THE CHURCHES OF PELION:

Vessels of Faith, Tradition, & Cultural Endurance in Post-Byzantine Greece

by
Christina Martha Vogiatzis

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

This research presents a regional, historical, and architectural study of the ecclesiastic landscape of Mount Pelion – a vast, rugged mountain range in Thessaly, Greece. Specifically, it explores the physical and metaphysical hypostases of the Orthodox Church in post-Byzantine Greece, in contrast to the established rhythms of Byzantine Church Tradition.

The churches of Pelion were constructed primarily in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries during the period of Ottoman rule in Greece, which commenced in Thessaly in the year 1423. During this four-century era of foreign reign, Greek Orthodox Christians were treated as second-class citizens by the Muslim hegemony, suffering widespread oppression, forbiddance of religious expression, and alienation from Western Europe. In the early years of Ottoman rule, many Greeks escaped from the coastal cities to resettle in the isolated mountains where the tyranny of the conquerors was minimized, and it was at this time that Pelion's ample, scattered villages began to take form. Here, the tradition of Greek Orthodox church-building was propagated, assuming a new architectural language of typology, construction methodology, vernacular tectonics, and interior decoration which differed from that of the grand Byzantine monuments of centuries prior. Located at the centre of every village, the churches of Pelion represent a synergy of religious and cultural zeal, preserving and strengthening the collective identity of Pelion's Greek Orthodox villagers and fostering a powerful sense of community, faith, and refuge during a period of deep social and religious oppression.

This thesis follows a four-part investigation which begins at the scale of the Byzantine Empire, zooming in progressively from chapter to chapter towards the scale of a single church – Agios Georgios in the village of Zagora – which serves as an example through which to explore the foundation, subsistence, and religious/social/cultural dimensions of Pelion's remote ecclesiastic edifices during the period of Ottoman rule. Through an abundance of visual artifacts including photography, sketches, drawings, maps, and diagrams, the research presented offers an unprecedented analysis and serves to address a severe knowledge lacuna in the field of Greek post-Byzantine studies of this region.

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To all those who contributed to this work in so many ways, who have gone unmentioned but not forgotten.

To God, for making all things possible.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my grandparents.

To my γιαγιά, Martha Vogiatzis, whose heartfelt stories of Kerasia sparked my fascination with Pelion from a young age.

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INTRODUCTION

The Eastern Orthodox Church[1] is one of the oldest religious institutions in the world today, with origins extending nearly two millennia into the past. Historically, it represents a tremendous force of invention and influence, framing and defining the social, spiritual, and architectural evolution of human civilization, especially in the regions encompassing Eastern Europe and the Balkan Peninsula.

In its beginnings, Orthodox Christianity defined the religious identity of the Byzantine Empire, which constituted one of the greatest world powers throughout the fourth to fifteenth centuries. During this period, the Church[2] saw a flourishing development of doctrinal innovation, gradually cultivating its own distinct language of architecture, art, and theological expression stylistically rooted in the Hellenistic philosophical systems which defined the educational basis of the Holy Church Fathers of Byzantium.[3] Many scholarly publications exist today which explore and describe the concept of Orthodox Church Tradition[4] in the Byzantine rite, outlining the established rhythms of its architecture and ecclesiastic decoration.

However, the gradual rise of the Islamic Ottoman Empire throughout the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries posed a looming threat to the subsistence of both the Byzantine State and the Orthodox Church. During this time, Ottoman mercenaries were successful in capturing major regions of Byzantine territory throughout Eastern Europe, the Balkan Peninsula, and the Middle East, reaching a climax in 1453 with the decisive conquest of Byzantium's capital city, Constantinople. This feat marked an irreversible milestone in the history of the Orthodox Church, signalling its transition from the Byzantine to post-Byzantine era, as well as the onset of a new way of life for Orthodox citizens which was

1.The Eastern Orthodox Church constitutes one of the three doctrinal branches of the Christian religion. It is defined by its Greek-Byzantine roots, sharing communion with the Church of Rome until the East-West Schism in 1054.

2. The word 'church' is used in two different ways throughout this work. When capitalized, I am referring to the Church as an institution or body of Christian believers; when lowercase, I am referring to a physical church edifice.

3. Charles Frazee, *Constantinople, Rome, and the Churches of Greece* (Boston: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2014), 7.

4. The word 'tradition' is used in two different ways throughout this work. When capitalized and singularized, I am referring to the Tradition of the Orthodox Church, which describes the various formal methods of communicating Christian Revelation, including Ecumenical Councils, writings of the Church Fathers, canonical institutions, Divine Liturgy, architecture, iconography, devotional practices, etc.; when lowercase, and in many cases, pluralized, I am referring to a set of informal customs, rituals, or beliefs transmitted within a cultural body from generation to generation.

characterized by religious persecution, social oppression, and cultural alienation – especially from the developments of Western Europe.

Yet, the demise of the Byzantine Empire at the hands of the Ottomans did not result in the complete eradication of their way of life; rather, the memory of Byzantine civilization "remained a potent fore in the lives, mentalities, and cultural creations" of the new empire's Orthodox citizens.[5] Furthermore, the nature of the Ottoman social class structure facilitated an inherent fusion between race and religion, resulting in a heightened reliance on the Orthodox Church as a propagator of cultural identity, language, and nationality in addition to traditional matters of faith, charity, and spirituality. The evolution of Orthodox ecclesiastic art and architecture in post-Byzantine times reflects the influence of the political, social, and economic pressures imposed on the Orthodox population by the Ottoman hegemony.[6]

In contrast to the relative wealth of scholarship regarding the ecclesiastic monuments of Byzantium, scholarly studies that investigate the vast wealth of post-Byzantine monuments throughout the Balkans are still "very few and mostly unsystematic in their approach to the material."[7] In the English language especially, this reality has been attributed to a "reluctance on the part of many scholars to study a period that was not a 'glorious' one in the history of the Balkans, and also to the indifference of foreign scholars to an art that did not contribute to the evolution of the arts in Western Europe during this period."[8] More than any other region of the Ottoman Empire, the church-building activities in post-Byzantine Greece were abundantly and exuberantly propagated, yet a comprehensive documentation, inventory, or architectural analysis of these edifices remains unpublished to this day.[9]

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5. Speros Vryonis Jr., "The Byzantine Legacy in the Formal Culture of the Balkan Peoples," in *The Byzantine Tradition after the Fall of Constantinople*, ed. John J. Yiannas (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 17.

6. Charalambos Bouras, "The Byzantine Tradition in the Church Architecture of the Balkans in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *The Byzantine Tradition after the Fall of Constantinople*, ed. John J. Yiannas (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 107.

7. Ibid., 111.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

As a launching point from which to examine both the substance and essence of the post-Byzantine Greek Orthodox Church, this thesis conducts a focused examination of the ecclesiastic landscape of Mount Pelion – a remote, mountainous region in Thessaly, Greece which was evolved throughout, and as a result of, the period of Ottoman rule in Greece. Most critically, the investigation presented in this thesis endeavours to explore the following research question: what was the role of the Orthodox Church in the social and spiritual lives of the post-Byzantine Greek Orthodox population, and how does its altered architectural expression represent a manifestation of this role?

In order to contemplate this question, the thesis assumes a four-part structure designed to guide the reader through a comprehensive study increasing in both scale and chronology with each progressing chapter.

Chapter 1: *The Greek Orthodox Church*, begins with a general historical, theological, and architectural account of the Orthodox Church, investigating its origins and evolution in Byzantine society as a means of establishing an intellectual foundation through which to understand the remainder of this work. In this chapter, the architecture of the Byzantine church edifice and its traditional iconographic decoration is intimately explored in relation to Orthodox theology, contemplating the physical and metaphysical hypostases of the Orthodox Church in Byzantine society, whose essential rhythms were upheld with some transformation in post-Byzantine times.

Chapter 2: *Defining Mount Pelion*, offers a general history of the region of Mount Pelion in Thessaly, Greece, which serves as the geographical venue framing the research explorations of this thesis. Specifically, this chapter presents a cultural emphasis exploring the origins of Greek inhabitation on Pelion and outlining the mountain's role as a place of refuge for Greek Orthodox citizens during Ottoman rule – subsequently resulting in the evolution of its village settlements, the strength, unity and social empowerment of its inhabitants, and the gradual definition of its distinct ethnic identity and vernacular architectural character.

Chapter 3: *Pelion's Sacred Spaces*, focuses on the ecclesiastic landscape of Mount Pelion, providing comprehensive insight into the internal and external factors which impacted the typological evolution, construction techniques, form, function, decoration, activation, and use patterns of the Greek Orthodox church architecture of this region. By extension, this chapter reflects on the fusion between Orthodox Tradition and Greek culture, contemplating the intensification of a third hypostasis within the Church as a cultural edifice – in addition to its traditional physical and metaphysical natures recognized in Byzantine times.

Chapter 4: *Agios Georgios of Zagora*, selects the church of Agios Georgios, located at the heart of Pelion's largest village of Zagora, as an archetypal specimen through which to engage in an intimate visual and theoretical analysis of a single church building of Pelion. In this chapter, Agios Georgios Church is systematically explored as a physical edifice, navigating its spatial layers, vernacular tectonics, interior ambience, and historical vestige. Through this analysis, revelations are presented regarding the church's spiritual dimensionality and cultural significance – serving as a model through which to interpret the entirety of Pelion's post-Byzantine ecclesiastic landscape.

Situating the discipline of architecture within the spheres of history, culture, art practices, philosophy, and theology, this thesis confronts a largely neglected and little-explored field of study, offering a speculative analysis rooted in tangible evidence and extensive fact-based historical research. While the work is primarily investigative, my hope is to offer a revelatory perspective on the role and legacy of the Orthodox Church in post-Byzantine Greece, specifically on Mount Pelion, commemorating its immense spiritual, social, and cultural impact on an entire civilization as manifested through its vigorous architectural tradition.

I

THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

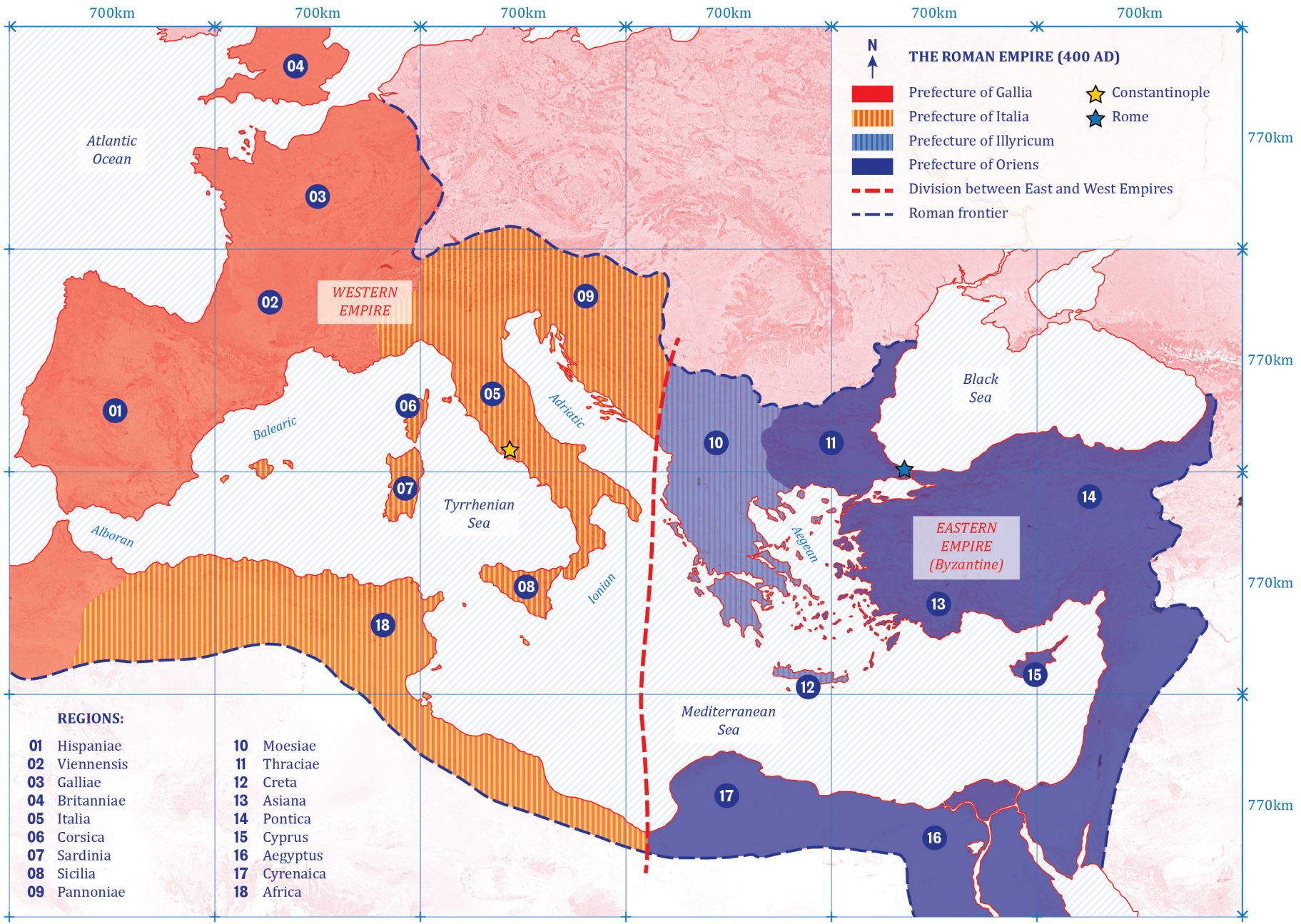


FIG 1.1 Territorial map of the Roman Empire in 400AD

Roots + Origins

According to biblical record, the first transmissions of the Christian Faith occurred in the first century AD when Saint Peter converted and baptized a crowd of three thousand citizens in Jerusalem, establishing the first Christian community.[1] At this time, the region was under jurisdiction of the Roman Empire which had conquered it nearly a century prior, and which prohibited the practice of the Christian Faith. Thus, the legacy of the early Christians is a bloody one, marked by frequent spouts of martyrdom, oppression, and persecution.[2] Despite this, the work of Christian missionaries was persistent and far-reaching, resulting in the emergence of small Christian communities in all the main centres of the Roman Empire within an astonishingly short timeframe, including throughout the Greek-speaking Balkan Peninsula of southeastern Europe.[3]

In the fourth century, Roman Emperor Constantine the Great completed two critical actions in the history of the Orthodox Church. First, in 313, he signed the Edict of Milan granting official tolerance of the Christian Faith throughout the Roman Empire. Second, in 330, he inaugurated the city of Constantinople and declared it the new capital of the Roman Empire, shedding its former pagan-stained associations with ancient Rome. These actions were further consummated by Emperor Theodosius I, who proclaimed Christianity the only legal religion of the Roman Empire and, in 395, divided its massive territory into Western and Eastern halves, governed respectively by two separate Roman emperors.[4]

In the Middle Ages, the Eastern half of the Roman Empire, universally referred to by scholars as the Byzantine Empire, fostered a society in which Church and State were inextricably entwined, and theology was a passionate interest among citizens of all social status – laity and clergy alike.[5] Never able to abandon the strong pull of its classical Hellenistic past, the Byzantine Empire was culturally characterized by its ancient Greek roots – a stark contrast to its western Latin-speaking neighbour.[6] The development of Orthodox Church Tradition thus derives in large part from ancient Greek prototypes, adapted and transformed by the Fathers of the Church "to correspond to the requirements of Christian dogmatics."[7]

Seven Ecumenical Councils taking place over a period of four centuries refined and formed the foundations of Orthodox doctrine and Church organization.[8] By the close of the eighth century, Orthodox Christianity in the East was a sophisticated and flourishing religion, and the Byzantine Empire was among the most prosperous,

1. Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1964), 20.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Charles Frazee, *Constantinople, Rome, and the Churches of Greece* (Boston: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2014), 10-11.

5. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 43-44.

6. Frazee, *Constantinople*, 3.

7. Vladimir Lossky and Leonid Ouspensky, *The Meaning of Icons* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1982), 27.

8. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 28.

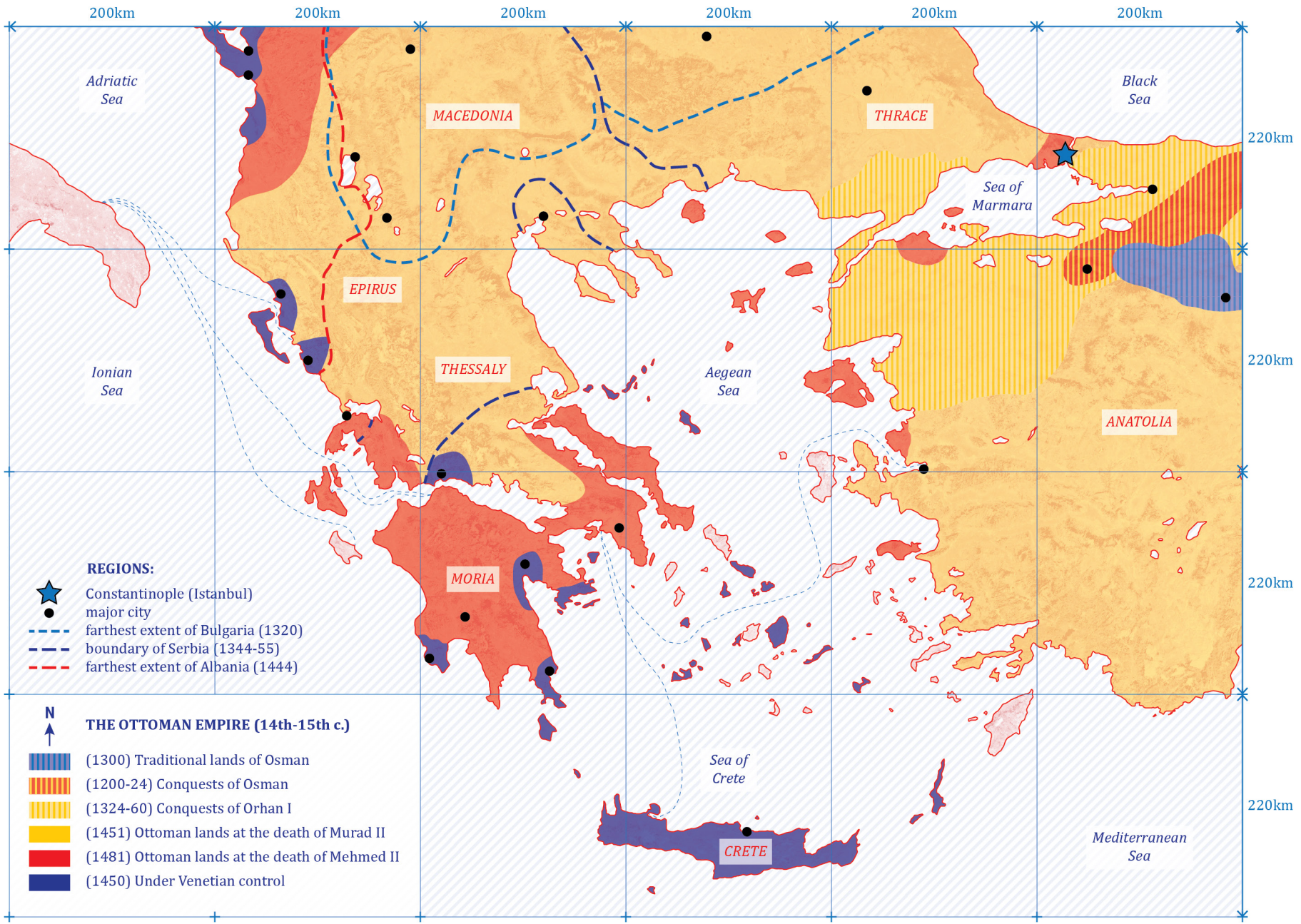


FIG 1.2 Territorial map of the Ottoman Empire in Greece throughout the 14th and 15th centuries

innovative, and influential world powers. However, following schismatic episodes within the Church which ultimately distinguished Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy as separate sectors of Christianity, as well as a series of wars and crusades which greatly weakened the Byzantine Empire, its capital, Constantinople, fell to the Ottoman Empire in 1453, signalling the beginning of a new social order and an oppressed form of life for its Christian citizens.[9]

After the Fall

The decisive conquest of Byzantium's capital occurred in May of 1453, though this defeat was not entirely unforeseen. For centuries prior, other regions of the Byzantine Empire had been attacked and overtaken by Ottoman mercenaries, especially throughout mainland Greece including its most prominent city, Thessaloniki. Nevertheless, the fall of Constantinople represented the onset of a major period of Greek historical experience, signalling the irreversible entry of the Greek Orthodox Christians into a captivity that would last for over four hundred years. The ensuing events would introduce eight far-reaching adversities into Greek culture and society, namely "political disenfranchisement, the simplification of class structure, economic impoverishment, ethnic dilution, religious retreat, legal disenfranchisement, the popularization and deformalization of culture, and cultural isolation."[10]

The period of history throughout the Balkan Peninsula after the fall of Constantinople is routinely referred to by modern scholars as 'post-Byzantine' – a term which describes the cessation of Byzantium as a political organism, but not as a cultural body. The memory of the former Byzantine Empire was not immediately extinguished in the minds of its Orthodox citizens, and the cultural and religious traditions of Byzantine civilization remained a strong influence in the "lives, mentalities, and cultural creations of Greeks, Bulgars, Serbs, Rumanians, Albanians, and others."[11] This fact is largely owed to the system of social classification which was officially instated throughout the Ottoman Empire following its decisive conquest of the former lands of Byzantium.

In contrast to the Christian philosophy of religious conversion, the Sacred Muslim Law of the Ottoman State did not distinguish between the spheres of politics and religion; nationality and religious identity were regarded as synonymous concepts.[12] Non-Muslim citizens of the Empire, called *rayahs*, were socially organized into nations, or *millets*, according to their religion. The subject nations of the Ottoman Empire were, in descending order of population, the Roman nation (*rum millet*) – comprising the Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians –,

9. Ibid.

10. Speros Vryonis Jr., "The Byzantine Legacy in the Formal Culture of the Balkan Peoples," in *The Byzantine Tradition after the Fall of Constantinople*, ed. John J. Yiannas (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 19.

11. Ibid., 17.

12. Adrian Fortescue, *The Orthodox Eastern Church* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1907), 234.

the Monophysite Armenian nation (*ermeni millet*), the Uniate Armenian Catholic nation (*ermeni katulik millet*), the Jewish nation (*yahudi millet*), and the Latin nation (*latin millet*).[13]

The ethnarch of the Roman nation was the Ecumenical patriarch of the Orthodox Church, who suddenly assumed a new political role of great power and authority similar to that of the former Byzantine emperors.[14] The scope of his duties encompassed both religious and civil affairs, including ensuring the orderly behaviour and timely payment of taxes of all Orthodox Christian citizens residing in the massive territory that encompassed Russia, Asia Minor, and the Balkan Peninsula.[15] However, his authority before the Ottoman sultan was all but extinguished. In reality, "the sultans controlled the patriarchate, for no one who held that office believed for one day of his life that making a decision contrary to the wishes of the sultan was permissible."[16]

Upon appointment to the patriarchal throne, the new patriarch was obliged to pay a grand sum of money to the sultan. For this reason, the turnover of Ecumenical patriarchs during the period of Ottoman rule was incredibly high, with terms of service rarely lasting more than one or two years. For the sake of the bribes, sultans liberally deposed, reappointed, and even killed patriarchs, resulting in many cases of martyrdom within the patriarchate as well as the accumulation of great financial debts within the Orthodox Church.[17]

The *rayahs* themselves were assigned a second-class position of stark inferiority to their Muslim conquerors, tolerated yet freely exploited, and subject to a long list of oppressive commandments. In Ottoman society, *rayahs* were obligated to pay heavy poll-taxes and land-taxes. They were forbidden to serve in the army, bear arms, sport beards, ride saddled horses, hold higher houses than their masters, expose any signs of their faith (crosses or domes) outside their places of worship, or ring church bells. They were required to dress differently than Muslim citizens and could not present evidence in a court of law against a Muslim. Offenses such as converting a Muslim to Christianity, seducing a Muslim woman, speaking openly against Islam, or forming alliances with citizens outside the Ottoman Empire were all punished with death.[18] In addition, there were two particularly cruel burdens that the *rayahs* were forced to endure. The first was the practice of *paidomazoma* (παιδομάζωμα), which permitted the Ottomans to confiscate one young boy from every Christian household and raise him as a Muslim janissary, serving either in the armed forces or in the sultan's secretariat.[19] The second was the systematic

13. Ibid., 239.

14. Ibid., 240.

15. Ibid.

16. Frazee, *Constantinople*, 150.

17. Fortescue, *The Orthodox Eastern Church*, 240-42.

18. Ibid., 235.

19. Sir Steven Runciman, "Rum Milleti: The Orthodox Communities under the Ottoman Sultans," in *The Byzantine Tradition after the Fall of Constantinople*, ed. John J. Yiannas (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 7.

FIG 1.3 Hagia Sophia Church in Constantinople (Istanbul) with Islamic minarets and symbols

FIG 1.4 Lithograph of Ottoman soldiers crossing the Bridge of Arta in Epirus, Greece

discouragement of education and the eradication of Christian schools. Orthodox citizens who aspired to a higher education were obliged to travel outside of the Ottoman Empire – a feat which was exceedingly difficult to achieve.[20]

Theoretically, adherence to these abundant restrictions implied that the *rayahs* could otherwise live freely in the observance of their customs and traditions, language, and faith. However, their greatest misfortune was their designation as a "subject-people under a race of foreign conquerors and masters… who at any time could, and who continually did, overstep their own law."[21] Accounts of Ottoman sultans implementing new laws in a fit of religious tyranny were not uncommon throughout the history of Ottoman rule, as in the example of Sultan Selim I in the year 1520, who ordered the sudden conversion of all Orthodox churches into mosques and all *rayahs* into True Believers under the pain of death.[22]

Many of the pre-existing Orthodox churches of Byzantium were seized by Ottoman authorities and forcefully converted into Muslim places of worship. In the case of the renowned Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, its walls were "whitewashed all over, the names of the Prophet and the first Khalifahs were hung up on huge round boards over the old ikons, the altar and ikonostasis were destroyed, and a Mihrab to show the direction of Mecca was fixed in the apse."[23] In Thessaloniki, church properties were confiscated and distributed to friends and relatives of the sultan, leaving only four churches in Christian hands.[24]

Within larger towns and cities throughout the Ottoman Empire, Orthodox Christians were ushered into designated living quarters separate from the incoming Muslim citizens, occupying makeshift homes which encircled a segregated commercial nucleus and central church. Residents of either quarter rarely intermixed.[25] Derelict building materials from former confiscated properties were used by the conquerors to construct baths and public institutions for Muslim citizens.[26] Throughout the Balkan Peninsula, a "network of mosques, medresses, hospitals, imarets, libraries, and palaces" was established to accommodate the Ottoman ruling class, and urban centres were "converted to Islamic rhythms of social and cultural life."[27]

In summary, the social distinction between the *rayahs* and the Muslim hegemony was blatantly apparent and strongly present in all aspects of life, prohibiting the gradual assimilation of Ottoman culture with its subject races. In this regard, the *millet* system did perform one invaluable service in facilitating the survival of the Greek

20. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 101.

21. Fortescue, *The Orthodox Eastern Church*, 236.

22. Ibid., 237.

23. Ibid., 241.

24. Frazee, *Constantinople*, 133-34.

25. Ibid., 184.

26. Ibid., 133-34.

27. Vryonis Jr., "The Byzantine Legacy," 20.

nation as a distinctive cultural unit throughout four centuries of foreign rule, preserving their Orthodox Faith and customs.[28] Under these conditions, the Greeks, "cut off from the West by the schism, forgotten by civilized Europe, ignorant and miserable, a servile race, paying for their faith by taxes, disabilities, degrading humiliations, and the sacrifice of their own children, always exposed to the violence of their masters, having every possible advantage to gain by turning, yet kept their faith throughout those centuries of oppression."[29]

Through the Church, the Greeks maintained a living connection to their proud Byzantine roots and a strong sense of collective identity. This was primarily fostered in remote regions of Greece, including mountain village settlements and the monastic communities of Mount Athos, where the surveillance of the Ottoman conquerors was less scrutinizing and severe.[30] The religious Church calendar of fasting and feast days – virtually unchanged throughout Ottoman rule – became the official axis of Greek social life, keeping the Orthodox laity in contact with their faith, language, and traditions and ensuring a cultural homogeneity between them across the lands of Greece.[31] Communion in the Church inspired the collective memory of the cultural and religious freedom enjoyed by the Byzantine Greeks, fuelling a nostalgic appetite to attain this sense of freedom once more.

Despite the general lack of formal education or clerical training – owed to the forbiddance of schools and to the absence of Christian printing presses within the Ottoman Empire – the amount of Greek Orthodox neo-martyrs willing to give their lives rather than deny their religion is remarkable throughout the period of Ottoman rule.[32] Numerous revolts, always brutally punished by the Ottomans, reveal the enduring restlessness of the subjugated Greeks during this time as well as their zealous devotion to both their culture and faith, which had become inherently intertwined.[33]

Around the eighteenth century, the waning political strength of the Ottoman Empire, coupled with a fortunate economic boom throughout the Greek mainland and islands, inspired a rebirth in Greek mercantile life and the emergence of a wealthy Greek merchant class.[34] These conditions led to a renewed spirit of social autonomy amongst the *rayahs* and a renaissance of church-building activities, which extended and reinterpreted traditional Byzantine models based on the truncated capabilities and new ideologies of the post-Byzantine Greeks. Increased contact with Western Europe shattered the centuries-long isolation between Greece and the West, introducing them to the Italian Renaissance, Baroque, and Enlightenment movements.[35] The germs of revolutionary France found fertile ground amongst the anguished

28. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 98.

29. Fortescue, *The Orthodox Eastern Church*, 238.

30. Frazee, *Constantinople*, 169.

31. Vryonis Jr., "The Byzantine Legacy," 29.

32. Frazee, *Constantinople*, 148.

33. Ibid., 147.

34. Runciman, "Rum Milleti," 10.

35. Vryonis Jr., "The Byzantine Legacy," 30.

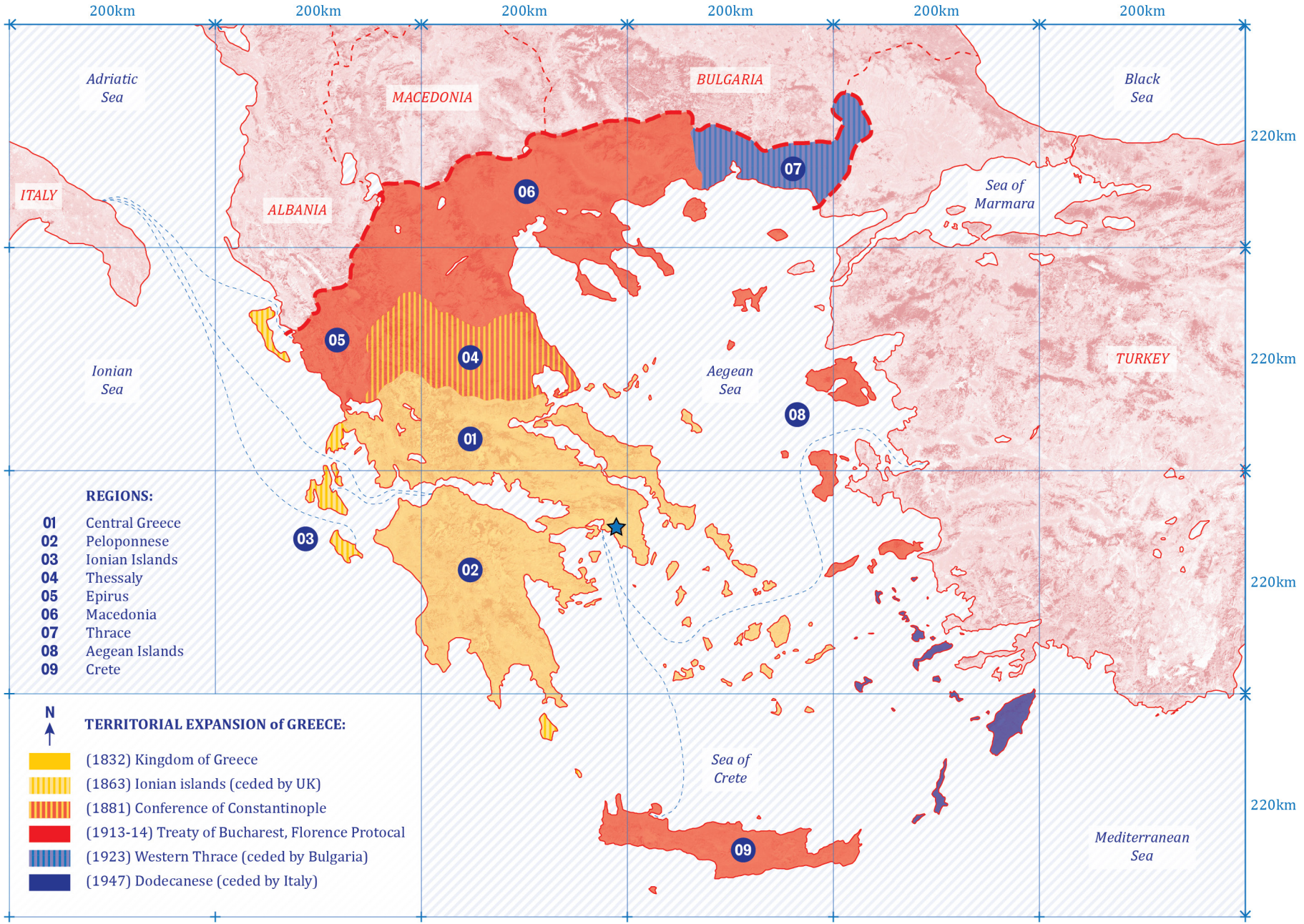


FIG 1.5 Map of the territorial expansion of Greece following its liberation from Ottoman rule

Greeks hungry for liberty, equality, and fraternity.[36] In 1829, following a nine-year Greek War of Independence, Greece attained its first taste of independence from the Ottoman Empire and was recognized as an autonomous State, with additional regions continuing to be liberated and added to the country until the mid twentieth century.

The road to liberation was long and arduous, and the four-century interim was stifling and brutal. The *millet* system caused an inextricable fusion between the Orthodox Church and the cultural identity of the Greeks – serving as their sustainer and protector for four hundred years. Yet, the story of Ottoman rule in Greece is one of intense piety and resilience, "of an oppressed people who refused to lose its identity and to forget its high traditions. And it was, above all, the Church that kept the light burning."[37]

The Orthodox Church Tradition

The harsh and sterile environment which invaded the former lands of Byzantium during the period of Ottoman rule necessarily kindled a spirit of strict doctrinal preservation within the Eastern Church, in contrast to the comparative openness for change and innovation that was exhibited in the West.[38] The traditional Byzantine styles of worship, church-building, and church decoration which define the Greek Orthodox Church to this day were largely developed in the early centuries immediately following the partition of the old Roman Empire by Emperor Constantine, reaching full maturity around the sixth century of the Christian era.[39]

In the Eastern Orthodox Christian Tradition, the sacredness of the Church is conveyed mutually through its physical design and its phenomenological use; that is, through a synthesis of both edifice and synaxis. The ultimate activation of the Orthodox Church is expressed in the Divine Liturgy – its most central and primary act of communal worship founded in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.[40] The Liturgy works to evoke the Divine Presence of the Holy Spirit, doing so through a dynamic fusion of multisensory stimulation, a synergy of material creations – movement, music, words, art, and architecture – that unite to form an ambient and corporeal framework which engages all five senses of the worshipper.[41] The gestures of prostration and crossing oneself, the smoky aroma of burning incense, the fragrant taste of the Holy Eucharist, the gentle chime of the priest's censer, the fervent chanting of tenor voices, the harmonious prayers of the choir, the flickering glow of candlelight, the intricate carvings of wood and metal, the rich iridescence of gilded gold and shining halos that

36. Frazee, *Constantinople*, 187.

37. Runciman, "Rum Milleti," 14.

38. Frazee, *Constantinople*, 164.

39. John Arnott Hamilton, *Byzantine Architecture and Decoration* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1972), 1.

40. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Canada, "I'm Orthodox: What Does that Mean?" accessed February 1, 2021, https://www.gometropolis.org/im-orthodox/.

41. Daniel J. Sahas, *Icons and Logos: Sources in Eighth-Century Iconoclasm* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 10.

FIG 1.6 Orthodox Christians celebrating the Divine Liturgy

FIG 1.7 The Orthodox Divine Liturgy

FIG 1.8 Orthodox priest preparing the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist during the Divine Liturgy service

illuminate the steady gaze of the saints in the holy icons, painted, embossed, and mosaicked on every inch of the church building, with its expansive domes and arches that soar above the laity and envelope them in a strong and boundless embrace – all physical human creations imbued with Divine Presence, working in tandem to construct an environment infused with spiritual essence.

The church building itself is sacred in its symbolic, physical manifestation as the Kingdom of God on earth, but the multisensory ritual of the Divine Liturgy and the active gathering and prayer of the faithful animates the architectural frame, generating a collective spirit of religious contemplation that resonates within every participant of the service, stirring their soul and directing their consciousness to a higher, invisible realm. Through this process, they receive true *gnosis* – that is, spiritual knowledge and experience of the Christian Revelation.[42]

The Tradition of the Orthodox Church describes the unique and various modes of receiving the Christian Revelation: "it is not the word, but the living breath which makes the word heard."[43] It is important to distinguish between the terms 'Tradition' and 'traditions': the latter describes a multitude of actions – cultural, human, and accidental – passed down for generations; the former describes the true, essential, and universal message of the Christian Faith.[44] Tradition as the communication of God's Word takes a variety of interactive forms within the Church, including Scriptural canon, acts of Ecumenical Councils, writings of the Church Fathers, hymnody, iconography, and architecture. All of these manifestations of Tradition express the same revealed reality, the same Divine Truth, and together, they form a full and coherent *gnosis* transmitted to the Orthodox laity through prayer, worship, and participation.

Throughout post-Byzantine Greece, the Tradition of the Orthodox Church was well-preserved. The celebration of the Divine Liturgy persisted unchanged during the four-century period of Ottoman conquest. In practice, only two visual components of the Orthodox Tradition – its architecture and iconography – saw a transformation from Byzantine to post-Byzantine times, straying from the established rhythms detailed in the Church's sacred dogmas of centuries prior. The reasons for these changes in the architectural and iconographic conventions of the Orthodox Church are attributed to various practical realities of the time, as opposed to a deliberate desire on the part of the post-Byzantine Christians to alter the established Byzantine rites. In particular, the lack of clerical education, the decline in trained iconographers, the simplified construction capabilities of the local craftsmen, the locality and reduced scale of building projects, the difficulties posed by remote and mountainous building sites, the rawness of available building materials, and the financial capabilities of the Greeks, to name a few, all played an influential role.[45]

42. Lossky and Ouspensky, *The Meaning of Icons*, 15.

43. Ibid.

44. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 205.

45. Charalambos Bouras, "The Byzantine Tradition in the Church

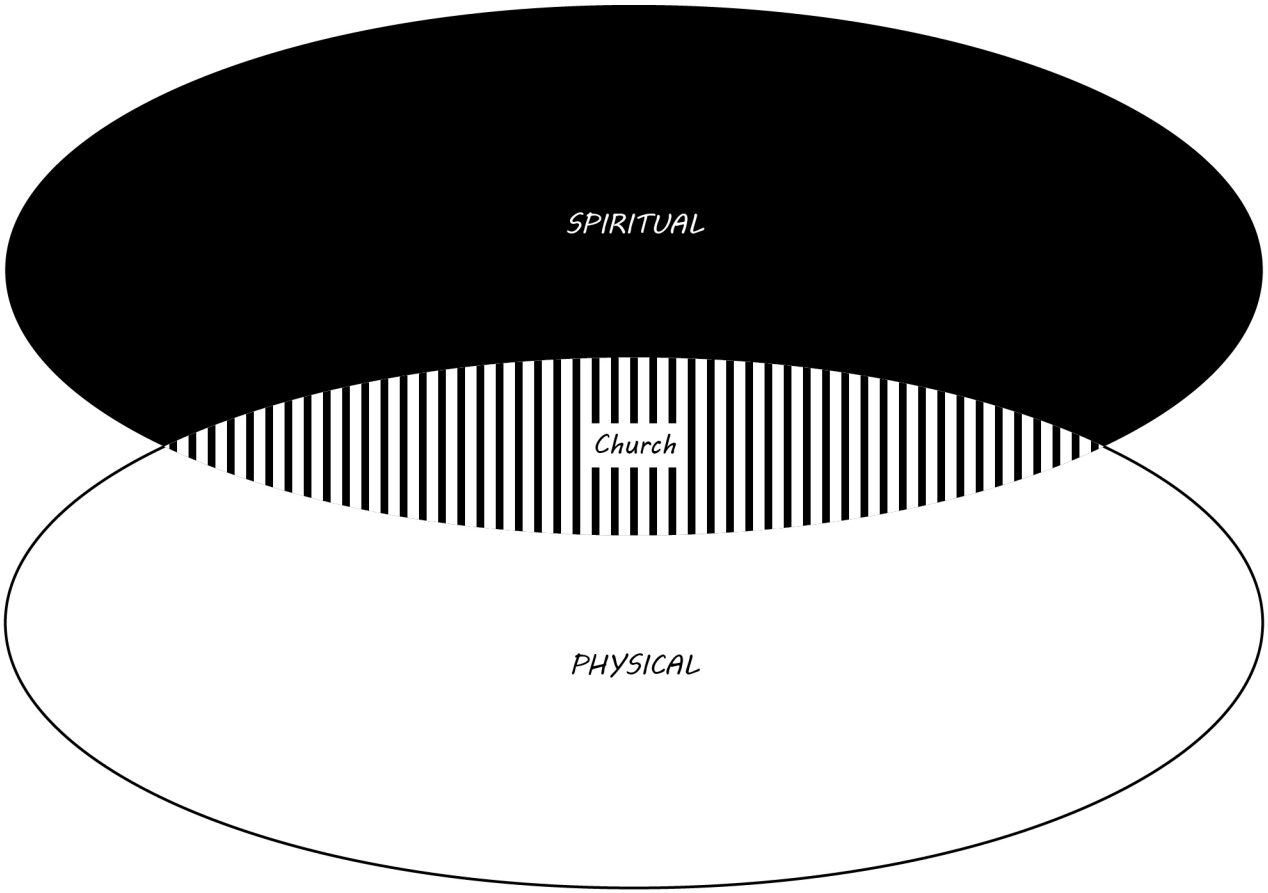


FIG 1.9 Realms of the Christian universe with the Church as the bridge between them

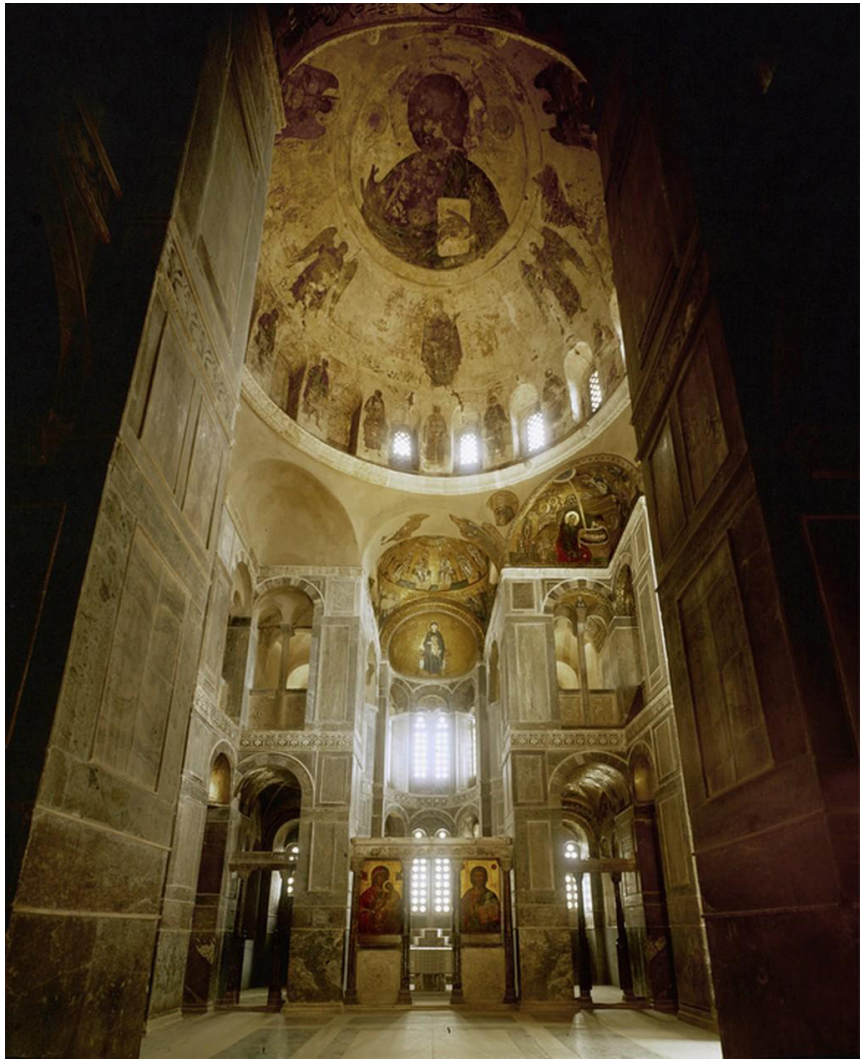


FIG 1.10 Dome and iconostasis of Hosios Loukas Monastery in Boeotia, Greece

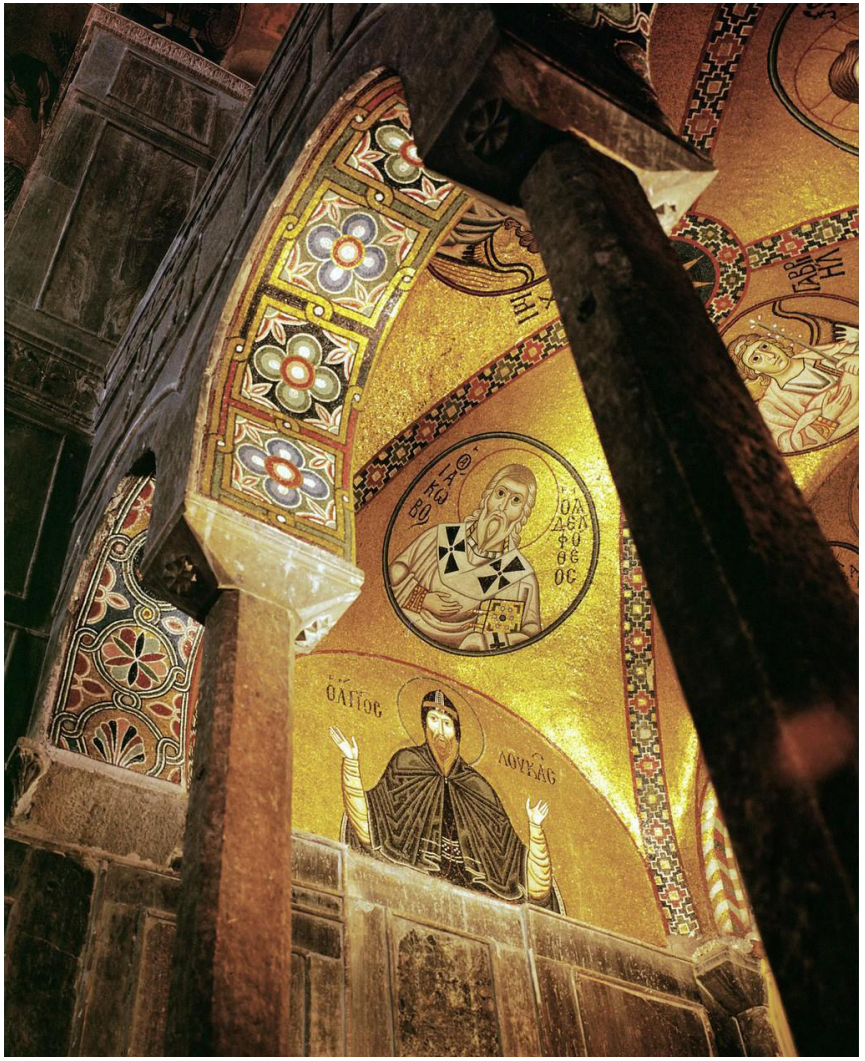


FIG 1.11 Mosaics and vaulted ceiling of Hosios Loukas Monastery in Boeotia, Greece

In order to conduct an evaluation of the architecture and decoration of Greece's post-Byzantine ecclesiastic monuments, it becomes necessary to examine the physical and spiritual rhythms of their Byzantine predecessors, which continued to inform their inception, though in a less formal and more intrinsic manner.

Ecclesiastic Architecture

With the promotion of the Christian Faith by Roman Emperor Constantine in the fourth century, there followed an ensuing impetus in the sphere of ecclesiastic architecture and church-building activities. Constantine himself was an active patron of the Church, supporting building efforts to develop, expand, and embellish the sacred edifices of his capital city.[46] Throughout subsequent centuries, the city of Constantinople grew to become a vast and flourishing centre of Byzantine art and architecture and a source of awe and inspiration for all other regions of the Empire. In the sixth century, the impressive building efforts of Emperor Justinian sparked incredible advancements in the methodology and theology of Byzantine architecture, with the establishment of many renowned churches including Constantinople's most famous monument, Hagia Sophia.[47] At this time, the practice of Byzantine sacred architecture, iconography, and church decoration reached full maturity, with roots spreading from its source in Constantinople throughout the entirety of the Byzantine Empire, manifesting with slight regional variations.

Traditional Byzantine art and architecture as exhibited in Constantinople assumed a powerful spirit of imperialism and ceremonialism, echoing the characters and motifs of Byzantine society. Depictions of Christ surrounded by angels reflected images of high dignitaries attending to the emperor; warrior saints donned costumes matching those worn by the royal guard. The flavour of daily life provided a visual language through which to express biblical figures and scenes. The Church was designed to appeal to the emotions of the people, manifesting architecturally with an air of grandeur, wonder, and awe which stirred their attention and consciousness towards the realm of God, activated by liturgical celebrations and various multisensory portrayals of worship.[48]

In Byzantium, the idea of the church edifice as a sacred space for religious worship was rooted in two fundamental theological concepts which define the Christian Faith. First, the Church represented an extension of the Incarnation and of Jesus Christ,[49] who Himself declared: "...where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them."[50] Second, the Church was an icon of Trinitarian doctrine,

Architecture of the Balkans in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *The Byzantine Tradition after the Fall of Constantinople*, ed. John J. Yiannas (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 117-118.

46. Hamilton, *Byzantine Architecture*, 2-3.

47. Frazee, *Constantinople*, 20.

48. Hamilton, *Byzantine Architecture*, 4.

49. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 245.

50. Matt. 18:20.

reproducing on earth the mystery of unity in diversity: just as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit unite as one God without losing their personal nature, similarly in the church, a multitude of worshippers unite as one in prayer without losing their individual identity.

Moreover, as an edifice, the church embodied "an unaltered dual concern for providing a place for the assembly of community members, while simultaneously conveying the symbolic expression of God's invisible and uncontainable realm."[51] In this sense, it represented a unity of two domains – the physical and the spiritual, earth and heaven – and endeavoured, through its architecture, to elevate the faithful from the former to the latter. Within this framework, various architectural typologies of Orthodox church building were developed, evolved, and propagated throughout the Empire.

The earliest and simplest typology is the basilica, based on the traditional Roman archetype of an imperial assembly hall, which satisfied the "dual role of providing covered space for a large body of people while at the same time alluding to divine presence through features such as the Altar Table, which symbolically denoted God's throne."[52] The basilica type was comprised of a large, rectangular space divided by interior colonnades, enclosed with a simple pitched roof. At first, pre-existing basilicas within the Empire were routinely adapted into spaces of Christian worship, transitioning from secular to sacred in the collective consciousness of the faithful by way of their association with religious functions.[53] Later on, this type emerged as an architecture for new ecclesiastic constructions, as in the fifth-century church of Agios Demetrios in Thessaloniki which constitutes Greece's oldest and grandest example of a three-aisle timber-roof basilica.[54]

As the theology and Divine Liturgy of the Orthodox Church were refined with time, the architectural feature of the dome emerged as a primary element in Byzantine church design.[55] Through its expansive form and boundless curvature, the dome represented an adequate physical manifestation of the "pattern of the heavens,"[56] the allegorical place "where God dwells."[57] It quickly rose in the favour of Byzantine architects, instructing the rhythm of all other structural features of the Church which assembled around it in a metaphorical expression of praise and support.[58] Existing basilicas throughout the Byzantine Empire were subsequently adapted to include a central dome. At the same time, new and advanced

51. Slobodan Ćurčić, "Architecture as Icon," in *Architecture as Icon*, ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Evangelia Hadjitryphonos (Princeton: Princeton University Art Museum, 2010), 9.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., 39.

54. Constantine Cavarnos, *Byzantine Churches of Thessaloniki* (Belmont: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1995), 21.

55. Hamilton, *Byzantine Architecture*, 12.

56. Constantine Cavarnos, *Byzantine Sacred Art* (2nd ed.) (Belmont: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1985), 127.

57. Ibid.

58. Hamilton, *Byzantine Architecture*, 12.

FIG 1.12 Hosios Loukas Monastery in Boeotia, Greece

FIG 1.13 Monastery of Mystras in Peloponnese, Greece

FIG 1.14 Hagia Sophia Church in Monemvasia, Peloponnese, Greece

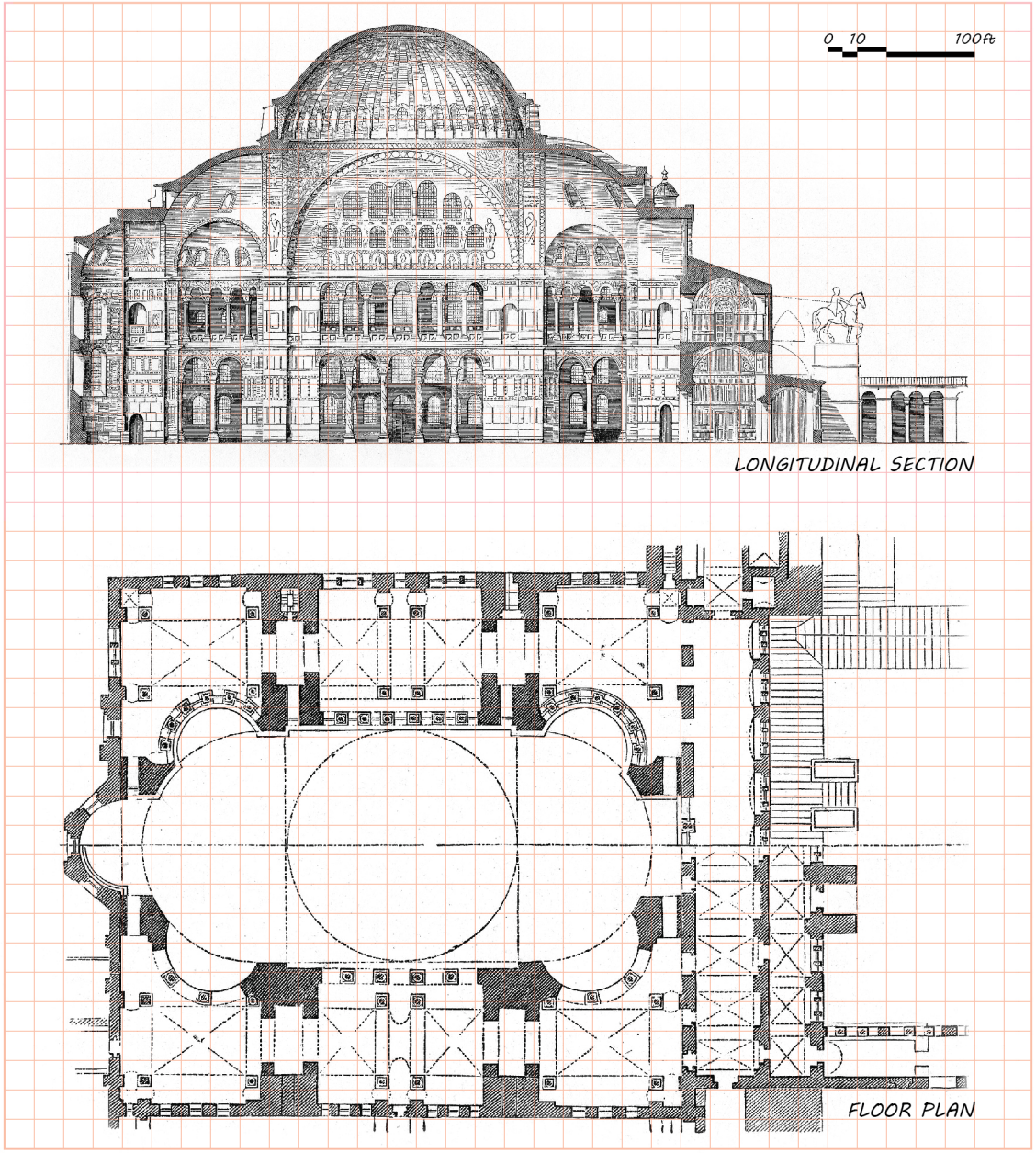


FIG 1.15 Orthographic drawings of Hagia Sophia Church in Constantinople (Istanbul)

FIG 1.16 Interior of Hagia Sophia Church in Constantinople (Istanbul)

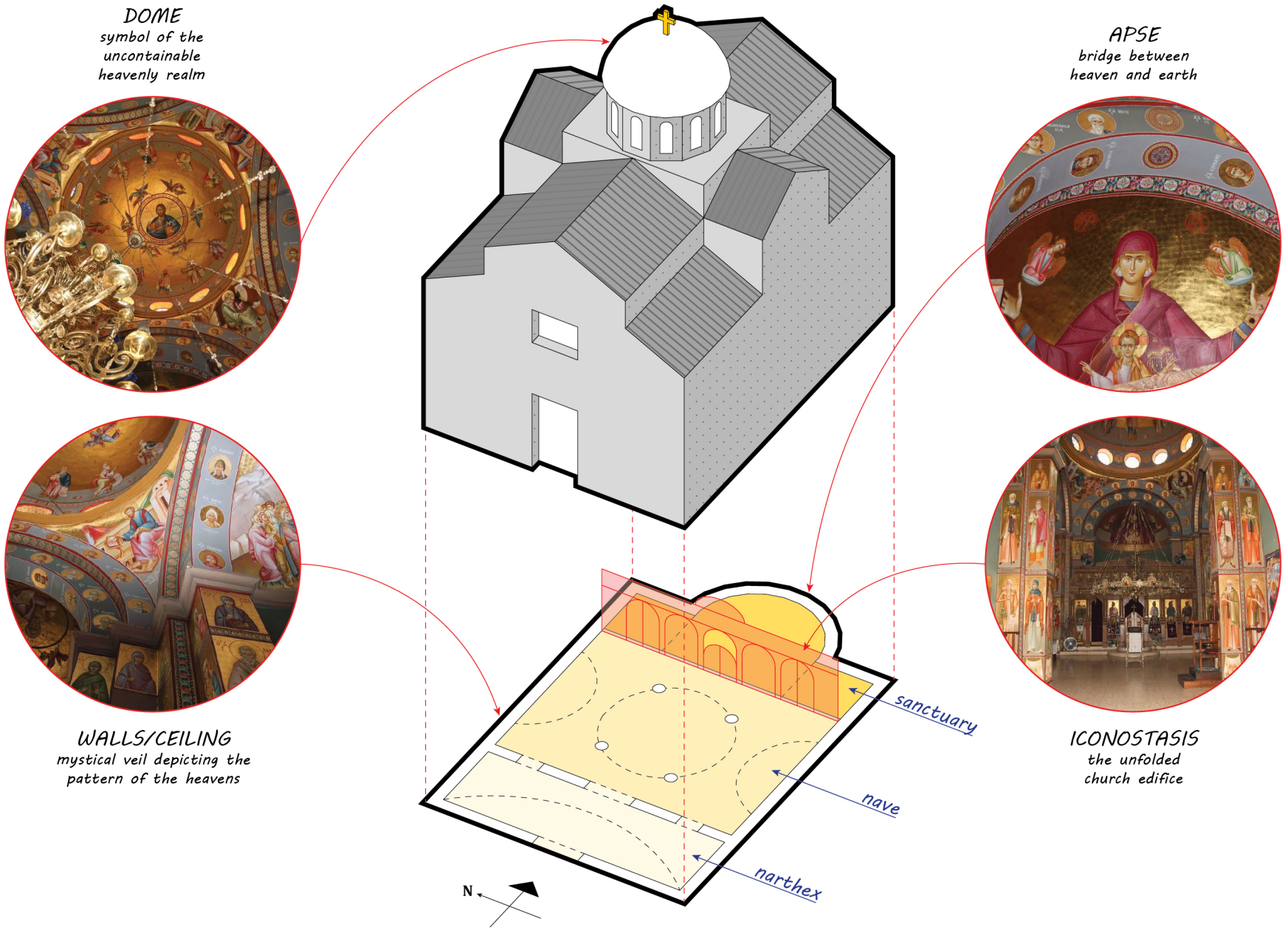


FIG 1.17 Traditional architecture, layout, and interior decoration of the Orthodox Church

architectural typologies were developed, featuring cross-shaped plans and compact massing which better served the spatial requirements of the Orthodox Divine Liturgy and the wall-integrated cycle of Byzantine iconography.[59]

The architectural epitome of the Orthodox Church is the 'cross-in-square' typology, which became most popular throughout the lands of Byzantine Greece in the Balkan Peninsula.[60] This type featured a compact exterior structure in which the ensemble of the entire edifice was presented immediately to the eye without the dissociation of its individual parts. It was symmetrically balanced, well-proportioned, and systematically arranged, free of superfluous architectural additions. On its east-facing façade, three apses protruded from the holy altar, visible from the exterior. Inside, a grand central dome covered a space which was square in plan, with loads distributed via a system of harmonious planes and geometries.[61]

Liturgically, the church was divided into three distinct zones of space, each with their own liturgical function and program: the narthex (νάρθηκας), the nave (ναὸς), and the sanctuary (ιερὸ). The narthex, separated from the nave by a wall with three thresholds, was the gateway into the church – the mediator between the exterior and interior worlds. The nave was the central assembly space of the laity, where they gathered in communal worship to pray and receive the Divine Liturgy. The sanctuary was the domain of the clergy conducting the holy services, inaccessible to the laymen in attendance, in which the Altar Table, vestry, and treasury were housed and the Sacrament of the Eucharist was prepared. The sanctuary was physically raised in height from the nave, asserting its superior hypostasis. It was fronted by an extension of the bema, creating a stage-like space called the *solea* (σολέα).[62] The orientation of the church building ensured that the sanctuary was east-facing, directed towards the rising sun in a symbolic anticipation of the second coming of Christ: "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."[63] These basic spatial components transformed the church building into a microcosm of the universe: "The earthly, mortal world and the eternal, imperishable heavenly world are symbolized in the [church] by the nave and the sanctuary… where the soul can be lifted up to heaven, to the spiritual and imperishable divine world."[64]

In contrast to the polytheistic temples of classical Greece which prioritized exteriority in line with the practices of pagan sacrifice customarily held outdoors, the architecture of the Byzantine church necessarily emphasized interiority, designed to envelope an entire congregation of worshippers and bring them

59. Ibid.

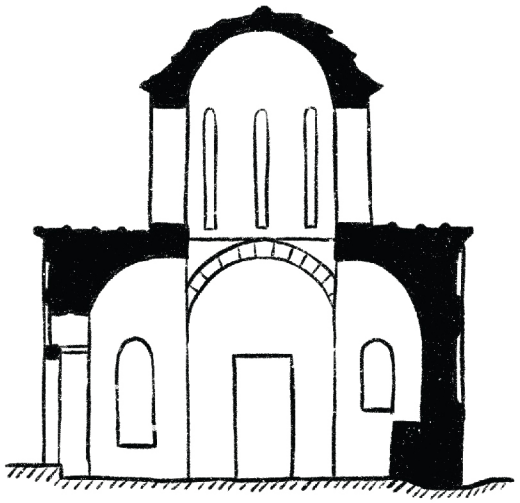
60. Ibid., 14.

61. Ibid., 13-14.

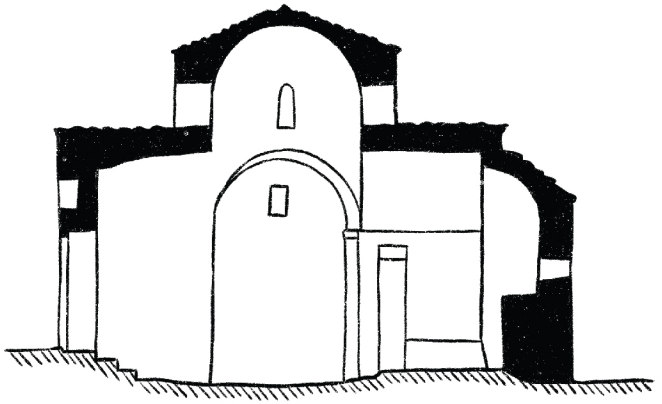
62. Ibid., 25.

63. Matt. 24:27.

64. Helen G. Saradi, "Space in Byzantine Thought," in *Architecture as Icon*, ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Evangelia Hadjitryphonos (Princeton: Princeton University Art Museum, 2010), 91.



SOUTH SECTION



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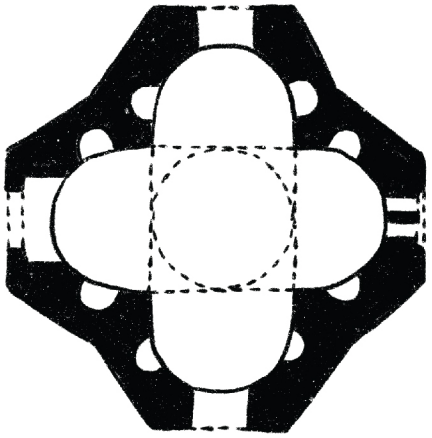
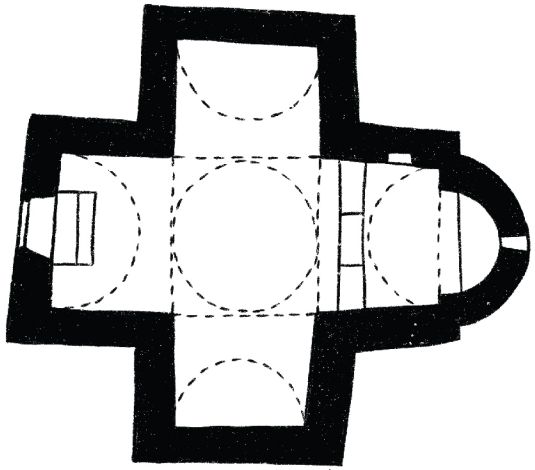


FLOOR PLAN

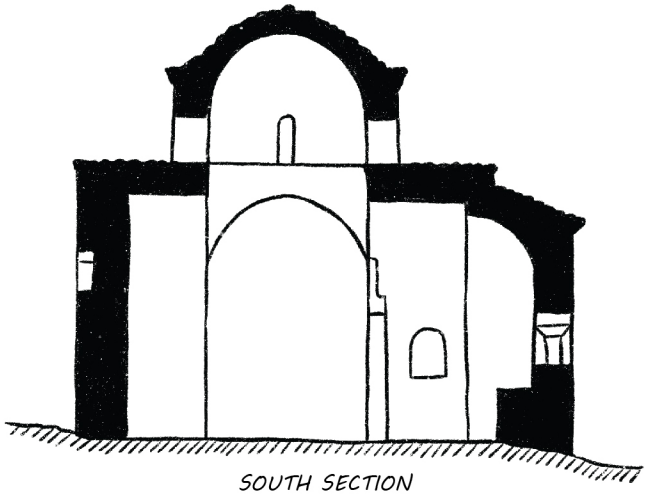
DOMED TETRACONCH CHURCH
(Agios Georgios, Loukisia - 11th c.)



FLOOR PLAN

DOMED FREE CROSS CHURCH
(Prophet Elias, Koropi - 18th c.)

FIG 1.18 Sample typologies of domed Byzantine churches in Greece



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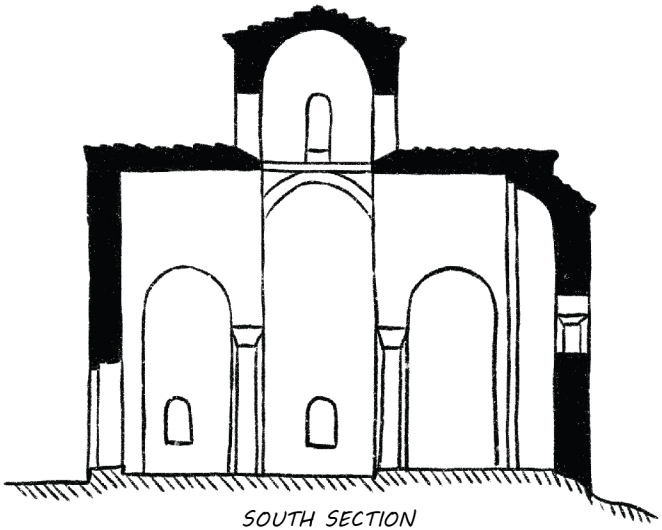

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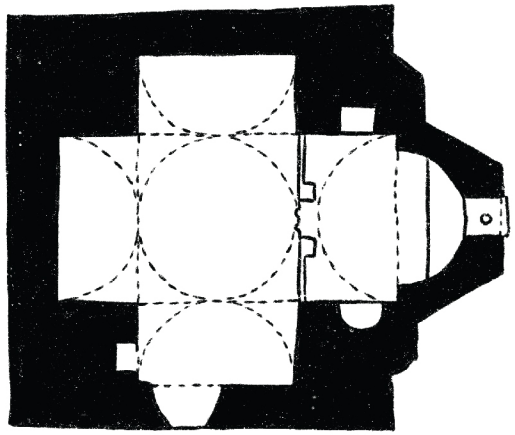
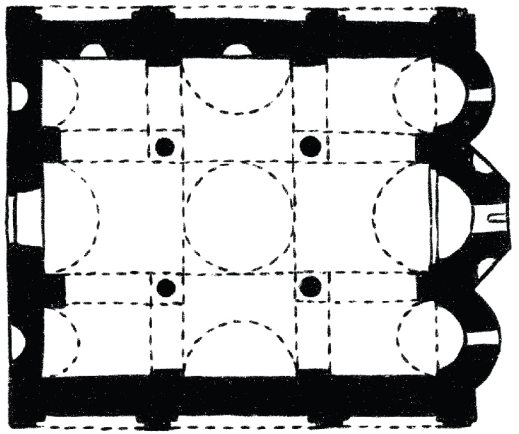


FLOOR PLAN

CONTRACTED DOMED CRUCIFORM CHURCH
(Agios Georgios, Athens - 12th c.)



FLOOR PLAN

DOMED CROSS-IN-SQUARE CHURCH
(Panagia Chalkeon, Thessaloniki - 11th c.)

FIG 1.19 Exterior of Agios Demetrios Church in Thessaloniki, Greece

FIG 1.20 Interior of Agios Demetrios Church in Thessaloniki, Greece

into communion with the spiritual realm of God.[65] Exterior decoration and ornamentation of churches was traditionally appropriate and restrained, clad with natural materials such as stone, marble, and brick. Openings were minimal and controlled to strategically illuminate the interior space in ways best contributing to a sense of mystery and intimacy. Small windows were routinely located around the base of the dome to accentuate this feature and allow for a top-centred emission of natural light.[66]

Decoration was a vital component in transforming the church edifice into a visual symphony which alluded to the realm of the spirit. Every inch of the interior was fully dressed in sacred imagery, either as paintings, mosaics, or carvings. Marble sculpture appeared abundantly in cornices, balustrades, pulpits, lintels, and column capitals, expressing a rich ensemble of intricate organic forms.[67] In the Byzantine church, images of natural Creation always symbolized "the transcendental quality of the human soul, the divine that is within man."[68]

The cycle of iconography was inextricably connected to the architectural form of the churches of Byzantium, adorning their walls and ceilings in a "mystical veil"[69] which reflected a "definite theological scheme [that transformed the whole edifice into] one great icon or image of the Kingdom of God."[70] This imagery immersed the faithful in the scenes of their faith, both instructing and inspiring them in the teachings of the Orthodox Church with a silent yet deeply impactful language. The wealthiest churches of Byzantium exhibited sumptuous and full iconographic mosaics; in less costly establishments, painted frescos were employed.[71]

The configuration of iconography within the church building was deliberately placed with symbolic, spatial purpose. The central dome depicted a majestic vision of Christ the *Pantocrator* surrounded by a procession of singing angels, leaning out from the highest point of the space and in the greatest physical scale as though emerging "from His holy dwelling and watching over the whole of Creation."[72] In the absence of a central dome, as in the traditional basilica churches, the icon of Christ was instead painted on the ceiling at the highest point in the nave before the sanctuary. In the central apse of the sanctuary connecting the ceiling to the floor, the icon of the Virgin Mary as *Platytera* was depicted with the Christ child in her embrace, emphasizing the way in which she symbolically hovers between heaven and earth. The four pendentives supporting the dome depicted the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, oriented towards Christ above.[73] The walls and vaults of the church

65. Frazee, *Constantinople*, 14.

66. Hamilton, *Byzantine Architecture*, 25.

67. Ibid., 26.

68. Saradi, "Space in Byzantine Thought," 87.

69. Cavarnos, *Byzantine Sacred Art*, 63.

70. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 277.

71. Hamilton, *Byzantine Architecture*, 13.

72. Cavarnos, *Byzantine Sacred Art*, 127.

73. Hamilton, *Byzantine Architecture*, 13.

were adorned with rows of saints, martyrs, and biblical scenes in a life-size physical scale as though "dwellers from another world come to convey their message to the worshippers of earth."[74]

Separating the nave and the sanctuary spaces was an impervious screen called the iconostasis (εικονοστάσι), which assumed "the symbolic role of the church building itself. It [became] the unfolded church interior, its four walls flattened out and made two-dimensional as a single giant screen, the boundary between the visible and invisible worlds."[75] Providing a layer of privacy and division between the church's nave and sanctuary, the iconostasis was adorned in tiers of panel icons mounted according to a deliberate scheme, depicting Christ to the right of the Holy Doors and the Virgin Mary to the left, with John the Forerunner next to Christ and the patron saint of the church next to Mary, as well as various other saints and festal or doctrinal icons on its upper tiers.[76]

The sense of conveying otherworldliness as a reflection of the heavenly order and celestial hierarchy was paramount in the churches of Byzantium, achieved in large part through a fusion of architecture and iconographic decoration. In its own right, the sacred iconography of the Church was developed with a theological intensity which can be further explored as an analysis of the Byzantine ecclesiastic Tradition.

74. Ibid.

75. Ćurčić, "Architecture as Icon," 27.

76. Ibid.

FIG 1.21 Iconostasis of Panagia tou Arakos Monastery in Lagoudera, Cyprus

FIG 1.22 Dome of Panagia tou Arakos Monastery in Lagoudera, Cyprus

FIG 1.23 Frescoed vault of Panagia tou Arakos Monastery in Lagoudera, Cyprus

FIG 1.24 Fresco of the Resurrection of Christ in Panagia tou Arakos Monastery

FIG 1.25 Fresco of the Nativity of Christ in Panagia tou Arakos Monastery

Byzantine Iconography

In Byzantine society, where religious consciousness permeated every aspect of daily life, artwork almost exclusively contained a religious dimension.[77] The teachings of the Church captured the imaginations of Byzantine artists and theologians alike, and images of all type, scale, and media were produced to adorn the church building and to visually interpret Orthodox Christian values. This flourishment of Byzantine religious art was both two-dimensional and three-dimensional, portable and building-integrated. Its material expression took many diverse forms including paintings, mosaics, illuminated manuscripts, stone reliefs, metalwork, ivory carvings, liturgical utensils, and reliquaries.[78]

While artwork had been used as a means of expressing the Christian Faith since the beginning of the first century, the style of art that is characteristically Byzantine may be said to date, like its architecture, from the sixth century.[79] This style was developed through a socially-ingrained philosophy of image-making which stemmed from classical Greece and was transformed through the Church.[80] Perhaps most influential was Plato's 'theory of the image' which defined the phenomenon of art or image-making as an "imitation… of objects perceptible by the senses, [rendering] not the highest, but only a lesser degree of reality."[81] Platonic thought accused images of being deceptive and illusionary with the potential to lead the viewer further from truth. With this perception in mind, Byzantine artists, in their thematic transition from the pagan to the Christian, sought to abolish the aesthetic naturalism of classical Greek art and sculpture. Instead, they adopted a philosophy of image-making that did not epitomize the superficial, corporeal beauty of the natural world, but rather, aimed at revealing the "immaterial, spaceless, timeless… realm of the spirit."[82]

Though anthropomorphic in form, Byzantine religious artwork was always theanthropic in content, imbuing it with sacred value.[83] Artworks that embodied a religious nature assumed a new designation and title: they were no longer merely works of 'art' (*techne*) but 'icons' (*eikón*) – a Greek word meaning image, likeness, or representation – and creators of icons were not 'artists' but 'iconographers.'[84] Over centuries of technical development and theoretical refinement, the practice of iconography became an integral component of Orthodox Church Tradition, a visual "expression of the theological

77. Slobodan Ćurčić, preface to *Architecture as Icon*, ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Evangelia Hadjitryphonos (Princeton: Princeton University Art Museum, 2010), x.

78. Ibid.

79. Constantine Cavarnos, *Orthodox Iconography* (Belmont: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1977), 13-14.

80. Lossky and Ouspensky, *The Meaning of Icons*, 27.

81. Evangelia Hadjitryphonos, "Presentations and Representations of Architecture in Byzantium: The Thought Behind the Image," in *Architecture as Icon*, ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Evangelia Hadjitryphonos (Princeton: Princeton University Art Museum, 2010), 126.

82. Cavarnos, *Orthodox Iconography*, 38.

83. Ćurčić, preface to *Architecture as Icon*, vi.

84. Bissera V. Pentcheva, "The Performative Icon," *The Art Bulletin* 88, no. 4 (2006): 631, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25067280.

FIG 1.26 Orthodox church dome with illuminated fresco of Christ the Pantocrator

experience and faith of the Church,"[85] working in tandem with written doctrine to convey and reveal the spiritual realities of the Orthodox Faith.[86]

Beginning in 726AD, conflicts arose within the Byzantine Empire regarding the validity of iconography and the appropriateness of sacred imagery. These conflicts are known as 'Iconoclasm' – the opposition of Holy icons. The year 780 marked the end of the first phase of Iconoclasm when Byzantine Empress Irene of Athens declared the suspension of icon persecution. Seven years later, the seventh and final Ecumenical Council convened in Nicaea (787) and officially upheld the iconophile position, reinstating icons as a vital component of Orthodox Tradition and restoring them within the Orthodox Church and throughout the Byzantine Empire. With this proclamation followed a rich and transcribed refinement of the philosophy, theology, and theory of Byzantine iconography as sacred Tradition, clarifying its central role within the Church and the proper ways in which it is expressed and venerated.[87]

The philosophical and practical canons of iconography which were concisely formulated at the seventh Ecumenical Council derive from the same ideology that defines the Divine Liturgy. The icon is an essential element of the liturgical experience, and as such, it must contribute in both its materiality and theological content to a transcendental experience of God.[88] Visually, it must function for a purpose more noble than merely aesthetic beauty; it must be imbued with a Divine Presence that serves to bridge the gap between the physical world of humanity and the metaphysical realm of the divine.

In its very conception, Byzantine iconography embodied an ardent respect for creation and a prudent divine awareness, being produced from only natural, organic substances: "All things are thine, and of thine own have we given thee."[89] In this way, icons inherently represented the fullest participation of the physical world: materials from the vegetable, mineral, and animal worlds – including water, chalk, stones, gems, metals, pigments, and egg – were extracted from the earth and prepared by human hands in order to serve God and be returned to their Creator.[90] The process of icon-making was an intimately prayerful experience between iconographer and icon, infused with inspiration directly derived from a pious understanding of the Gospel sacred writings.[91]

As a physical manifestation, the Byzantine Christians regarded two perspectives from which to contemplate the iconography of the Church. The first was by examining the space within the picture plane and the content of the image itself. The second was by considering the space outside the picture plane and, more specifically, the

85. Sahas, *Icons and Logos*, 5.

86. Lossky and Ouspensky, *The Meaning of Icons*, 22.

87. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 39.

88. Pentcheva, "The Performative Icon," 632.

89. 1 Chron. 29:14

90. Lossky and Ouspensky, *The Meaning of Icons*, 55.

91. Cavarnos, *Byzantine Sacred Art*, 124.

FIG 1.27 Mosaic of Christ in Hagia Sophia Church in Constantinople (Istanbul)

FIG 1.28 Mosaic of the Virgin Mary in Hagia Sophia Church in Constantinople (Istanbul)

FIG 1.29 Mosaic of the Virgin Mary and Christ Child in the apse of Hagia Sophia Church in Constantinople (Istanbul)

FIG 1.30 Mosaic of the Virgin Mary and Christ Child, flanked by Empress Irene and Emperor John II Komnenos in Hagia Sophia Church in Constantinople (Istanbul)

FIG 1.31 Iconographers painting frescoes in the Holy Monastery of Rousanou in Meteora, Thessaly, Greece

experiential engagement between icon and spectator.

i. Compositional Techniques

In the case of the first point, attention was paid to the graphic, compositional techniques of iconography. Because icons were above all "an expression of the theological experience and faith of the Church"[92] and not an imitation of reality, they assumed an unnaturalistic style of representation: "The Byzantine icon-painter sees with the eyes of faith, by means of which he communes with those mystical realities which 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard.'"[93] In seeking to express the uncircumscribable heavenly realm, depictions of corruptible matter were transfigured to a state unlike the regular, logical world. This sense of unfamiliarity amongst worldly things was intentionally employed to allude to the incomprehensible and mysterious nature of God. In fact, following the Iconoclastic disputes, "a representation could only be justified if it could express the invisible reality that lies beyond the senses."[94]

(1) The first way in which the Byzantine icon approached spiritual themes was by revoking regular **perspective**, thus establishing "an alternative way of seeing the world."[95] Through the use of inverted perspective, physical space was reduced to a minimum and the contents of the image were presented in close proximity to the viewer, with nothing receding into infinity. Architectural depictions in Byzantine iconography were not imitations of real buildings, churches, houses, or cities, but rather, depictions of architectural elements – arches, vaults, roofs, furniture – that were "not realistic in their spatiality, given the absence of geometric perspective."[96] Through this, there was an impression or essence of *locus*, but a definite site was inconclusive, and its manifestation was evidently transformed.[97]

(2) Additionally, the graphic principle of **proportion** was methodically distorted for subliminal and selective emphasis. In Byzantine iconography, buildings, facial features, bodies, nature, etc. assumed a "transfigured state,"[98] indicated by a scalar portrayal in which they appeared physically changed. In the case of saints and holy figures, the icon presented a likeness of a prototype which participated in form, but not in essence.[99] This form was representative not of an animate, but of a deified form, that is, "not of corruptible flesh, but of flesh transfigured, radiant with Divine Light."[100] As such, proportional peculiarities were introduced, such as an enlargement of the head and eyes and a reduction of the nose, hands, and mouth, alluding to an enlightened way of thinking and seeing and a refinement of the other

92. Sahas, *Icons and Logos*, 5.

93. Cavarnos, *Byzantine Sacred Art*, 90.

94. Hadjitryphonos, "Presentations and Representations,"120.

95. Ibid., 144.

96. Ćurčić, preface to *Architecture as Icon*, vi.

97. Hadjitryphonos, "Presentations and Representations,"144.

98. Lossky and Ouspensky, *The Meaning of Icons*, 38.

99. Pentcheva, "The Performative Icon," 634.

100. Lossky and Ouspensky, *The Meaning of Icons*, 36.

PERSPECTIVE

Through the use of inverted perspective, the physical space of icons is reduced to a minimum and the contents of the image are presented in close proximity to the viewer, with nothing receding into infinity·

PROPORTION

In icons, buildings, facial features, bodies, nature, etc· assume a "transfigured state," indicated by a scalar portrayal in which they appear physically changed·

TIME

Icons depict an intentional layering of events within a single picture plane in order to more fully and succinctly represent a particular saint, event, or lifetime·

DEMATERIALIZATION

Though the icon inherently borrows forms and colours from the material world, it sheds sham materiality and maintains a sentiment of ascetic austerity·

FIG 1.32 Compositional techniques of Byzantine iconography

senses.[101] Architecture and landscape elements were depicted at a proportionately small scale in relation to human prototypes to emphasize the significance of theme over environment. Other times, architecture and landscape were omitted altogether, and the holy figure became larger than life, positioned against a vacant background of gold or unicolour.

(3) Byzantine iconography recognized "a reality that is never seen as the perceiver might expect it."[102] Thus, the representation of **time** within the image did not adhere to physical laws of time in the natural world. Icons depicted an intentional layering of events within a single picture plane in order to more fully and succinctly represent a particular saint, event, or lifetime. The icon was not a photographic snapshot of a moment in time; it was an embodiment of Holy Scripture, and therefore, every detail which was "necessary and sufficient for this purpose"[103] was admitted, irrespective of its physical impossibility.

(4) Finally, because icons focused not on worldly but on spiritual matter, all natural elements in an iconographic scene were explicitly **dematerialized** to allude to an alternate, invisible realm. Though the icon inherently borrowed forms and colours from the material world, it shed sham materiality and theatrics and maintained a sentiment of ascetic austerity.[104] For example, trees did not appear as luscious blossoms of green, but rather, as stumps with sparse leaves and branches. Likewise, mountains were not sublime, snow-capped giants but schematic, stair-like rocks. The intention was to allude to a sense of place or geography without over-dramatizing or over-specifying. In the case of architecture, there was routinely an opening up of buildings to depict interior spaces simultaneously with their exteriors, characterizing the Byzantine approach in which "the notion of the Whole [imbued] the representation of space."[105]

In summary, the compositional techniques of iconography assumed an anagogic quality. They were graphic tools which worked to lead the soul and mind upwards towards "the realm of the spirit, of the incorruptible, of the Kingdom of God, as far as this can be achieved with material means."[106]

ii. Empsychos Graphe

The second essential quality of the Byzantine icon concerned physical engagement and spectator interaction. As a liturgical art and an integral component of the Orthodox Divine Liturgy, iconography was likewise expected to be experienced with all five of the senses. The term, *empsychos graphe* (ἐμψυχος γραφὴ), is a Greek

101. Ibid., 38

102. Hadjitryphonos, "Presentations and Representations,"144-145.

103. Lossky and Ouspensky, *The Meaning of Icons*, 38.

104. Cavarnos, *Byzantine Sacred Art*, 26-28.

105. Hadjitryphonos, "Presentations and Representations,"144.

106. Cavarnos, *Byzantine Sacred Art*, 89.

expression which translates to 'inspirited image.'[107] The Byzantine icon, in its original ecclesiastic and liturgical setting, was intended to perform through its materiality. With this ideology, the essential component became the presence of the human interactor: the living body that moved through physical space.[108] The active approach of a person, their movement, gaze, and breath, simultaneously disrupted the lights of the candles, causing them to flicker and oscillate on the metallic surfaces of the icon and mingle with the smokiness of rising incense in the air. Consequently, the icon was ascribed a perception of dynamism as it luminously changed and performed before the person, endowing it with a perceived sense of spirit. In this way, the icon relied on liturgical ambience and was intended to provide access to divine knowledge "through an almost Eucharistic participatory knowledge of God."[109]

The conception of light thus became extremely important in the experience of a Byzantine icon, compounded with the architectural form of the church. In the setting of the church interior, candlelight was the primary source of illumination, preferred over daylight for its warm and lambent properties. The sparse, punctured windows of the church building calculatedly focused incoming sunlight, transforming it into a spotlight of sorts which illuminated specific icons within the space at different times throughout the day.

107. Pentcheva, "The Performative Icon," 632.

108. Ibid., 651.

109. Ibid., 632.

FIG 1.33 Orthodox monk venerating a Byzantine icon

FIG 1.34 Painted and silver-gilded icon of the Virgin Mary and Christ Child

Light is a frequent analogy employed in Christian writings. God Himself and the knowledge of Him is described as a life-giving "Divine Light [that] permeates all things."[110] The concept of light inspired the use of colour and luster in Byzantine iconography. While actual colours themselves were saturated yet subdued, they contrasted brilliantly with large swaths of radiant gold or other metallics with light-emitting qualities. Painted icons almost categorically included an element of either metallic engraving, framing, or gold-gilded backgrounds. The shimmering, reflective quality of the Byzantine icon contributed to the kinetic effect which imbued it with an apparent *empsychos graphe*, animated by the approach of a corporeal presence.[111] This was emphasized by the customary expectation of body-centred interaction: the icon was traditionally venerated through the dynamic rituals of bowing, kissing, and performing the sign of the cross.[112]

The two-fold essence of the Byzantine icon, its compositional design as well as its participatory activation, inherently endowed it with the same dual hypostasis which defined the ideology of Byzantine architecture – both endeavoured to access and connect the two realms which compose the Christian universe: that of the body and that of the spirit. Through form, design, and liturgical experience, the architecture and iconography of the Orthodox Church were transformed into vehicles of religious ascent, becoming "instruments for the knowledge of God [and for] communion with Him."[113]

While the Ottoman conquest with its devastating social and political consequences decisively arrested the development of Byzantine art, iconography, and architecture, the legacy of Byzantium's "grand and logical construction" and "sensitive and appropriate decoration"[114] remained a powerful symbol in the minds and memories of the *rayahs* inhabiting post-Byzantine Greece. Enriched by these inherited expressions of Orthodox Church Tradition, the Orthodox Greeks of the Ottoman Empire continued to practice their Christian Faith with reverence and resolve, giving rise to a new era of church-building and decoration reflective of their Byzantine prototypes, yet adapted and extended into new, creative forms which embodied their own collective circumstances, perceptions, and way of life.

110. Lossky and Ouspensky, *The Meaning of Icons*, 40.

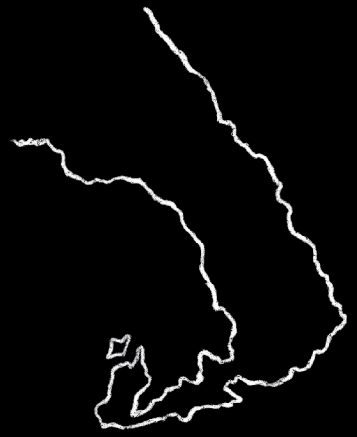
111. Pentcheva, "The Performative Icon," 640-641.

112. Ibid., 640.

113. Lossky and Ouspensky, *The Meaning of Icons*, 31.

114. Hamilton, *Byzantine Architecture*, 10.

FIG 1.35 Portable icon shrouded in a floral wreath



II

DEFINING MOUNT PELION

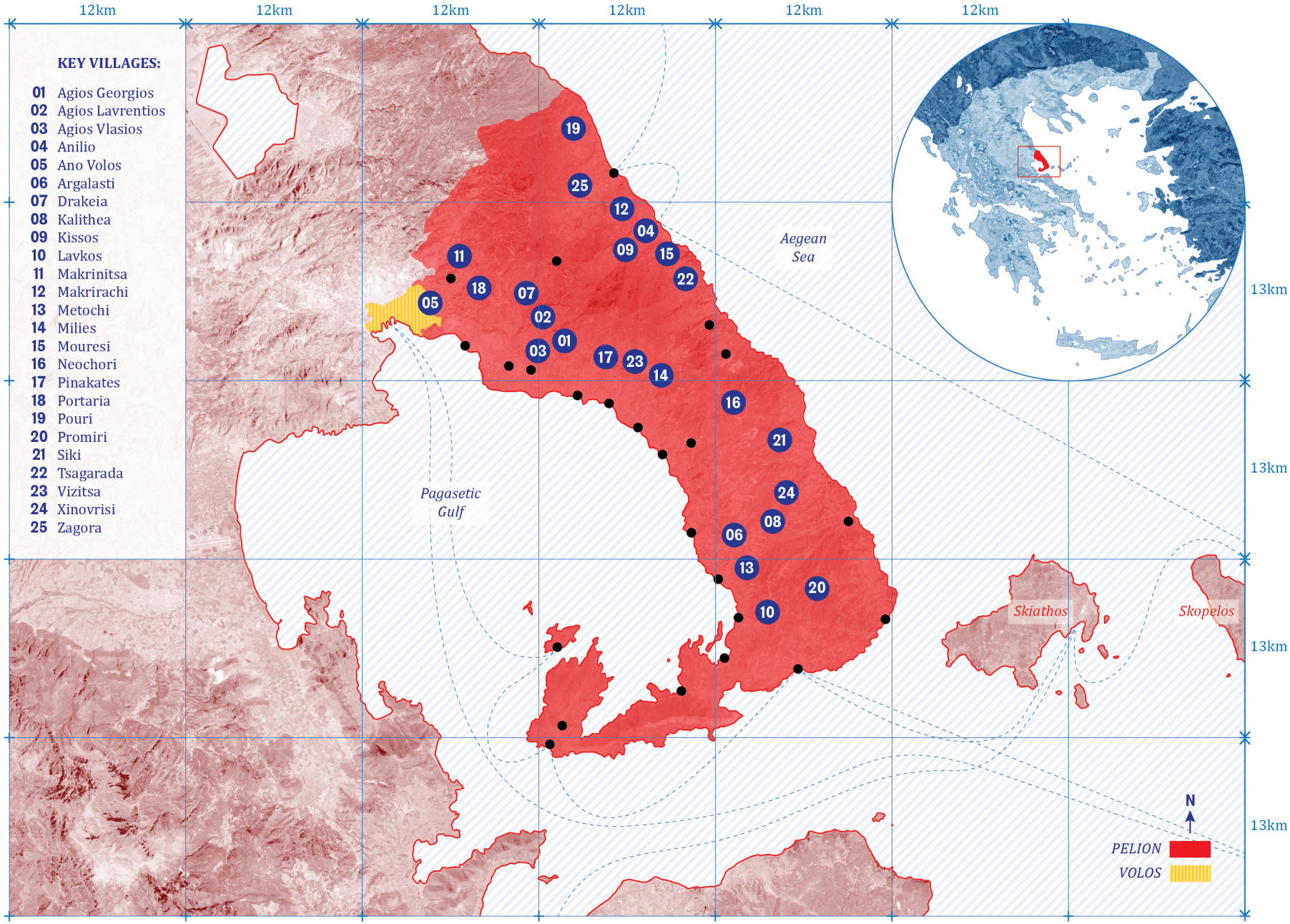


FIG 2.1 Map of Mount Pelion and its key villages in Magnesia, Thessaly, Greece

Mountain of Centaurs

On the eastern coast of mainland Greece, a hook-shaped peninsula boldly protrudes from the land mass of southeast Thessaly, visible from outer space. It nestles itself in the crystal blue waters of the Aegean Sea, framing the boundaries of the Pagasetic Gulf and encircling the port city of Volos.

It soars into the sky, reaching heights that exceed 5,000 ft. On a clear day, the views from its summits extend endlessly into blue horizons. Towards the northeast, the ancient city of Thessaloniki can be spotted with the sun sparkling off its bleach-white buildings, framed by the silhouette of Mount Athos rising miles in the distance behind it. Towards the east and south, the islands of Skiathos, Skopelos, Alonnisos, and Euboea are vast shadowy flecks contrasting against the cerulean and azure of the boundless sky and sea.

Its slopes present a sublime landscape of unparalleled magnitude, resilience, and ecological diversity. Deep valleys and cliffs of schist stone; intense forests of chestnut, oak, and beech; fields of chamomile and olive groves; cool and shadowy caves; bubbling freshwater streams; sandy seashores miles long – all are found in direct proximity, transitioning abruptly from one to the next.

Its climate is more severe than the surrounding lowlands – chillier in the winter, rainier in the spring, prone to strong winds, thick mists, and heavy snowfalls. As the seasons change, nature bursts to life with colours bold and vivid, saturated by the intense rays of the sun. Thousands of rare botanic species thrive in these lands, alongside copious fruit trees of every sort, from apple, pear, and cherry to mulberry, quince, and fig.

On Mount Pelion, the forces of nature reign supreme with assertive conviction. It has been this way since the beginning of human civilization.

The earliest written accounts of Pelion are found in the epics of ancient Greek poets including Homer, Pindar, and Hesiod, who revered the mountain for its great scale and natural abundance. Pelion also prominently featured as a backdrop for the adventures of the mythical Greek gods in ancient Greek mythology.[1] The infamous half-man, half-horse creatures, the centaurs, were believed by the ancient Greeks to have originated from the mountain and to actively inhabit its wooded slopes. In particular, the legend of Chiron the Centaur – wise scholar of medicine and tutor to heroes like Heracles, Achilles, and Jason – earned Pelion its classic epithet, 'Mountain of Centaurs' (βουνό των Κενταύρων), which is perpetuated to this day.[2]

Extensive evidence suggests an almost complete absence of human inhabitation on Pelion until the late Byzantine period. This fact subsists with the exception of Pelion's beach and coastal regions bordering the Aegean Sea towards the east and the Pagasetic Gulf towards the south, at which the discovery of palaeolithic cave paintings,

1. Κώστας Λιάπης, *Πήλιο: αναδρομές, καημοί, εξομολογήσεις* (Βόλος: Γραφικές Τέχνες ΠΑΛΜΟΣ, 2010), 13.

2. Ibid.

FIG 2.2 Centaur's Path, Portaria

FIG 2.3 Partial view of Mount Pelion from Makrinitsa with the city of Volos in the distance

FIG 2.4 Entrance to Koimisis Tis Theotokou Church, Makrinitsa

FIG 2.5 East façade of Koimisis Tis Theotokou Church, Makrinitsa

FIG 2.6 Spolia in the east façade of Koimisis Tis Theotokou Church, Makrinitsa

FIG 2.7 South door to Koimisis Tis Theotokou Church, Makrinitsa

engravings, and other archaeological artifacts testify to the existence of ancient human settlements.[3] Contrarily, the steep mountainscapes and dense woodlands of Pelion's upper slopes proved unsatisfactory for ancient settlers, collectively affirmed by a lack of archaeological evidence in these wilder regions, an absence of historical record, and the enduring myth of the centaurs, which only began to wane in popular consciousness upon the sporadic arrival of Greek Orthodox ascetic monks in the early tenth century.[4]

Mountain of Monastics

Toponymic analysis of Pelion's villages and beaches reveals a pattern of Slavic origin, suggesting the existence of Slavic settlements on Pelion as early as the sixth to eighth centuries.[5] Little is known of these early agricultural hamlets, and with time, they were effectively assimilated by the dominant Greek element.[6] Around the tenth century, a trend in the construction of Greek Orthodox monasteries can be traced throughout the region – a fact affirmed both by official ecclesiastic records and testimonies as well as physical epigraphs inscribed within the walls of these still-standing monuments.[7] In particular, the close of the eleventh century and onset of the twelfth saw a surge in ascetic monks migrating from northeast Mount Athos to spread the Orthodox Faith and establish new monastic communities on Pelion's slopes, beckoned to the region by its promise of isolation, purity, and natural immersion.[8] Between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, these monks were instrumental in the foundation of prominent monasteries of the region including Panagia Makrinitissa (in Makrinitsa, thirteenth c.), Prodromou tis Neas Petras (in Portaria, thirteenth c.), and Agios Lavrentios (in Agios Lavrentios, fourteenth c.).[9] The sudden flourish of monastic communities throughout Mount Pelion inspired a new epithet: 'Mountain of Monastics' (όρος των Κελλίων), rebranding its ancient pagan associations to Greek mythology for a more appropriate nexus to the Greek Orthodox Faith.[10]

On the lands directly surrounding these new mountain monasteries, small hamlets were formed by farmers, shepherds, and their families who toiled the earth and cultivated the monastic grounds. Meanwhile, a barbarian threat increasing in severity and frequency triggered a steady influx of migrants fleeing Pelion's coastal settlements to seek refuge at higher ground,[11] where elevation and isolation meant protection and security. Throughout the twelfth to early fifteenth centuries, these migrants largely integrated with the monasteries' pre-

3. Ibid., 18.

4. Ibid.

5. Γιάννης Κίζης, *Πηλιορείτικη Οικοδομία* (Αθήνα: Πολιτιστικό Ίδρυμα Ομίλου Πειραιώς, 2007), 42.

6. Ibid., 524.

7. Κ. Α. Μακρής, *Η Λαϊκή Τέχνη του Πηλίου* (Αθήνα: ΜΕΛΙΣΣΑ, 1976), 27.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 18.

11. Ibid., 19.

existing agricultural hamlets, contributing to the gradual expansion of these communities which, over time, evolved into networks "of closed farming-shepherding and family-based economic units."[12]

Such were the foundational beginnings of the soon-to-be villages of Pelion. Typically, the site selection for these early settlements prioritized matters of both supply and defence – judiciously distant and visually concealed from Pelion's coastlines, leeward, sun-facing, and sufficiently accessible to fresh water.[13] Building construction techniques were primitive, with widespread tectonic use of rough-cut schist stone and heavy timber which were both abundantly available from Pelion's vast mountains and forests. Most of these early crude structures were either demolished by time or replaced during the building boom of ensuing centuries which "totally altered the image and layout of the villages."[14] Makeshift dirt roads and pathways were traced throughout the dense forests, and planes of fertile land were painstakingly forged by inhabitants to enable them to plant seeds and trees in order to sustain their agricultural livelihoods.[15]

Mountain of Refuge

Following the decisive conquest of the region of Magnesia in Thessaly, Greece, which fell to the Ottomans in 1423 (nearly half a century preceding the conquest of Byzantium's capital, Constantinople), the area was met with great political change and population resettlement. The new Ottoman conquerors promptly seized the most profitable and fertile plains of coastal Volos, Koropi, and later, Lechonia, and established a new army base on the hilltop of the ancient city of Iolcos.[16] Volos became the Ottoman military centre of southeast Thessaly.[17]

At the heart of the city, surrounding the old Byzantine castle, Muslim neighbourhood districts were established. The influx of these new foreign settlers, coupled with the increasing sense of social and political subjugation towards the *rayahs*, resulted in a great number of Greek Orthodox citizens abandoning their lodgings in the cities and scaling the distant slopes of Pelion in search of refuge from the precarious gaze of their Muslim conquerors.[18] These 'refugee' Greeks arriving from the coastal cities amalgamated with Pelion's small, pre-existing agricultural settlements, forming communities of increasing scale, strength, and ability.[19]

Due to its vastness, wilderness, and general isolation, Pelion was not regarded as an asset of great political or socio-economic allure for the Ottomans, and its sporadic settlements of centuries prior therefore enjoyed a considerable level of freedom and autonomy

12. Κίζης, *Πηλιορείτικη Οικοδομία*, 524.
13. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 19-20.
14. Κίζης, *Πηλιορείτικη Οικοδομία*, 524.
15. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 20.
16. Μακρής, *Η Λαϊκή Τέχνη*, 29.
17. Κίζης, *Πηλιορείτικη Οικοδομία*, 42.
18. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 20.
19. Ibid.

FIG 2.8 View from Makrinitsa at dusk with the city of Volos in the distance

in comparison to the tightly-surveilled cities below.[20] Of course, the trade-off was a lifetime of relentless physical labour – cultivating a brutal landscape and enduring such adversities as illness, famine, harsh climate, social isolation, and lack of either ability or authority to pursue an alternative destiny.[21]

Despite these inherent hardships, the allure of freedom, however compromised, held great sway, and rumors of peaceful Greek settlements on Mount Pelion quickly spread throughout the Greek mainland. In subsequent centuries, migrants from all over Greece were uprooting and travelling to Pelion, seeking to escape the tyranny of the Ottomans most prevalent in the populous cities.[22] A considerable portion of these Greek migrants arrived from Euboea, western Thessaly, Epirus, and the Aegean islands, each bringing with them unique skillsets, perspectives, and competencies inherited from their native regions of Greece. Many were manufacturers, tradesmen, or merchants with great creative and entrepreneurial adeptness.[23] Naturally, by the close of the sixteenth century, the primitive agricultural communities of the late Byzantine centuries and Middle Ages had effectively evolved into substantial, organized villages. By the onset of the seventeenth century, Pelion had become "the most densely populated region of Greece."[24]

20. Ibid.

21. Μακρής, *Η Λαϊκή Τέχνη*, 29.

22. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 21.

23. Κίζης, *Πηλιορείτικη Οικοδομία*, 524.

24. Ibid, 44.

FIG 2.9 Local villager gathering wild mulberries in the forests of Ano Kerasia

FIG 2.10 Local villagers gathering wild mountain tea from the fields of Ano Kerasia

FIG 2.11 Holly tree in Zagora

FIG 2.12 Fig tree in Kerasia

FIG 2.13 Almond blossoms in Kerasia

FIG 2.14 Peach tree in Zagora

Mountain of Villages

The promising expansion of Pelion's villages, and the financial opportunities implied therein, did not fail to attract the attention of the Ottoman authorities. Whereas the entirety of Mount Pelion had been originally designated as 'property of the Crown' since the onset of the Ottoman conquest of Magnesia,[25] new and more refined devised and implemented.

These initiatives actually began in the early sixteenth century, with a decree issued by the Ottoman sultan formally bestowing generous portions of western, eastern, and northern Pelion to the valide sultan (the legal mother of the ruling sultan).[26] With this official designation also came a level of protection for the Greek settlements residing there, prohibiting the instalment of Muslim citizens in these regions and thus ensuring the cultural and religious purity of these communities. Subsequent imperial berats further defined their rights and privileges, granting them a reasonable degree of liberty and autonomy. However, a portion of their overall income was compulsorily confiscated and offered to the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina[27] – a constant reminder of their social subjugation to their Ottoman conquerors.

In the seventeenth century, additional sultanic decrees provided further definition to Pelion's remaining villages which were quickly rising in prominence and flourish. Some of these villages were conferred to the pasha of Larissa and governed by Ottoman dignitaries; the rest were privately owned by timariots of the Ottoman army.[28] Depending on the ownership, village incomes were collected and either distributed to support various institutions within the Ottoman Empire, or else amassed for the sizeable profit of the timariot landowner.[29]

Thus, throughout the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, the villages of Pelion existed within two official categories of ownership: *vakoufi* (βακούφι) – belonging to the valide sultan – and *hasi* (χάσι) – belonging to the pasha of Larissa or private timariots. The distinction between these two village categories implied several differences in terms of governance, management, financial conditions, and social/religious freedoms.[30]

In general, the daily circumstances of the *vakoufi* villages were superior to those of the *hasi* villages, as they enjoyed a less restricted and more privileged way of life.[31] Most notable among these special privileges were lower and steadier taxation rates, as well as, according to a formal berat issued in 1604, the liberty to construct new Greek Orthodox places of worship or to repair derelict ones at will, without requiring special permits.[32] By the early eighteenth century, the following villages of Pelion

25. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 22.

26. Ibid.

27. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 21.

28. Κίζης, *Πηλιορείτικη Οικοδομία*, 44.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 23.

32. Μακρής, *Η Λαϊκή Τέχνη*, 29.

FIG 2.15 The village of Portaria rising above a thick fog

were categorized with *vakoufi* status: Agios Georgios, Agios Lavrentios, Agios Vlasios (Karambasi), Argalasti, Drakeia, Kalithea (Bir), Kissos, Lavkos, Makrinitsa, Makrirachi, Metochi, Mouresi, Pinakates, Promiri, Siki, Vizitsa, and Xinovrisi (Bistinika).[33]

Contrarily, the privately owned *hasi* villages suffered from more exorbitant taxation rates which fluctuated routinely according to the varying demands of the toparchs.[34] The issue of taxation often placed considerable financial strain on the villagers; surviving catalogs disclose long records of "lords, shepherds, and widowers" alike acquiring loans in times of exorbitant taxation in order to be able to fulfill their financial duties.[35] Additionally, villagers were subject to a mandatory offering of work, were not permitted to freely construct Greek Orthodox places of worship or to repair derelict ones, and, according to historical accounts from scholars Gregory Konstantas and Daniel Philipides, "were not free to wear what they wanted."[36] By the early eighteenth century, the following villages of Pelion were categorized with *hasi* status: Ano Volos, Portaria (Katichori), Milies, Neochori, Pouri, and Zagora.

For reasons undisclosed, there are also a few accounts of villages which switched classification from *vakoufi* to *hasi* or vice versa, as in the case of Anilio, which was

33. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 23.

34. Ibid.

35. Μακρής, *Η Λαϊκή Τέχνη*, 33-34.

36. Ibid., 29-30.

FIG 2.16 Arterial commercial street in Makrinitsa (largest *vakoufi* village)

FIG 2.17 Arterial commercial street in Zagora's Agios Georgios district (largest *hasi* village)

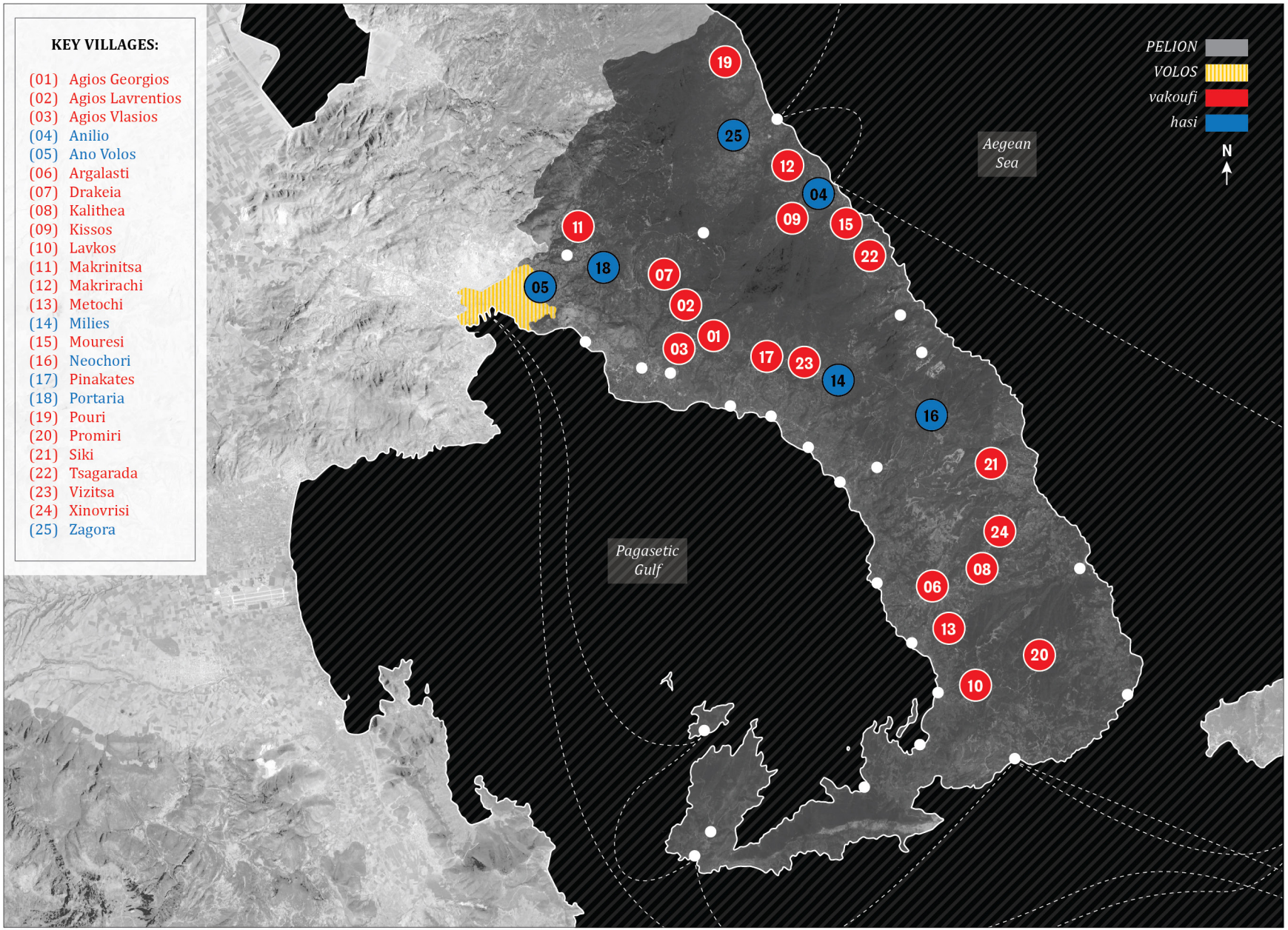


FIG 2.18 Map of Mount Pelion denoting *vakoufi* and *hasi* villages in the 19th century

FIG 2.19 The village of Makrinitsa

demoted to *hasi* from its original *vakoufi* status, and Tsagarada, which rose from *hasi* to *vakoufi* status at the onset of the seventeenth century.[37]

Despite the apparent contrasts between *vakoufi* and *hasi* villages, the realities of their geographical adjacencies and essential coexistence rendered the actual day-to-day distinctions between them less severe. Many *hasi* villages, especially those of substantial size, population, and economic strength such as Zagora and Milies, functioned at face value much like *vakoufi* villages. In addition, the special privileges afforded to the *vakoufi* villages by the Ottoman State were never necessarily absolute and did depend to some degree on the will and character of the individuals in power.[38] Furthermore, *vakoufi* and *hasi* villages alike were equally subject to threats beyond those imposed by the Ottoman authorities – including regressions, natural disasters, raids, looting, famine, and much more – which united and bonded them in practical matters of survival and defence.[39] Thus, the villages of Pelion possessed a rather uniform ethnic character overall, presenting a homogenous style of customs, traditions, and architectural vernaculars.[40]

In the system of taxation imposed on Pelion's *vakoufi* and *hasi* villages, there was one major positive outcome: the routine collection of such taxes inspired the necessity for a committee of local representatives to manage these financial affairs. This committee, elected annually by fellow villagers, reported directly to the voivode of Pelion (the legal representative of the valide sultan) to collect and deliver the required tax amounts for their respective village.[41] Within this framework, an organized system of local self-governance was established, further enhancing the sense of independence, autonomy, self-sufficiency, and identity afforded to Pelion's villages. The existence of this local governance also served to secure and enforce a collective consciousness of religion, rights, and ethics which came to define Pelion's villages, uniting them in strength and virtue.[42]

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a fortuitous confluence of political circumstances, enhanced by the perks of self-governance, a skilled working class, and an abundance of natural resources, propelled the villages of Pelion into a remarkable period of economic and political prosperity which would drastically advance their form, their function, and their future in centuries to come.[43]

37. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 23.

38. Κίζης, *Πηλιορείτικη Οικοδομία*, 44.

39. Μακρής, *Η Λαϊκή Τέχνη*, 33.

40. Κίζης, *Πηλιορείτικη Οικοδομία*, 44.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 23-24.

Mountain of Prosperity

Generally, the period between 1750 and 1850 is regarded throughout Pelion as one of peak prosperity – a flourish of social, economic, and political progress which drastically altered the image of the villages and the daily lives of the villagers.[44] This bourgeon of good fortune did not necessarily transpire smoothly or instantly; rather, it emerged gradually amidst a previous spout of economic regressions, Albanian marauders, and recurring famines which repeatedly plagued the region at this time.[45] Despite these hardships, the persistent efforts of previous generations and the clever involvement of the present one in matters of commerce, industry, and trade resulted in an overall trend of progression which would continue in a positive direction.[46]

Until the mid seventeenth century, the primary economic activity of Pelion's villages was agricultural in nature, and the distribution of yields was restricted to the immediate local region.[47] Around the year 1650, the mass cultivation of olive trees and the production of olive oil revealed a new, thriving market of economic potential, followed by wine produced from the abundance of grapevines planted by villagers in preceding years. In the eighteenth century, the discovery and widespread espousal of sericulture steered Pelion towards a road of far-reaching fortune and esteem. Silk became the most profitable source of income for the region, which villagers used to create desirable handmade artifacts including headscarves, hats, fabrics, thread, etc.[48] At the same time, olive oil, wine, and other valuable produce including apples and figs continued to play a central role in the agricultural activities of Pelion's villages. Gradually, word of the superb quality and craft of such products and goods spread to foreign shores, and soon, the products of Pelion were routinely exported throughout the Ottoman empire and parts of Western Europe via the ports of the Aegean, the Adriatic, Egypt, and Syria.[49]

A domino effect of progressive developments ensued. The high demand for Pelion's exported products in foreign lands inspired a resurgence of seafaring, and new ports were consequently established at the shores of Zagora and Trikeri.[50] Through the flourish of productive economic activities, an emerging bourgeois class of Greek merchants and sailors gained prominence throughout Pelion's villages. The economic relations between Pelion and Western Europe re-established their contact with the forward-thinking societies of the West, as well as with educated Greek expatriates of the diaspora eager to aid their subjugated motherland. Resultantly, progressive ideas of liberation and enlightenment reached Pelion and became widely disseminated throughout its villages, finding fertile ground amongst the sagacious Greek Orthodox villagers.[51]

44. Ibid., 24.

45. Μακρής, *Η Λαϊκή Τέχνη*, 33-34.

46. Ibid.

47. Κίζης, *Πηλιορείτικη Οικοδομία*, 43.

48. Μακρής, *Η Λαϊκή Τέχνη*, 34.

49. Ibid.

50. Κίζης, *Πηλιορείτικη Οικοδομία*, 49.

51. Μακρής, *Η Λαϊκή Τέχνη*, 34.

FIG 2.20 Hand-sketch of a cobblestone road (*kalderimi*) in Makrinitsa

FIG 2.21 Hand-sketch of a traditional *archontiko* mansion in Makrinitsa

Furthermore, an emphasis on education became a defining characteristic of this period, "mainly on the initiative of expatriate merchants and men of letters."[52] Before the eighteenth century, official accounts confirm the absence of any formal schools on Pelion, save for one rudimentary setup operating informally in Zagora between 1647 and 1648.[53] In 1777, under the joint initiative of former patriarch of Constantinople, Kallinikos III, and Zagora-born expatriate, Yiannis Prigkos, a new, advanced school known as the *ellinomouseio* (ελληνομουσείο) was founded in the village of Zagora.[54] A few decades later, the villagers of Milies followed suit, establishing a prominent school of their own in the village centre. Both of these schools were revelled for their dynamic and progressive curricula, offering higher education in diverse subject areas including foreign languages, mathematics, history, geography, and physics.[55] By 1809, the esteemed English writer and topographer, William Martin Leake, recorded the existence of five schools in total throughout Pelion, located in the villages of Zagora, Milies, Makrinitsa, Drakeia, and Portaria.[56]

There was also emerging incentive for affluent families of Pelion to educate their children in distant European lands, including Italy and France. Equipped with newfound knowledge and experience gained from their studies abroad, these intellectuals would often return to Pelion to enrich their compatriots with exotic insights, skills, and artforms.[57] Many became benefactors for local initiatives aimed at the further development of Pelion's villages – as was the case in the villages of Zagora and Milies, where Pelion's first libraries were established and generously equipped with instruments of physics and chemistry, comprehensive book collections, manuscripts, maps, diagrams of anatomy, and other valuable artifacts for learning.[58]

In such a flourishing, productive, and intellectual environment, it was only natural that artists, craftsmen, and builders would experience an analogous renaissance of creative inspiration.[59] Alongside Pelion's progressive economic and social strides, there emerged an architectural revolution – a building boom which comprised the major restructuring of building typologies and village morphologies.[60] These new structures "reflect the period of Greek enlightenment and bear witness to the considerable affluence of an economically thriving, bourgeois society,"[61] presenting a style that is "as much extraneously inspired and provincial as it is locally independent and notable."[62]

52. Κίζης, *Πηλιορείτικη Οικοδομία*, 524.

53. Ibid., 51.

54. Μακρής, *Η Λαϊκή Τέχνη*, 34-35.

55. Ibid.

56. Κίζης, *Πηλιορείτικη Οικοδομία*, 51.

57. Μακρής, *Η Λαϊκή Τέχνη*, 36-37.

58. Ibid., 34-35.

59. Ibid., 39.

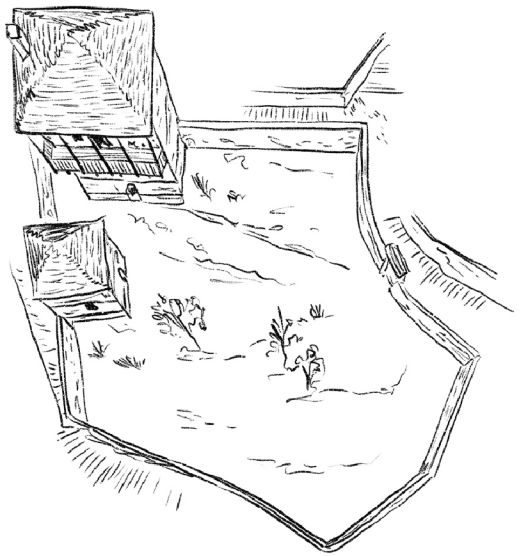
60. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 24.

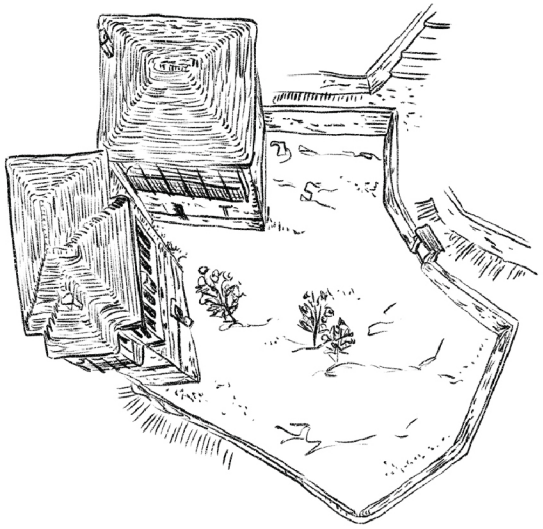
61. Κίζης, *Πηλιορείτικη Οικοδομία*, 523.

62. Ibid.

C· 1700

Fortress-like two-storey homes with open cantilevered loggias are constructed in the style of the early domestic architecture of Pelion, usually accompanied by a separate single-room shed in the vicinity of the property·



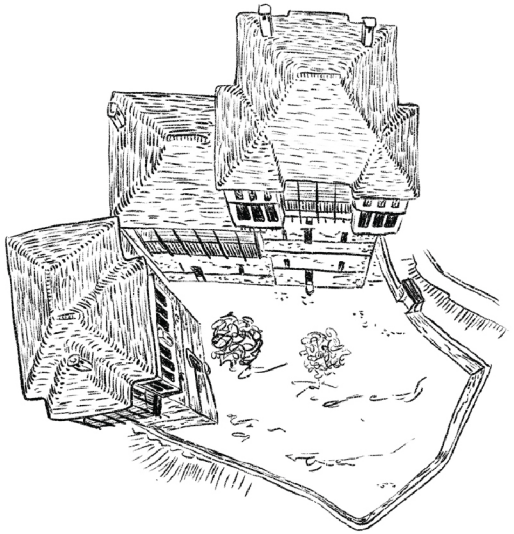


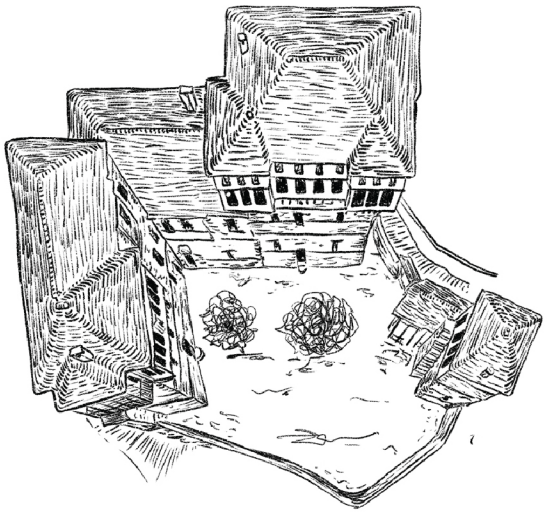
C· 1720

The central structure is replaced by a larger building with a fortified stone base and an open loggia on the south façade, accompanied by a large tower-house in the south-west of the property, built on the foundations of the previous shed construction·

C· 1750

The large and affluent archontiko is constructed in the traditional symmetrical style with a large central loggia, catapults protecting the entry, and a fortified stone base· A door connects the main house with the secondary structure, which serves as the servants' and chefs' quarters·





C· 1830

The servants' and chefs' quarters are renovated and expanded to connect to the primary archontiko· The central loggia of the archontiko is closed up for further protection· An additional structure designed to accommodate an overspill of domestic needs is constructed in the eastern vicinity of the property·

FIG 2.22 Development of the traditional *archontiko* mansion between the 18th and 19th centuries

FIG 2.23 Hand-sketch of the *ellinomouseio* in Zagora

FIG 2.24 Class photo from a school in Katichori (19th century)

FIG 2.25 The school of Milies in 1894

FIG 2.26 Traditional *archontiko* mansion in Vizitsa

FIG 2.27 The village of Pinakates

FIG 2.28 The village of Agios Georgios

FIG 2.29 Traditional *archontiko* mansion in Zagora

Makeshift dwellings of previous centuries were demolished to make way for more elaborate, affluent structures suitable for the sophisticated Greek population of Pelion. These structures, known as *archontika* (αρχοντικά), were mansions of durable mixed construction, designed to support a range of functions including dwelling, production, and defence.[63] The fortress-like typology of the *archontika* represents a regional vernacular of house-building widely disseminated throughout the villages of Pelion, framed and finished in Pelion's native timber and stone, with walls covered in white plaster, roofs of overlapping schist stone, robust thresholds, small windows, and architecturally-integrated furniture. In many cases, the walls and ceilings of these structures were lavishly decorated with painted murals, plain beading, coffering, or wood-carved ornaments – exhibiting the impressive artistic abilities of local craftsmen.[64]

The renovation or reconstruction of village churches was another important building activity undertaken during this period,[65] which will be more thoroughly explored in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

By the mid nineteenth century, "competition from fast-growing European industry, combined with the absence of a significant consumer hinterland, signalled the end of the prosperity enjoyed by [Pelion's] villages."[66] Nevertheless, the fortuitous events of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries ignited a spark of hope in the collective consciousness of Pelion's Greek Orthodox inhabitants, as well as a passionate desire for liberation from their conquerors. In 1821, this spark would surge into a flame fuelled by the powers of political prowess, economic stability, and social unity. On May 7th of that year, following the Divine Liturgy services at the Greek Orthodox church of Pamegiston Taxiarchon in Milies, an organized anti-Ottoman revolt would mark the official initiation of Thessaly's Magnesia region into the Greek War of Independence.[67] Though it would take sixty years of arduous effort for the villages of Pelion to finally achieve their goal of liberation in 1881,[68] the noble contribution of this region in Greece's overall struggle for freedom cannot be overstated.

At a glance, the story of Mount Pelion in post-Byzantine Greece is one of humble beginnings and valiant endings, characterized by exceptional displays of resilience, perseverance, and vision in the face of adversity and oppression, with protagonists who exhibit a passionate, undying commitment to their rich cultural and religious foundations.

63. Ibid., 48.

64. Ibid., 528-529.

65. Ibid., 523.

66. Ibid.

67. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 25.

68. Ibid.

Village Morphology

Today, the constellation of villages scattered throughout Mount Pelion constitutes a strong visual reminder of the post-Byzantine past. Twenty-five key villages occupy the mountain's slopes and coastlines, alongside countless other smaller settlements. Though physically altered by the damages incurred from insurrections and wars throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many of Pelion's traditional architectural specimens still survive in good form to this day, endowing the villages with an authentic and well-preserved architectural character.[69]

The fact that Pelion's villages evolved from agricultural roots is morphologically significant. As previously outlined, the earliest foundations of today's fully formed villages were communities of farmers and shepherds, either cultivating the monastic grounds of the late Byzantine period or establishing new livelihoods in the early post-Byzantine period. Thus, the villages of Pelion in their humble beginnings were not 'designed' in line with some predetermined set of architectural master plans. Rather, they developed organically according to the practical needs of the people who established them and were regularly adapted as these practical needs evolved with time.[70]

When conducting a morphological analysis of Pelion's key villages, three apparent typologies emerge. The first constitutes the simplest type and describes the majority of the villages. This type emulates a single cell with a central nucleus that acts as an epicentre of various community, religious, commercial, and recreational activities. Private dwellings and stables are arranged in concentric layers surrounding the nucleus, connected by a series of cobblestone roads, or *kalderimia* (καλντερίμια), which meander according to the unique topographic conditions of the site. All roads lead to the nucleus, which serves as the vital sustainer of social life and is characteristically defined by a central square, or *plateia* (πλατεία), and a central church.[71]

Key villages of Pelion which belong to this simple type are Agios Georgios, Agios Lavrentios, Agios Vlasios, Anilio, Argalasti, Drakeia, Lavkos, Makrinitsa, Makrirachi, Milies, Mouresi, Pinakates, Promiri, Portaria, and Vizitsa.[72] Many of these villages originated from the monastic hamlets surrounding Pelion's monasteries of the late Byzantine centuries – a fact confirmed by their toponyms derived directly from the names of monasteries.[73]

The second morphological type emulates four adjacent cells, each with their own nucleus. Villages of this type are divided into districts (συνοικίες), each uniquely named, uniting to form a collective unit. Each district is defined by its own *plateia*, central church, and commercial strip. In this sense, these villages are essentially patterns of the

69. Κίτσος Α. Μακρής, "Συμβολή στη μελέτη της πολεοδομίας των χωριών του πηλίου," *Επιθεώρηση Τέχνης* 42 (1958): 78.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid., 79-80.

72. Ibid., 80.

73. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 21.

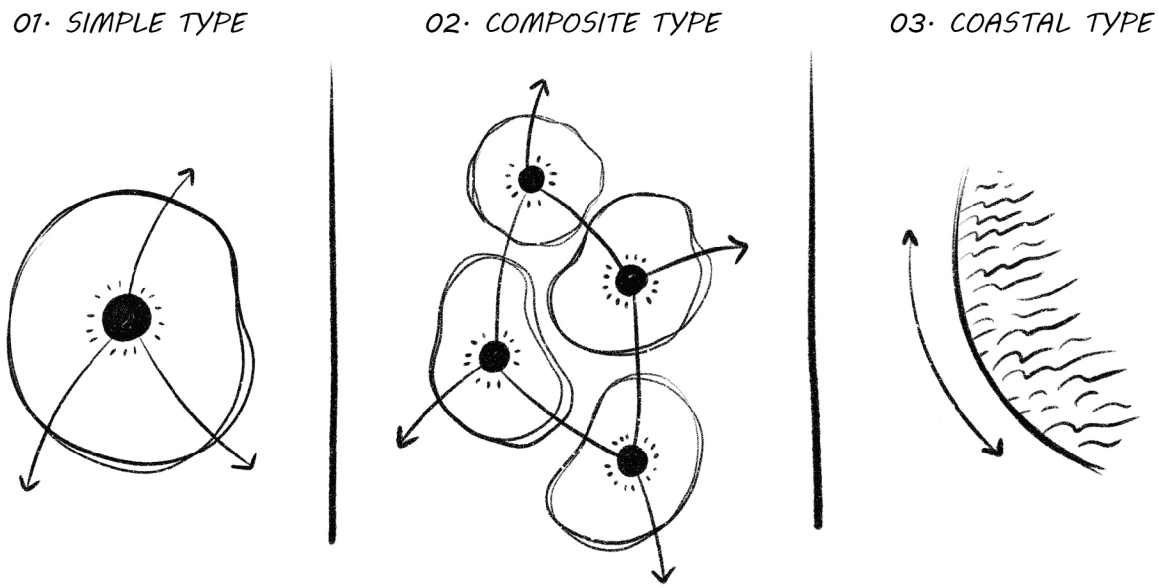


FIG 2.30 Three morphological types of Pelion's villages

FIG 2.31 Satellite image of Makrinitsa (simple type)

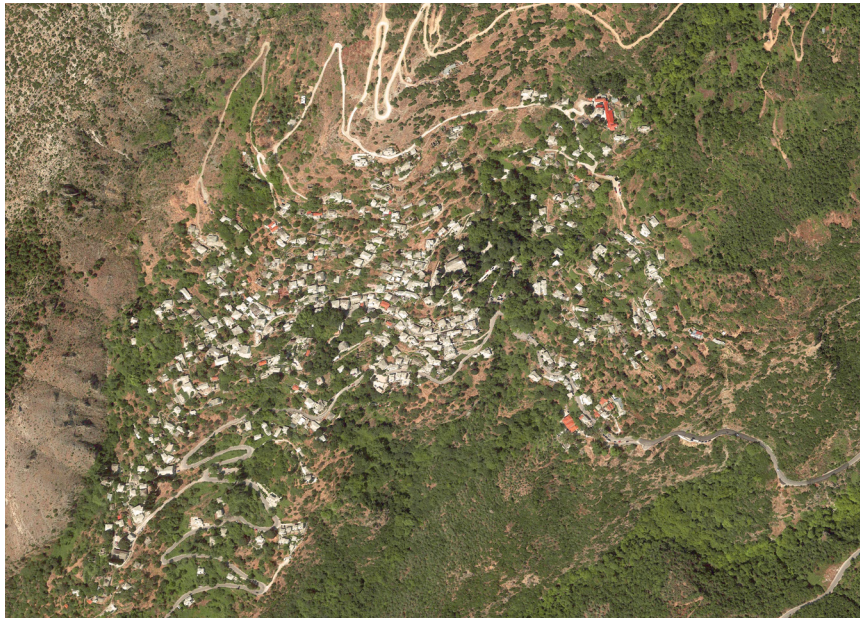


FIG 2.32 Satellite image of Milies (simple type)

FIG 2.33 Satellite image of Tsagarada (composite type)

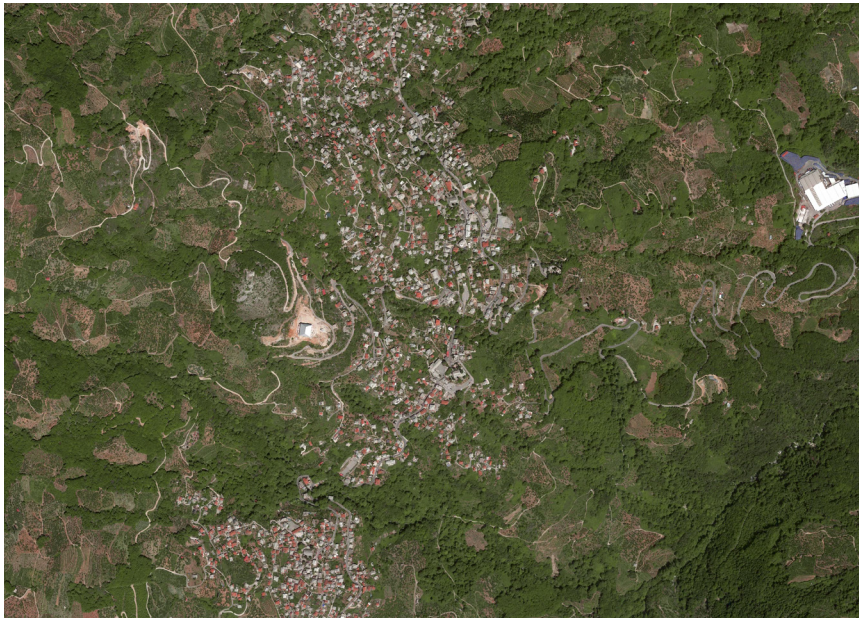


FIG 2.34 Satellite image of Zagora (composite type)

first simple type, repeated and amalgamated to form one super-village.[74]

Villages which belong to this composite type are Ano Volos (with districts Agios Onoufrios, Alli Meria, Anakasia, and Ano Machalas), Tsagarada (with districts Agia Kyriaki, Agia Paraskevi, Agios Stefanos, and Taxiarchi), and Zagora (with districts Agia Kyriaki, Agia Paraskevi, Agios Georgios, and Sotira).[75]

The third and final type defines Pelion's coastal villages which were originally established to accommodate the seafaring activities of the larger mountain villages, especially during the economic acme of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These coastal villages are systemically elongated towards the sea, situated within natural coves in the land, and possessing a very shallow width. Key examples of this type are the villages of Agria, Afissos, Chorefto, Chorto, and Milina.[76]

Consistent throughout all three types is the shrewd exploitation of solar orientation and natural ventilation. All villages are either east or south-facing with the exception of Anilio – a name which literally translates to 'lack of sunshine,' blatantly acknowledging its deliberate exception to this rule.[77]

Across all villages, there is an established architectural character dually defined by a consistency of vernacular construction techniques as well as key constructed elements including a central *plateia*, natural fountains (βρύσες), stone bridges, cobblestone *kalderimia*, towering *archontika*, and perhaps most strikingly, an abundance of Greek Orthodox chapels and churches. In the next chapter of this thesis, the physical and phenomenological hypostases of these rich sacred spaces will be explored and discussed in detail.

74. Μακρής, "Συμβολή στη μελέτη," 80.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid., 81.

77. Ibid.

FIG 2.35 The central *plateia* of Makrinitsa

FIG 2.36 The central *plateia* of Vizitsa

FIG 2.37 The central *plateia* of Agios Georgios

FIG 2.38 The central *plateia* of Pinakates

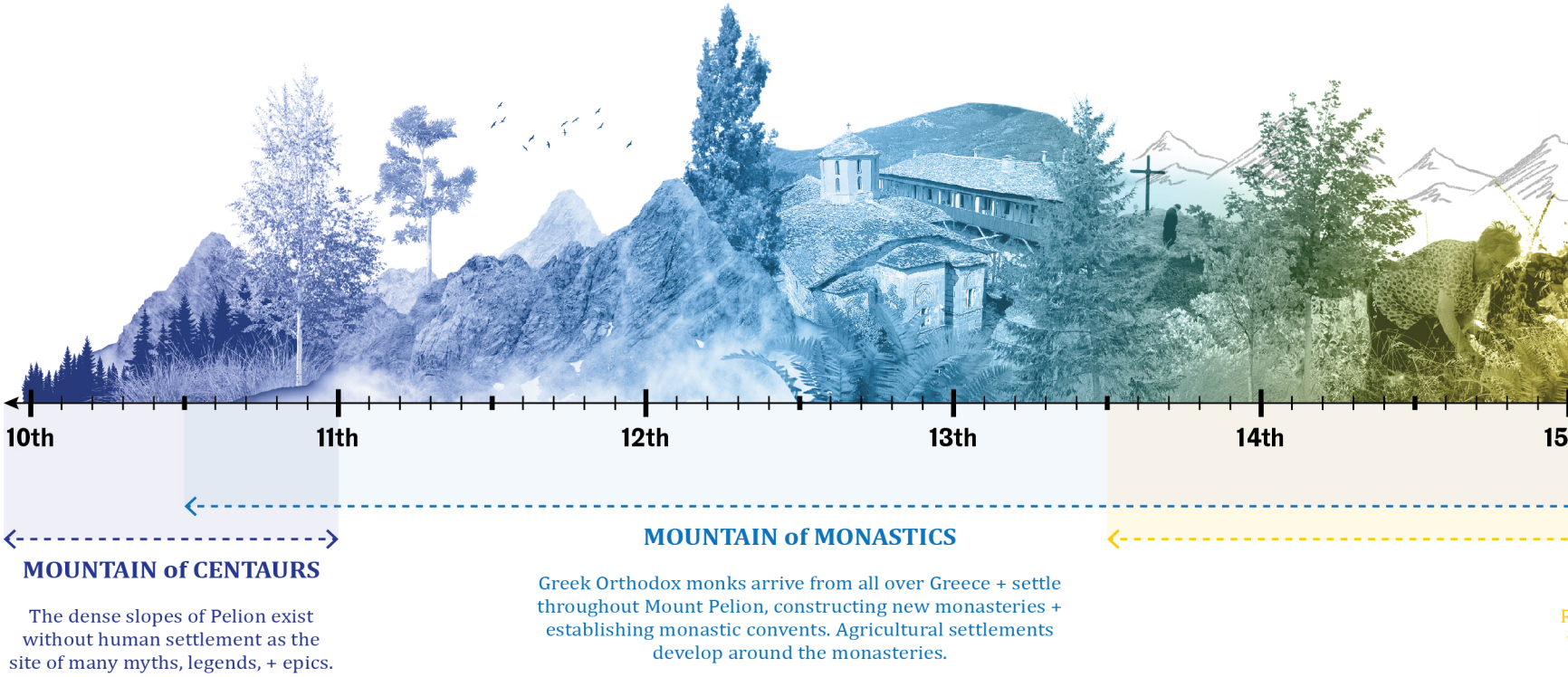
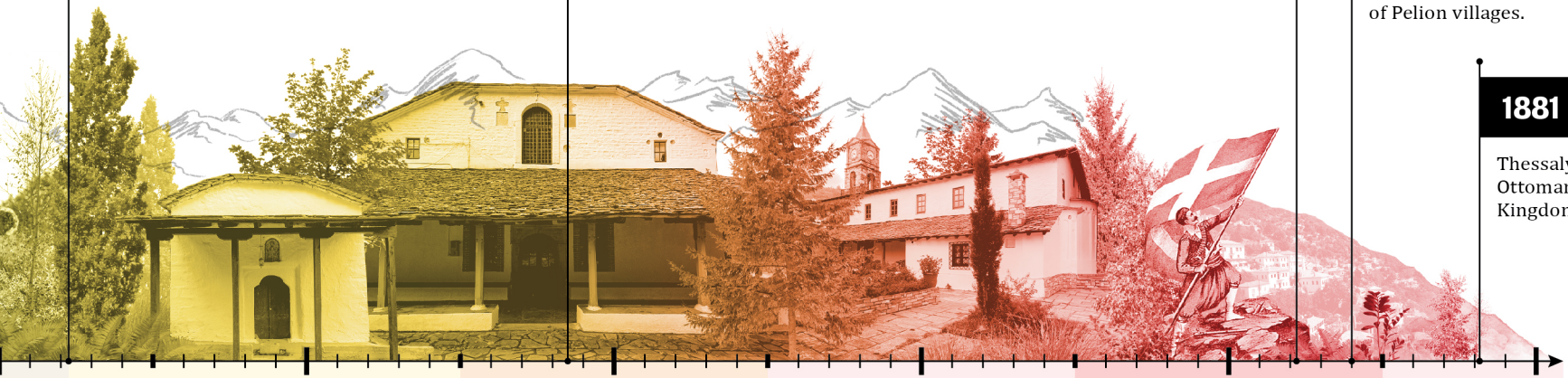


FIG 2.39 Timeline of Mount Pelion until the 20th century



1423

Decisive conquest of Thessaly by the Ottoman Empire.

end of 16th c.

Pelion's villages are divided into *vakoufia* + *hasia*.

1821

Pelion's villages join the Greek Revolution.

1840

End of *vakoufia* + *hasia*. administrative division of Pelion villages.

1881

Thessaly is liberated from Ottoman rule + joins the Kingdom of Greece.

th 16th 17th 18th 19th 20th

MOUNTAIN of REFUGE

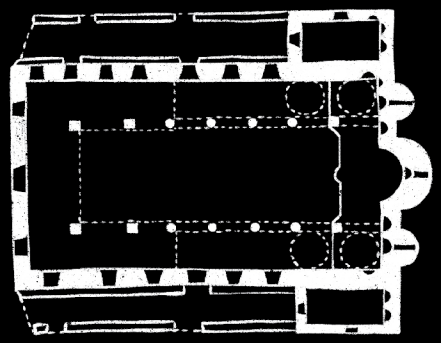
Refugee Greeks from all over Greece travel to Pelion + amalgamate with the agricultural settlements.

MOUNTAIN of VILLAGES

The steady influx of refugee Greeks leads to the expansion of Pelion's agricultural settlements into village communities.

Pelion's villages experience an economic + political flourish.

ACME!



III

PELION'S SACRED SPACES

FIG 3.1 South façade of Agia Marina Church, Kissos

FIG 3.2 North-west façade of Zoodochos Pigi Church, Vizitsa

FIG 3.3 East apse of Pammegiston Taxiarchon Church, Milies

FIG 3.4 East apses of Koimisis Tis Theotokou Church, Makrinitsa

An Epoch of Change

Throughout the period of Ottoman rule in Greece, the construction of new Greek Orthodox churches was not entirely impossible, though it was systematically discouraged. Through a convoluted acquisition of permits issued sparingly by the Ottoman authorities, it was technically possible to erect new churches "only on the site of, and no larger than, an earlier church that had been destroyed, and these permits were valid for only a very short period of time."[1] In some parts of Greece, further restrictions prohibited certain traditional architectural features, such as a visible dome, belltower, or exterior cross.[2] Additionally, the threat of seizure, conversion, looting, and general vandalism of Greek Orthodox churches at the hands of the foreign conquerors was ever-present.

In 1774, the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca signed between the Russian and Ottoman Empires marked a milestone in the decline of the Ottoman Empire following its defeat in the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774. Most significantly, article seven of this treaty ordered the constant "protection of Christian churches in the Ottoman Empire," allowing for the first time the influence of a foreign power in the fate of its Orthodox Christian subjects.[3] This new law, in combination with disintegrating state administration which rendered the enforcement of Islamic law difficult outside of the central cities, signalled the beginning of a new era of empowerment for Greek Orthodox citizens and increased liberties in the construction of their sacred places of worship, especially in the remote regions and mountain villages of Greece.[4]

Fortuitously, these political circumstances corresponded synchronically to the period of immense economic prosperity enjoyed by the villages of Pelion in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As a result, an ideal environment was formulated for villagers to engage in an explosion of church-building activities. Throughout Pelion's villages, numerous sacred spaces in the form of *exoklisia* (ξωκλίσια), *katholika* (καθολικά), and churches (εκκλησίες) were erected in devotion to the Greek Orthodox Faith, designed to serve the various spiritual, cultural, and social needs of the thriving population. The majority of Pelion's sacred spaces today originate from this late post-Byzantine period, testifying to the climate of deep religious piety and an enduring faith in God which was a powerful source of hope for the Greeks throughout these dark years of subjugation.[5]

1. Charalambos Bouras, "The Byzantine Tradition in the Church Architecture of the Balkans in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *The Byzantine Tradition after the Fall of Constantinople*, ed. John J. Yiannas (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 109-110.

2. Sir Steven Runciman, "Rum Milleti: The Orthodox Communities under the Ottoman Sultans," in *The Byzantine Tradition after the Fall of Constantinople*, ed. John J. Yiannas (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 7.

3. Charalambos Bouras, *Byzantine & Post-Byzantine Architecture in Greece* (Athens: MELISSA Publishing House, 2006), 263.

4. Bouras, "The Byzantine Tradition," 110.

5. Κώστας Λιάπης, *Πήλιο: αναδρομές, καημοί, εξομολογήσεις* (Βόλος: Γραφικές Τέχνες ΠΑΛΜΟΣ, 2010), 87.

The architecture of these abundantly emerging religious structures represents "an adherence to inherited values"[6] through the extension of classic Byzantine forms and manners, readapted and intermixed with elements of popular culture, folk art, and vernacular tectonics.[7] Most prominently, there emerged "a tendency on the part of the Church to return to ancient models – that is, to the simplicity and functionality of the Early Christian basilica," which became the archetypal architectural form for ecclesiastic edifices throughout Pelion and post-Byzantine Greece.[8]

Three Typologies

The resurgence and widespread propagation of the basilica type throughout Pelion's villages was owed to a variety of cultural, theoretical, and practical factors. For the builders active during this period – whose construction competencies were relatively rudimentary and whose top priorities concerned issues of speed and mass production – the basilica was preferred for its structural simplicity, especially in comparison to the grand designs of Greece's traditional Byzantine monuments, presenting an architecture of complex spans and curvatures requiring the expertise of specialized engineers.[9] The basilica's formal simplicity was also complimentary to the financial capabilities of Pelion's villagers, as well as to its natural environment, offering a strong, stable, and resilient frame which could withstand powerful climatic events such as windstorms, rainstorms, heavy snowfalls, or earthquakes, all commonly experienced on the mountain's vast slopes. The basilica's structural elements were well-suited to the local building materials of stone and timber available in abundance throughout Pelion's forests and valleys.[10] Finally, this type offered an atmospheric experience which visually alluded to the old, beloved monasteries of the region, while also providing an ideal spatial framework for villagers to conduct vital activities of religious worship, cultural expression, and communal gathering.[11] As an added benefit, the basilica was inconspicuous in its external form, bearing resemblance to a common residence and thus integrating discreetly within the village fabric "without attracting the attention or displeasure of the Moslems."[12]

The sacred basilicas of Pelion possess either one or three interior aisles and can be organized into three overarching typologies: the one-aisle timber-roof basilica, the one-aisle domed basilica, and the three-aisle timber-roof basilica.[13] Each of these basic types manifests throughout Pelion's villages with countless architectural variations, influenced by a range of site-specific conditions which

6. Bouras, *Byzantine & Post-Byzantine Architecture*, 264.

7. Ibid., 275.

8. Ibid., 267.

9. Ibid., 265.

10. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 89.

11. Ibid., 90.

12. Bouras, *Byzantine & Post-Byzantine Architecture*, 267.

13. Κίτσος Α. Μακρής, *Αρχιτέκτων Δήμος Ζηπανιώτης* (Αθήνα: Ανάτυπο από την «Επιθεώρηση Τέχνης», 1957), 4.

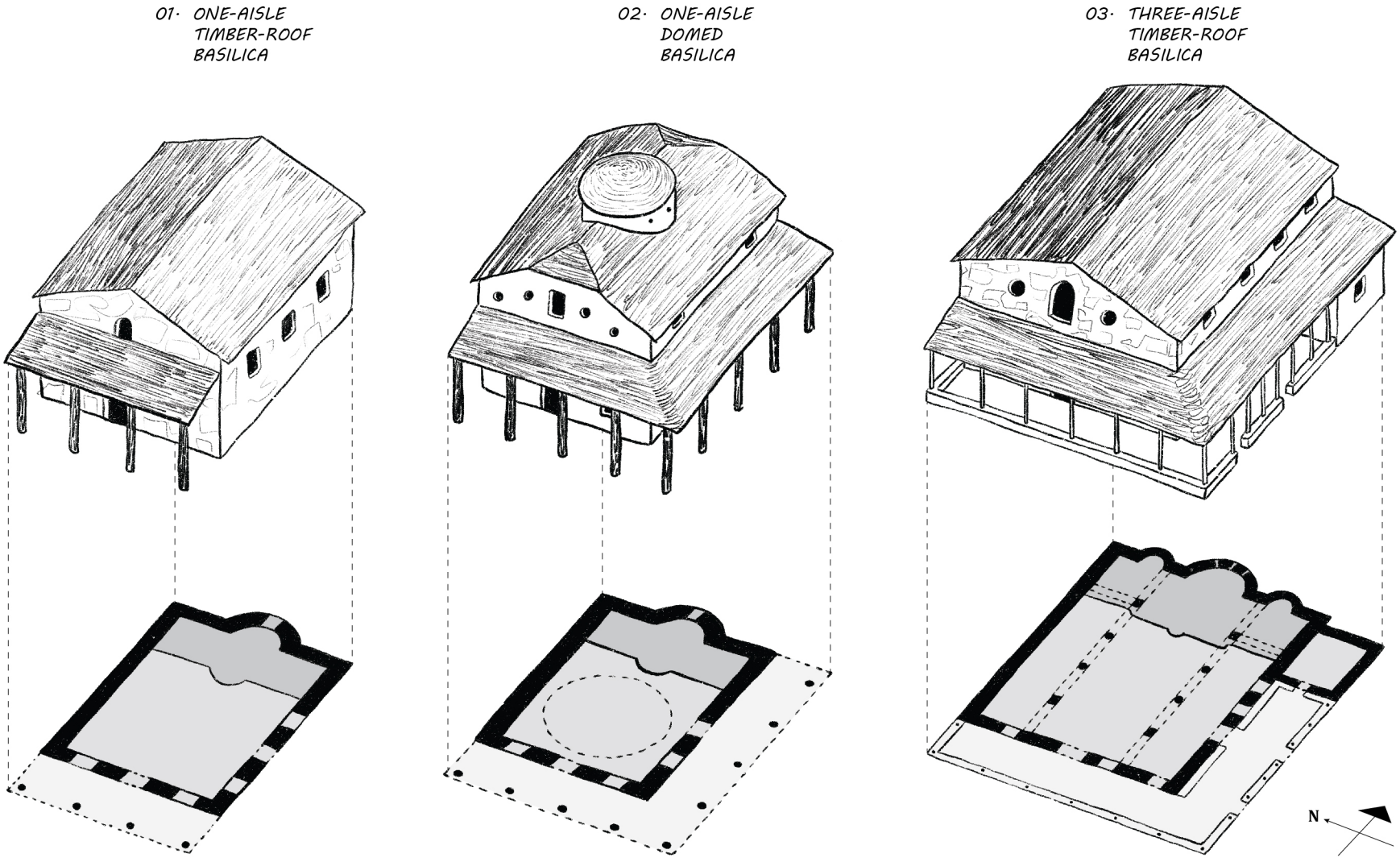


FIG 3.5 Three typologies of Pelion's sacred basilicas

include: the financial capabilities of the villagers at the time of the basilica's construction (impacting its overall dimensions and materiality); the topography and location of the site (whether it was situated atop a hill, in a flat zone, on a severe downslope, etc.); its accessibility and position within the village (defining its primary façade and entry point); and its proximity to neighbouring structures (impacting its interaction with light and wind and affecting the design of openings and placement of the exo-narthex).[14]

In addition, each of these architectural typologies corresponded to a particular programmatic type. That is, the one-aisle timber-roof basilica was the type employed for small *exoklisia*; the one-aisle domed basilica was typically employed for *katholika* of monasteries; and the three-aisle timber-roof basilica was employed for central village churches.[15] These three typological categories of sacred space each implied different patterns of use and served a unique purpose in the religious and social life of the villagers.

One-aisle timber-roof basilica (exoklisia)

The word *exoklisi* derives from a confluence of two Greek words: *exo* (έξω), meaning 'outside,' and *ekklesia* (εκκλησία), meaning 'church.' Thus, the *exoklisi* is a small religious chapel usually located on the outskirts of a village away from its central nucleus. In the villages of Pelion, these spaces were not exclusively served by a particular parish priest, nor did they operate weekly in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy service. Rather, they acted as microcosms of the Orthodox Faith numerously peppering the peripheries of the villages and supporting small gatherings or intimate acts of personal prayer and worship. Dedicated to a particular saint of the Orthodox Church, services were customarily held in an *exoklisi* on the annual name day of its respective patron saint.[16]

Humble both in construction technique and in physical dimension, the *exoklisia* of Pelion were routinely erected on the personal initiative of an individual member of the village community, though a few were commissioned by wealthy patrons.[17] The lack of involvement of master builders in their construction is verified by the complete absence of epigraphs bearing the name of an architect inscribed in the walls of any *exoklisi* of Pelion.[18]

Architecturally, all *exoklisia* are examples of the typology of the one-aisle timber-roof basilica.[19] They comprise one-room constructions with a modest iconostasis screen separating the main nave and altar. They are consistently characterized by a pitched roof covered in local schist stone, a rubble stone wall construction coated in plaster, and a rough-cut stone tile floor. On the east exterior façade, they typically possess a single protruding hemispherical apse which corresponds to the holy altar

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 92.

17. Ibid.

18. Μακρής, *Αρχιτέκτων Δήμος Ζηπανιώτης*, 28.

19. Ibid., 4.

FIG 3.6 West entrance to an *exoklisi* in Zagora

FIG 3.7 East apse of the *exoklisi* of Agios Triantaphyllos, Zagora

FIG 3.8 The *exoklisi* of Agios Ioannis Prodromos, Makrinitsa

FIG 3.9 Timber-roof of Agios Ioannis Prodromos, Makrinitsa

FIG 3.10 Iconostasis of Agios Ioannis Prodromos, Makrinitsa

FIG 3.11 Fresco of Saint John the Baptist in Agios Ioannis Prodromos, Makrinitsa

of the interior. In general, artistic decoration in *exoklisia* is minimized as a result of the lower use patterns and modest circumstances of their erection, rarely including painted iconographic frescos or intricate stone and wood engravings.[20]

One notable variation of this type is the *exoklisi* of Agios Ioannis Prodromos in the village of Makrinitsa, constructed in 1806. This one-aisle timber-roof basilica is located at the heart of the village's central *plateia* and possesses a quality of construction greatly superior to that of the majority of Pelion's *exoklisia*. Its walls exhibit an elaborate display of 'opus isodomum' masonry, complete with an exo-narthex which enwraps its west and south façades. On its east façade, there is an apse intricately decorated with engraved marble ornamentation. Its interior includes an array of skylights below the timber roof, a wall fresco of its patron saint, a wood-carved iconostasis, and a second-floor mezzanine accessible by a narrow wooden spiral staircase in the northwest corner of the nave.[21]

One-aisle domed basilica (katholika)
The one-aisle domed basilicas of Pelion typically define *katholika* of monasteries – that is, the main church building of a monastic convent, serving as the primary place of worship for the monks or nuns residing there. Architecturally, this typology resembles a hybrid of Pelion's one-aisle timber-roof *exoklisia* and three-aisle timber-roof churches. Its most distinctive element is a roof-integrated dome, following traditional Byzantine prototypes which necessarily prescribe this architectural feature as a physical expression of Christian doctrine. The dome emerges from the roof in the shape of either a half-lemon or cylindrical protrusion, or else remains invisibly inscribed beneath the pitch of the roof which swells atop it to conceal it completely.[22]

Additionally, the *katholika* of Pelion include either an interior narthex at the west façade alone, or alternatively, an exo-narthex which habitually covers both the west and south façades. The east façade includes one, or more rarely, three exterior apses protruding from the inner altar. This typology offers an open-plan interior and often includes a greater number of fresco and carving decorations than the typical, more modest *exoklisia* on its exterior apses, interior walls, and iconostasis.[23]

Three-aisle timber-roof basilica (churches)
In addition to Pelion's abundant *exoklisia* and *katholika*, the majority of sacred spaces throughout its villages are churches, or *ekklesies,* in the form of three-aisle timber-roof basilicas.[24] These structures represent the epitome of the creative church-building activities of Pelion's late post-Byzantine period, and thus merit a more thorough exploration and formal analysis.

20. Ibid., 4-5.

21. Κ. Α. Μακρής, *Η Λαϊκή Τέχνη του Πηλίου* (Αθήνα: ΜΕΛΙΣΣΑ, 1976), 60-61.

22. Μακρής, *Αρχιτέκτων Δήμος Ζηπανιώτης*, 7.

23. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 91-92.

24. Μακρής, *Αρχιτέκτων Δήμος Ζηπανιώτης*, 5.

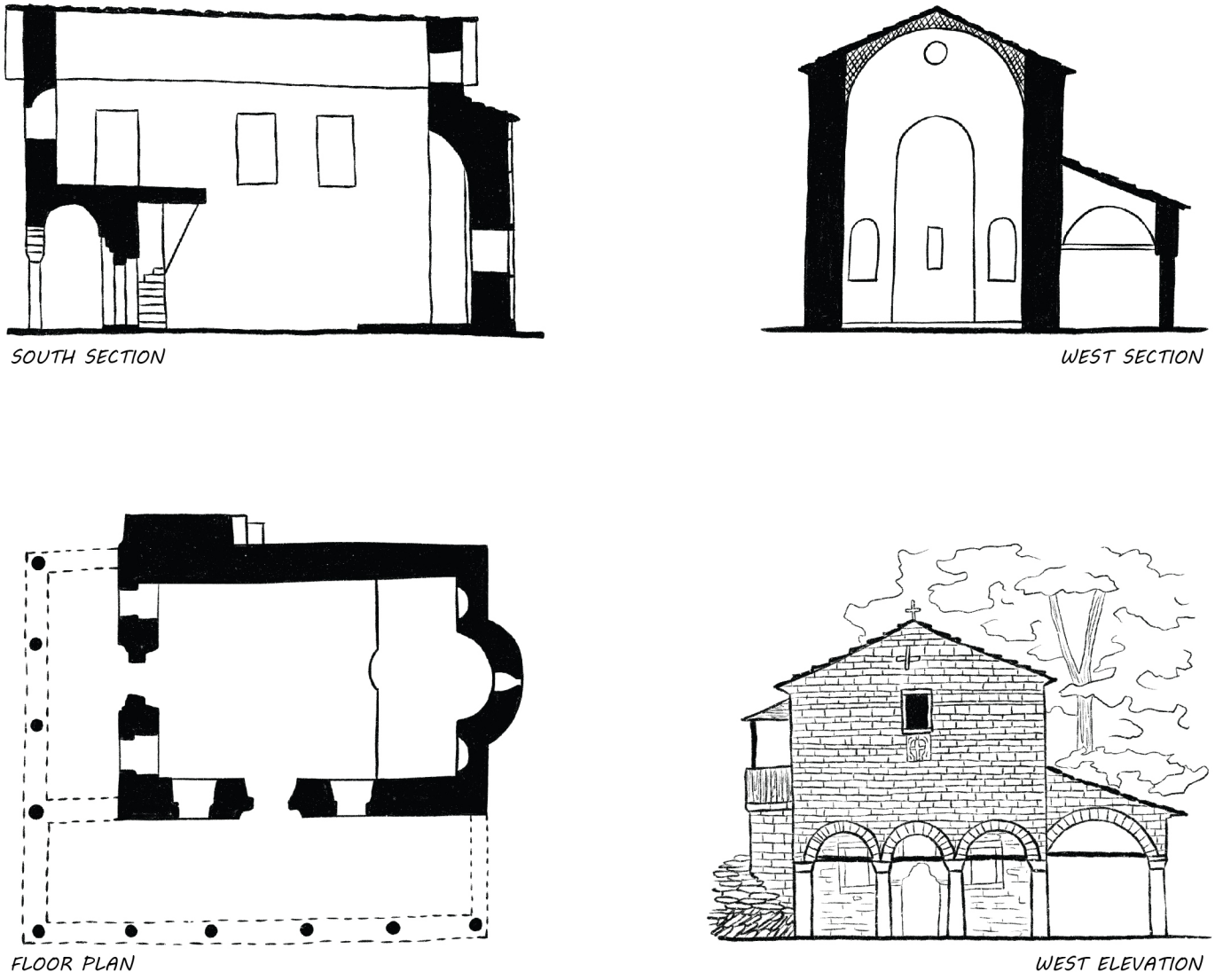
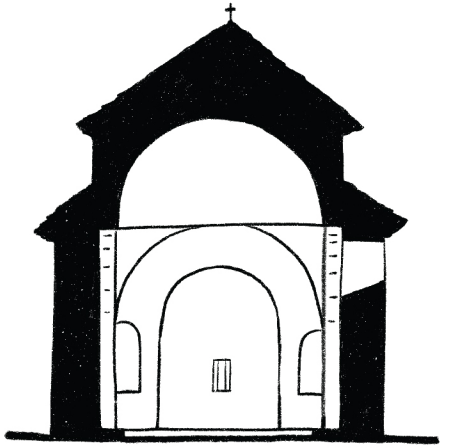
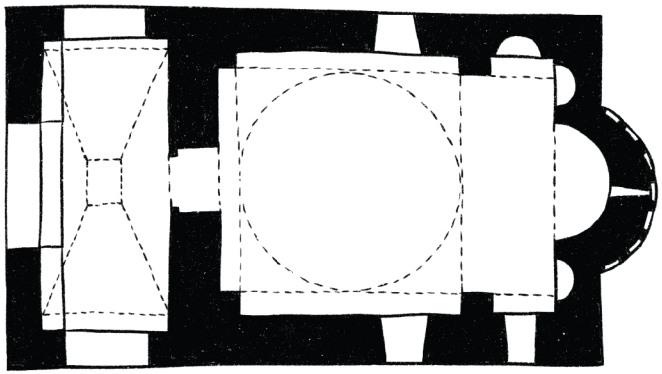


FIG 3.12 Orthographic drawings of the one-aisled timber-roof basilica, Agios Ioannis Prodromos in Makrinitsa

SOUTH SECTION



WEST SECTION



FLOOR PLAN

WEST ELEVATION

FIG 3.13 Orthographic drawings of the one-aisled domed basilica, Agios Athanasios in Lavkos

The Zagorian Patriarch

Instrumental in the promotion and propagation of the three-aisle timber-roof basilica type throughout Pelion, as well as in the general development of the social and spiritual life of the villagers residing there, was Ecumenical Patriarch Kallinikos III.[25]

Born in the village of Zagora in 1713 to a wealthy family of merchants, Kallinikos received his early education under the instruction of monks teaching in the elementary Greek schools of Zagora and was sent to Constantinople at the age of fifteen to pursue advanced studies. For twelve years, he received personal mentorship from wise clerical figures and quickly rose through the ranks of the Church as a result of his keen erudition and ability.[26] In 1757, he ascended to the patriarchal throne of Constantinople, but only served in this position for seven months due to internal disputes within the Church which he was unable to subdue. In July of the same year, Kallinikos was expelled from the patriarchal throne and exiled to the Holy Monastery of Sinai in Egypt.[27]

Here he remained for three years and three months, devoting much of his time to reading and reproducing ecclesiastic books in the monastery's library, authoring theological texts, and writing letters of counsel to friends and family.[28] In 1761, Kallinikos gathered his abundant writings and books, departed the monastery, and commenced the long journey back to Constantinople. In 1762, he was officially pardoned by the Holy Synod and granted permission by the reigning patriarch to return to his homeland of Zagora, where he arrived later that same year at the age of forty-nine following an absence of thirty-four years.[29]

In Zagora, Kallinikos was greeted with great affection and respect from his compatriots, as noted in his personal journals which survive to this day. Until his death in 1792, he remained in Zagora and devoted all of his energies to the spiritual, educational, political, and social development of his people.[30] He served as an active teacher and clergyman in the churches of Zagora and instructed the congregation about their Greek Orthodox Faith. In addition to his instrumental role in the establishment of Zagora's library and *ellinomouseio*, Kallinikos also became deeply immersed in church-building activities throughout Zagora and other villages of Pelion.[31] Having read many theological texts about the doctrines of Orthodox ecclesiastic architecture and iconography, he was a rare and invaluable source of knowledge for the largely uneducated population of Pelion, ensuring the right propagation of Orthodox Tradition through an adapted post-Byzantine style of architecture suitable to the economic and topographical capabilities of Pelion's villagers. With his own personal

25. Ibid., 23.

26. Νίκος Διαμαντάκος, *Ζαγοριανοί Ιεραρχές και Άλλοι Κληρικοί* (Βόλος: Πολιτιστικός και Αθλητικός Οργανισμός Δήμου Ζαγοράς, 2007), 11.

27. Ibid., 13.

28. Ibid., 14.

29. Ibid., 14-15.

30. Ibid., 17.

31. Μακρής, *Αρχιτέκτων Δήμος Ζηπανιώτης*, 25.

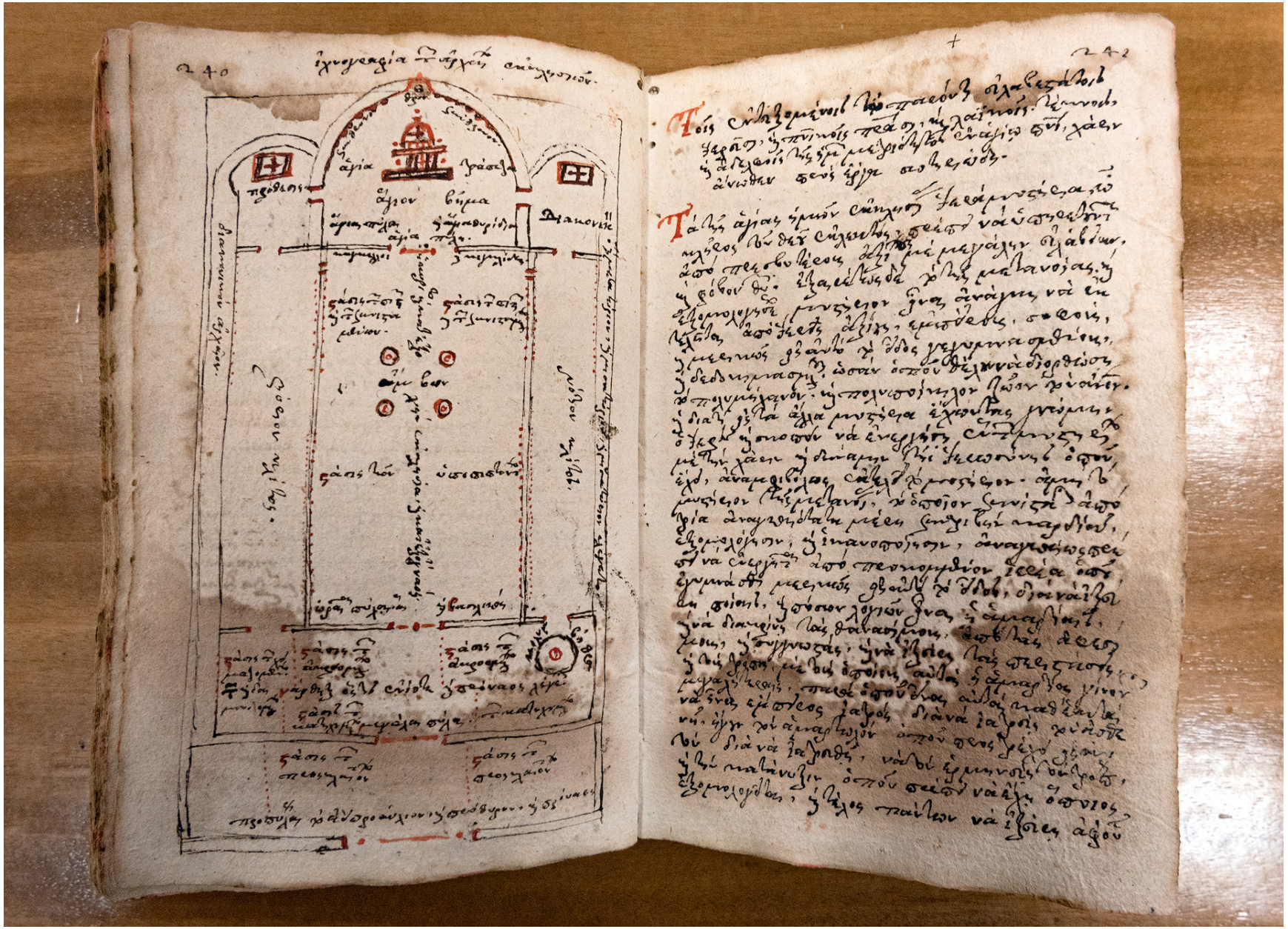


FIG 3.15 Manuscript of Ecumenical Patriarch Kallinikos III depicting a plan view of the ancient three-aisle basilica church

funds, he adorned these churches with icons, holy books, and priestly vestments and actively reached out to expatriates of the Greek diaspora encouraging them to do the same.[32]

Passionate in his initiatives throughout Pelion, Kallinikos declined offers from the Holy Synod to return to the patriarchate and assume the patriarchal throne on three separate occasions, opting instead to support the faith, scholarship, and patriotism of his homeland.[33] For his zealous efforts and accomplishments, Patriarch Kallinikos has been regarded by scholars and theologians alike as "an enlightened, patriotic, scholarly, and wise archpriest" and "the foremost founder of the Greek enlightenment in Pelion and in pre-revolution Greece."[34] One of his greatest triumphs is manifest through Agios Georgios Church in Zagora, constructed in 1765 under his detailed attention and instruction, which represents an ideal specimen of the three-aisle timber-roof basilica typology with harmonious proportions and masterful artistic ornamentation.[35]

Kallinikos' interest in this typology is best demonstrated through a particular sketch in one of his personal manuscripts which he authored during his time at Sinai. The sketch is a copy of an earlier illustration completed by Patriarch Chrysanthos Notaras of Jerusalem half a century prior.[36] It features a plan view of a theoretical three-aisle three-apse basilica, with each interior section of the church carefully labelled. The sketch also possesses a didactic quality, utilizing the model of the Roman basilica as a framework for informing the clergy and laity of their physical place within the church according to the ancient tradition.[37] A second plan-view sketch of the church of Sinai found in Kallinikos' manuscripts further corroborates his fascination with this architectural typology.[38]

Kallinikos' sketches constitute an effort to study the basilica typology and recommend it, perhaps not only throughout Pelion, but anywhere else in Greece where it was difficult to construct the complex churches of the traditional Byzantine rhythm.[39] Following the erection of his prototypical church of Agios Georgios in Zagora, the three-aisle timber-roof basilica typology became widely propagated throughout Pelion's villages. The passionate and attentive efforts of the Zagorian Patriarch Kallinikos III thus set the foundations for the ensuing ecclesiastic landscape which characterizes the entirety of Mount Pelion to this day.

32. Διαμαντάκος, *Ζαγοριανοί Ιεραρχές*, 17-18.

33. Ibid., 19.

34. Ibid., 20.

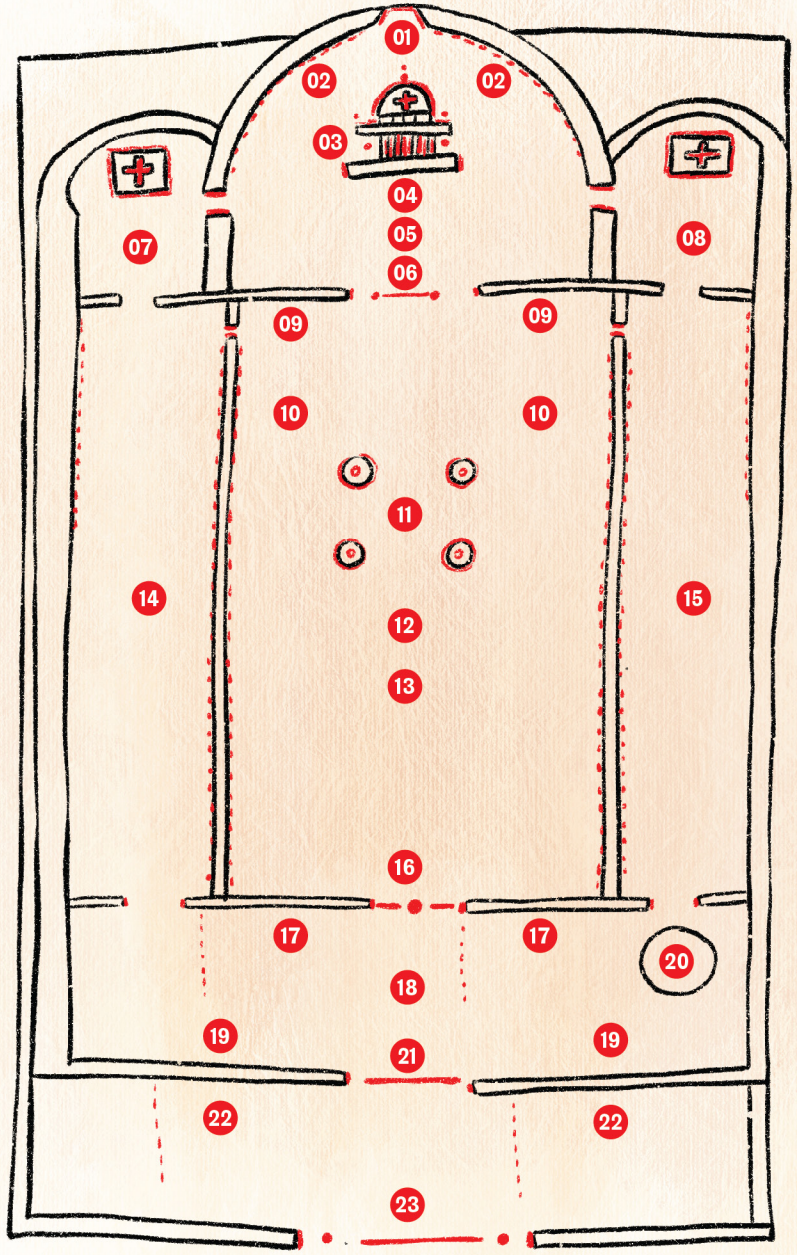
35. Bouras, *Byzantine & Post-Byzantine Architecture*, 287.

36. Χαράλαμπος Θ. Μπούρας, "Ὁ ἀρχιτεκτονικός τύπος της βασιλικής κατά τήν Τουρκοκρατία και ὁ Πατριάρχης Καλλίνικος," in *Εκκλησίες στήν Ελλάδα μετά τήν Άλωση*, ed. Χαράλαμπος Θ. Μπούρας (Αθήνα: Εθνικό Μετσόβιο Πολθτεχνείο, 1979), 168.

37. Ibid., 162.

38. Ibid., 160.

39. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 90.



01· bishop's throne
(θρόνος)

02· clergy's bench
(σύνθρονον)

03· holy table
(αγία τράπεζα)

04· holy bema
(άγιον βήμα)

05· holy doors or holy alcove
(αγία πύλαι ή άγια θυρίδια)

06· holy door
(αγία πύλη)

07· prothesis
(πρόθεσις)

08· diaconicon
(διακονικόν)

09· rails
(κιγκλίδες)

10· place of the faithful
(στάσις των πιστών και των συνισταμένων)

11· pulpit
(άμβων)

12· main church or nave
(κυρία εκκλησία ή ναός)

13· place of the kneelers
(στάσις των υποπιπτόντων)

14· north aisle
(βόρειον κλίτος)

15· south aisle
(νότιον κλίτος)

16· beautiful door
(ωραία πύλη)

17· place of the listeners
(στάσις των ακροωμένων)

18· narthex
(νάρθηξ, πρόναος λέγεται)

19· place of the sinners, possessed, restless
(στάσις των χειμαζομένων, δαιμονιζομένων, και ενεργουμένων)

20· baptismal font
(κολυμβήθρα)

21· large doors
(μεγάλαι πύλαι)

22· place of the weepers
(στάσις των προσκλαιόντων)

23· propylaea
(προπύλαιον, πρόναος λέγεται)

FIG 3.15 Replica of Kallinikos' sketch of an ancient three-aisle basilica church with English translations

The ‘Pelioritiki’ Ekklesia

Perhaps the most influential factor impelling the widespread success of the three-aisle timber-roof basilica was its ability to satisfy, with its architectural form, the diverse needs of the entire congregation, promoting a deep spirit of collective identity which had become an essential defining feature of the close-knit village communities of Pelion.[40] These structures were spacious enough to support the large congregations of villagers – ever-growing from the steady influx of refugee Greeks to the mountains – and seamlessly framed both the religious and social spheres of village life.[41] The three-aisle timber-roof basilicas of Pelion are typically located in the centre of a village, often in its *plateia*, operating as village churches served by a respective parish priest and celebrating religious services on a regular basis.

From the exterior, the churches of Pelion resemble upscaled *exoklisia*, with a pitched roof that conceals all three inner aisles, thus disguising their interior nature. Tectonically, they exist in harmony with their natural environment, constructed and clad in materials directly extracted from the surrounding landscape.[42] Their basic wall assembly incorporates locally-quarried stone masonry; exposed wood beams and columns are fashioned from the chestnut, oak, beech, or cypress trees of the adjacent forests; columns and engravings utilize local marble from north Pelion; slate and pebble floors feature stones extracted from local rivers; schist rooftiles

40. Bouras, *Byzantine & Post-Byzantine Architecture*, 265.

41. Ibid., 267.

42. Μακρής, *Αρχιτέκτων Δήμος Ζηπανιώτης*, 27.

FIG 3.16 North façade of Metamorphosis Church, Makrinitsa

FIG 3.17 North-east view of Metamorphosis Church, Makrinitsa

FIG 3.18 West façade of Metamorphosis Church, Makrinitsa

FIG 3.19 North portico of Metamorphosis Church, Makrinitsa

FIG 3.20 South portico of Metamorphosis Church, Makrinitsa

FIG 3.21 South façade of Metamorphosis Church, Makrinitsa

FIG 3.22 Schist roof tiles of Panagia Church, Zagora

are retrieved from quarries in the villages of Propan and Neochori. These simple tectonics firmly situate the churches of Pelion within their environment and afford them an inextricably regional vernacular character.[43] Thus, in their inherent existence, they represent a full participation of the natural landscape transformed by the skill and vision of human hands and mind.

Additionally, the physical scale of the churches – their dimensions and geometry – emulate that of their natural surroundings. The complete use of natural materials allows them to blend chromatically into the landscape, aging in tandem with the elements. With time, the schist rooftiles have adopted a light greyish tone, interspersed with specks of grey-green moss; wood elements have darkened from rain and snow to better match the tonal values of the stone; swaths of white plaster have lost their stark intensity, fading more discreetly into the stone-dominated landscape.[44] Like the grand edifices of Byzantium, every architectural element of Pelion's churches expresses its structural role, conveying a sense of formal simplicity and clarity. Loads are distributed directly from element to element in a rhythm that is immediately understood by the visual observer without superfluous architectural additions.[45]

The three-part spatial configuration of narthex, nave, and sanctuary established in Byzantine prototypes is maintained in the composition of Pelion's churches. On their west façade, they characteristically feature an exo-narthex often extending around the north and south façades and terminating at the protruding volumes of side chapels integrated within the east-facing holy altar. These exo-narthexes act as porticos shielded from the elements by a sub-roof supported on its free-end by a colonnade, functioning as important spaces of gathering and social intercourse for villagers.[46] The east-façade of all churches is dominated by three apses, the centre of which is larger than the adjacent two. These are often clad in marble and elaborately decorated with marble engravings of various sacred and secular themes.[47]

An eclectic and diachronic character is afforded to Pelion's churches by a routine incorporation of spolia into their façades, apses, and other architectural elements including columns, beams, and lintels.[48] This architectural custom originated from old Byzantine building practices which favoured the reuse of derelict stone details, sculptures, and other fragmented elements into new constructions as visual evidence of a glorious past.[49] In the case of Pelion's churches, the integration of spolia presented a two-fold benefit. First,

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid., 27.

45. Ibid.

46. Bouras, *Byzantine & Post-Byzantine Architecture*, 267.

47. Μακρής, *Αρχιτέκτων Δήμος Ζηπανιώτης*, 6.

48. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 85.

49. Ludovico V. Geymonat, "The Syntax of Spolia in Byzantine Thessalonike," in *Approaches to Byzantine Architecture and its Decoration: Studies in Honor of Slobodan Ćurčić*, ed. Mark J. Johnson, Robert Ousterhout, and Amy Papalexandrou (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012), 230.

it was convenient in an environment characterized by wilderness and isolation, where structural elements had to be individually harvested and laboriously manufactured from the harsh surrounding landscape. As many churches erected throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century were reconstructions of previous edifices which had been either intentionally demolished by adversaries or ravaged by nature and time, the amount of building fragments available for reuse as spolia was abundant and opportune. Secondly, the visual presence of spolia conveyed a sense of history and deep-rooted culture for the villagers residing there, alluding to a distant past which was, for them, a great source of familiarity, heritage, and pride.[50] The majority of spolia in Pelion's churches dates back to the monastic period between the tenth and fourteenth centuries, though some fragments are much older, originating from the early Christian and late Byzantine period.[51] In the village of Makrinitsa, Koimisis Tis Theotokou Church exhibits an impressive collection of wall-integrated spolia primarily salvaged and recycled from its earlier monastery of the Middle Ages which was destroyed by fire, preserving the memory of this preceding structure and fusing it into its successive form.[52]

One distinctive feature of Pelion's churches is an emphatic step-down which separates their interior and exterior thresholds. Contrary to the churches of Byzantium which were characteristically raised into the air by a staircase leading to their primary entrances, the recession into the ground is a symbol of the churches' post-Byzantine chronology, revealing a requirement imposed by the Ottoman authorities as an exercise of their power and domination over the *rayahs*. Within the nave, three aisles are divided by a colonnade comprised of two, three, or four columns, connected at their capitals by arches. The columns themselves are constructed of local marble, or else fashioned using the trunk of a single tree, usually cypress.[53] As a rule, the ceiling of the centre aisle is slightly taller than the two adjacent, featuring either a flat finish decorated with wood carvings, or a slightly arched finish coated in plaster. In some cases, small domes are embedded into the ceiling, obscured on the outside by the slanted planes of the exterior roof and thus legible only from within the space.[54]

In general, the interiors of Pelion's churches extend the Byzantine custom of sparse natural illumination with few light wells of minimal size. Fresco iconography, if present, is expressed in a subdued colour palette, and the soaring height of the iconostases further contributes to the sense of darkness within the space. This characteristic is attributed to a desire for privacy, austerity, and retreat, as well as "an expression of the climate of mysticism inherited from the theological movements of the Palaeologan era."[55] Additionally, the

50. Bouras, "The Byzantine Tradition," 116.

51. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 87.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., 93.

54. Μακρής, *Αρχιτέκτων Δήμος Ζηπανιώτης*, 5-6.

55. Bouras, "The Byzantine Tradition," 117.

FIG 3.23 Interior view of Pammegiston Taxiarchon Church, Milies

FIG 3.24 South-east view of Agia Kiriaki Church, Zagora

FIG 3.25 Central apse on the east façade of Agia Kiriaki Church, Zagora

lack of natural daylight strengthens the ambient effect of candlelight within the church, which is the primary illuminator of the space, constructing an atmosphere of warm, flickering luminosity which interacts with the iconography and metallic tectonics of the interior elements, creating the same sensory, fragrant, and dynamic experience that was integral to the Byzantine Tradition of worship.

The position of the faithful within Pelion's church was traditionally prescribed, following ancient customs. An integrated row of pews reserved for women worshippers (γυναικωνίτης) ran in a 'pi' shape along the west, north, and south walls, often separated from the male section by a kinetic screen.[56] The general placement of worshippers within the three-aisle basilica church is revealed in an old, familiar nursery rhyme which originated in Pelion in post-Byzantine times, transmitted by oral tradition to this day. An English translation is provided below:

Builder, master builder, and first of all the builders
You who came from Ioannina to build churches
Make them great, tall, in twos, in threes
To the left will be Panagia with all the girls
To the right will be Christ with all the young men
In the middle will be the Cross, where the elderly stand

Μάστορα, πρωτομάστορα και πρώτε στούς μαστόρους
Πούρθες από τά Γιάννενα νά χτίσεις εκκλησία
Κάν'την τρανή, κάν'την ψηλή, κάν'την στά δυό, στά τρία
Ζερβά νά είν'ή Παναγιά μέ όλα τά κορίτσια
Δεξιά νά είναι ο Χριστός μ'όλα τά παλληκάρια
Στή μέση νάναι ο Σταυρός, νά στέκουν οί Γερόντοι[57]

Extending from a long-standing religious and social custom originating in Byzantium, Pelion's churches were founded by wealthy patrons of the region – either aristocrats, church officials, or individual members of the congregation – who commissioned their construction and funded their decoration. These acts of patronage "were commemorated by founders' inscriptions carved or painted above the entrances of churches."[58] Such physical inscriptions or epigraphs carved in stone and embedded into the wall cladding of the churches were also employed to denote the name of the particular architect who erected them, creating a traceable record of the craftsmen active in this region at the time.

The Travelling Craftsmen

Based on the epigraphs of Pelion's churches, written testimony, and oral tradition, the identity of the craftsmen who constructed the three-aisle timber-roof basilicas of the region is known. These characters were Greeks from Epirus and Macedonia, skilled in the art of construction, who travelled to Pelion in groups of about forty men led by a master craftsman, or architect.[59] They constructed both sacred and secular architectural works

56. Μακρής, *Αρχιτέκτων Δήμος Ζηπανιώτης*, 6.

57. Ibid.

58. Bouras, "The Byzantine Tradition," 109.

59. Ibid., 160.

FIG 3.26 Derelict *archontiko* mansion in Makrinitsa

FIG 3.27 Derelict *archontiko* mansion in Zagora

– *archontika*, bridges, fountains, and churches alike – and are infamously known as the chief contractors in the building boom of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, shaping the built environment of settlements throughout Thessaly, Mount Athos, Peloponnese, and even the islands of the Aegean.[60] The craftsmen of Epirus and Macedonia represented the epitome of Greece's construction expertise at the time, working far and wide until local inhabitants had acquired the necessary knowledge and contracting ability to take on their own building construction projects.[61]

Most craftsmen working throughout Pelion originated from the village of Zoupani in Epirus.[62] The majority of them possessed synonymous surnames derived from their native village, thus complicating the task of distinguishing between them.[63] Among these master builders, the best-known personality is Demos Zipaniotis, who actively constructed an abundance of churches throughout Pelion's villages between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Notable examples of three-aisle timber-roof basilica churches known to be constructed by the architect Demos Zipaniotis include Agios Athanasios in the village of Agios Georgios (1795), Agios Athanasios in the village of Lavkos (1795), Agios Ioannis Prodromou in the village of Siki (1795), and Agia Paraskevi in the village of Zagora (1803).[64] In the east façade of the latter church, just above the central apse, a stone-carved figurehead of the architect is subtly embedded into the wall, gazing out towards the ocean beyond.[65]

Though regarded as an architect, the creative agency, as well as the technical training, of figures such as Demos Zipaniotis was less specialized than the title suggests. They were in fact master craftsmen, skilled in the art of construction, who followed a more prescribed methodology of building which was adopted and repeated at a mass scale throughout the region. The work of the architects during this period does not embody an individualized sense of personal expression; rather, it represents a collective body of architecture that reflects a shared and stable culture, tradition, and geographical region.[66]

While the majority of contractors working throughout Pelion's villages were equally active in both sacred and secular building projects – thus invoking a strong architectural coherency of structure, technique, and materiality between these two programs – the architect himself, Demos Zipaniotis, is only known to have worked on churches.[67] His role for the erection of Pelion's churches was limited to their structural

60. Ibid.

61. Ρέα Λεωνιδοπούλου-Στυλιανού, *Πήλιο: Ελληνική Παραδοσιακή Αρχιτεκτονική* (Αθήνα: ΜΕΛΙΣΣΑ, 1992), 84.

62. Bouras, *Byzantine & Post-Byzantine Architecture*, 284.

63. Λεωνιδοπούλου-Στυλιανού, *Πήλιο*, 84.

64. Μακρής, *Αρχιτέκτων Δήμος Ζηπανιώτης*, 15-23.

65. Ibid., 3.

66. Ibid., 4.

67. Ibid.

FIG 3.28 Donkey transporting construction materials up a cobblestone road (*kalderimi*) in Makrinitsa

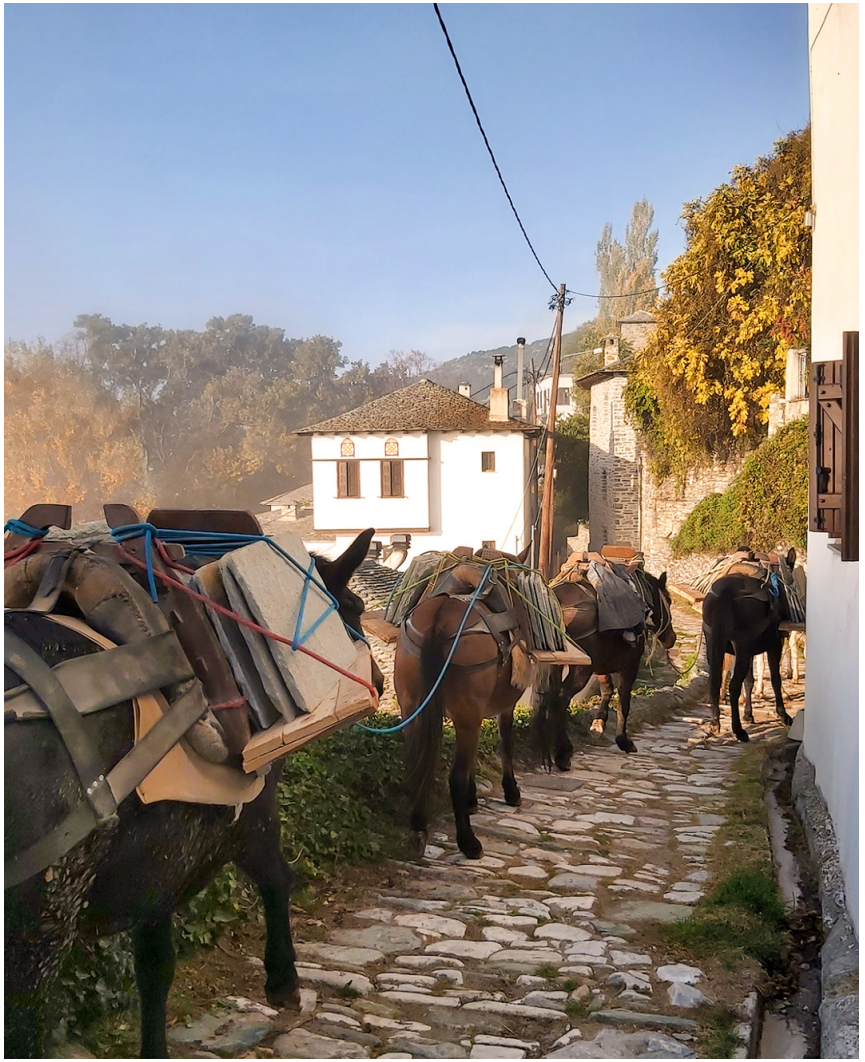


FIG 3.29 Donkeys transporting construction materials up a cobblestone road (*kalderimi*) in Makrinitsa

skeleton – that is, their architectural frame alone – with interior embellishments added subsequently by other specialized artisans.[68] His churches are distinguished by epigraphs bearing his name along with the year of their erection, carved by the sculptor Milios Zoupaniotis who also hailed from Epirus. From close analysis of the various epigraphs, it can be deduced that Demos Zipaniotis worked on Pelion for a period of ten years.[69] The churches themselves were typically constructed in a period of a few months.[70] The construction work of Demos Zipaniotis exhibits an impressive degree of quality, stability, and clean craftsmanship in details such as arches, domes, and corner joinery. In a series of earthquakes which devastated the region in the year 1955, not a single one of his churches was demolished or irreparably damaged.[71]

Each individual construction project was undertaken via a contract outlining the terms and scope of work. In this, the architect signed his name declaring responsibility for the entire building venture. Terms of payment were outlined, as well as key dates for the initiation and completion of the project.[72] To transport building materials, donkeys were used to scale the steep topography of the mountains. The craftsmen constructed cobblestone roads for them to follow, called *kalderimia*, which survive to this day and constitute the primary circulation arteries of the villages.[73]

As a customary ritual in the construction of secular houses or bridges throughout Pelion, an animal was sacrificed, its blood shed on the foundations of the newly erected structure. In the case of churches, a makeshift wooden cross was fastened to the roof of the church alongside either a crown or bouquet of fresh flowers as a prayer to God requesting protection, good fortune, and abundant blessings for years to come.[74]

In the mid to late nineteenth century, local architects emerged throughout Pelion, assuming the role of the Epirote and Macedonian craftsmen of previous years in the construction of Pelion's sacred and secular architectural works. At this point, however, the building boom of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had subsided, mainly as a result of increased political tensions and simmering revolutionary activities. Examples of local master builders active during this time are Georgios from the village of Drakeia, who constructed the cell of Panagia on the small island of Trikeri, and the brothers G. and P. Kosmades from the village Milies, who constructed the School of Vizitsa in 1865 together with the architect Z. Gerasis.[75]

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid., 14.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid., 30.

72. Ibid., 9.

73. Ibid., 11.

74. Ibid., 12.

75. Ibid., 10.

Laïki Techne

For the three-aisle timber-roof basilica churches of Pelion, interior and exterior decoration was an essential component intwined with their religious character, as was the case for the Byzantine monuments of centuries prior. Once the craftsmen had erected a church's architectural frame, specialized artisans were subsequently invited to paint, sculpt, engrave, gild, sow, and adorn it with pious works of ecclesiastic artistry. Beginning in the eighteenth century and onwards, there was, in the sphere of ecclesiastic art and architecture, "a tendency towards renewal and a wider involvement of the popular elements of the arts and culture in general."[76] Thus, the churches of Pelion at first glance possess an undeniably "eclectic character"[77] with regards to their aesthetic dimension.

There are certain identifiable differences between the Byzantine and post-Byzantine rhythms of ecclesiastic decoration. This is primarily a result of the practical capabilities of the artisans working at the time, who were influenced by a more restricted cultural, political, and intellectual environment, and were less likely to be formally educated in matters of Greek Orthodox theology or the doctrines of spiritual art. Nevertheless, this loose, instinctive adherence to inherited Byzantine values allowed for a new, innovative language of ecclesiastic decoration to emerge throughout Pelion inspired by the aesthetics of folk art, or *laïki techne* (λαϊκή τέχνη), and thus possessing a unique, regional character.[78] In the years of economic prosperity and increased contact with Western Europe, the works of ecclesiastic art produced throughout Pelion also incorporated adopted styles of the European baroque and rococo, with elaborate, dynamic forms and playful manipulations of light and shadow.[79]

Often piously produced by anonymous artists, a plethora of traditional expressive artforms can be abundantly observed in the churches of Pelion, manifesting through various art mediums including painting, engraving, wood-carving, weaving, metalworking, and more.[80] The philosophy, technique, and aesthetics of some of these mediums will be analyzed in further detail below.

Post-Byzantine iconography

In contrast to the churches of Byzantine Greece which incorporated an established iconographic cycle seamlessly mapped to the traditional spatial features of their architecture, the appearance of iconography on the interior walls of Pelion's post-Byzantine churches was a more challenging, and therefore less commonplace, phenomenon. In addition, the inherent absence of typical spatial elements such as a central dome, pendentives, or inner narthex in the architecture of the basilica posed a disruption to the traditional iconographic cycle of Byzantine times. Largely due to the lack of trained

76. Bouras, *Byzantine & Post-Byzantine Architecture*, 263.

77. Ibid., 281.

78. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 33.

79. Bouras, *Byzantine & Post-Byzantine Architecture*, 268.

80. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 33.

FIG 3.30 Iconostasis in Pammegiston Taxiarchon Church, Milies

FIG 3.31 Frescoes in the narthex of Pammegiston Taxiarchon Church, Milies

FIG 3.32 View from the nave to the narthex in Pammegiston Taxiarchon Church, Milies

FIG 3.33 Ceiling and fresco iconography in Pammegiston Taxiarchon Church, Milies

iconographers throughout Pelion, there was, in general, a decline in the tradition of Byzantine iconographic fresco painting, and an increased dependency on the use of portable icons and other forms of artistic craft to adorn the interior of the basilica churches.[81]

In both style and theme, the iconography of Pelion assumed a noticeably more ethnographic character than traditional Byzantine iconography.[82] Forms were more humanistic and subject to the individualized interpretation of the artist. As opposed to specialized iconographers, most artists working throughout Pelion were painters by trade whose work was not exclusively limited to spiritual themes, but folk art as well. In some cases, Western painting techniques influenced the iconography of Pelion's churches, as in, for example, Agios Ioannis Church in the village of Vizitsa, decorated by the local painter Konstantinos Miliotis in the late eighteenth century, in which the appearance of clouds, cherubic angels, and physical perspective exhibits strong Italian undertones.[83] In other cases, the iconography is true to Byzantine Tradition, presenting profound similarities to the styles practiced on Mount Athos, as in Pammegiston Taxiarchon Church in Milies, whose anonymous iconographer is believed to have originated from the Holy Mountain.[84]

While some basilica churches of Pelion present a very full and rich display of fresco iconography – including Agia Marina Church in the village of Kissos, Agios Dimitrios in the village of Neochori, and Pammegiston Taxiarchon in the village of Milies – others are completely devoid of iconographic fresco decoration.[85] In the latter cases, panel icons are abundant, and there is typically an increased emphasis on wood-carved or stone-carved details.

Ecclesiastic wood-carving

Throughout post-Byzantine Greece, the art of wood-carving flourished as a vital method of ecclesiastic decoration. In Epirus, artisans mastered the craft and subsequently transmitted it to Pelion, where it encountered local artistic styles and adopted a traditional regional character.[86]

The tradition of ecclesiastic wood-carving originates from Byzantine times, dominant in details such as doors, iconostases, bishop's thrones, pulpits, and other liturgical objects and furnishings. Due to the inherent material decay of wood, this technique was less favourable compared to stone-carving and metalworking which were also prominent throughout Byzantium. However, the great abundance of forests throughout Pelion, and especially walnut trees, inspired a renewed partiality for the art of wood-carving in post-Byzantine times.[87]

81. Bouras, *Byzantine & Post-Byzantine Architecture*, 267.

82. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 94.

83. Μακρής, *Η Λαϊκή Τέχνη*, 147.

84. Νικόλαος Αθ. Παπαθεοδόρου, *Ο Ναός των Ταχιαρχών στις Μηλιές του Πηλίου* (Μηλιές: Ιερός Ναός Παμμεγίστων Ταξιαρχών Μηλεών Πηλίου, 2016), 89.

85. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 94.

86. Μακρής, *Η Λαϊκή Τέχνη*, 93.

87. Ibid.

The churches of Pelion in particular are revelled for their impressively tall, intricately wood-carved iconostases, chromatically invigorated by painted or gold-gilded details.[88] The phenomenon of the towering, ceiling-height iconostasis originated in the Russian Orthodox Church and was popularized in regions of post-Byzantine Greece largely as an alternative to the increasing lack of fresco iconography which was more difficult to incorporate. In addition to the iconostasis, the wooden pulpits and bishop's thrones of Pelion's churches are also generously carved, as in the churches of Agia Marina in the village of Kissos, Agios Georgios and Agia Paraskevi in the village of Zagora, and Pammegiston Taxiarchon in the village of Milies, to name a few.[89] On Pelion, the oldest known wood-carved iconostasis is located in the church of Agios Athanasios the Athonite in the village of Zagora, crafted in 1680 and gold-gilded in 1735. Here, the style of wood-carving is produced in a low relief which resembles marble-carving techniques, exhibiting traditional biblical subjects such as grapevines, flowers, and winged dragons.[90]

Beginning in the eighteenth century, the specimens of wood-carved iconostases throughout Pelion multiplied greatly in line with the intensification of church-building activities. The technique of wood-carving became gradually more skillful, daring, and advanced, and themes became more diverse, commonly featuring

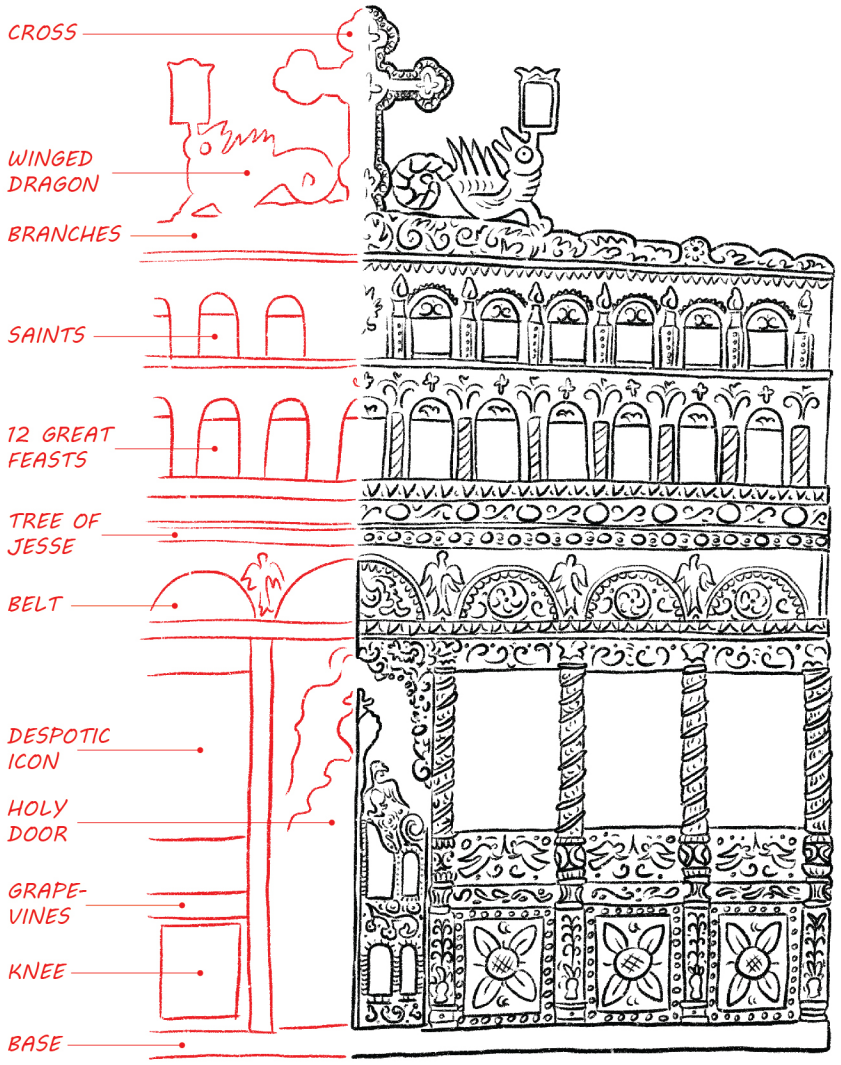


FIG 3.34 Sketch of a typical iconostasis of Pelion

88. Bouras, *Byzantine & Post-Byzantine Architecture*, 274.

89. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 94.

90. Μακρής, *Η Λαϊκή Τέχνη*, 93.

FIG 3.35 Iconostasis of Agia Marina Church, Kissos

human figures, lively animals, mythical creatures, and even entire landscapes.[91] In the mid eighteenth century, the baroque style popular throughout Western Europe began to influence the wood-carvings of Pelion, inspiring works of incredible and elaborate detail which possessed a storytelling character.[92]

Despite the mass integration of baroque styles, a certain restraint and adherence to Byzantine values was exercised, forging a new style of art known as 'neo-Hellenic baroque.' Within the elaborate and dynamically carved narratives of the iconostases, there remained a sense of order within the disorder, and human forms retained their traditional staticness characteristic of Byzantine art.[93] Yet, reflective of the evolving cultural values, ideologies, and social empowerment of the Greek population in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there emerged an evidently increasing desire to merge the sacred and the secular worlds – that is, to imagine the presence of God directly involved in the everyday livelihoods of the villagers.[94] In wood-carvings, this was expressed through a continued interest in biblical symbols, designs, and forms, now intermixed with scenes of ordinary life – a vision of Paradise in which humans were no longer absent.[95]

For example, the iconostasis in Agios Konstantinos Church in the village of Mouresi features an undeniably narrative quality, unifying scenes from the Holy Bible, ancient mythology, and everyday village life. Here, figural lumberjacks with raised axes, men smoking pipes, and gardeners harvesting leaves are carved with extreme attention to detail, existing alongside intricate flora and fauna patterns and even centaurs raised on hind legs. These themes deeply reflect the character of folk art which was popular throughout Pelion, translated into an ecclesiastic setting.[96]

Characteristic of the European Baroque, there was an emphasis on dynamism, light, and shadow in the ecclesiastic wood-carvings of Pelion, achieved through deep relief, metallic gilding, and painting in lively colours such as red, green, white, pink, light blue, and yellow.[97] Following the onset of the Greek revolution throughout Pelion in 1821, there followed a decline in the popularity of the neo-Hellenic baroque and a return towards the static, reserved styles of classical Greece. These newer works were largely crafted by local wood-carvers who had begun to emerge in the region during the nineteenth century, gradually replacing the Epirote craftsmen.[98]

Ecclesiastic stone-carving

In addition to the extravagant evolution of the technique of wood-carving, stone-carving experienced a similar

91. Ibid., 94.

92. Ibid., 96.

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid., 98.

97. Ibid., 100.

98. Ibid.

FIG 3.36 Detail of the iconostasis in Pammegiston Taxiarchon Church, Milies

FIG 3.37 Pulpit of Pammegiston Taxiarchon Church, Milies

FIG 3.38 Spolia in the east façade of Koimisis Tis Theotokou Church, Makrinitsa

revival. The churches of Pelion necessarily integrated stone reliefs and marble engravings into their exterior cladding, either in the form of newly crafted elements or spolia recycled from pre-existing structures. While these decorations were typically most prevalent on the east-facing apses of Pelion's churches, they also appeared in subtler architectural elements such as lintels, door frames, and columns.[99] Most commonly utilizing white marble quarried from the region, the stone carvings depict both secular and sacred scenes, words, and symbols, representing a strong visual connection to the villagers' ancient and recent past.[100]

Whether in painted iconography, intricate wood-carvings, or marble engravings, the abundant interior decoration of Pelion's churches revealed an extension of the traditional Byzantine rite which, through material means activated by liturgical worship, aspired to transform the church edifice into a transitory bridge that hovered between the physical and spiritual realms. The forms of post-Byzantine decoration, interrupted in their development by centuries of social and religious oppression, inherently adopted new methods of craftsmanship and expression, manifesting through a confluence of regional, social, and practical realities. Most prominently, ecclesiastic decoration throughout Pelion assumed a new, secondary role in its preservation of cultural identity. Apart from facilitating access to their faith, the three-aisle timber-roof basilica churches of

FIG 3.39 Stone-carved lintel above the south entrance of Koimisis Tis Theotokou Church, Makrinitsa

99. Λιάπης, *Πήλιο*, 89.

100. Bouras, *Byzantine & Post-Byzantine Architecture*, 274.

FIG 3.40 Stone epigraph and spolia in the south façade of Koimisis Tis Theotokou Church, Makrinitsa

Pelion also facilitated access to the villagers' sense of self as a race of people residing in this region of Greece. The inherent fusion of culture and religion contrived through the Ottoman *rayah* classification system in post-Byzantine Greece led to an increased desire on the part of the faithful to envision themselves more actively within ecclesiastic architecture and artistry, expressed most notably through the emerging integration of local folk art practices within the decorative language of the church edifice. In this sense, the Church itself gained an additional layer of value and revere in the minds of the post-Byzantine Greeks; it was, for them, a true embodiment of their entire essence as human beings.

Hypostases + Legacy

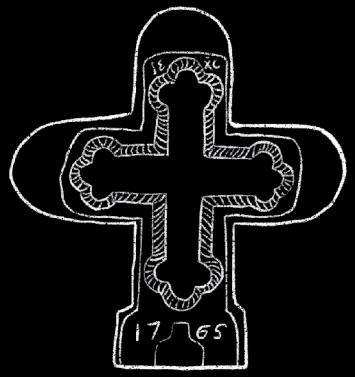
As physical edifices, the post-Byzantine churches of Pelion overall exemplified a synchronic respect and union between the past, present, and future lives of Pelion's villagers. Phenomenologically, they upheld a fundamental religious and cultural position in post-Byzantine society. In the churches, the faithful found refuge, escape, strength, and hope to live through long periods of deep slavery and oppression.[101]

In post-Byzantine times, Pelion's churches were living frameworks which perpetuated the two most essential aspects of the villagers' collective identity: their culture and their faith. Amidst a centuries-long political and social climate characterized by instability, harassment, persecution, and an oppressed sense of cultural expression, these churches became the sustainers of social unity and the cultivators of human mind, body, and spirit. Throughout the humble and isolated villages of Pelion, churches were more than places of religious worship – they were also schools and artist workshops, spaces of creation, innovation, learning, and expression. Located at the heart of every village, they operated both metaphorically and literally at the epicentre of village life. They were products of the landscape, synergies of Pelion's native species, transformed by human skill and craft. Perhaps most strikingly, these monuments tectonically and hypostatically preserved the memory of their flourishing Byzantine ancestors, who lived in harmony, splendour, peace, and most significantly, freedom.

For all of this, the churches of Pelion embody a legacy deep-rooted in the cultural history of the region, rendering them timeless specimens of commendable value and respect. In essence, they are the resilient manifestation of an entire civilization, with roots that span thousands of years into the past and extend down to this very day.

101. Διαμαντάκος, *Ζαγοριανοί Ιεραρχές*, 9.

FIG 3.41 Hand-sketch of Agia Marina Church, Kissos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IV

AGIOS GEORGIOS OF ZAGORA

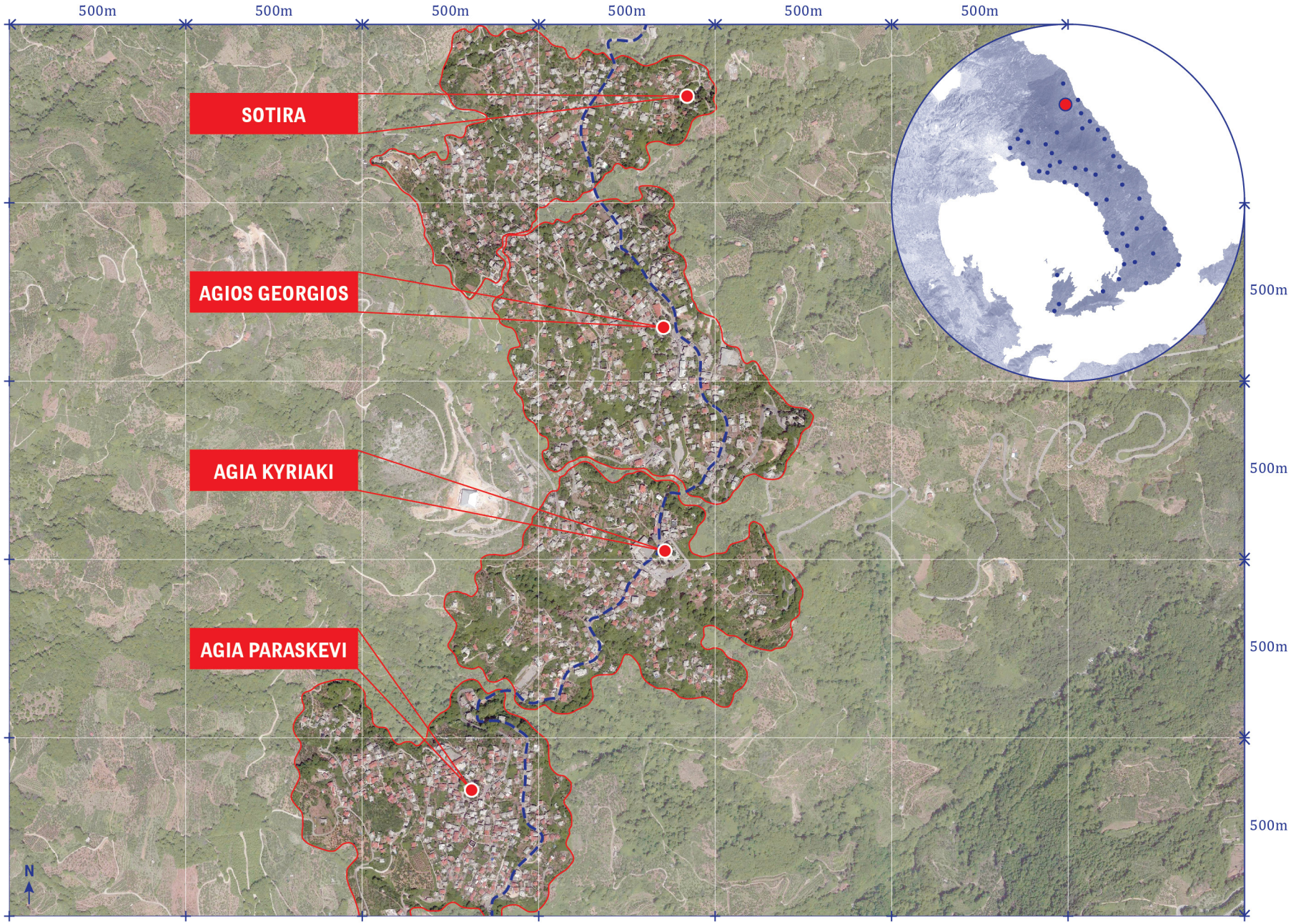

FIG 4.1 Map of Zagora and its four districts

Zagora at a Glance

The village of Zagora is situated near Pelion's northeast shore at a height of approximately 500m, facing an expansive view of the Aegean Sea. The origins of its name are ambiguous; one hypothesis suggests its derivation from a Slavic word meaning 'behind the mountain,' another proposes the consolidation of two Greek words, *zoa* (ζόα), meaning 'animals,' and *agora* (αγορά), meaning 'market,' referencing an annual livestock bazaar hosted at this location throughout the Middle Ages.[1]

Since its foundation, Zagora has remained one of the largest villages of Pelion in both population and land area, with a composite morphology comprised of four amalgamated districts: Agia Paraskevi, Agia Kyriaki, Agios Georgios, and Sotira. Each district was gradually developed around a central nucleus featuring a *plateia* and a Greek Orthodox place of worship – defining its respective name. The earliest district of Zagora evolved around the monastery of Sotira, originally founded by a community of Greek Orthodox monks who settled in the region during the twelfth century.[2] Throughout the period of Ottoman rule, refugees arriving from all over Greece facilitated Zagora's vast expansion, evolution, and population growth which ultimately triggered the unification of its districts into one cohesive village.[3]

1. Νίκος Στουρνάρας, *Πήλιο: Ίστορια, Λάογραφια, Τουρισμός* (Βόλος: Self-published, 1984), 79.

2. "Πήλιο και Ζαγορά," Δημόσια Ιστορική Βιβλιοθήκη της Ζαγοράς, accessed December 2, 2020. http://www.library-zagora.gr/pilio-zagora/#.

3. Στέφανος Γ. Ψημένος, *Ανεξερεύθνητο Πήλιο* (Αθήνα: ROAD Εκδόσεις A.E., 2003) 145.

	1800	1828	1889	1981
Volos	500	1,000	11,029	71,378
Agios Georgios	2,000	1,750	1,757	859
Agios Lavrentios	2,000	1,750	1,696	790
Agios Vlasios	350	750	1,122	772
Anilio	500	900	645	480
Ano Volos	3,500	3,250	4,014	688
Argalasti	2,500	3,000	2,325	1,603
Drakeia	2,500	500	2,463	799
Kissos	1,250	1,750	1,563	430
Lavkos	2,500	3,000	1,957	1,021
Makrinitsa	4,000	7,500	3,682	546
Makrirachi	500	600	689	733
Milies	1,500	1,750	1,941	745
Mouresi	500	1,000	984	491
Neochori	1,250	/	1,432	440
Pinakates	600	1,000	794	326
Portaria	3,000	3,000	2,544	769
Pouri	400	1,000	693	619
Promiri	1,250	3,500	1,310	925
Siki	400	/	490	588
Tsagarada	2,000	2,500	1,739	605
Vizitsa	600	1,000	811	315
Zagora	4,000	3,000	3,261	2,675

FIG 4.2 Population change of Volos and Pelion's key villages throughout the 19th and 20th centuries

FIG 4.3 View from Zagora to the Aegean Sea

FIG 4.4 View of Zagora

FIG 4.5 Zagora in autumn

Despite its less privileged categorization as a *hasi* village throughout the late sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, various historical documents testify to Zagora's extraordinary prominence amongst the villages of Pelion as an economic, commercial, and political epicentre, especially during the acme of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. At this time, all of Pelion's villages were informally referred to as 'villages of Zagora,' and the mountain itself was nicknamed 'the mountain of Zagora.'[4] As the birthplace of many significant and active figures, including the aforementioned Ecumenical Patriarch Kallinikos III, Zagora became a leader in the spheres of education, architecture, commerce, and ecclesiastic affairs, from which progressive developments were often initiated and gradually percolated to other villages of the region.

Zagora's remote location on Pelion greatly contributed to its success among the other villages. Its vast distance away from the populous, Muslim-dominated coastal cities – accessible only by a long and treacherous footpath through the mountains – afforded it a strong level of privacy and isolation which translated to increased freedoms for its Greek Orthodox inhabitants. As well, the village's extremely fertile soil and temperate climate produced an ideal environment for the abundant cultivation of agricultural products including grapes, cherries, chestnuts, hazelnuts, and most importantly, apples – the village's principal yield.[5] Finally, its proximity to the Aegean coastline invited the opportunity for seafaring and economic trade, and, after acquiring a fleet of ships in the late eighteenth century, Zagora's port of Chorefto became the chief harbor of commercial export between Pelion and Western Europe.[6]

The increased contact between Pelion and the West, with Zagora at its nucleus, inspired the immigration of many Zagorians to cities outside of the Ottoman Empire. Through keen engagement in commercial activities, many of these expatriates succeeded in acquiring great wealth abroad which they subsequently used to contribute to the physical, mental, and spiritual enhancement of their homeland. Most notable and instrumental in facilitating the vast educational progression of Zagora's villagers were the establishments of the village's historical library in 1762 and *ellinomouseio* in 1777 – both founded on the joint initiative of Patriarch Kallinikos and Ioannis Pringkos, a Zagorian expatriate residing in Amsterdam.[7] Through its thriving social and didactic environment, Zagora produced many of Pelion's most prominent historians, scientists, clerics, philosophers, and political activists throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.[8]

Pelion's classic architectural *archontiko* typology was widely propagated throughout Zagora and disseminated throughout surrounding villages of Pelion. A record of

4. Στουρνάρας, *Πήλιο*, 82.

5. Ψημένος, *Ανεξερεύθνητο Πήλιο*, 145.

6. "Πήλιο και Ζαγορά."

7. Ψημένος, *Ανεξερεύθνητο Πήλιο*, 144.

8. Στουρνάρας, *Πήλιο*, 82-83.

inscribed plaques, statues, fountains, and epigraphs can be traced throughout the village's key architectural constructions, establishing a systemic record of its development, and immortalizing the names and dates of those who contributed to its evolution.

The ecclesiastic landscape of Zagora is rich and abundant, characterized by a hierarchy of *exoklisia*, monasteries, and churches, the majority of which were constructed or renovated during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Traditional three-aisle basilica churches are located at the centre of Zagora's Agia Paraskevi, Agia Kiriaki, and Agios Georgios districts, all of which served, and continue to serve, as vital social and religious establishments operating at the centre of village life. Constructed in 1803, 1740, and 1765, respectively, all three of these churches are exemplary models of the traditional post-Byzantine ecclesiastic architecture of Pelion, built by Epirote craftsmen using vernacular building materials, featuring elaborate interior decoration in the form of wood-carvings, stone sculpture, and iconographic fresco paintings.[9]

As a means through which to intimately investigate both the physical and metaphysical dimensions of these Greek Orthodox sacred spaces, the church of Agios Georgios will be comprehensively analyzed in subsequent pages of this thesis as an archetypal model of Pelion's post-Byzantine, timber-roof three-aisle basilica church.

9. Ibid, 80.

FIG 4.6 Zagora's historical library

FIG 4.7 Entrance to Zagora's historical library

FIG 4.8 Upper *agora* of Agios Georgios district

FIG 4.9 *Archontiko* mansion in the upper *agora*

FIG 4.10 Steps leading to the upper *agora*

FIG 4.11 Footpath leading to the upper *agora*

FIG 4.12 South view of the central *plateia* of Agios Georgios district

FIG 4.13 North view of the central *plateia* of Agios Georgios district

Approaching Agios Georgios

Zagora's Agios Georgios district is located at the centre of the village and represents its main social core. Of all the four districts, Agios Georgios possesses the largest *plateia*, paved in natural flagstone, framed by commercial program and traditional cafes, and cloaked by five centuries-old plane trees which knit a dense canopy of foliage above it. Historically, this *plateia* was the central gathering space of all villagers and the primary venue for formal and informal social events within the village, including festivals, weddings, town meetings, religious celebrations, and other cultural activities throughout the year. At the northwest corner of the central *plateia* in Agios Georgios, a small footpath leads upwards towards a secondary *plateia* smaller in size and framed by two nineteenth-century neoclassical *archontika.* In post-Byzantine times, this upper space was known as the *agora* by villagers, housing the district's primary commercial strip.[10]

At the northernmost edge of the central *plateia*, an old stone belltower acts as a threshold connecting the *plateia* with the south courtyard of Agios Georgios Church, serving as the primary entry point into the church grounds. The base of the belltower contains a gated and arched passageway that compresses and immerses the entrant in a shroud of shadow before they re-emerge back into the daylight, providing a physical and spatial cue that signals their admission towards a serene, sacred realm away from the secular commotion of the *plateia.*

10. Νίκος Γ. Διαμαντάκος, *Εκκλησίες και εξωκλήσια της Ζαγοράς* (Βόλος: Γραφικές Τέχνες ΠΑΛΜΟΣ, 2019), 51.

FIG 4.14 Stone belltower leading to Agios Georgios Church

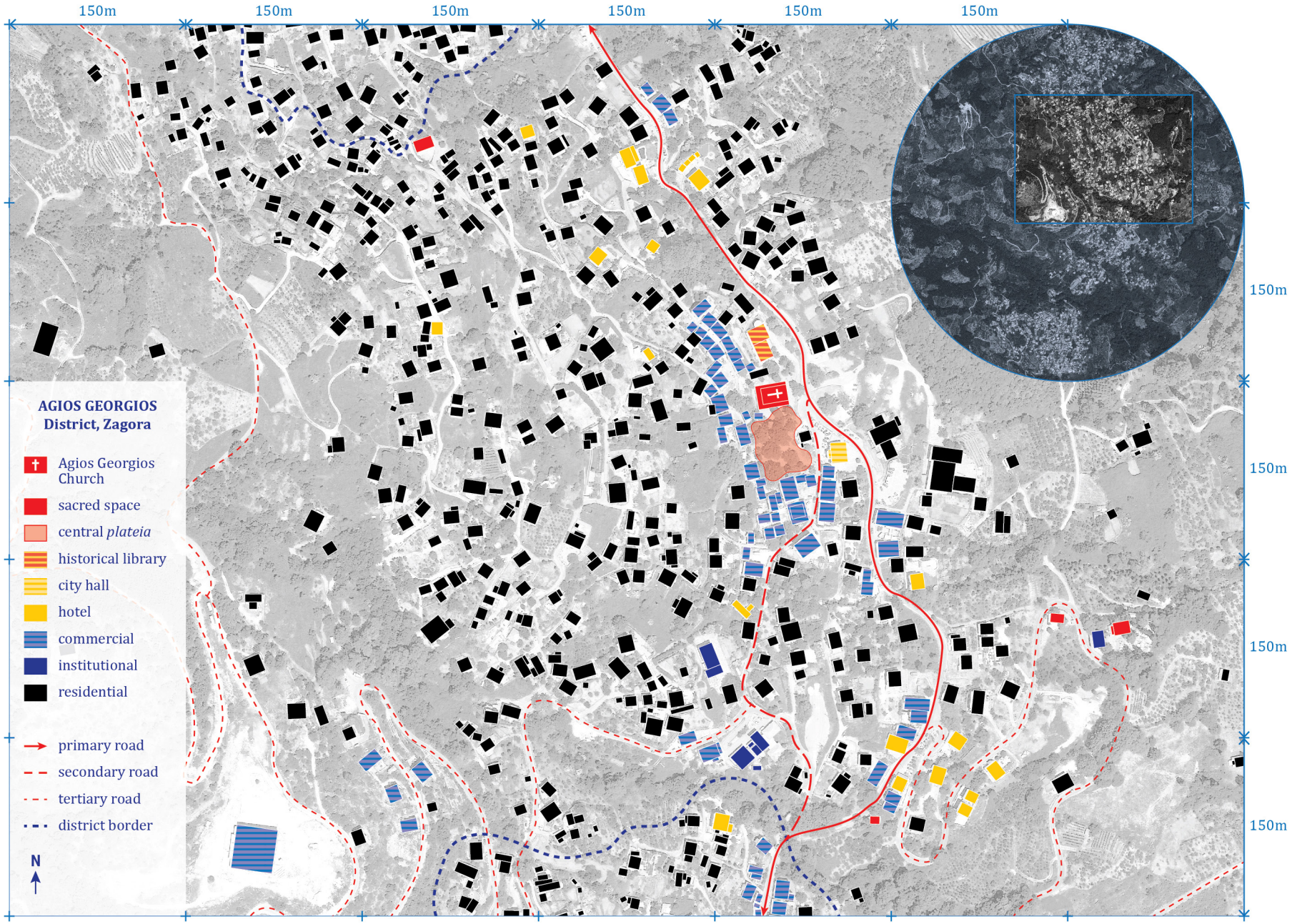

FIG 4.15 Programmatic and circulation map of Zagora's Agios Georgios district

FIG 4.16 Arched threshold beneath the belltower leading to Agios Georgios Church

FIG 4.17 View of Agios Georgios Church from the belltower

FIG 4.18 Vegetation in the courtyard of Agios Georgios Church

FIG 4.19 View of the belltower from the south entrance

FIG 4.20 View of Agios Georgios Church from the village's arterial road

The courtyard space surrounding Agios Georgios Church represents a transitionary buffer between the exterior world and the interior microcosm of the church edifice, creating a circulatory zone which focuses and relaxes the mind of the faithful pilgrim, preparing them for their sacred experience within the church itself.

Upon entrance into the courtyard of Agios Georgios Church, the world becomes instantly quiet. A layer of dense foliage encloses the entirety of the yard in all directions, shielding against external noise and wind. The sound of trickling water gently emanates from a natural stone fountain adjacent to the belltower. On the ground, a striation in the flagstone paving orients the visitor directly towards the church's south door, visually linking it to the passageway beneath the belltower. Planting beds brimming with flowers and cypress trees provide fragrance and shade all around the church, obscuring its façade and emphasizing its inherent integration within the natural landscape of Pelion.

At its west end, a wide stone staircase flanked by a flower garden connects the churchyard to the district's upper *agora*. To the north, a short footpath leads to the village's historical library. To the east, a sharp decline in the topography of the site raises the churchyard high above the arterial road below, forging a clear view from the sacred grounds that surpasses the lower infrastructure of the village and aims straight towards the eastern horizon of the Aegean Sea. From the street level below, the east-facing apses of the church's exterior are visible from a distance away, towering above the village as though raised weightlessly into the sky.

FIG 4.21 Figural site map of Agios Georgios Church and surrounding district

FIG 4.22 Hand-sketch of Agios Georgios Church from the courtyard of Zagora's historical library

Exploring the Edifice

The architectural rhythm of Agios Georgios Church was designed under the rigorous instruction of Patriarch Kallinikos upon his return to his birthplace of Zagora in the late eighteenth century.[11] Informed by decades of intense theological training in matters of Orthodox Tradition, as well as direct personal experience navigating the grand ecclesiastic monuments of Byzantium's former capital, Constantinople, Kallinikos oversaw the entire construction and decoration of Agios Georgios Church, ensuring its appropriateness as a space of devotion to the Orthodox Faith. Accounting for the inherent limitations posed by practical realities including location, economy, and materiality, Kallinikos succeeded in perpetuating a new regional style of Greek Orthodox church unique to the villages of Pelion, yet faithful in form and function to the established conventions of Orthodox doctrine.

Built atop the crude foundations of a pre-existing edifice of unknown chronology, Kallinikos' church of Agios Georgios is a classic three-aisle timber-roof basilica with a north-south length of 21.5m and an east-west width of 13.65m.[12] Externally, the church exists in harmony with the surrounding architecture of Zagora, representing a material fusion of the natural landscape. Its walls are composed of rectangular stone block masonry dressed in a thin layer of white plaster. Its roof is pitched with a flat peak, clad in locally quarried schist stone extracted from the nearby village of Propan.[13] The ground treatment

11. Ibid., 52.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

FIG 4.23 View of Agios Georgios Church from the upper *agora*

FIG 4.24 Northwest view of Agios Georgios Church from the upper *agora*

FIG 4.25 West façade of Agios Georgios Church

FIG 4.26 Northwest view

FIG 4.27 Southwest view

FIG 4.28 Southeast view

FIG 4.29 Northeast view

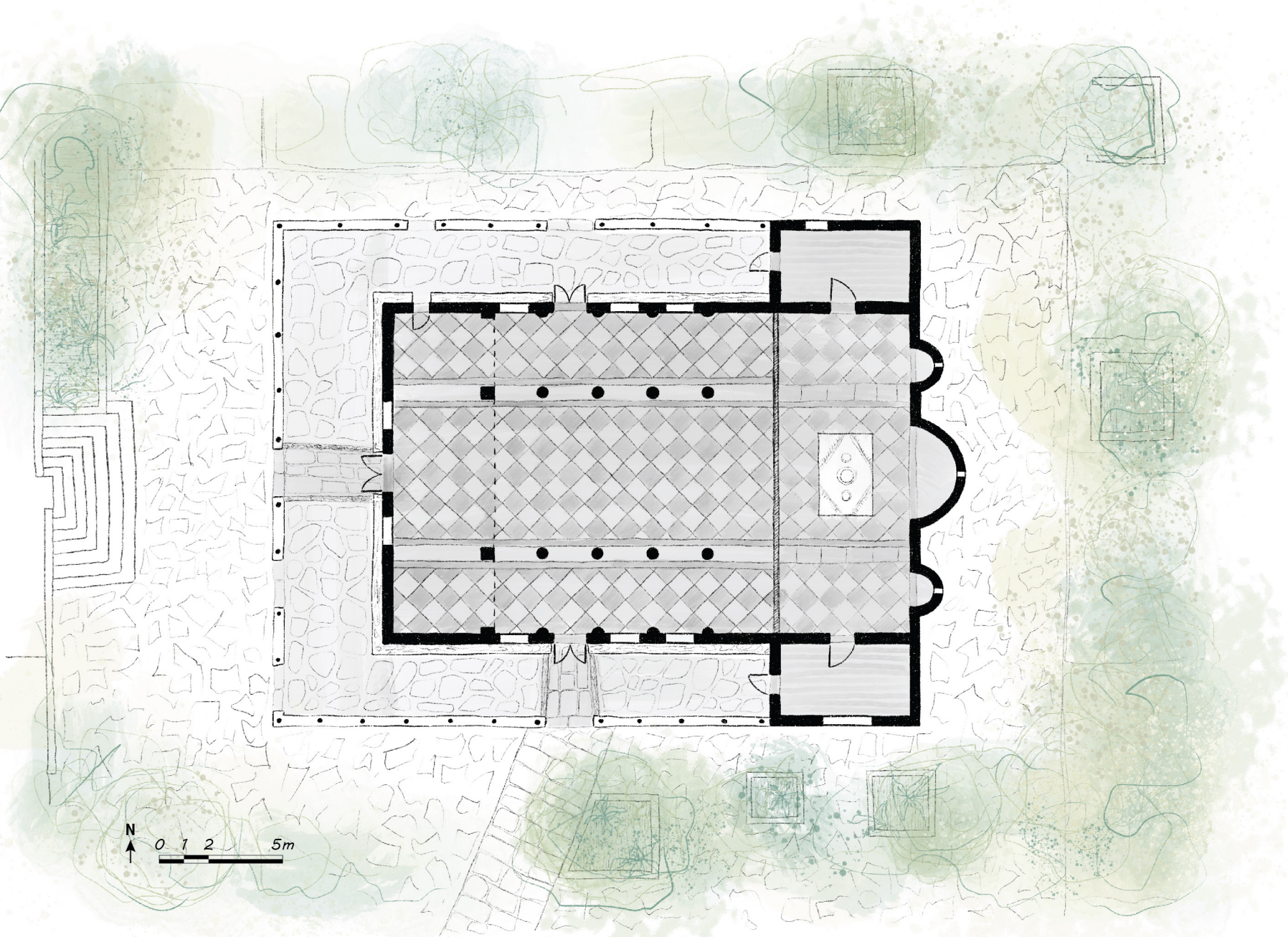

FIG 4.30 Hand-sketch of the plan of Agios Georgios Church

features alternating patterns of flagstone designed to orient the human visitor and define various imaginary spatial zones in and around the church edifice.

Along its north, west, and south façades, a spacious exo-narthex provides a further transitory zone of refuge between the courtyard and the church interior, stretching 4m towards the west and 2.9m towards the north and south.[14] The roof of the exo-narthex is supported by a rhythmic array of slim wooden posts rooted within a plastered half-wall. This protrusion is interrupted by six entrances – two at its north end, three at its west, and one at its south, leading towards the church's main entrances. Against the walls of the church, an integrated bench spans the length of these three façades, generously shielded from the elements by the roof of the exo-narthex. A complex system of exposed timber beams support the heavy gravity loads of the schist roof structure, directing them towards the earth. The apparent roughness exhibited by this handiwork inherently mimics the chaos of the surrounding landscape – the anarchy of foliage, forests, trees, and branches that engulf the entirety of the mountainous village.

The church's principal entrance is located at its west façade, traditionally opposite the east-facing altar.[15] Double doors occupy the north and south façades as well, primarily used as exits following the Divine services. The dominance of the western threshold is emphasized by a

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 53.

FIG 4.31 Connection detail between timber roof beams and posts of the exo-narthex

FIG 4.32 Timber roof substructure of the exo-narthex

FIG 4.33 Connection detail between schist roof tiles and plaster walls

FIG 4.34 Schist roof tiles of Agios Georgios Church

FIG 4.35 Transition of flagstone paving between the courtyard and south exo-narthex

FIG 4.36 Flagstone paving in the courtyard of Agios Georgios Church

FIG 4.37 North exo-narthex

FIG 4.38 South exo-narthex

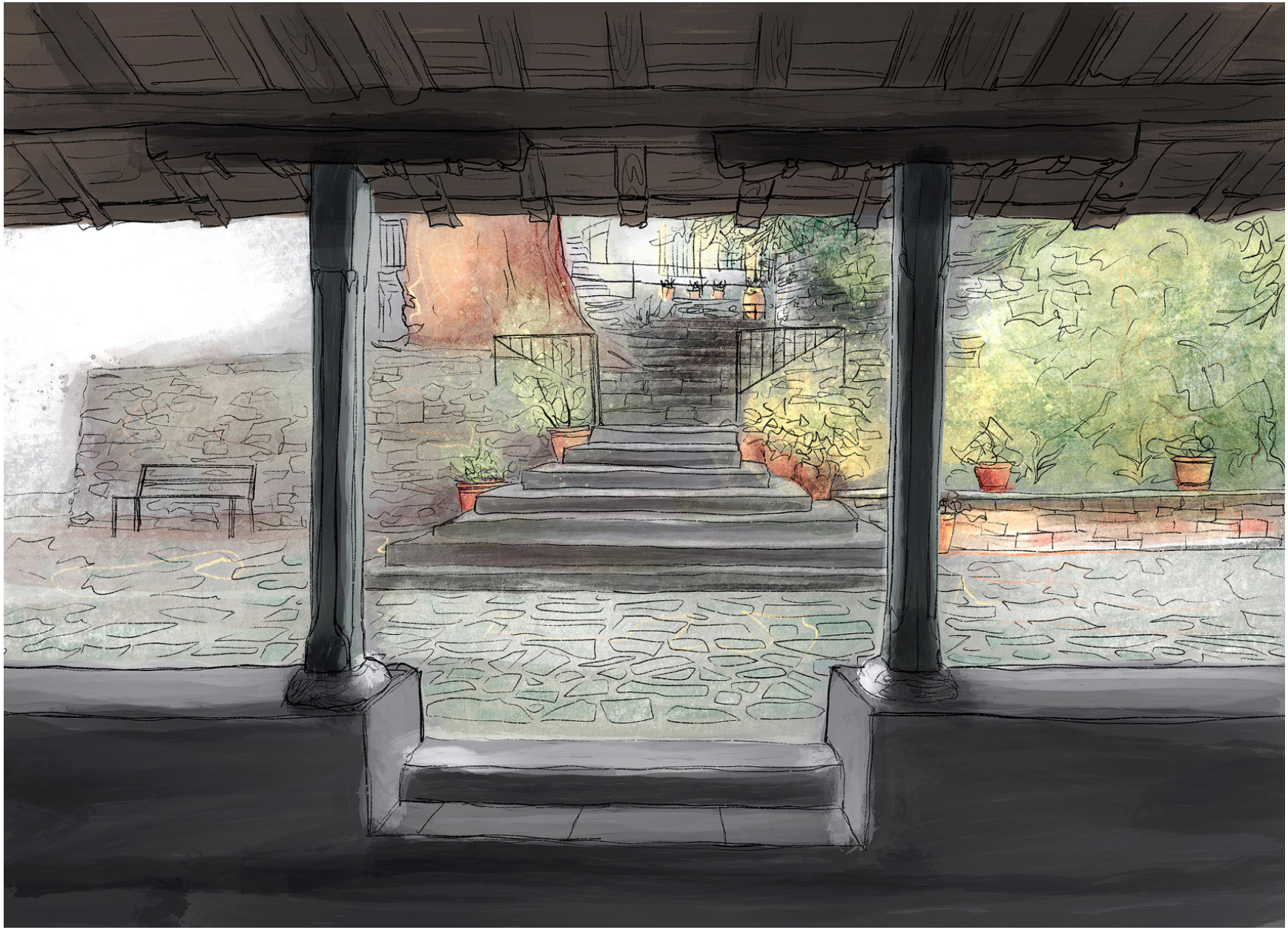

FIG 4.39 Hand-sketch of the view from the west exo-narthex leading to the upper *agora*

FIG 4.40 West entrance

FIG 4.41 North door

FIG 4.42 Photo montage revealing the south, north, west, and east façades of Agios Georgios Church

more elaborate treatment of handcrafted ornamentation. A marble lintel occupies its summit, engraved at its centre with the emblem of a cross and a double-headed eagle to its left and right. The double-headed eagle is a prominent symbol in the Orthodox Church that extends from Byzantine roots, signifying the dual nature of the Byzantine Empire as a leader in both secular and sacred affairs. Embedded in the wall above the lintel and framed by an ornately carved marble frame is a painted icon of Saint George seated on a throne – honouring the church's patron saint who symbolically watches over the faithful parishioners entering and exiting his sacred establishment.

Adjacent to the main entrance, two large windows puncture the church's west façade, surrounded by frames of crimson masonry. A combination of clear, tinted, and patterned glass obscures the view to the church within. Above the roof of the exo-narthex, three additional windows direct natural daylight into the space, with the centre taking a heightened, arched form. The voids between the three windows are filled by embedded stone epigraphs and decorative crosses, as well as six handmade Rhodian plates of various colour, style, and pattern. The appearance of the Rhodian plates is consistent across the church's north, west, and south façades, adding a subtle layer of decoration to the exterior while also celebrating the culture and craftmanship of the local villagers.

The church's south façade features three windows below, and five above, the roof of the exo-narthex, eclectically decorated with twenty Rhodian plates interspersed between them. Above the south door, there is an additional painted icon of Saint George depicted on horseback. The north façade presents a symmetrical array of openings, with an additional miniature door leading to the women's gallery within the church. The portico sheltered by the exo-narthex is interrupted on the north and south façades by two volumes protruding from the inner altar, the south-most containing a chapel dedicated to the Christian martyr, Saint Eustathios.

In line with Byzantine custom, three apses corresponding to the inner altar emerge in semicircular volumes on the church's east façade, representing the three divine persons of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each apse is extravagantly adorned in marble ornamentation, divided into five strips and separated by rows of miniature columns. The rectangular voids formed by this striated arrangement are detailed in various stone-carved images of Creation and Orthodox symbolism, including crosses, double-headed eagles, cypress trees, roses, vases, birds, branches, and flowers – representing a synergy of the natural world within the religious hypostasis of the Church.[16] A sliver window in each apse directs natural light within the space, and stone epigraphs exist embedded into the wall space between them.

16. Ibid., 54.

FIG 4.43 Photo montage constructing the three eastern apses of Agios Georgios Church

FIG 4.44 Stone-carved details on the central apse

FIG 4.45 Icon of Saint George seated on a throne above the west entrance

FIG 4.46 Stained-glass window detail

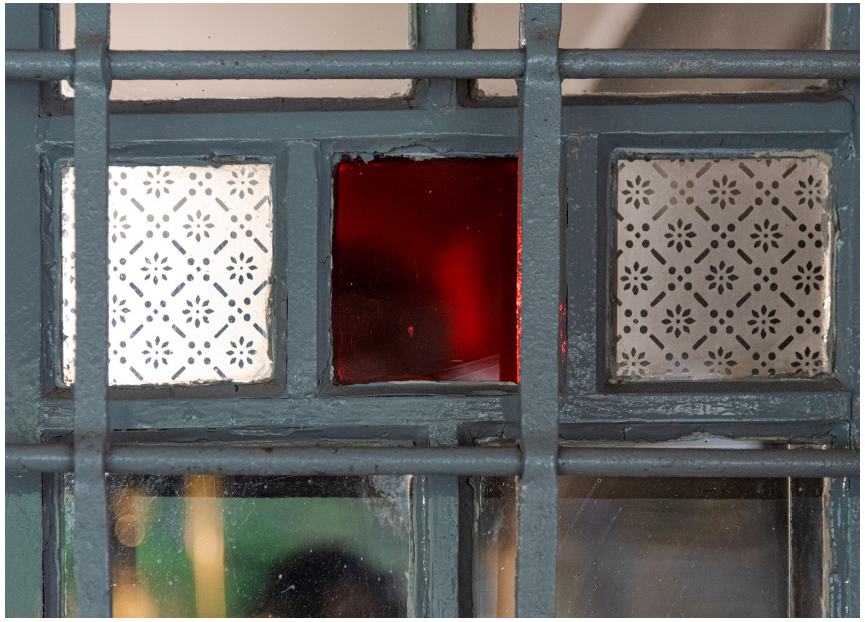

FIG 4.47 Stone emblem of a double-headed eagle on the lintel of the west entrance

FIG 4.48 Detail of masonry window surrounds

FIG 4.49 Detail of Rhodian plates surrounding a window above the exo-narthex

Epigraphs of Narrative

The integrated presence of stone-carved epigraphs on the east and west façades of Agios Georgios Church displays a living signature of its founders and contributors, silently reciting the eternal narrative of the structure itself. On its east façade, the following epigraph between the centre and lefthand apse honours the church's founder and reveals the date of its erection. An English translation from the original Byzantine Greek is provided below:

This church was erected in dedication to the Great Martyr, Saint George, under the instruction of the most holy former patriarch of Constantinople, Kallinikos, with assistance and contribution from the faithful parishioners of this church and of the villagers residing here during the reign of the holy bishop of Dimitriados, Gregorios, March 14th, 1765.

ΑΝΥΓΕΡΘΗ ΕΚ ΒΑΘΡΩΝ Ο ΘΗΟΣ ΟΥΤΟΣ ΝΑΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΜΑΡΤΙΡΟΣ ΓΕΟΡΓΙΟΥ ΔΙΑ ΠΡΟΤΡΟΠΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΝΑΓΙΩΤΑΤΟΥ Π(ΑΤ)ΡΙΑΡΧΟΥ ΠΡΩΗΝ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥΠΟΛΕΩΣ ΚΕΙΡΙΟΥ ΚΑΛΙΝΙΚΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΚΟΙΝΗΣ ΒΟΗΘΥΑΣ ΚΕ ΣΥΝΔΡΟΜΗΣ ΤΩΝ ΕΝΟΡΙΤΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣ ΤΑΥΤΕΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΩΝ ΛΟΙΠΟΝ ΕΓΧΩΡΙΩΝ ΕΠΙ ΤΩΝ ΗΜΕΡΩΝ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΝΙΕΡΩΤΑΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΑΔΟΣ ΚΥΡ ΓΡΙΓΟΡΙΟΥ ΕΤΟΣ ΑΨΞΕ ΜΗΝ ΜΑΡΤΙΩ 1Δ[17]

Further testimony to the church's construction is provided by an epigraph on its west façade to the left of the central window, which reads:

July 20th, 1765, this sacred church of the holy and glorified Great Martyr, Saint George, the victor and miracle-worker, was renovated under the initiative of the pious Christian parishioners and was completed on October 18th.

ΑΨΞΕ ΙΟΥΛΙΟΥ Κ ΑΝΑΚΑΙΝΗΣΘΗ ΟΥΤΟΣ Ο ΘΕΙΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΝΣΕΠΤΟΣ ΝΑΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΕΝΔΟΞΟΥ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΣ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΤΡΟΠΑΙΟΦΟΡΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΘΑΥΜΑΤΟΥΡΓΟΥ ΔΙΑ ΣΥΝΔΡΟΜΗΣ ΤΩΝ ΕΥΣΕΒΩΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΤΕΛΙΩΘΗ ΟΚΤΟΜΒΡΗΟΥ ΙΗ'[18]

Above the epigraph, there is a wall-embedded stone cross denoting the year 1765. The two aforementioned epigraphs thus solidify 1765 as the church's year of construction. The first date, March 14th, defines the date of completion of the church's bare architectural frame. The subsequent dates, July 20th and October 14th, define the period during which completing details of its construction were undertaken, including wall plastering, roof cladding, floor tiling, etc.[19]

A second epigraph of equal size to the right of the central window balances the symmetry of the west façade, honouring the master builder, mastro-Michail, whose team of craftsmen erected the church edifice. The epigraph includes a short rhyme entreating the peaceful and harmonious collaboration of all villagers involved in the church's construction, before concluding with the following prayer addressed to its patron saint:

17. Ibid., 59

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

FIG 4.50 Stone epigraph to the left of the central window on the west façade

FIG 4.51 Stone epigraph to the left of the central apse on the east façade

FIG 4.52 Stone epigraph to the right of the central apse on the east façade

Dear Saint George, pray for and help the humble servants who contributed to the establishment of this church.

Μ(Α)ΣΤ(Ο)Ρ(Ο) Μ(Ι)Χ(ΑΗ)Λ + ΙΔΕ Ζ(ΗΤΑ) Κ' ΙΔΕ Β(ΗΤΑ) ΠΩΣ ΚΟΙΤΑΖΟΥΣΙ Τ(ΗΝ) ΠΗΤΑ ΠΟΤΕ Ν' ΑΒΓ' ΑΠΟ ΤΟΝ ΦΟΥΡΝΟ ΜΗ ΤΗ ΦΑΓΟΥΝ ΓΙΑ ΤΟΥΡΝΟ ΚΑΙ ΟΡΜΟΥΝ ΟΛ(ΟΙ) ΟΙ β(ΗΤΑ) ΓΙΑ ΝΑ ΦΑΓΩΣΙ ΤΗΝ ΠΗΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΘΙΣΤΑΤΑΙ Η Ζ(ΗΤΑ) ΜΕ ΒΟΗΘΕΙΑΝ ΤΗΣ Θ(ΗΤΑ) ΕΩΣ ΠΗΤΑ ΝΑ ΚΡΥΩΣΗ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥΣ ΒΛΑΧΟΥΣ ΝΑ ΓΛΥΤΟΣ(Η) + Ω ΑΓΙΕ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΕ ΠΡΕΣΒΕΥΕ ΥΠΕΡ ΠΑΝΤΩΝ ΤΩΝ ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ ΕΚΚΛΙΣΙΑΝ ΣΟΥ ΤΑΥΤΗΝ ΒΟΪΘΗΣΑΝΤΩΝ + Ζσογ'[20]

A fourth epigraph occupies the church's east façade between the centre and righthand apse, featuring a second prayer:

You, the Great Martyr for whom this church was founded by the God-fearing dwellers of this land, Zagora, during these years of hardship, who stands before the Holy Trinity, pray for us and for our well-being, after the Holy Apostles and the Three Holy Hierarchs.

ΣΟΙ ΤΩ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΜΑΡΤΥΡΙ ΚΑΙΠΕΡ ΟΥ ΚΑΤ' ΑΞΙΑΝ ΤΟΝΔΕ ΝΑΟΝ ΑΝΙΔΡΥΣΕ ΘΕΟΦΙΛΕΣ ΤΟ ΓΕΝΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΧΩΡΑΣ ΤΑΥΤΗΣ ΖΑΓΟΡΑΣ ΕΝ ΧΡΟΝΟΙΣ ΔΥΣΤΥΧΙΑΣ ΔΙΟ ΩΣ ΠΑΡΙΣΤΑΜΕΝΟΣ ΤΡΙΑΔΙ ΤΗ ΑΓΙΑ ΥΠΕΡ ΤΗΣ ΧΩΡΑΣ ΠΡΕΣΒΕΥΕ ΜΕΤΑ ΤΩΝ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΩΝ ΤΡΙΩΝ ΙΕΡΑΡΧΩΝ, ΚΑΙ ΕΥΤΥΧΙΑΣ ΤΑΥΤΗΣ. ΚΑΠΑ ΚΑΙ ΔΕΛΤΑ ΕΣΜΙΞΑΝ ΚΑΙ Ν ΚΑΙ Π ΚΑΙ ΙΩΤΑ ΚΑΙ Σ.Γ.Ε. ΚΑΙ Ρ. ΚΑΙ ΕΓΕΝΝΗΣΑΝ ΠΡΩΤΑ. 17 ΤΟ Σ.Υ. ΚΑΙ Μ ΚΑΙ Φ ΚΑΙ Ε ΚΑΙ Μ ΤΩΝ ΓΑΜΜΑ: 69 ΚΑΙ ΥΣΤΕΡΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΑ ΛΟΙΠΑ ΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΑ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΑΜΑ[21]

As a whole, the seamless integration of these epigraphs within the church's exterior façade firmly situates the structure in time, while systemically immortalizing and celebrating those who piously contributed to its foundation and erection. Deciphered in tandem, the inscriptions tell a story that endows the church building with a voice and spirit, providing contextual coherency and historical clarity to visitors of any chronological era, as well as demonstrating the religious piety of those who constructed it.

The World Within

Upon entry into Agios Georgios Church, the threshold is defined by an emphatic step down – an unusual feature for an Orthodox church imposed by Ottoman authorities at the time of its construction, intended as a condescending gesture to demean the significance of the Greek Orthodox place of worship. Traditionally, Orthodox churches in Byzantium were raised from the ground plane as a symbol of their higher nature and holy status. The depression of Agios Georgios Church into the earth affirms its origins as a post-Byzantine monument, creating a more compressed and cooler interior environment that contributes to a general air of austerity, solidity, and intimacy within the church.

20. Ibid., 60.

21. Ibid., 61.

FIG 4.53 Hand-sketch of the south aisle and iconostasis

In line with the Byzantine Tradition of Orthodox worship, the physical scale, layout, and decoration of the church interior are all designed to construct a sense of otherworldliness. The architectural rhythm of the church aligns to the Orthodox Divine Liturgy, augmenting the rich synaesthetic experience produced through a synthesis of chanting, kneeling, bowing, observing, sensing, and receiving the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist. Acoustically, the various hard surfaces that compose the church's walls, floors, and structural elements create a gentle echo within the church, augmenting the voices of the priest and chanters conducting the Divine services.

The interior organization of the church presents a gradient of spatial sacredness for the faithful pilgrim moving through the space, from narthex to nave to sanctuary. Throughout this progression, specific architectural elements exist to initiate, support, and guide the faithful through the sacred rituals of Orthodox worship. Upon entering the church from its primary western entrance, a wooden candlestand (παγκάρι) and display of votive icons (προσκυνητάρι) define the boundaries of the narthex and greet the faithful pilgrim, who lights a candle and bows before the icons as a symbol of piety and respect. The pilgrim then enters the church's nave, gathering in unity with neighbouring parishioners to stand, bow, and kneel throughout the celebration of the Divine Liturgy service. The transition between the narthex and nave is emphasized by an expansion of the physical space in both height and width.

In the three-aisle basilica church of Agios Georgios, each of the three aisles of the nave are defined by two colonnades composed of five columns each, adjoined at their capitals by rows of arches supporting the roof structure. The westernmost column is tetrahedral in form, while the other four are cylindrical, presenting a diversity of geometric profiles. The church's timber-framed roof is concealed by a plastered ceiling which is gently raised and curved in the middle aisle and flat in the two side aisles. The ceiling is decorated in rich iconographic frescos, the largest of which are encompassed in intricate wood-carved and gold-gilded frames. The iconography of the middle aisle depicts the three persons of the Holy Trinity; God the Father is positioned above the holy altar, Christ the Son is positioned above the nave, and the Holy Spirit in the form of an angel is depicted towards the church's western narthex. Parishioners are thus immersed in a microcosm of sacred imagery mirroring the heavenly realm above. The walls themselves are void of fresco iconography, decorated instead by wall-hung panel icons of various saints and religious events.[22]

The interplay of light and colour is carefully curated within the church in a subdued and ascetic palette: the floor is subtly finished in alternating white and dark grey marble tiles; wood stains of pews, furniture, and icon stands are dark and saturated in hue; column shafts are painted in a muted shade of brown. The stained-glass windows of the ground floor offer minimal penetration of natural daylight within the space, and light is primarily filtered in through the smaller punctures above the roof of the exo-narthex. The heightened infiltration of natural

22. Ibid., 55.

FIG 4.54 Hand-sketch of the bishop's throne

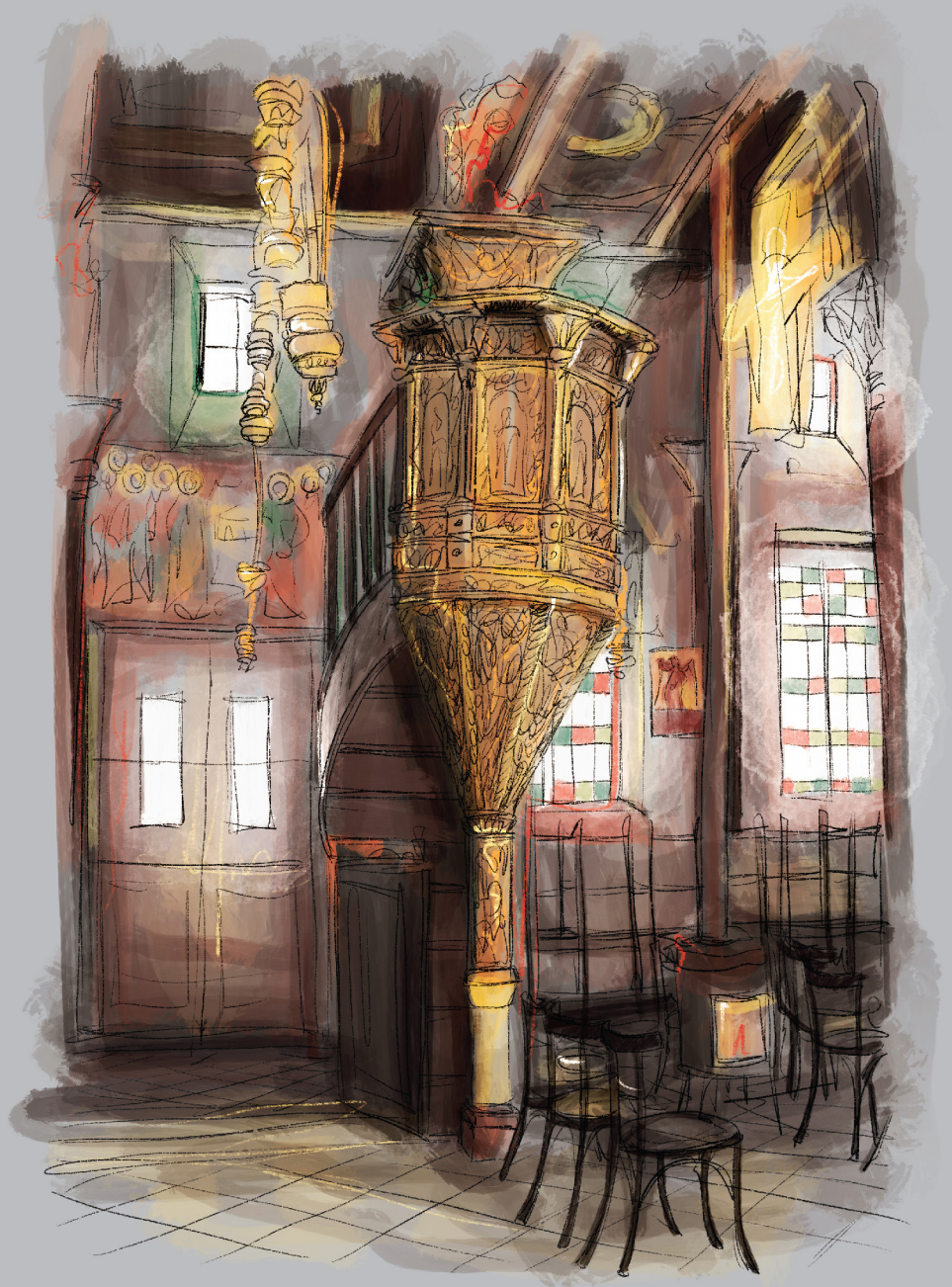

FIG 4.55 Hand-sketch of the pulpit

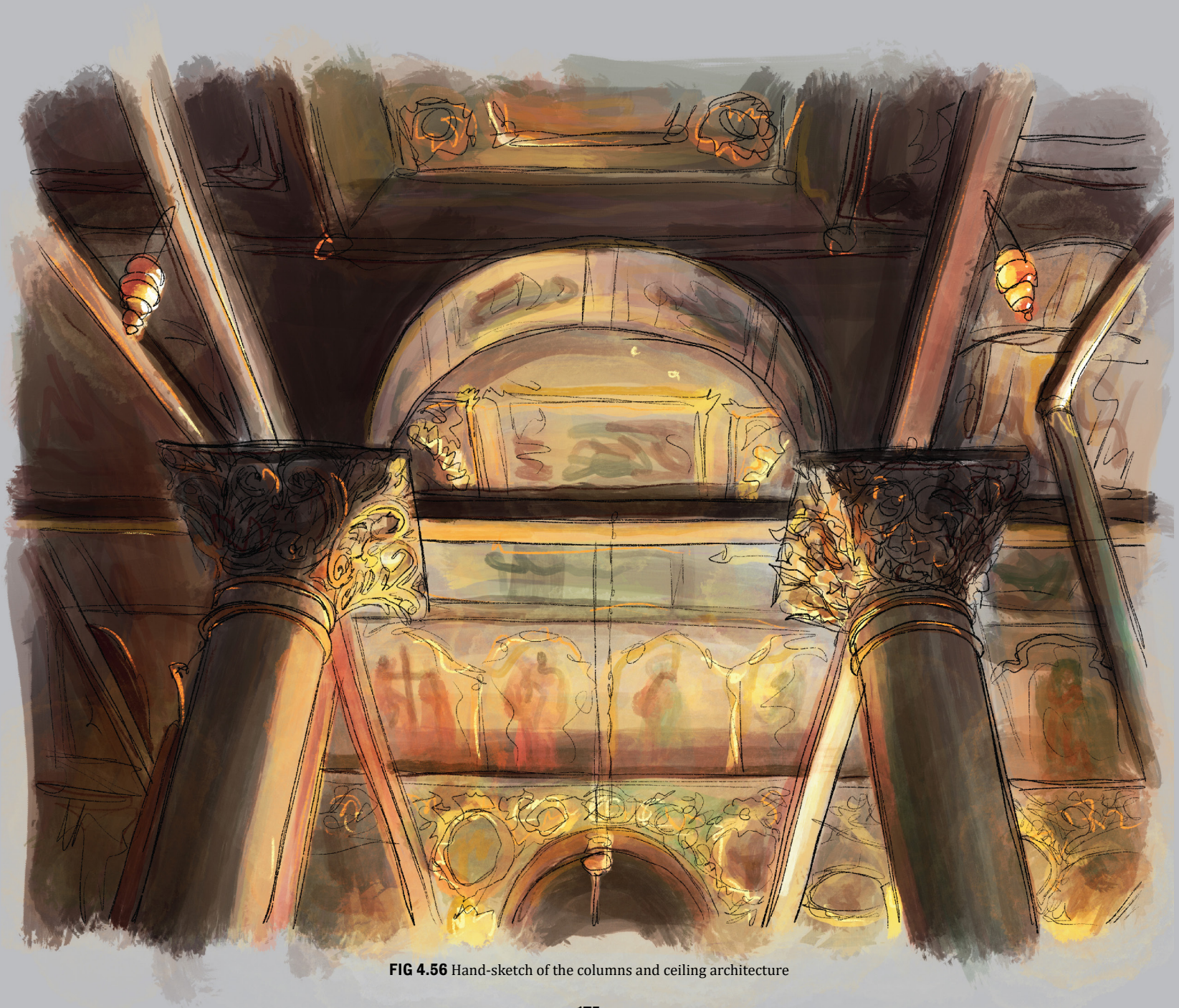

FIG 4.56 Hand-sketch of the columns and ceiling architecture

light within the church corresponds to the Byzantine practice of incorporating lightwells around the base of the central dome – thus creating an identical effect of top-filtered daylight within the domeless basilica church that resourcefully alludes to the Byzantine ecclesiastic rhythm.

Blazing candles provide the main source of light within the church, abundantly dispersed throughout the space. Three elaborate chandeliers (πολυέλαιοι) are suspended from the ceiling of the church's middle aisle, as well as one candelabra that holds thirteen silver oil lamps.[23] Each side aisle also features a smaller chandelier of its own, contributing to a sense of warm, dynamic, flickering light which ignites the entire interior space. The rigorous integration of reflective metallic objects within the church amplifies this energetic effect of candlelight, bringing the architectural elements to life and endowing the icons with a perceived sense of spirit – *empsychos graphe*.

Most prominent in the interior decoration of Agios Georgios Church is its rich display of fine wood-carving. Each of the column capitals separating the church's three aisles are finished in ornate wood-carved and gold-gilded floral designs. As well, the pulpit (άμβωνας) towards the left, and bishop's throne (δεσποτικός θρόνος) towards the right of the central nave are entirely wood-carved, representing masterful works of art in a harmonious geometric rhythm which controls the wandering eye and acts as a visual anchor within the church's primary space of worship. The pulpit is supported by a white marble column topped by a pentahedron depicting the Archdeacon Stephanos and the four Evangelists on each of its faces. The bishop's throne features two wood-carved lionesses at its base, two double-headed eagles at its midriff, and two doves outstretched in flight at its peak.[24] As a rule, the forms and designs which adorn Agios Georgios Church routinely intersperse images of God's earthly and heavenly Creation, constructing an interior environment in which the physical and spiritual realms of the Christian universe converge.

Appropriately, the iconostasis separating the nave and sanctuary represents the most intensive concentration of decoration and wood-carved ornamentation, crafted in 1774.[25] In a dynamic and expressive artistic style reflecting the neo-Hellenic baroque, the wood-carvings of the iconostasis display a bountiful confluence of various objects and symbols, including grapevines, flowers, birds, angels, double-headed eagles, deer, lions, and dragons, all gilded in gold leaf to accentuate their intricate forms.[26] Impressive in height, the iconostasis towers over the nave, providing a complete visual obstruction to the inner holy altar which is raised two steps from the floor level of the nave, emphasizing its superior sacred value.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., 57.

26. Ibid., 56.

FIG 4.57 View of the iconostasis from the nave

FIG 4.58 Detail of the wood-carved Beautiful Gates of the iconostasis

FIG 4.59 Left-hand view of the iconostasis

FIG 4.60 Right-hand view of the iconostasis

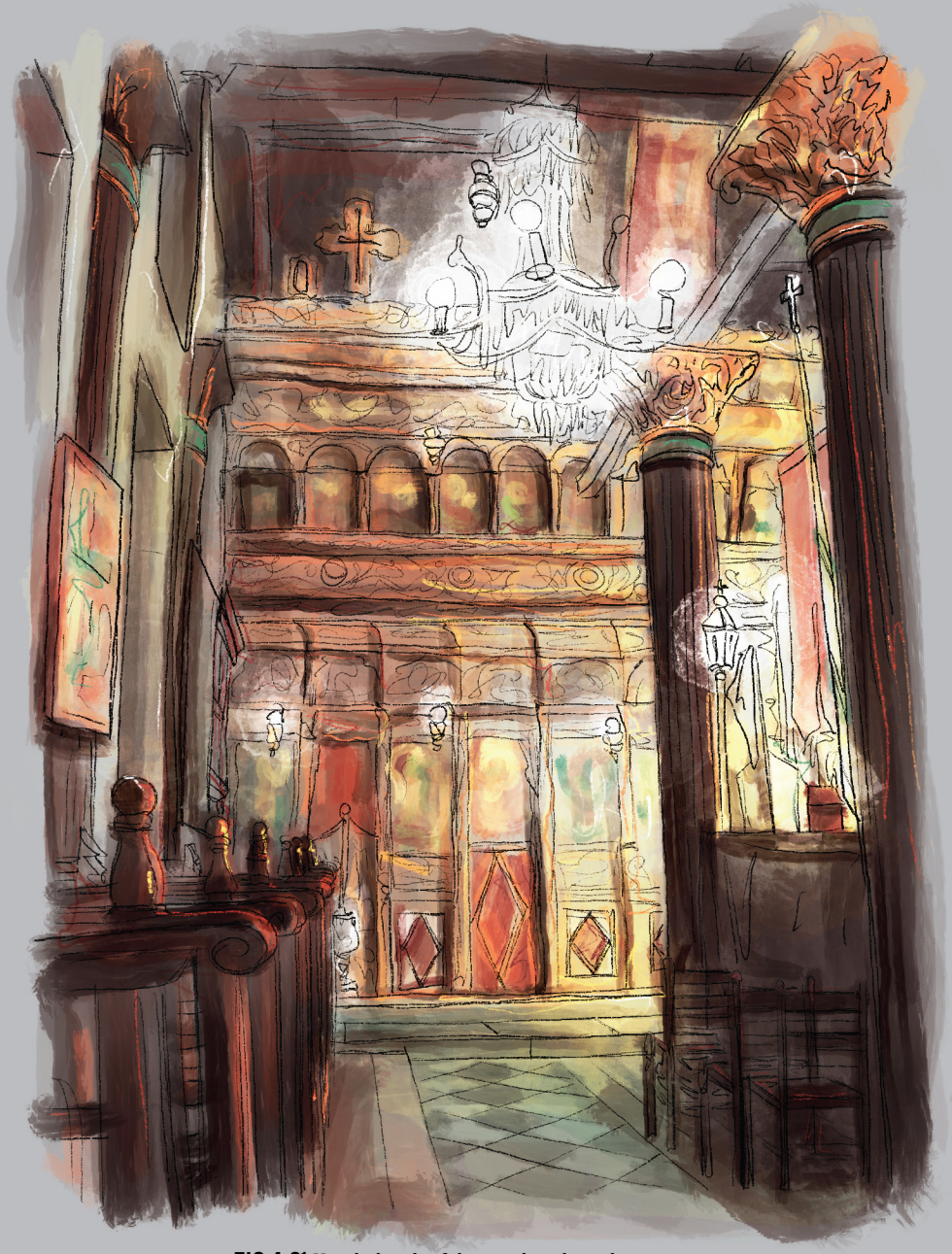

FIG 4.61 Hand-sketch of the north aisle and iconostasis

Three wood-carved crosses top the iconostasis at its summit, each flanked by two sculptural doves. Five doors subtly puncture its base, the centremost possessing the greatest prominence and serving as the primary entrance into the sanctuary. The iconostasis exhibits three tiers of panel icons which date from the eighteenth to the twentieth century; there are nineteen on the top row, twenty-one in the middle, and sixteen on the bottom.[27] The bottom tier features the largest and most significant icons, arranged in accordance with the traditional Byzantine scheme.

The Metaphysical Dimension

As a whole, the design, construction, composition, decoration, and activation of Agios Georgios Church all coalesce to facilitate a transcendence of its physical, architectural form. Through gradient layers of sacred spatial organization, the faithful pilgrim undergoes a metaphysical journey of spiritual sedation – beginning with their entry into the courtyard, followed by the exo-narthex, interior narthex, and nave, gazing upon the harmonious iconostasis which guards the holy sanctuary. An extravagance of artistry and material manipulation, coupled with the phenomenon of dynamic light interaction, transforms the church building into a microcosm of the heavenly realm immediately accessible here on earth.

Congruently, the edifice itself recites a voiceless narrative rooted in history, locus, and culture. Agios Georgios Church is decisively a product of its founders – architecturally expressing their religious and practical outlook of the world. The church remains faithful to Orthodox Tradition, incorporating the most prized features of Byzantium while confidently transforming and expanding into new manifestations of sacred space suited to the conditions of post-Byzantine life on Pelion.

It is only through an assessment of the metaphysical realities surrounding the church that the structure assumes a sacred dimension. Void of this, it is reduced to a mere confluence of wood and stone, metal and glass. With it, however, it is elevated to a position of exceeding reverence and respect, empowered by the ephemeral, immortalizing qualities of memory, faith, culture, and spirit. In this regard, Zagora's Agios Georgios Church, along with all other churches of Pelion, represents a vital monument of priceless significance, eternally exalting the legacy of a race of people who dared to uphold their religious and cultural identity amidst four centuries of arduous struggle in the long and precarious chronicle of Ottoman Greece.

27. Ibid.

FIG 4.62 Hand-sketch of the belltower leading to Agios Georgios Church flying the official flags of Greece and the Orthodox Church

CONCLUSION

The research presented in this thesis constitutes a focused analysis of the Greek Orthodox churches of Mount Pelion, unpacking the history and legacy of a specific geographical region in post-Byzantine Greece. More generally, it explores the broader architectural transformation of the Greek Orthodox Church from Byzantium to Ottoman times. Though the churches of Pelion possess an inherent and deep-rooted vernacular character, the social, political, and economic pressures influencing their architectural form were common throughout many regions of Greece, as well as the larger Ottoman Empire, and thus conclusions can be applied and extended to a larger scope of study.

In post-Byzantine Greece, as demonstrated most holistically through the example of Pelion's three-aisle timber-roof basilica churches, the Orthodox Church continued to exist in both function and form as a mystical bridge uniting the spiritual and physical realms – in line with the Orthodox Tradition established by the Holy Church Fathers of Byzantium. The most striking evolution that can be observed between the Byzantine and post-Byzantine Church is the apparent adoption and expansion of a third hypostasis: that of a cultural edifice, preserving the national identity of the Greek population.

In post-Byzantine Greece, where the social liberties of the Greeks were blatantly compromised, the Church assumed an additional secular role in supporting the day-to-day demands of the general community. Deprived by the Ottoman authorities of sufficient institutional infrastructure of their own, the Greek population turned to the Church to satisfy their didactic, artistic, political, philosophical, and social appetites. Thus, for the Greek Orthodox citizens of the Ottoman Empire, the church edifice became more than merely a space for religious worship; it was also the space that framed and sustained the foundation of their daily lives.

This heightened metaphysical role of the Church was consistent among all Orthodox *rayahs* under Ottoman subjugation. An analysis of Agios Georgios Church in the village of Zagora reveals the multitude of dimensions that comprise the post-Byzantine Church. As a physical, architectural manifestation, the Church was formally, tectonically, and decoratively inspired by its region, site, and landscape. As a spiritual, religious edifice, the Church was true to its theological roots in terms of spatial organization and rituals of prayer and worship. As a cultural vessel, the Church was a polymorphous institution and living narrative which preserved the population's cultural memory, providing a tangible link between past, present, and future civilizations.

The field of post-Byzantine ecclesiastic architecture in Greece remains grossly understudied, with very limited publications known to modern scholarship, especially in the English language. Yet, the significance and value of this branch of research is undeniable – inseparable from the eternal legacy of the Orthodox Church and the history of the Greek civilization as a whole. The research explored in this thesis represents a modest attempt to scratch the surface of the vast abyss known as post-Byzantine ecclesiastic architecture, extracted in large part through the assemblage and translation of various modern Greek texts authored by historians, folklorists, and ethnographers local to the Pelion region of Greece. With time, however, I hope to witness a wider involvement of other disciplines contributing to this field of study – in particular of architects whose passionate and collaborative effort in the subject would result in a more comprehensive cognizance of these worthy architectural monuments, bringing them out of the shadow and into the light.

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