</sup> (fig. 23), the different parts of the altar screen in the St Nikolaos chapel annexed to the katholikon (late 10<sup>th</sup> – beginnings of the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries)<sup>49</sup>, but also the recently revealed slab (fig. 24) in the eastern outer façade of Saints Anargyroi chapel (10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries)<sup>50</sup>. However, the provenance of all of these is still uncertain.

In conclusion, the examination of the marble architectural members in the bell-tower of Vatopedi monastery enriches our knowledge about sculpture especially in the Middle Byzantine, but also in the Late Byzantine period; moreover, an aspect of the nature and organization of the marble decoration in a non-ecclesiastical Athonite building, erected at the dawn of a new era, just a few years after the Ottoman Occupation of Mount Athos (1423/24) and its separation from the gradually declining Byzantine State, is provided. On the other hand, as we saw, the reused material in the bell-tower renders some enquires about their provenance necessary. The latter remains still uncertain and only hypotheses can be expressed, like those that have been mentioned above. In any case, I believe it is important to pose these questions even though they may never be answered.

<sup>44</sup> PAZARAS, Τα βυζαντινά γλυπτά 49, 51 (fig. 61, 62).

<sup>45</sup> S. MAMALOUKOS, Η οικοδομική τεχνολογία στο Βυζάντιο. *Archaeologia* 96 (2005) 13; R. OUSTERHOUT, Master Builders of Byzantium. Princeton, N.J. 1999, 136–147; Ch. BOURAS – L. BOURA, Η ελλαδική ναοδομία κατά το 12<sup>ο</sup> αιώνα. Athens 2002, 434. Also, on the general problem of whether or not quarries operated in Middle and Late Byzantium see C. MANGO, Byzantine Architecture. New York 1976, 22, 24; J.-P. SODINI, Marble and Stoneworking in Byzantium, Seventh-Fifteenth Centuries, in: The Economic History of Byzantium: from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century 129–146.

<sup>46</sup> Unpublished; on similar examples see V. RUGGIERI, La scultura byzantina nel museo archeologico di Antiochia di Pisidia (Yalvaç). *OCF* 71.1 (2005) 70–71 and fig. 7a.

<sup>47</sup> On this fountain (second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) see D. LIAKOS, Τα λιθανάγλυφα του Αγίου Όρους, Α΄ (unpublished PhD) Aristotle University Thessalonike 2000, 86–87; IDEM, Η τέχνη στον Άθω: μαρμαρογλυπτική, ξυλογλυπτική, μεταλλοτεχνία, κεντητική, in: Το Άγιον Όρος στα χρόνια της απελευθέρωσης. Αφίερωμα στεν εκατονετήριδα της απελευθέρωσης (2/15 Νοεμβρίου 1912). Thessalonike 2012, 317.

<sup>48</sup> Unpublished; for similar examples see A. ORLANDOS, Το μαρμάρινον τέμπλον του Πρωτάτου των Καρυών. *EEBS* 23 (1953) 90, fig. 5; Th. PAZARAS, Το μαρμάρινο τέμπλο του καθολικού της Μονής Ιβήρων, in: Άγιον Όρος. *Physe – latreia – techne* 172, 252 (fig. 8, 9); BOURAS, Ο γλυπτός διάκοσμος, fig. 59, 60; O. POWSTENCO, The Cathedral of St. Sophia in Kiev. Columbia 1954, 89; R. SCRANTON, Medieval Architecture in the central area of Corinth (*Corinth XVI*). Princeton, N.J. 1957, nos 37, 85. The throne was constructed at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> – beginnings of the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the exonarthex was added, as has been shown by MAMALOUKOS, Το καθολικό 108, 214–215. The technique and the stylistic elements of the sculpted decoration (two-headed eagle) indicate that the throne was created in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (for other examples in marble sculpture of this period on Mount Athos, see LIAKOS, Τα λιθανάγλυφα, Α΄ 13, 23–24). On the meaning of the existence of the throne in the exonarthex of the katholikon, not only in Vatopedi monastery, but also in many other churches on Mt Athos and Serbia see V. KORAĆ, Le trône extérieur de l' hìgoumène dans le katholikon de Vatopédi. Les parallèles dans l'architecture Serbe, in: *Iera mone Batopediou. Istoria kai techne. Athonika Symmeikta* 7 (1999) 143–154.

<sup>49</sup> PAZARAS, Τα βυζαντινά γλυπτά 89–93.

<sup>50</sup> Unpublished; for other examples see Th. PAZARAS, Κατάλογος χριστιανικών αναγλύφων πλακών εκ Θεσσαλονίκης με ζωομόρφους παραστάσεις. *Byzantina* 9 (1977) 81–84, no. 48, 49; IDEM, Ανάγλυφες σαρκοφάγοι 135–136.





1 Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower



2 Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower; arcosolium



3 Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower; decorative brick ornaments in the western façade



- 4 Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower; a "Pula type" bowl in the northern façade
- 5 (right) Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower; the column in the wall opening on the upper floor (northern façade)





6 Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower; the lower part of the column with the base in the wall-opening of the northern façade



7 Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower; capital with inherent impost of the column (wall-opening, northern façade)



8 Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower; northern wall-opening; part of a door frame impacted in the western arch



9 Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower; northern wall-opening; part of a door frame impacted in the eastern arch



10 Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower; eastern wall-opening; part of a cornice on door frame with unfinished sculpted decoration, impacted in the southern arch



11 Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower; eastern wall-opening; part of a cornice impacted in the northern arch



12 Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower; western wall-opening; undecorated cornices impacted in the southern arch



13 Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower; southern wall-opening; undecorated cornice impacted in the eastern arch



14 Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower; outer northern façade; part of a cornice



15 Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower; outer northern façade; part of a cornice



16 Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower; outer northern façade; cornice



17 Skete of St Demetrios; kyriakon; part of a cornice impacted in the stone-built krepis



18 (left) Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower; outer northern façade; Marble panel from an altar screen



19 Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower; outer northern façade; marble brick



20 Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower; outer northern façade; marble slab



20 Vatopedi monastery; bell-tower; outer northern façade; marble slab



- 22 (top left) Vatopedi monastery; fountain next to the bell-tower; the reused colonettes of an altar screen
- 23 (top right) Vatopedi monastery; katholikon; exonarthex; the marble throne with two reused mullions
- 24 (left) Vatopedi monastery; chapel of Saints Anargyroi; marble slab impacted in the eastern façade