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Inhalt

- 1 RAIMON GRAELLS I FABREGAT – CLEMENS SCHMID
Votive weapons in the panhellenic sanctuary of Olympia
(10th–5th centuries B.C.): a diachronic analysis
- 23 WALTER-HERWIG SCHUCHHARDT (†) – AENNE OHNESORG
unter Mitarbeit von VASILEIA MANIDAKI
Die ›Kleine Rosettensima‹ auf der Athener Akropolis – ein
eigentümliches archaisches Marmordach
- 103 ELKE RICHTER
Die Stadtmauern der triphyllischen Städte Samikon, Platiana
und Vrestos
- 175 IPHIGENEIA LEVENTI
In search of the statuary type of Aphrodite Sosandra
- 213 HENNER VON HESBERG
Konsolengeisa hellenistischer Zeitstellung aus Rhodos
– Ausdruck privaten Luxus in der Wohn- und Grabarchi-
tektur
- 257 BRIGITTE FREYER-SCHAUENBURG (†)
Νύμφαι ὀρεσκῶνι βαθύκολποι. Zum Nymphentypus
Samos – Tralles
- 281 LEONARDO FUDULI
The spolia in the Middle Byzantine cityscape of Athens
- 321 Hinweise für Autoren

Contents

- 1 RAIMON GRAELLS I FABREGAT – CLEMENS SCHMID
Votive weapons in the panhellenic sanctuary of Olympia
(10th–5th centuries B.C.): a diachronic analysis
- 23 WALTER-HERWIG SCHUCHHARDT (†) – AENNE OHNESORG
with the collaboration of VASILEIA MANIDAKI
The ›Small Rosettes Sima‹ on the Athens Acropolis – an
unusual Archaic marble roof
- 103 ELKE RICHTER
The city walls of the Triphylian cities Samikon, Platiana and
Vrestos
- 175 IPHIGENEIA LEVENTI
In search of the statuary type of Aphrodite Sosandra
- 213 HENNER VON HESBERG
Modillions of Hellenistic date from Rhodes – Expression of
private luxury in domestic and funerary architecture
- 257 BRIGITTE FREYER-SCHAUENBURG (†)
Νύμφαι ὀρεσκῶνι βαθύκολποι. On the nymph of the
Samos – Tralles type
- 281 LEONARDO FUDULI
The spolia in the Middle Byzantine cityscape of Athens
- 321 Information for authors

The spolia in the Middle Byzantine cityscape of Athens

LEONARDO FUDULI

Die Spolien im mittelbyzantinischen Stadtbild Athens

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG Eine Gruppe kleiner in mittelbyzantinischer Zeit (12.–13. Jahrhundert) erbauter Kirchen in Athen weist diverse Spolien auf, d. h. wiederverwendete Basen, Säulen, Kapitelle und Rahmen. Diese in der Regel aus Marmor gefertigten Stücke stammen von Denkmälern der antiken Stadt und wurden im Inneren der Kirchen zur Verschönerung der heiligsten Teile verwendet. Im vorliegenden Beitrag werden die Spolien unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des neuen Kontexts analysiert, wobei der Schwerpunkt auf der Geschichte des Gebäudes liegt, in dem sie sich befinden, sowie auf der Chronologie ihrer Wiederverwendung, wobei versucht wird, die Gründe für diese Praxis zu verstehen.

Schlagwörter Wiederverwendung; römischer Architekturdekor; byzantinische Kirchen; antike Marmorarbeiten.

ABSTRACT A group of small churches built during the Middle Byzantine age (12th–13th century) in the city of Athens show several *spolia*, i.e. reused bases, columns, capitals and frames. These, generally in marble, come from monuments of the ancient city and are placed inside the churches to embellish the most sacred parts of them. In the following paper the *spolia* will be analysed with particular attention to the new context focusing on the history of the building in which they are located, the chronology of their reuse, trying to understand the reasons for this practice.

Keywords reuse; Roman architectural decoration; Byzantine churches; ancient marble workpieces.

Υλικό δεύτερης χρήσης στο μεσοβυζαντινό αστικό τοπίο της Αθήνας

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ Μια ομάδα μικρών εκκλησιών στην Αθήνα, οι οποίες ανεγέρθηκαν κατά τη μεσοβυζαντινή περίοδο (12ος–13ος αιώνας), παρουσιάζει ποικίλο υλικό σε δεύτερη χρήση (*spolia*), και συγκεκριμένα βάσεις, κίονες, κιονόκρανα και πλαίσια. Αυτά τα κατά κύριο λόγο μαρμάρινα τμήματα προέρχονται από μνημεία της αρχαίας πόλης και χρησιμοποιήθηκαν στο εσωτερικό των εκκλησιών για τον διάκοσμο των ιερότερων μερών τους. Στο άρθρο αναλύεται το υλικό σε δεύτερη χρήση υπό το πρίσμα του νέου αυτού πλαισίου αναφοράς, με επίκεντρο την ιστορία του κτηρίου στο οποίο βρίσκονται τα εν λόγω τμήματα, καθώς και τη χρονολόγηση της επαναχρησιμοποίησής τους, ενώ παράλληλα επιχειρείται η κατανόηση των αιτιών αυτής της πρακτικής.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά Επαναχρησιμοποίηση. Ρωμαϊκός αρχιτεκτονικός διάκοσμος. Βυζαντινές εκκλησίες. Αρχαίες μαρμάρινες κατασκευές.

Although in recent decades¹ the reuse of ancient architectural elements has been a topic developed in several studies, it is not so for the city of Athens, where the subject does not seem to have experienced the same attention. The reasons for this could be manifold, not least among which are the scarcity of the phenomenon, or the remarkable alterations to buildings in which *spolia* have been employed.

This article offers an overview of this practice common up to the end of the ancient world. Even though confined to the urban area of Athens and without any pretention of completeness, it can yet be possible to shed light on the relationship between the ancient city and its artistic and cultural legacy throughout the Middle Ages and up to more recent times.

STATE OF PLAY

The book on the urban development of Athens by Ioannes Travlos primarily focuses on matters regarding the transformation of the city throughout the centuries. The chapters on the medieval age contain only a few and brief references to the reuse of ancient materials in the Athenian churches².

Charalambos Bouras in his study on Byzantine Athens³ reports many references to *spolia* reused in the Middle Byzantine (12th–13th centuries) churches of the city, and points out the episodic nature of the studies on Byzantine architecture and their frequent incompleteness. This imperfect record, identified by Bouras, at an important period in the history of the city has certainly had significant consequences on the studies of the identification and analysis of the reused ancient elements. They seem to have been almost completely neglected.

Greater attention in academic studies has been paid to the most famous churches built during this period, such as Panagia Gorgoepekoos (Παναγία Γοργοεπήκοος) or Agios Eleutherios (Άγιος Ελευθέριος), better known as Mikri Metropolis (Μικρή Μητρόπολη, *fig. 1*)⁴.

One of the earliest surveys, by Karl Michel and Adolf Struck, dating to the beginning of the 20th century, analyses the sculptural reuse of material embedded in the external façades of the building⁵.

The research of Henry Maguire⁶ in 1994 has the same leaning, whereas Bente Kiilerich⁷ in 2005 clearly demonstrates a different approach. She carefully analysed the elements reused on the outside of the church, not neglecting to consider the original intention of the builder regarding the replacement of the *spolia*; she argued for a later timing for the reuse, different from other scholars⁸. The article of Helen Saradi⁹ in 1997 is a key reference point: in that she

I am grateful to the Ephoreia of Antiquities of the City of Athens and the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports for permitting me to study the *spolia* in the Middle Byzantine churches of Athens and to publish the photos. Immeasurable thanks are due to Maria Beatriz Borba Florenzano, Dimitri Palaeothodoros, Helen Saradi, Yannis Varalis for many fruitful discussions and precious and wise advice on the topic. Sincerest thanks are owed to all colleagues and institutions that have supported my research, in particular Barbarà Carè, Antonio Corso, Nikolaos Karatsas, Viviana Spinella, the University of São Paulo, the colleagues of Labeca, the Gennadius Library, the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, the custodian staff of all the churches and sites visited. This paper was developed within the research project on the ancient Mediterranean cities of Labeca – MAE of the Universidade de São Paulo, directed by Maria Beatriz

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¹ For a useful summary on the reuse, its meaning and the bibliography, see Pensabene 2015a.

² Τραυλός 1960, 135–148. 150–162.

³ Bouras 2016, 1 f. He makes several references to the *spolia* reused in the churches of Athens, with significant photographic evidence, but he does not analyse them from a stylistic or chronological point of view.

⁴ For a complete bibliography on the building, see Kiilerich 2005, 95–114 and Bouras 2016, 176–184.

⁵ Michel – Struck 1906, 147 f.

⁶ Maguire 1994, 169–172.

⁷ Kiilerich 2005, 95–114.

⁸ For further details see *infra*, p. 312.

⁹ Saradi 1997, 395–423.

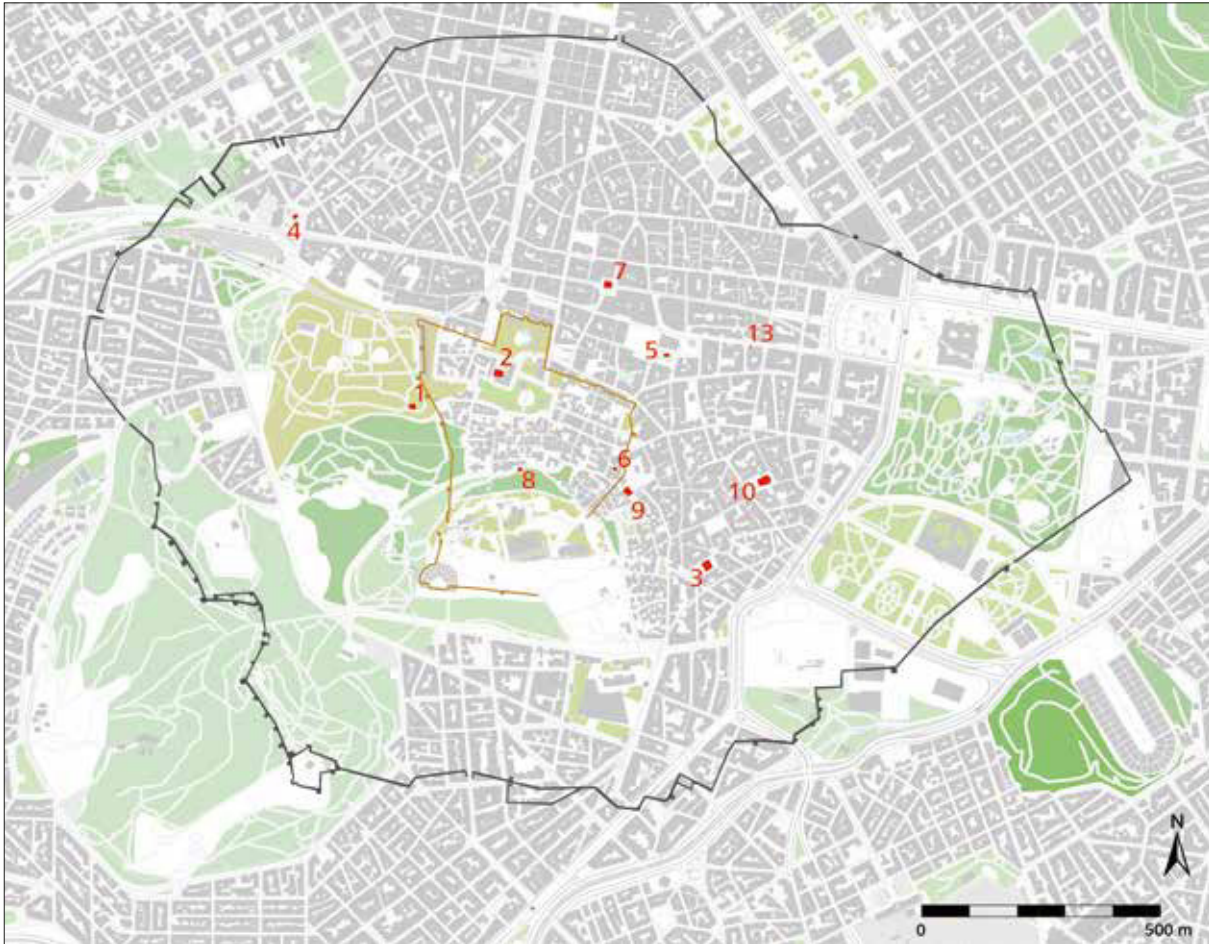


Fig. 1 Plan of Athens showing the ancient (grey) and Late Antique (brown) city wall and the churches mentioned in the text: 1. Agioi Apostoloi. – 2. Fethiye Mosque. – 3. Agia Aikaterini. – 4. Agioi Asomatoi. – 5. Panagia Gorgoepekoos (Mikri Metropolis). – 6. Agios Ioannes o Theologos. – 7. Kapnikarea. – 8. Metamorphosis tou Soteris. – 9. Agios Nikolaos Rangavas. – 10. Sotera of Kottakis. – 13. Agia Dynami

considers the Byzantine age in its entirety, citing a wide and varied series of case studies on the subject. In her interesting and recent inquiry, Sarah Adler Rous reviews all the recycling during Antiquity in Athens, but excludes that of the Middle Ages¹⁰.

In a significant article of 2013 entitled ›Spolia and spoilage of the archaeological environment‹, Stavros Oikonomidis in examining some areas of the city highlights how Athens can be considered »a city born from a city« because of the high level of *spolia* contained in many buildings¹¹. The author, however, provides a general view and does not specifically analyse the reused elements.

Lastly, among the reuse of the ancient architectural materials, it is worth noting numerous capitals reused as counterweights for olive oil presses, found in different areas of the city and catalogued in a recent study on olive oil production in Athens¹².

From this short summary two points are clear. The lack of specific studies on the subject, which isolate Athens in the literature of such matters, but also the absence of research by archaeologists. In most cases the cited scholars are historians or historians of art, with little interest therefore towards the *spolia* or any analysis of them. This circumstance is perhaps

¹⁰ Rous 2016; Rous 2019.

¹¹ Oikonomidis 2013, 337–354.

¹² Papi – Bigi 2015, 94–100.

due to the fact that the objects studied are located chronologically on a borderline between the Ancient and the Middle Ages. The difference between Athens and the western Mediterranean / Rome is evident: in the latter, the main studies have been conducted by archaeologists who, especially in recent decades, have turned their attention well beyond investigating a single reused object¹³. This breadth of vision is the obvious basis from which to start a study, for only then is one able to usefully focus attention on the context of reuse and then on the origins, intentions and significance of the practice.

THE LOCATION OF THE BUILDINGS STUDIED IN MEDIEVAL ATHENS

As Bouras highlighted in his introduction, the buildings of Byzantine Athens which have survived until today, other than anything recovered in excavations, consist of a few churches of modest size and frequently almost completely reworked over time. This situation is certainly in stark contrast with the quantity and variety of buildings and monuments of the ancient and Byzantine city that once played a significant role¹⁴. The majority of the Byzantine monuments were of a similar size and type of structure; surviving through the centuries, they were damaged or destroyed during the Greek War of Independence (1821–1832), after which the city underwent considerable alterations¹⁵.

The development of the city was substantially conditioned by geomorphological and topographical factors, such as the presence of ancient ruins. The city also developed in correspondence with the medieval fortifications: the lived-in areas remained always within the confines of the ancient city, occupying uninhabited areas for centuries. This new form of urbanization involved the new churches and monasteries, some of which were isolated (*fig. 2*)¹⁶.

The construction of houses of no great height allows the churches, despite their own rather small dimensions, to stand out in the urban landscape. Even so, these did not occupy a prominent position but were simply inserted into an urban fabric devoid of proper planning¹⁷.

The churches located within the walls of the ancient city are presented and analysed below¹⁸.

THE TYPE OF BUILDINGS STUDIED

The buildings date mainly from the same period, i.e. between the 11th and 12th centuries, are of the same type, and have suffered a similar fate in many cases¹⁹. Most, with very few exceptions, have undergone destructive restorations and reconstruction and are therefore not straightforward to study²⁰. The reconstruction and integrative restoration have at least

¹³ See Esch 2011, 13–31; Pensabene 2015b, 19–59.

¹⁴ Bouras 2016, 1 f.

¹⁵ On the development of the city after the Greek War of Independence, see Τσαυλός 1960, 235–258. On the abandonment of the Greek monuments of Athens, see Greenhalgh 2012, 101–103.

¹⁶ Mango 1994, 102 f.; Bouras 2016, 7–10 and Tzavella 2012.

¹⁷ On the absence of a city development plan, see Bouras 2016, 9 e; Buchwald 2007, 57–74.

¹⁸ I.e. the walls that protected the city until the middle Imperial age, cf. Τσαυλός 1960, 93 pl. 5. See also Baldini-Lippolis 1995, 169–190; Baldini 2014, 309–321; Bazzocchi 2014/2015, 217–256.

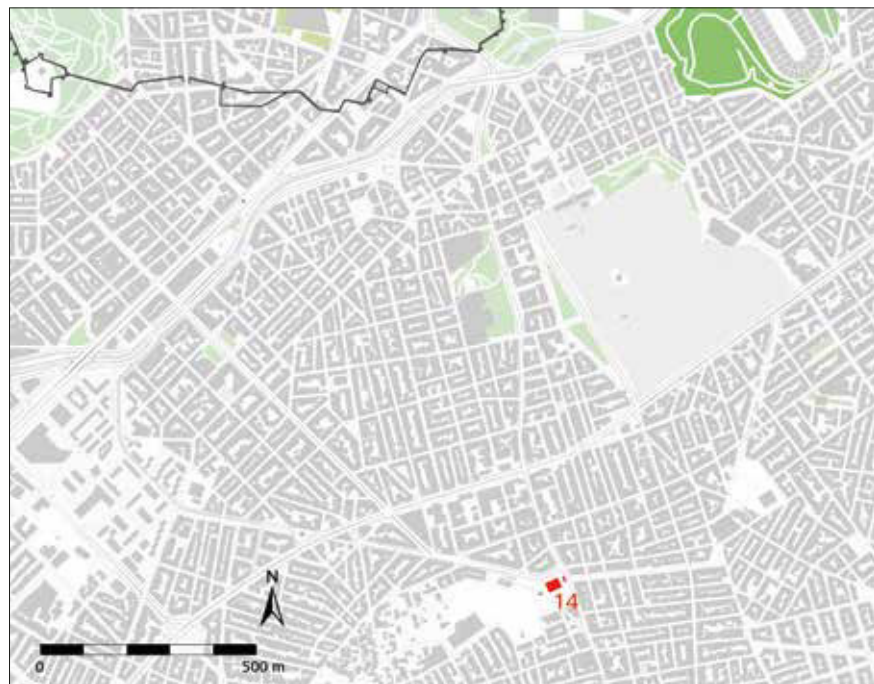
¹⁹ Krautheimer 1986, 379–395.

²⁰ For a summary of the restoration and reconstruction of the main mid-Byzantine churches of Athens between 1833 and 1939, see Χλέπα 2011, 42–59.

Fig. 2 Plan of Lykabettos area in Athens showing the Byzantine churches Homologetai (11) and Moni Petraki (12) mentioned in the text



Fig. 3 Plan of Neos Kosmos area with the church of Agios Ioannes Vouliagmenis (14)



preserved in most cases the cross-in-square domed plan, preceded by an endo-narthex, with the bema and hierarchically apsed prothesis and *diakonikon*.

The naos is separated from the bema and the endo-narthex by pillars, while the entire internal space is divided into nine squares by the columns. These have the fundamental function of flanking the arms of the cross-in-square; in most cases studied they are *spolia*, together with their capitals.

Due to the limited size of the churches, the builders chose columns not higher than 3 m, being probably easier to find in the same or a number of ruins. In the church of Kapnikarea (Εκκλησία της Παναγίας Καπνικαρέας), for example, the columns underwent readjustment, combining two overlapping shafts once belonging to different columns.

Although not always practised, the intention of the builder is often to arrange the columns in opposing pairs, i.e. one set arranged parallel to the entrance and the other placed parallel to the *templon* or to the iconostasis. This is particularly evident in the case of the church of the monastery of Moni Petraki (Μονή Ταξιαρχών Πετράκη) where columns made of marble from Karystos (*marmor carystium*) and of the same size are crowned with *Blattkelch* capitals, whilst two grey granite columns are crowned with Corinthian capitals. This did not prove possible in some cases, such as the church of Agia Aikaterini (Αγία Αικατερίνη): here the two *Blattkelch* capitals, which crown the iconostasis columns, are not of the same size and material. Another example is the church of Agioi Asomatoi (Άγιοι Ασώματοι) where similar Ionic-Attic bases, reused as capitals, do not crown columns of the same type.

The greater concentration of *spolia* (aside from sporadic cases of reuse of architectural elements within the walls of buildings) is therefore present in the naos space, and much less on the outside – where the *spolia* are predominantly reused to frame the access doors.

An exception here is represented by Mikri Mitropolis (Μικρή Μητρόπολη), which does not present columns inside, as well as the church of the Monastery of Kaisariani (*fig. 2*) where the exterior of the building contains decorative elements unknown in other contemporary churches.

ANALYSIS OF THE SPOLIA AND THEIR CONTEXTS

Although it cannot be considered a reused sacred place, but rather a preserved one, it is worth noting the case of the church of Agios Ioannes stin kolona (Άγιος Ιωάννης στην Κολώνα, *fig. 5*)²¹ located at the northern boundary of the ancient city (*fig. 4*). The current church dates back to the 19th century, but appears quite different from the one shown in the depictions of the 19th century travellers²². August Mommsen refers to the thaumaturgical powers attributed to a column (especially in healing fevers)²³ and although he has no information on the existence of a previous church in the place of the current one, his hypothesis must still be taken into consideration.

It is assumed that the carystium marble column, crowned by a 2nd century Corinthian capital (*fig. 6*)²⁴, came from one of the ancient buildings nearby²⁵, namely a late antique bathing structure found on the same block or, less likely, from within a house²⁶.

Agioi Apostoloi (Solaki)

Agioi Apostoloi (Άγιοι Απόστολοι, *fig. 7*) is one of the two churches in the area of the agora preserved until today (the other one is Agios Georgios [Άγιος Γεώργιος]). It is located in the south-eastern area of the agora (*fig. 1*), east of the Panathenaic Way and the post-Herulian walls. Its original construction on the foundations of a nymphaeum²⁷ dates to the period between the end of the 10th and the beginning of the 11th centuries, and for this reason it is one of the oldest churches of the Middle Byzantine period²⁸. The building underwent restoration work at the beginning of the 17th century, but it was after the Greek War of Independence

²¹ Ξυγγόπουλος 1929, 111. The church, only mentioned in the study of Bouras, is considered post-Byzantine, see Bouras 2016, 49 n. 300. Furthermore, it has long been identified with the Agios Ioannes Prodromos church, see Grandstrem et al. 1976, 26–28.

²² Bendtsen 1993, 43 fig. 76; Μπίσης 1940, 49.

²³ Mommsen 1868, 144–148.

²⁴ It is not dated by Heilmeyer 1970, 74 n. 289; a proposed

date to the Tetrarchic age is in Déroche 1987, 435. All dates in this article are A.D., unless qualified by B.C.

²⁵ The different hypotheses are listed by Marchiandi 2014, 827, fig. 477.

²⁶ Greco 2014a, 828–830.

²⁷ For the complex stratigraphy of the area, see Greco 2014b, 1117–1119; 1123 f.

²⁸ Frantz 1971, 3–6; Frantz 1988.

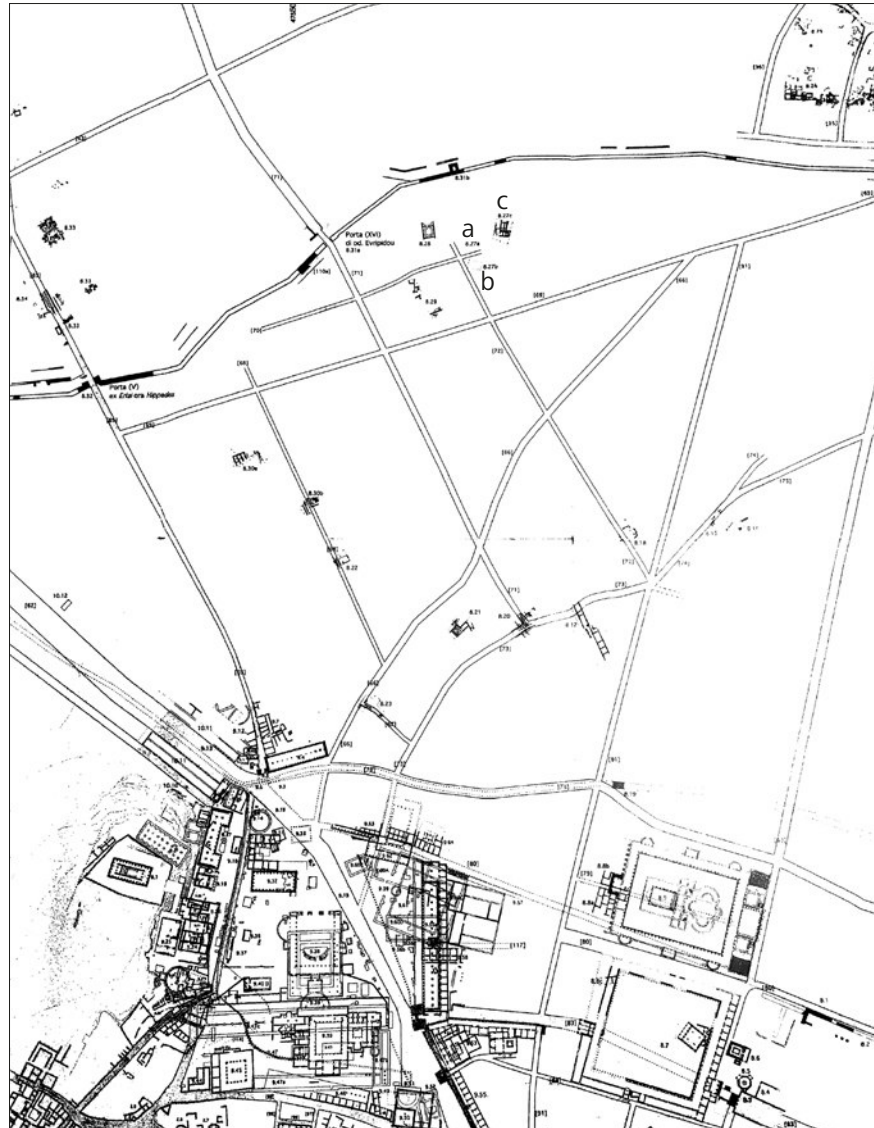


Fig. 4 Map showing the location of the church of Agios Ioannes stin kolona (a), ruins of late Roman baths (b), housing structure of Platia Theatrou (c)

that the church was partly destroyed (*fig. 8*). It was subjected to significant restoration in 1836, 1854 and between 1876 to 1882²⁹. The church, after having been subjected to archaeological investigations between 1954 and 1956, has continued to remain the same.

From an architectural point of view, the building comprises a single complex: the central plan; the tetraconch and the cross-in-square plan being amalgamated into one. It is possible to suppose the presence of a fourth western apse and a tripartite narthex, both of which were probably destroyed during the Greek War of Independence, and after which the west wing of the building was extended³⁰.

Regarding the reuse visible in the interior of the church, some clarifications are necessary: they concern essentially the documented reconstruction of the 1950s³¹. The only original column still in situ is the first one on the right, in Hymettian marble, currently equipped with metal clips for support (*fig. 9*). The other three original columns were substituted, due to

²⁹ Detailed references to restorations are in Frantz 1971, 35–42; for a recent recap and the related bibliography, see Χλέπα 2011, 43.

³⁰ Bouras 2016, 132.

³¹ Frantz 1971, 40–42.



Fig. 5 Agios Ioannes stin kolona



Fig. 6 Agios Ioannes stin kolona, Corinthian capital

their bad preservation, by new ones imitating the greyish colour of the original marble. Moreover, the original second column to the left, located to the north-east, had already been replaced in ancient times by a column formed from about twenty poros blocks, crowned by an Ionic base reused as a capital (*fig. 10*)³², which was then further substituted in the 1950s by a stone reproduction of one of the two Corinthian capitals preserved in the church³³.

There are remains of the original two columns in the space in front of the church. They rest on ancient bases and show signs of reworking so as to be adapted to their new use. According to Frantz some visible signs on them, such as a carved groove, could be proof of their origin from the nymphaeum, on which the church and the columns directly stand.

In light of this, the intention to confer a homogeneity of appearance to the interior of the church is clear. It could also be inferred by the substitution employing columns imitating the colour of the original marble and by the adoption of the copies of the capitals, the originals of which can be seen at the entrance of the building. Even on the second column on the left, where there was originally an Ionic-inverted base used as a capital, a replica of the best preserved original Corinthian capitals was used, along with the additions of the missing parts.

The *Blattkelch* capital (*fig. 11*) on the first column on the right consists of a crown of eight acanthus leaves, divided into five lobes, with ringed voids and raised edges, and one of lance-shaped leaves with central ribs and slightly raised edges detectable. The capital was already known to Börker who included it in his collection, dating it to the late Hadrianic age based on the design of the acanthus³⁴.

³² See Frantz 1971, 7 pl. 5, f.

³³ Frantz 1971, 41.

³⁴ Börker 1965, 103 f. pl. 41 cat. BK 58; Déroche 1987, 427. For the type of acanthus used, see also Heilmeyer 1970, 73 f. pls. 17, 4; 18, 1. 2.



Fig. 7 Agioi Apostoloi



Fig. 8 Agioi Apostoloi, the church before the reconstruction

The second capital to the right is a copy put in place during the last restoration. The original³⁵ model is to be seen in the area in front of the church, to the left of the access staircase which leads to the space in front (fig. 12).

The *imum folium* leaves are broad, with a primary vein marked by deep grooves and separated by ringed voids in five lobes, arranged two on each side. The *secundum folium* leaves are similar to the first, extending around a primary vein marked by deep grooves arising from the base of the *kalathos*.

The *cauliculi* are formed by three distinct leaves and crowned by a rim with three sepals. Similarly, the chalices (*calyx*) formed by two leaves characterized by deep grooves and with an elongated eyelet.

The helices are ribbon-shaped with raised edges, separated from the stem of the abacus flower in the centre. The volutes are not totally preserved but broken at the base. The concave

³⁵ H 56.5 cm; W 60 cm; *Imum folium* H 18 cm; *Secundum folium* (at the base of the stem) H 30 cm.



Fig. 9 Agioi Apostoloi, interior



Fig. 10 Agioi Apostoloi, interior before the reconstruction

horizontal profile of the abacus is edgeless and crowned with a drafted margin.

The capital shows the typological features of the classical capitals as elaborated in the Forum of Augustus³⁶; the simplification of the leaf ornamentation and a certain rigidity of the forms suggest a dating at the middle of the 1st century.

Also in place of the ancient first capital on the left there is currently a replica, placed at the time of the restoration that also includes the missing parts of the original. This last is located in the area in front of the church and still shows the traces of white paint with which it was covered³⁷.

The acanthus leaves have the primary vein crossed by lateral grooves and divided into five (*imum folium*) and three (*secundum folium*) lobes by elongated eyelet.

The *cauliculi* are formed by two leaves and crowned by cord-shaped rim. Even the chalices are formed by leaves but they are only partially preserved.

The helices are ribbon-shaped with raised edges, separated from the stem of the central flower. The volutes are not totally preserved but broken at the base. The convex horizontal profile abacus is edgeless and crowned with a drafted margin.

From a stylistic point of view the capital is comparable to those of the monument of Philopappos³⁸, for this reason it could be datable in the first twenty-five years of the 2nd century B.C.

The main differences with respect to the examples mentioned above are due to a greater affinity of the capital of Agioi Apostoloi with Classical models, as it seems evident by a greater height of the upper part of the *kalathos* and the contrast between the smooth surfaces and the carved foliage.

³⁶ See Heilmeyer 1970, pl. 3, 2 and Pensabene 2015a, 909 no. 390 fig. 361

³⁷ H 49 cm; W 57 cm; *Imum folium* H 18 cm; *Secundum folium* H 18.5 cm.

³⁸ Börker describes the capital (Börker 1965, 74 pl. 23, KK 71) comparing it with Philopappos monument

KK 66. Regarding the Philopappos monument, see Flämig 2007, 55–58. Although the scholar tackled issues concerning the typology of the monument in a very detailed way, he does not take the capitals into consideration. See also Carando 2011, 364–367.



Fig. 11 Agioi Apostoloi, interior,
Blattkelch capital on first right column



Fig. 12 Agioi Apostoloi, outside,
original Corinthian capital

Agios Nikolaos Rangavas (Ἅγιος Νικόλαος Ραγκαβά)

The church in the Plaka district (*fig. 1*) was transformed after the creation of a parish in the 19th century. An important restoration in the early 1980s was useful in permitting an intensive appreciation of the monument³⁹. The original cross-in-square domed church survives in the north-eastern part of the complex, currently deprived of both the narthex and the façade. The wall of the narthex was replaced with two columns, and the façade was rebuilt extending the western side of the entire building. On the southern side of the church an apsidal nave was added along the length of the entire new building (*fig. 13*). This was connected with two breaks in the original wall corresponding to the bema and an arm of the cross-in-square, and ran across one open space, separated by two columns and a pillar in the 19th century extension⁴⁰. As shown by the jambs of an external entrance on the northern side still in situ, the new building underwent a raising of the floor level of about one metre.

In the interior and on the outside there are some reused elements, such as an Ionic capital (*fig. 14*) incorporated into the buttress on the southern side of the building⁴¹, a grey granite column⁴² used as a base for a seat (*fig. 15*) in the courtyard of the church and a fragment

³⁹ On the restoration, see Κουνουπιώτου-Μανωλεσοῦ 2003, 55–62.

⁴⁰ Bouras 2016, 248–254, figs. 195. 198.

⁴¹ H 22 cm; W 74 cm. Only two sides are visible. The main side is heavily damaged, almost illegible. The *kyma* consists of three eggs, two of which are barely visible, the central one and the darts have been completely eroded. The lower edge of the echinus is on

the same line that crosses the centre of the volutes. At the centre of the pulvinus there is only one *balteus* formed by four particular rounded ribbons which together with the other elements described above contributes towards suggesting a date during the Augustan period, see Pensabene 2015a, 875 no. 62 fig. 32, see also Bingöl 1980, pl. 22. 165.

⁴² H 256 cm; H end of the shaft 6 cm.

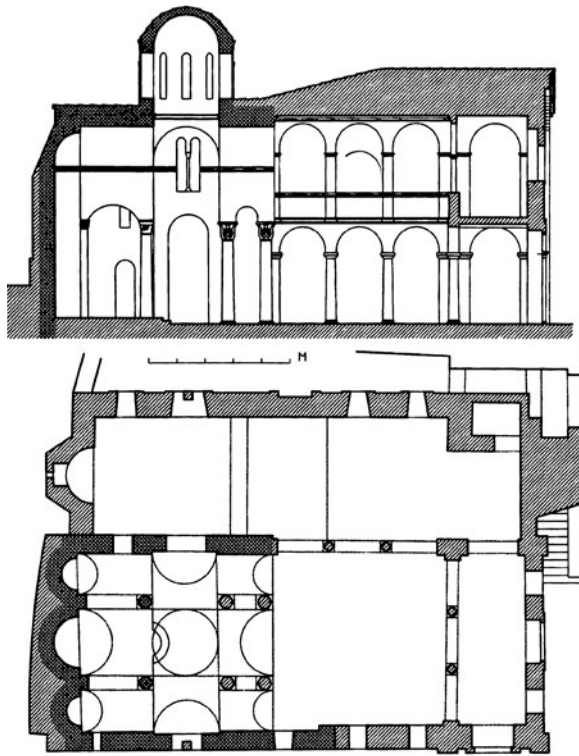


Fig. 13 Agios Nikolaos Rangavas,
plan of the present church



Fig. 14 Agios Nikolaos Rangavas, fragment of mar-
ble acanthus leaves embedded into the southern wall



Fig. 15 Agios Nikolaos Rangavas, West façade,
reused Ionic capital



Fig. 16 Agios Nikolaos Rangavas,
Blattkelch capital reused as support of the altar



Fig. 17 Agios Nikolaos Rangavas,
grey granite column used as a base for a seat
in the courtyard of the church

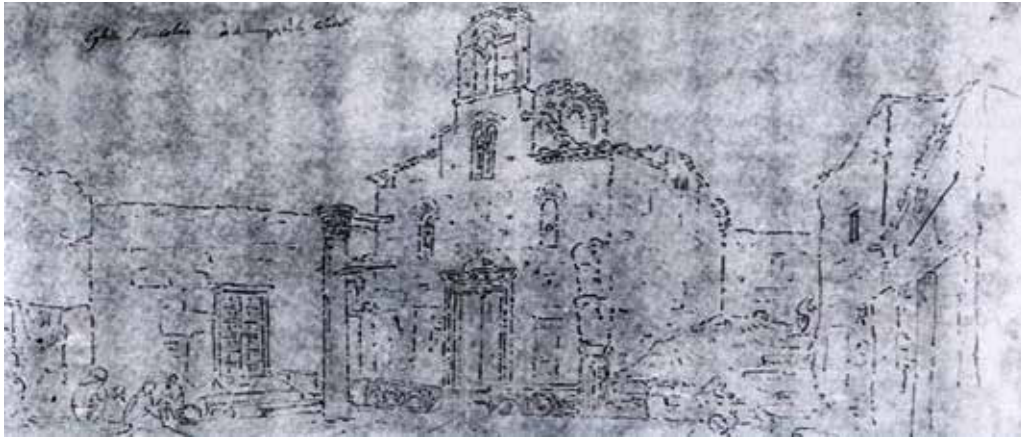


Fig. 18 Agios Nikolaos Rangavas, L. F. S. Fauvel, ca. 1800

of marble acanthus leaves⁴³ embedded into the southern wall (*fig. 16*) of the 19th century extension of the building. The stylistic rendering of the last is rather coarse and the piece has probably undergone reworking to be suitable for reuse.

In the interior of the church the *spolia* have been reused mainly in the naos area behind the iconostasis and therefore are almost completely hidden to the eye.

Both the columns and the capitals of the naos have been reused. The right column, currently supported by a wooden cage, is tapered to the top and crowned by a Byzantine capital. The left column holds a Byzantine capital of similar size, but in order to match the height of the right-hand column, it is composed of two shafts: a lower shaft lacking its top and an upper shorter component.

Even the columns in front of the bema, currently covered by stucco, are *spolia*. In the left column it is possible to see the carystium marble of which it is composed, through a small chink.

Similarly hidden behind the iconostasis there is a *Blattkelch* capital⁴⁴, reused as support of the altar (*fig. 17*). It shows a ring of eight *acanthus spinosus* leaves. These leaves are divided into three lobes, the tips of which touch each other, producing a deeply-shaded and elongated eye-shape. The spaces are filled with low flat lance-shaped leaves that slightly exceed the height of those of the acanthus. The upper half of the *kalathos* is occupied by a crown of lance-shaped leaves with their central veins, surmounted by a square abacus. The use of the *acanthus spinosus* in the *imum folium* together with the lance-shaped leaves dates the capital around the middle of the 2nd century, similarly to the capitals of the Odeum of Corinth⁴⁵.

It is not certain whether the capital at the base of the altar can be identified with the one depicted in a 19th century drawing preserved in the Louvre (*fig. 18*)⁴⁶. This drawing shows the church in its original form (before the 19th century transformations), when it belonged to the Hellenic school with a cross-in-square domed plan with a bell tower. The picture shows

⁴³ H 24 cm; W 31 cm. The capital had already been identified by Bouras 2016, 253. It belongs to the central part of a Corinthian *anta* capital, which is considered to be related to a very prolific type, the most famous example of which is visible in the Arch of Hadrian, see Börker 1965, 100 pl. 37, KK 77; Kosmopoulos 2018, 80 with further bibliography.

⁴⁴ H 65 cm, maximum W 62 cm; see Bouras 2016, fig. 200.

⁴⁵ Liljenstolpe 1997/1998, 101 fig. 28. 29; see also *Der Kleinasiatische Typus* of Börker 1965, 198 pl. 97.

⁴⁶ Draftsman L. F. S. Fauvel, see Auzépy – Grélois 2001, 165 fig. 98.

some details worthy of attention: on the left side of the façade there is clearly a smooth column, surmounted by a capital with leaves, and linked to the façade by two props⁴⁷. On the right side of the facade a fluted column clearly stands out, surmounted by the beginning of an arch, which according to Bouras could belong to an exo-narthex or in any case to a portico⁴⁸. In both cases, despite the uncertainty relating to the structures to which they belong, the presence of *spolia* in the building is evident from the drawing. Even the orthostates, reused in the front, could come from an unidentified monument⁴⁹.

Agios Ioannes o Theologos (Άγιος Ιωάννης ο Θεολόγος)

Not far from the church of Agios Nikolaos, as one walks along Prytaneiou Street towards Monastiraki, the Exarchia tou Panaghioy Taphou rises on the right side. The church's east-west axis runs in parallel to the crags of the hill of the acropolis. It is totally different from the churches here examined – both in the plan and chronology, its construction is rather recent. In the large fenced-in space next to the church on the downstream side, it is possible to identify a small number of *spolia*, adorning the garden, such as: a column shaft reworked with a hole at the bottom for the flow of water, a grey granite column with top of the shaft and a fragmentary Corinthian capital.

On the crag below the church of the Exarchia tou Panaghioy Taphou, the small church of Agios Ioannes o Theologos (figs. 1. 19) stands, partly incorporated into modern buildings. The two-columned cross-in-square domed church is in a satisfactory state, especially after the restoration of the 1970s⁵⁰.

According to Bouras' analysis of the 19th century representation of the building, there was a *tribelon*, to which belonged the two pillars separating the naos from the narthex⁵¹.

Both columns of the church are crowned with two capitals following a widespread trend in contemporary architecture of the 12th century, for which a large number of cases⁵² is available: it is perhaps to reproduce the impost capital (figs. 20. 21)⁵³.

Both columns are monolithic, the right in carystium marble⁵⁴ and the left in grey marble⁵⁵. Both show the top part of the shaft but it is not possible to know the base type, since



Fig. 19 Agios Ioannes o Theologos, East façade

⁴⁷ Bouras identifies the capital depicted in the drawing as the one reused in the altar, Bouras 2016, 251.

⁴⁸ Bouras 2016, 251.

⁴⁹ Greco 2011, 519 f. fig. 289. 290.

⁵⁰ See Κουνουπιώτου-Μανωλεσσού 1975, 140–150.

⁵¹ Bouras 2016, 2012.

⁵² Μπούρας – Μπούρας 2002, 35–36.

⁵³ Frantz 1961, fig. 15. Similar examples of reuse are in the church of Taxiarches near Carystos in Euboea, see Μπούρας – Μπούρας 2002, 138–140.

⁵⁴ H 243 cm; it is tapered upwards (base Dm 38.8 cm; top of the shaft Dm 34.6 cm); top of the shaft H 4.5 cm.

⁵⁵ H 251 cm, it is tapered upwards (base Dm 35.9 cm; top of the shaft Dm 31 cm), top of the shaft H 3.5 cm.



Fig. 20 Agios Ioannes o Theologos, four-sided Ionic and Corinthianizing capitals on the right column



Fig. 21 Agios Ioannes o Theologos, Ionic and Blattkelch capital on the left column

the shaft extends below the floor level. This last was probably raised during the restoration.

In spite of their similar dimensions, which was probably the reason they were chosen to be a couple, the Corinthian capitals placed on the columns are different.

The four-sided Ionic capital⁵⁶ placed on the right column (*fig. 20*) shows an egg-and-tongue Ionic *kymation*. The three full eggs, slightly pointed, are framed by thinly carved shells and flanked by half-palmettes with four petals curling upward. The canal is concave and at the point of its maximum height is equal to that of the height of the echinus. The concave ribbon volutes are bordered by a drafted margin, and the line that joins the volute eyes passes approximately through the middle of the echinus' height.

The characteristics of the capital allow it to be traced back to that classicist vein typical of the Augustan age, allowing it to be dated within the first half of the 1st century AD⁵⁷.

Above the Ionic capital there is a Corinthianizing *anta* capital (*fig. 20*)⁵⁸. The *kalathos* is covered by four S-shaped leaves of *acanthus mollis* divided into five lobes, with an elongated eyelet; upon the leaves there is an Ionic *kyma* on which are four palmettes, one on each side, alternately open and closed. The helices are not supported by *caules* and are dominated by the abacus flower. The type is comparable with a capital from the Acropolis, which Christoph Börker considers to be of the late Trajanic and Hadrianic period⁵⁹. Based on the design of the *acanthus*, however, it is much more likely that it derives from late 2nd century to early 3rd century AD models and is not to be dated before the late 4th to early 5th century AD⁶⁰.

⁵⁶ H 15.4 cm; W 48.5 cm.

⁵⁷ Pensabene 2015a, 875 no. 63 fig. 33.

⁵⁸ H 34.5 cm; W 43 cm.

⁵⁹ Börker 1965, 152.

⁶⁰ About this type, see Déroche 1987, 437.

The Ionic capital⁶¹ placed on the left column (*fig. 21*) has only the central part of the *ky-mation* flat and in shallow relief. The eggs alternate with darts and the half-palmettes have three petals: the uppermost curling upward; the others curling downward. The canal is low and straight and the concave ribbon volutes are bordered by a flat strip. The line that joins the eyes of the volutes passes approximately through the base of the echinus. The abacus has its upper part moulded as a necking ring. The bolster is decorated by three astragals that separate two narrow bands.

This type originates from post-Hadrianic capitals of Attic tradition in Pentelic marble but with a simple design: a reduced chiaroscuro and decorative effects based on flat silhouettes⁶². Even the bolster shows an Attic decoration of Classic and Hellenistic tradition that survives also in Hadrian's Villa capitals⁶³. Based on this data, it can be dated to the middle of the 2nd century AD.

The *Blattkelch* capital⁶⁴ (*fig. 21*) shows damaged leaves and a reworked abacus which probably had square profile. The *imum folium* has eight acanthus leaves, occupying two thirds of the entire *kalathos*, and the *secundum folium* has 16 lance-shaped leaves. The date is probably 2nd century BC⁶⁵.

Agia Aikaterini (Αγία Αικατερίνη)

The church stands in a small square along Lysikratous Street in the Plaka district, between the hill of the acropolis and the Olympieion (*fig. 1*). It is part of a multi-layered archaeological area, visible at around 3.5 metres below the current street level, a few meters away from the façade of the church.

The oldest phase shows a small part of an Ionic marble portico⁶⁶ that probably continues below the church. According to the most recent interpretations the portico could belong to the *Prytaneum*⁶⁷ or *Serapeion* known through the literary sources⁶⁸ the last phase of which would be dated in the 2nd century⁶⁹.

The church has a colonnade and a cross-in-square layout with narthex⁷⁰. The data on the church is scarce and old⁷¹: it was badly damaged during the Greek War of Independence, after which it was subjected to substantial reconstruction, especially concerning the western part and the dome⁷². On this occasion two of the four columns were replaced, as can be inferred from the modern capitals placed on these⁷³.

The two columns embedded in the iconostasis, currently covered with paint (white on the shaft and gold on the capital⁷⁴), probably belong to the previous church; it is not possible to describe and correctly identify the type of the material they are of (*fig. 22*). Although the

⁶¹ H 14 cm, W 46.3 cm

⁶² For the capital from Pentelic quarries, see Herrmann 1988, 71–76.

⁶³ Herrmann 1988, 19.

⁶⁴ H 39 cm; W 42 cm.

⁶⁵ Type IIa, cf. Liljenstolpe 1997/1998, 94; Börker 1965, no. 14 pl. 18, see also Doulfis 2016, 27. 28, figs. 2–4.

⁶⁶ The portico was also standing in the last century, as it was seen and designed by travellers cf. Bendtsen 1993, 41 fig. 69.

⁶⁷ This is assumed by Schmalz 2006, 33–81.

⁶⁸ Paus. 1, 18, 4.

⁶⁹ The chronology could be proven by the presence of some 2nd century Corinthian capitals. For further details and bibliography, see Greco 2011, 525 f. A

hypothesis of the reconstruction is in Lippolis 1995, 43–67 and Corso 2010/2011, 69–80.

⁷⁰ The most probable date is the second quarter of the 11th century, see Megaw 1931/1932, 126; with which Bouras agrees, see Bouras 2016, 143.

⁷¹ In 1767 the church became the *metochion* (μετόχιον) of St. Catherine's Monastery (Mount Sinai), see Bouras 2016, 140.

⁷² On the reconstruction after the Greek War of Independence, see Καράνη 2007, 147–156.

⁷³ For a resume on the transformations of the church and the bibliography, see Χλέπα 2011, 42 f.

⁷⁴ For similar examples in the West Mediterranean, see S. Maria dell'Ammiraglio in Palermo, Fuduli 2022, 176–180.



Fig. 22 Agia Aikaterini, ▷
interior, iconostasis

Fig. 24 Agia Aikaterini, △
Blattkelch capital on the
left column

Fig. 23 Agia Aikaterini, ▽
Blattkelch capital on the
right column



two *Blattkelch* capitals on the columns of the iconostasis have the same dimensions and were constructed in pairs⁷⁵, they are fairly different. The capital on the right (*fig. 23*) has a *kalathos* half-covered with rings of acanthus leaves and the other half by sepals. The acanthus leaves are simple, flat and with few engraved details, save the elongated eyelets. The leaves are divided from one another by the lower part of the sepal, which begins almost at the base of the capital. The abacus is missing, perhaps reworked. From its pattern, the capital can be compared to 2nd century capitals⁷⁶, with respect to which there are stylistic differences due

⁷⁵ The capitals are considered to be early Christian by Καράνη 2007, 152 f. fig. 6.

⁷⁶ Börker 1965, 77 f. pl. 24; pl. 26, BK 24.



Fig. 25 Moni Petraki, interior

to a simplification of the foliage. For this reason, it is highly probable they can be dated not earlier than the 3rd century. Unlike the right capital, the one on the left side (*fig. 24*) presents only one third of the *kalathos* occupied by a ring of acanthus leaves, while the sepals occupy the greater part. The acanthus leaves are flat and wide, with a few engraved details, such as the middle vein. They are divided into five jagged lobes, with elongated eyelets, each-leaf edge touching that of the adjacent leaf. The abacus is missing, perhaps reworked. The stylistic analysis allows to compare it to a long-lasting style known in Athens starting from Agrippa's Odeum⁷⁷. The acanthus and the sepals have extremely polished tips, suggesting they could be dated from the Severan age onwards⁷⁸.

Katholikon of Moni Petraki monastery (Μονή Πετράκη)

Despite being placed in an extra-urban position, outside the historic city (*fig. 2*), the *katholikon* of the Monastery represents, unlike the buildings seen so far, a rare case of continuity from the 10th century until today, with only one significant phase of abandonment between 1550 and 1673⁷⁹. As Bouras has highlighted, the continuity of the building's use has given rise to significant modifications that have altered its forms, creating interpretative problems relating to its typology on which there is a documented debate⁸⁰. The building cannot be classified as a cross-in square-domed church, as indeed are most of its contemporary churches, and as affirmed by Maria Sotiriou in a study in the 1960s⁸¹ together with several scholars,

⁷⁷ I.e. IIA cf. Liljenstolpe 1997/1998, 94. See also Börker 1965, 64 f. pl. 18, BK 8.

⁷⁸ See Liljenstolpe 1997/1998, 94.

⁷⁹ Bouras 2016, 259–264.

⁸⁰ For this topic and the bibliography, see Bouras 2016, 259–262.

⁸¹ Σωτηρίου 1960/1961, 101–129.

but rather to the four-columned type with compact bema, similar to Agia Aikaterini⁸². Two phases of the building can be found, one dating back to the first half of the 10th century and the second to the 12th century. It is difficult to date the placement of the reused columns and capitals in the naos, considering the many interventions of the modern age⁸³ – such as the addition of the narthex in 1804, built on the previous foundations. However there is no reason to doubt that they can be dated back to the original phase of the church.

In a detailed monographic study of the entire complex, only a paragraph is dedicated to the capitals, of which only a meagre description is presented, without any interest in their chronology. The author makes a distinction only between the three definitely Roman capitals, and the remaining one on the second column on the right, which probably dates back to medieval times and was fashioned after ancient models⁸⁴.

The four columns and three of the capitals that crown them are *spolia* (fig. 25)⁸⁵. The first column on the left in grey marble⁸⁶ holds a Corinthian capital (fig. 26)⁸⁷. The foliage occupies two thirds of the *kala-thos* height. S-shaped acanthus leaves with a main vein marked by deep grooves and separated by eyelets in five concave lobes are arranged two on each side. The *cauliculi* are formed by four distinct leaves and crowned by a cord-shaped rim. The chalices are formed by two leaves separated by deep grooves and elongated eyelets.

There are ribbon-shaped flat helices, separated by the stem of an abacus flower that reproduces a rope pattern. The volutes are partially preserved and the moulded abacus is formed with cable and ovolo; the



Fig. 26 Moni Petraki,
Corinthian capital on the first left column



Fig. 27 Moni Petraki, Blattkelch capital
on the second left column

⁸² See supra, p. 296.

⁸³ On the modern phases, see Ορλάνδος 1939/1940, 207 f.

⁸⁴ Στούφη-Πουλημένου 2003, 38 f. figs. 23 α–δ.

⁸⁵ According to Bouras (2016, 264) below the current floor level the bases of the columns would be preserved. It is rather difficult to ascertain this, especially in light of the fact that visible bases were not found

in other contemporary Athens churches. A reference to the capitals, without stylistic analysis or hypotheses about their chronology is in Στούφη-Πουλημένου 2003, 38 f.

⁸⁶ Tapered upward: H 293 cm; Dm 40.7 (base), 35.6 cm (2/3 H); H top of the shaft 7.5 cm.

⁸⁷ H 44 cm; W 51 cm; H *imum folium* 16 cm; H *secundum folium* 14 cm; *Cauliculus* H 8 cm; abacus H 5 cm.



Fig. 28 Moni Petraki,
Blattkelch capital on the first right column



Fig. 29 Moni Petraki,
Blattkelch capital on the second right column

flower has not been preserved. The second left column⁸⁸, embedded in the *tribelon*, similar to the one on the right side, holds a capital with leaves (*fig. 27*)⁸⁹. The first column on the right⁹⁰, lacking its original *sommoscapo*, was probably re-adapted and reworked, and now holds a *Blattkelch* capital⁹¹ and an impost block with Ionic *kyma* (*fig. 28*)⁹². Both can be considered related to the same type that presents a crown of eight acanthus leaves and a second of 16 sepals that begin at the top of the space between the leaves with a straight abacus. The main differences between them concern their dimensions: the capital on the first right column is larger. In addition, its leaves are wider with lobes separated by elongated eyelets; however the other capital has a simpler acanthus design which is characterized by leaves with very narrow lobes around the middle vein and internal details indicated by a few strokes. From these stylistic differences it is possible to date the first capital on the right to the second half of the 2nd century, while the second capital on the left can be dated a bit later between the 2nd and 3rd centuries⁹³.

The second right column⁹⁴ is made of carystium marble, and holds a *Blattkelch* capital imitation (*fig. 29*)⁹⁵, evident first of all from the acanthus leaves, and secondly from the sepals of the upper crown. It is not possible to say exactly when this capital was introduced but it

⁸⁸ H 276 cm; Dm (medium H) 36.6 cm; top of the shaft H 5 cm.

⁸⁹ H 41 cm; W 49 cm; H *imum folium* 17 cm; H *secundum folium* 17 cm.

⁹⁰ H 289 cm; Dm 49.9 cm (base); 41.3 (at about 2/3 of the height).

⁹¹ H 46 cm; W 52 cm; H *imum folium* 21 cm; H *secundum folium* 18 cm.

⁹² H 28 cm; W 80 cm, *Ovolus* H 8 cm.

⁹³ Cf. Börker 1965, 84 pl.32, BK 47–48 e 180; pl.72, BK 65.

⁹⁴ H 278 cm; Dm 35.9 cm (medium height); top of the shaft: H 5 cm.

⁹⁵ The literature on ancient architectural element imitations during the medieval times, especially in the West, is very wide. In general see: Pensabene 2015b, 15–59. For Rome: Pensabene 2015a, 894–904. 969. 972. For Palermo during Islamic rule: Fuduli 2022, 43–54. For Norman Palermo: Fuduli 2022, 47–81.

seems possible to hypothesize that it was at the time of the construction of the building in an attempt to provide a decorative element similar to those already reused.

Metamorphosis tou Soteris (Μεταμορφώσης του Σωτήρος, Plaka)

Located on the northern slopes of the acropolis (*fig. 1*), the church dates to the 12th century⁹⁶. The building has a simple cross-in-square domed plan without narthex. On the southern side there is a chapel carved into the rock, probably an original crypt which later underwent enlargements, perhaps under Ottoman rule⁹⁷. The 1966 restoration brought to light some burials beneath the floor⁹⁸. Inside the building the *spolia* are variously distributed throughout the naos, chapel and presbytery. All the four monolithic columns of the naos and their capitals have been reused (*fig. 30*). They are made from different materials: the first right column consists of two drums⁹⁹ (the lower one in greyish marble and the upper one in Hymettian marble); the second right column is in white marble¹⁰⁰; the first left column is in carystium marble¹⁰¹; and



Fig. 30 Metamorphosis tou Soteris, grey marble shaft



Fig. 31 Metamorphosis tou Soteris, interior

⁹⁶ On the chronology of the church, see Bouras 2016, 245–247. The church is shown complete in a drawing of 1853, cf. Bendtsen 1993, 44, fig. 82 and in 19th century lithography of 1858, cf. Chenavard 1858. According to Bouras it survives only partially intact, having been subjected to multiple expansions and restorations: in particular, to enlarge the interior space the eastern and western walls were demolished and, after the Greek War of Independence, the building was judged demolished, cf. Papageorgiou Venetas 2001, 81 fig. 28.

⁹⁷ For an overview on the Ottoman Athens, see Tolia 2019, 24–36.

⁹⁸ Λαζαρίδης 1966, 113.

⁹⁹ H 297 cm (lower drum: 34.5 cm + upper drum: 262.5 cm); Dm 39.9 cm (low) and 35 cm (medium height); top of the shaft: H 6 cm, end of the shaft: H 7.5 cm.

¹⁰⁰ H 296 cm; Dm 40.11 cm (lower point), 36.2 cm (mid-point); top of the shaft: H 4 cm; end of the shaft with *apophyge* (H 4 cm) visible only by the East side.

¹⁰¹ H 298 cm; Dm 36.6 cm (lower point), 35.9 cm (mid-point); top of the shaft (damaged): H 3 cm; end of the shaft: H 4 cm.



Fig. 32 Metamorphosis tou Soteris, Ionic-Attic bases reused as capitals on the first and second left column

the second left column is in grey marble¹⁰². To the right of the entrance of the southern compartment, there is a fragment of a marble *kioniskos* (fig. 31)¹⁰³. Despite the poor state of conservation, it is evident that the marble is imported (*lapis niger?*); although a certain dating is not possible, it is likely that the piece can be dated to the imperial age¹⁰⁴. In the same space, the access to the crypt on the left side has an Ionic-Attic base¹⁰⁵ with an upside-down plinth reused as capital, probably late Imperial (fig. 32).

Although at first glance the naos capital-bases can seem similar, a more careful analysis reveals some significant differences that allow, despite their belonging to the same type, one to consider the capitals of the two columns facing the iconostasis as a pair, while the other two have their own individual characteristics.

The base-capitals of the second right and left columns (fig. 33) consist of a lower rope-shaped torus base and a scotia framed by two fillets. The upper torus that does not



Fig. 33 Metamorphosis tou Soteris, Ionic-Attic base with an upside-down plinth reused as capital

¹⁰² H 298 cm; Dm 40.7 cm (lower point), 36.6 cm (mid-point); top of the shaft: H 4 cm; end of the shaft: H 4 cm.

¹⁰³ H 102 cm; H fillet 3.5 cm.

¹⁰⁴ For a general overview on the *kioniskoi* from the Kerameikos cemetery of Athens, see Stroszeck 2014, 150 f.

¹⁰⁵ H 22 cm; W 47.5 cm. The proportions of a tighter scotia and torus refer to a late imperial chronological dating. On the reuse of the base in Rome, see Pensabene 2015a, 977 f.

protrude beyond the dimension of the underlying scotia is decorated with an astragalus. The first right base-capital, strongly damaged in the plinth where two corners are missing, has: a profile of a quarter-circle rope-shaped torus, a scotia, and an upper torus decorated by an astragalus¹⁰⁶.

The first left base-capital (*fig. 33*)¹⁰⁷ has proportions different from the imperial age bases as well as in the decorations: the quarter-circle lower torus is decorated with an engraved imitation of the rope, a very high and shallow scotia, and an upper torus replaced with an astragalus, rendered with very flattened and elongated beads. It could be argued that it is an element created at the time of the construction of the building so as to harmonize with the others that can probably date back to Late Antiquity.

The altar behind the iconostasis is also made up of reused elements (*fig. 34*): a fragment of a column shaft entirely covered by white paint¹⁰⁸, a late imperial Attic Ionic base¹⁰⁹ and an impost block¹¹⁰ decorated with acanthus leaves interspersed with sepals and a cross engraved on the long sides.

This impost block fits into a typology attested during Late Antiquity in Greece, with many variations¹¹¹. In the case presented here, the acanthus leaf still seems strongly influenced by classic 1st century prototypes¹¹², an influence that is certainly more evident in the refined specimens from the *Hephaisteion*¹¹³ in comparison with which this one from the Metamorphosis is simpler – and probably for this reason later¹¹⁴. Despite the common elements such as the spiny acanthus leaves with the hollow lobes and a central cross, in the specimen in question the leaves are extremely flat and there are also sepals.



Fig. 34 Metamorphosis tou Soterou, altar

Kapnikarea

The church of the *Dormitio Virginis* is located in the heart of the modern city (*fig. 1*), in the eponymous square that is on the very busy Ermou Street¹¹⁵. Unlike the other churches here analysed, its state of conservation is fairly intact¹¹⁶, despite having undergone several ex-

¹⁰⁶ On the decorated Roman bases, see Schreiter 1995, 161–137.

¹⁰⁷ Pensabene 2015a, 986.

¹⁰⁸ H 52.5 cm; Dm 37.2 cm; top of the shaft: H 3.5 cm.

¹⁰⁹ H 17 cm.

¹¹⁰ H 20 cm; W 68 cm.

¹¹¹ Kautzsch 1936, 83, pl. 117, 244 (4th century). An analysis of the type in the broader panorama of Palaeo-Christian architectural sculpture in Attica, Boeotia and Peloponnese is given in Sodini 1977, 423–450.

¹¹² Sodini 1977, 434 fig. 19 indicates as a reference prototype the acanthus of the Eleusinian propylaeum; more generally it does seem feasible to support a direct dependence on Hadrianic prototypes characterized by the so-called ringed voids, see Kosmopoulos

2018, 80–83. For the Corinthian capitals with ringed voids, see Walker 1979, 103–129.

¹¹³ Sodini 1977, 433 f. figs. 3. 4.

¹¹⁴ A specimen of the mature 5th century is kept in the Byzantine Museum of Athens, cf. Σκλάβου-Μαυροειδή 1999, 53 n. 56.

¹¹⁵ It is known that when Ermou Street was laid out in 1834, the demolition of the church was discussed. It was saved by the intervention of Ludwig I of Bavaria, at the suggestion of the French archaeologist Adolph Napoleon Didron, cf. Χλέπα 2011, 46, see also Couchaud 1842, 19.

¹¹⁶ A lithography (1843) and a watercolour painting (aquarelle; 1835) are shown in Panselenou 2004, pls. 15. 17.

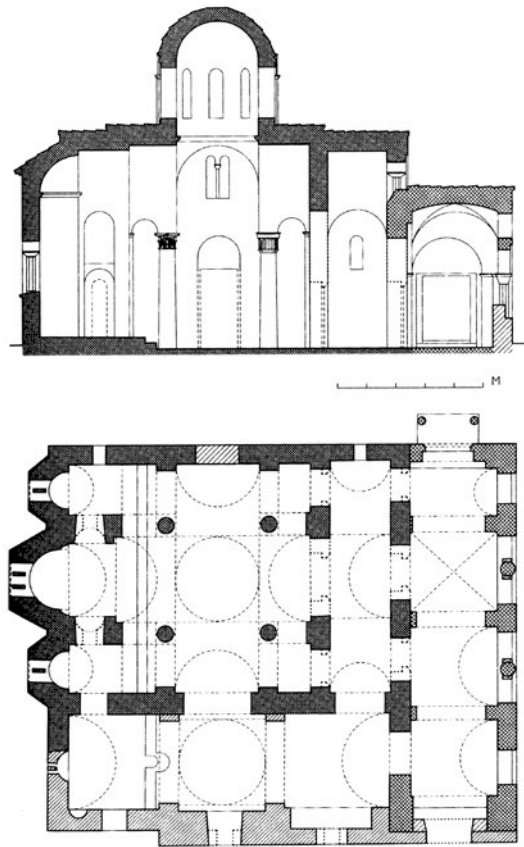


Fig. 35 Kapnikarea, plan of the present church



Fig. 36 Kapnikarea, Corinthianizing capital

pansions at the time of its elevation to a parish church. Nevertheless, there is no monograph study of the monument.

The original part of the building (second half of the 11th century) has a cross-in-square domed church with an endo-narthex covered with a barrel vault. At a later time (first half of the 12th century) the stoa-exonarthex and the southern portico would have been added, which still appears in the mid-19th century with the intercolumniation¹¹⁷ closed by short walls. In the modern

age, under the Ottoman rule, the chapel of Agia Barbara (Ἁγία Βαρβάρα) was built on the northern side of the building (fig. 35). According to Bouras, the church was also extended to the area where the chapel itself was later erected, considering both the existence of the arch base (that connected the building with another one no longer existing) and the style of the dome¹¹⁸.

The building presents numerous *spolia*, especially in the construction of the chapel and in the naos. Among these, there are columns and capitals; all of them are of different style, material and size (fig. 36).

The first left column is formed from two shafts¹¹⁹ and is surmounted by a Corinthianizing capital (fig. 37)¹²⁰ with four angular acanthus leaves supporting the volutes and an Ionic kyma occupying the space between them, with a palm leaf crossed by the stem of an abacus flower. Although the type is the same as the capital of Agios Ioannes Theologos (probably 4th – early 5th centuries A.D.), the acanthus leaves are pretty coarse, the details of the palmettes and above all the scrolls are shallowly-carved. Thus, this capital of Kapnikarea can be considered as contemporary but of inferior quality¹²¹.

The second left column is the only monolithic one¹²² in the church. It is surmounted by a Corinthian Proconnesian¹²³ marble capital of Byzantine age belonging to the *Leierkapitelle*

¹¹⁷ Cf. Couchaud 1842 and also Lenoir 1856, 262.

¹¹⁸ Bouras 2016, 228 f. 232 n. 39.

¹¹⁹ 1st shaft: H 206.5 cm; lower Dm 41 cm, upper Dm 38.5 cm; end of the shaft: H 2.5 cm; 2nd shaft: H 163.5 cm; Dm 116 cm.

¹²⁰ H 31.5 cm; W 46 cm.

¹²¹ Déroche 1987, 437.

¹²² Carystium marble, H 335 cm; lower Dm 50 cm, upper Dm 41 cm.

¹²³ H 54.5 cm; Dm 40.7 cm.



Fig. 37 Kapnikarea, interior



Fig. 38 Kapnikarea, Corinthian capital



Fig. 39 Kapnikarea, Blattkelch capital



Fig. 40 Kapnikarea, Corinthian capital

(fig. 38)¹²⁴ type, of which several variants are known. In this case the shallower carving, the reduction of the volutes and the schematization of the leaf are evident.

The first right column consists of two segments of shafts¹²⁵ and is surmounted by a capital with imitation leaves (fig. 39)¹²⁶ as can be inferred from the shape of the acanthus leaves and sepals. It probably dates back to the age of construction of the building although the possibility that it came from a disused older building cannot be excluded¹²⁷. It is possible to trace the models of this type of imitation in the *Blattkelch* that have a bipartition between the two crowns, determined by the overlapping leaves¹²⁸.

The second right column is made up of two shafts¹²⁹ and is crowned by a Corinthian capital (fig. 40), dated to the Augustan period, as mainly shown by the circular eyelet and the leaf shape¹³⁰. It appears to be completely reworked judging by the absence of the *imum folium*¹³¹, the tips of the *secundum folium* being broken and rounded, the abacus flower and the lack of the volutes, whose bases are reworked.

Agioi Asomatoi (Theseion)

The church stands below the current street level in the area of Theseion at the centre of the square at the beginning of Ermou Street (fig. 1). Damaged during the Greek War of Independence, the church, elevated to a parish one, underwent an expansion with a considerable alteration of the original perimeter and – in the first half of the 20th century – also along the north and south sides¹³². Only in the 1950s, and not without controversy¹³³, did the reconstruction of the building start to return it to its original form. The building is small in size and belongs to the type of a cross-in-square domed church of the Athenian type. Inside, four columns and four Ionic bases are reused as capitals¹³⁴.

¹²⁴ See Kautzsch 1936, 112 pl. 22 fig. 353.

¹²⁵ 1st shaft: H 257 cm; Dm 38.8 cm; 2nd shaft H 89 cm, lower Dm 37.8 cm, upper Dm 36.6 cm.

¹²⁶ H 36 cm; Dm 36.2 cm; 1 ring of leaves H 12.5 cm.

¹²⁷ A similar case is the Moni Petraki katholikon, see supra, p. 298–306.

¹²⁸ For the models see Börker 1965, 195 BK 169. 171.

¹²⁹ 1st shaft H 217.5 cm; lower Dm 43.6 cm; upper Dm 39.4 cm; 2nd shaft H 120.5 cm; lower Dm 38.5 cm; upper Dm 37.4 cm.

¹³⁰ H 58 cm; Dm 38.5 cm; 1 ring of leaves H 15 cm; abacus H 8 cm. See Viscogliosi 1996, 120–125; Pensabene 2015a, 822 f. It would be of Hadrianic tradition (2nd cent.) according to Déroche 1987, 429.

¹³¹ At first sight one might think that between the column and the capital a drum has been inserted to make it match the other columns in height, cf. Bouras 2016, 231. After a careful examination, though, it is seen to be the lower part of the capital, the diameter of which is about one centimetre smaller than the part of the capital still decorated.

¹³² On the transformation of the building, see: Στίκας 1959, 115–162 mostly fig. 1 and Χλέπα 2011, 44 f. An image of the building before the 1950s restoration is in Struck 1911, 143 fig. 165; Chatzidakis 1961, fig. 56, Panselenou 2004, pl. 1.

¹³³ Bouras 2016, 162.

¹³⁴ First right column (carystium marble): H 359 cm;



Fig. 42 Agioi Asomatoi, Ionic-Attic base reused as capital on the first left column



Fig. 41 Agioi Asomatoi, Ionic-Attic bases reused as capital on the first right column

Also in this church, as in the *Metamorphosis tou Soterou*, the bases of columns have been turned upside-down to become capitals. It is possible to note a similarity in the column arrangement with the aforementioned church. The first left capital-base on the left has no plinth (fig. 41), the original one has in fact been reworked. In place of the plinth a broken slab has been placed. The lower torus has been reduced to a quarter of a circle, and the scotia between the two fillets is shallow and its shape cylindrical, separated from them only by a groove. To match the height of the others the second left column has a drum added to the top, on which is a base-capital with a reworked lower torus, an oversized scotia between two fillets and an upper torus separated from a scotia (fig. 42). The poor state of preservation of the capital-base (fig. 43) placed on the first right column compromises one's ability to work out the component details with which the lower torus was



Fig. 43 Agioi Asomatoi, Ionic-Attic base reused as capital on the second left and right columns

lower Dm 46.4 cm, medium Dm 45.8 cm. Second left column H 304 cm. It has in the top of the shaft the *apophyge* and an addition of a fragment of stem with a larger diameter than the capital. First right column H 349.5 cm, medium Dm 42.6 cm. Second right column H 341.2 cm.

perhaps decorated and the scotia seems to have been filled with material (stucco?). The base placed on the second right column is characterized by a lower quarter-circle torus, an oversized scotia between two strips and an upper cylindrical torus, separated by only a groove; these data allow us to consider the base as having been made in the Late Antique period¹³⁵. In particular, the capital-base of the second left column is very similar, in its height and the scotia and the two not very prominent torus, to an odd base in the Byzantine Museum of Athens, whose origin is unknown but can be dated between the 5th and 6th centuries¹³⁶.

Sotera Kottakis (Σωτεία Κοττάκη)

This church has undergone similar alterations and upheavals as already seen in the others. Only the naos and the bema remain of the original Byzantine era, probably of the end of the 10th century¹³⁷. The rest, in fact, has been enlarged, both laterally and longitudinally, with the creation of three naves and two chapels on the sides of the prothesis and *diakonikon*¹³⁸.

As usual the *spolia* are concentrated in the area of the naos and consist of four columns with their respective capitals (fig. 44).

Looking at the columns laid out in the garden in front of the church, Bouras¹³⁹ notes that they may be the original shafts (two in Hymettian marble and one in carystium) of the church columns that were replaced, at least for those on the western side, a habit attested in other cases¹⁴⁰. In fact, near the naos, the original Hymettian marble columns have been maintained. The first right capital consists of an inverted imperial base where the column is carved together with the plinth, while the other three are Corinthian. They lack the leaf turnovers and the volutes. Probably these were already missing when the pieces were put in place, and that is the reason why the abacus has been reworked (being adapted for the new use)¹⁴¹, without replacing or reworking the leaves. The first left capital is an Asian Corinthian type (fig. 45) consisting of two rings of *acanthus spinosus* leaves with their characteristic pointed lobes. In the first ring the lobes touch those of the adjacent leaf to form triangular shadowed areas, above which emerges the leaf of the second crown; they can be dated to the 3rd century¹⁴². The second left Corinthian capital (fig. 46) has broad and flat leaves with circular



Fig. 44 Sotera Kottakis, interior

¹³⁵ Pensabene 2015a, 979–986.

¹³⁶ Ορλάνδος 1954, 269 fig. 218, 2; Σκλάβου-Μαυροειδή 1999, 66 n. 85.

¹³⁷ Bouras 2016, 268.

¹³⁸ Ξυγγόπουλος 1929, 94 fig. 107.

¹³⁹ Bouras 2016, 267 n. 4.

¹⁴⁰ As in the church of Agioi Apostoloi, see supra, p. 286–288.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Bouras 2016, 267 n. 5.

¹⁴² Pensabene 1986, 312, tipo 9.



Fig. 45 Sotera Kottakis, Asian Corinthian capital



Fig. 46 Sotera Kottakis, Corinthian capital



Fig. 47 Sotera Kottakis, Ionic-Attic base reused as capital on the first right column



Fig. 48 Sotera Kottakis, Corinthian capital

eyelet, hollow lobes and the space between the leaves of the first ring occupied by the lower part of those of the second. The *cauliculi* are crossed with vertical lines and are surmounted by a thin rim of petals, whilst the volutes are ribbon-shaped with defined edges. Some details of the capital refer back to the Hadrianic tradition – in the ringed voids and the shape of *cauliculi*. In contrast, however, the leaves appear rather flat and lacking in strong chiaroscuro effects. It is therefore possible that the capitals in question are modelled on those of the Hadrianic age but may have been executed in a coarser manner¹⁴³. The first right column holds an inverted base-capital (*fig. 47*) with a plinth on which is a drum so that it reaches the height of the other capitals. The drum displays a lower torus, scotia edged with strips and

¹⁴³ For this type, see Kosmopoulos 2018, 80.

a cylindrical upper torus separated from the fillet by an incision, all of which are features typical of late antique bases. The second right Corinthian capital (*fig. 48*) is severely damaged, not only lacking volutes but also with the foliage seemingly eroded. Nevertheless, the capital seems to be comparable both by type and by date to another one mentioned above¹⁴⁴.

Homologetai / Μονή Ομολογητών / (ο Agioi Pantes / Άγιοι Πάντες)



Fig. 49 Homologetai Pantes, the church before the restoration in 1957

Outside the ancient city, on the border between the district of Ampelokipoi and Mount Lykabettos, in Tsocha Street (*fig. 2*) there is the *katholikon* of the destroyed monastery of Homologetai (10th century). Of the buildings analysed so far it is perhaps the one that has undergone the most interventions, following destruction and with a reconstruction that was not very respectful of the original¹⁴⁵. Through the photographic documentation it is possible to see the condition of the building before the reconstruction with only two of the previous three apses and part of the dome standing (*fig. 49*). The area was subjected to archaeological excavation in the 1920s, but nothing has been published of this in detail. The building, after decades of neglect, was rebuilt in 1957 in the typical form of the Helladic school: a two columned cross-in-square domed church, similar to Agios Ioannes Theologos. Both of the columns are *spolia* – in Hymettian marble on the left and carystium on the right (*fig. 50*)¹⁴⁶. The latter, clearly visible in the old photo, must have been simply repositioned at the time of the reconstruction, whereas the left column certainly comes from the site. According to Charalambos Kritzas, the capitals are *spolia*¹⁴⁷; however, to the author's eye only the one placed on the right column seems to be reused. It looks an impost capital from the final phase of the Middle Byzantine age, like some of the examples already seen. The area around the building, visibly below the current street level, preserves numerous architectural elements, perhaps originating from the excavation, which have been studied in detail in an article by Manolis Korres¹⁴⁸.

¹⁴⁴ See the capital of Agioi Apostoloi (1st century A.D.), supra, p. 289 f.

¹⁴⁵ Bouras 2016, 255–258.

¹⁴⁶ H 2.50 cm. Without bases, tapered upwards, with top of the shaft.

¹⁴⁷ Κριτζάς 2004, 90–113.

¹⁴⁸ Korres 1996, 104–109. According to him the first basilica was built on an ancient temple from which the *spolia* would come.



Fig. 50 Homologetai Pantes.
Interior, Carystium marble column



Fig. 51 Agios Ioannes Kynegos
in Vouliagmenis Street

Agios Ioannes (Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης) in Vouliagmenis Street

The church of Agios Ioannes is not widely known, being located outside the perimeter of the ancient city. It was the *metochion* of the monastery of Agios Ioannes Kynegos (Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ο Κυνηγός) but today it is in Vouliagmenis Street (fig. 3). A multi-layered site emerged from the archaeological excavations, the first phase of which dates back to the 12th century¹⁴⁹. Behind the apse of the modern church of Agios Ioannes which inherited the monastic title, the remains of the Byzantine church bema are still visible, restored by the proficient Ephorate, after years of neglect. Still a place of worship, some *spolia* may be seen although not in their exact position of reuse, having not been inserted into the masonry but appearing in an inconsistent way. However, it does seem likely that they came from the original Byzantine church. In addition a fragment of a marble column drum, walled in in recent times as an altar in the centre of the apse, exists on which there is an unwallled Corinthian capital¹⁵⁰, along with other scattered fragments (fig. 51)¹⁵¹.

One of the most interesting complexes from the point of view of the practice of reuse in all of Attica is the Kaisariani monastery, which due to its sheer size and complexity would require a specific treatment that goes beyond a strictly urban study. It is located a few kilometres from the city and at the same time hidden from it, perhaps so aiding an extraordinary state of preservation of the monument over the centuries, which deserves extensive study. In fact, despite the several studies, including monographs¹⁵², there is no specific research or

¹⁴⁹ Λαζαρίδης 1970, 142 f. sch. 3 pl. 110 α–δ; 111 α. β.

¹⁵⁰ H 40 cm; W 35 cm, 1st cent. A.D.

¹⁵¹ Regarding the Middle-Byzantine door frame mentioned by Bouras and illustrated by Lazaridis, there

is not currently a trace of it on the site, see Λαζαρίδης 1970, 142 f. pl. β.

¹⁵² For further bibliography, see Μπούρας – Μπούρα 2002, 221–225.

a published catalogue of the *spolia* of the site. Here the practice of reuse starts rather early and is particularly visible in the *katholikon* of the first half of the 12th century. The large quantity of ancient and medieval architectural elements within the enclosure also suggests the presence of many destroyed or transformed buildings that underwent numerous reuses.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS

There are also buildings built in the same period but with less use of *spolia* than those mentioned above. Among these, there is the church of Kimisi Theotokou (Κοιμήσεως της Θεοτόκου, 10th century) in Platia Monastiraki in which, although the interior is completely covered by decoration, it is possible to see some reused columns.

To complete the overview of the city, it seems appropriate to briefly mention some buildings that are not included in this discussion either because they are later than the others or because they are outside the urban area.

Mikri Metropolis must certainly be mentioned, so named because it was the city's cathedral until the Greek War of Independence¹⁵³. It has plan and construction features similar to the Byzantine buildings seen so far, i.e. a cross-in-square domed church. Yet it distances itself from them, due to the absence of columns and the concentration of ancient and medieval *spolia* in the main external façade¹⁵⁴. These peculiarities have given rise to a debate regarding the dating of the building. According to the *communis opinio* it dates to a period between the end of the 12th and the beginning of the 13th centuries¹⁵⁵, therefore lying outside the chronological range considered here. A recent study, based on the careful analysis of several testimonies dates the construction of the building to the 15th century, the year of the abandonment of the sanctuary dedicated to the Virgin inside the Parthenon, of which the church would be the direct heir¹⁵⁶. In this context the *spolia in re*, reused in a prominent and visible position have, according to Bente Kiilerich, the function of conveying a message of the victory of Christ and of the Church. Such reuse is allowed after the engraving of crosses on the *spolia*, according to a practice well attested in the Middle Ages¹⁵⁷.

The phenomenon of reuse is also documented in much later buildings that also, however, fall outside the chronological limits of this survey: such as the church of Agios Dionysios the Areopagite (Διονύσιος ὁ Ἀρεοπαγίτης)¹⁵⁸, Agia Zoni (Αγία Ζώνη) and Agios Spyridon (Άγιος Σπυρίδωνας)¹⁵⁹. Although numerically inferior in the *spolia* they host, these may document the persistence of this practice well beyond the limits of the Middle Byzantine age.

Also noteworthy is the small church of Agia Dynamis (Αγία Δύναμις, 16th century) in Metropoleos Street. At the time of the construction of a hotel this church, with a single

¹⁵³ For the bibliography, Kiilerich 2005, 95–114.

¹⁵⁴ For a detailed analysis of *spolia* see Kiilerich 2005, 95–98. On the reused frieze, see also Simon 1983, 6 f. 77. 81. 83. 90 pl. 1, 1. 2.

¹⁵⁵ Kiilerich 2005, 95.

¹⁵⁶ Kiilerich 2005, 108–111.

¹⁵⁷ The incision of crosses appears to have been a widespread practice during the Middle Ages and to which specific meanings have been attributed. For the engraving of crosses on buildings, see Iasos: Cabiale 2010, 43–47 and Servadei 2016, 149; for Philae: Nautin 1967, 37 f. For the engraving of crosses on figurative reliefs there is a large bibliography about

the Christian interpretation. The question was already posed by Mango 1963, 53–75 and then taken up again by Maguire 1994, 169–172 with the evocative title ›The Cage of Crosses‹. A slight criticism of this interpretation is in Papalexandrou 2003, 56–80. Finally see Saradi 1997, 415.

¹⁵⁸ Although very little remains of the building, a reworked marble cornice belongs to the 16th century phase, see Travlos et al. 1965, 173 pl. 46, b.

¹⁵⁹ In the church in addition to a cipollino column with Ionic capital, there is another column shaft next to the main entrance on Lysiou Street.

nave, was preserved and is currently located in the portico of the hotel. Apart from several square blocks visible in the preserved structure, the gateway to Pentelis Street has the highest concentration of reuse: such as the jamb to the right of Hymettian marble and the left one formed by two parts in Pentelic marble (bottom) and grey marble (top). The architrave is made up of two decorated blocks – both *spolia*: the lower a medieval one and the upper one an ancient frame with dentils. On the back there are two fragments: on the inner side at the base of the apse is a fragment of an impost capital and on the external side a fragment of a medieval imitation frame.

The Fethiye Mosque in the Roman agora, built between 1668 and 1670, might be added here since it also presents *spolia*, but due to the chronology and the context in which they were reused it too would require a separate discussion¹⁶⁰. It stands on a church of the 8th–9th centuries, which probably functioned as the cathedral of the city of Athens for about two centuries as seems confirmed by the excavations¹⁶¹. The portico of the mosque, which has a different orientation than the church below, is made up of six columns on the front that are together with their bases *spolia*. It consists of six columns in carystium and Hymettian marble and as many Doric capitals used as bases.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis conducted so far has sought to clarify some aspects of the reuse of materials in Athens in the Middle Byzantine age. The technical and historical data on the *spolia* and the contexts of reuse highlight some questions to which it is not always possible to answer in a complete or definite manner: hypotheses flourish. This is due to the vastness of the phenomenon and the difficulties in classifying it in specific categories.

One of these questions destined, at least at the moment, to remain unanswered regards the origin of the reused elements. Even if this is, according to Esch, a secondary problem: it is the new context in which the old piece is placed and re-functionalized that is of greater importance¹⁶².

In the case of Athens, it is highly probable that the procurement took place directly from the urban area and from areas that were also quite distant from each other: in almost none of the cases presented is it possible to state that the *spolia* were sourced from a particular building.

Before answering some fundamental questions, a premise must be made. It cannot go unnoticed that almost all the buildings have been reconstructed over a long period of relatively recent time that ranges from the mid-19th century to around the middle of the 20th century, after the destruction caused by the Greek War of Independence. In fact, some of them remained in a state of neglect for decades. The attitude expressed to the original in the reconstruction is pertinent to each case. Apart from the churches in which the damage was not relevant or at least did not affect the naos (in which most of the *spolia* are generally found) there are two cases that deserve some further observation.

The church of Sotera Kottakis, which suffered considerable damage, has been largely rebuilt. Only two of the four columns with their respective capitals are still in situ, namely those closest to the iconostasis, the other two having been replaced with reproductions. A similar situation also happened to Agioi Apostoloi in the Agora where not only three columns but also two capitals were replaced by copies. This practice finds echoes to the situ-

¹⁶⁰ For the reuse under the Ottoman rule, see Ousterhout 1995, 48–62.

¹⁶¹ See Μπούρας – Μπούρα 2002, 137–139.

¹⁶² Esch 1999, 75–77.

ation in Messina in Sicily, where in the immediate post-war period in the Norman cathedral, columns and capitals-*spolia* were saved from the rubble and replaced by modern replicas in the 20th century reconstruction¹⁶³. This approach was due to the needs of building statics but encouraged through a deep desire to conserve.

The discussion now concerns how *spolia* are reused, the reasons for their reuse and the relationship with the past, i.e. their value in the new context.

In the absence of specific studies on Greece, the knowledge on the phenomenon in Rome, although with due differences, will be essential to understand some important aspects of the practice in Athens.

One feature that Athens has in common with Rome and other cities of the ancient world is the very close relationship with its ruins, if we consider that many of them were never completely obliterated but transformed and adapted to new uses. In general, however, the ancient city during its existence and for different reasons has consistently taken advantage of the conspicuous architectural heritage which has always characterized its landscape. Although this work focuses on Middle Byzantine buildings (10th–12th centuries AD), it is not possible in any way to exclude the possibility that even during the first Byzantine phase of Athens the reuse of ancient architectural elements was widespread. Unfortunately the lack of monuments datable to this phase makes it impossible to speculate on the spread of the practice in this era.

From the analysis carried out here it emerges that despite the destruction that has devastated the city, it has been possible to delineate the outline of *spolia* reuse during this phase within the urban area (for buildings that are, generally, small and almost all pertaining to the same type).

Regarding the positioning of the *spolia* in medieval buildings, except in two cases both without columns (Mikri Metropolis and Agia Dynamis) and where for different reasons the pieces have been placed outside the building, they are located either in the central area of the building, generally the colonnaded part – the majority of the churches analysed having two or four columns, depending on the plan type adopted – or in the naos and in the iconostasis.

The most immediate aspect is the fact that among all the buildings analysed there are very few cases of monolithic columns, nor are they of the same material (Agios Ioannes Theologos, Sotera Kottakis). Some are in fact formed by two overlapping shafts joined to match the height of the others (Metamorphosis tou Soterou) or they have a shorter unrelated shaft added to achieve comparable dimensions with others (Kapnikarea, Agioi Asomatoi).

A greater effort towards homogeneity and symmetry can be seen in the reuse of the capitals for example in Homologetai or Metamorphosis tou Soterou where the column bases used as capitals are almost all of the same size, but also in Moni Petraki in which three *Blattkelch* capitals and one Corinthian were chosen, and at Agios Ioannes Theologos where impost capitals were obtained by overlapping Ionic capitals with a Corinthian or a *Blattkelch* capital. This custom allows us to assume that the *Blattkelch* capitals are assimilated to the Corinthian capitals due to the presence of the acanthus leaves.

One notices the absence of homogeneity in the architectural decoration, i.e. pairs of columns and capitals¹⁶⁴ or, generally speaking, sets of objects symmetrically used. In fact not only architectural elements of different sizes are used, but also made from different marbles. The prevailing use of marble leads to thinking that marble was perceived as a reminder of the past, a prestigious material that gave *auctoritas* to the most significant parts of the building.

¹⁶³ Fuduli 2022, 50–52.

¹⁶⁴ This use belongs to the early Christian era as supported by Deichmann 1940, 114–130.

A comparison between the reuse in Athens and the reuse in Rome¹⁶⁵ and southern Italy, on which the academic literature is much more developed, shows the prominence given to the colonnade which was probably linked to the intention to enhance the area of the naos, the fulcrum of the building¹⁶⁶. This is also evident from two cases of altars consisting of a capital or a column and a capital respectively in Agios Nikolaos Rangavas and Metamorphosis tou Soteris.

The main question at this point of the analysis concerns how much this is the result of intention and how much is due to a more haphazard pattern of decision-making. A hypothetical answer could be given, based once again on the position of the capitals and their combinations. It should be considered that together with the authentic *spolia* (*spolia in se*), there are elements reworked or produced at the time of construction of the building (*spolia in re*) and of clearly different workmanship, as in the church of Moni Petraki or Kapnikarea.

The church of Moni Petraki has four capitals, three of which are *Blattkelch* and one Corinthian, placed on the first column on the left. Of the three *Blattkelch* capitals the one on the second right column is a medieval remake patterned after ancient models.

In Kapnikarea, three of the four capitals are medieval and the fourth one (second right side column), though ancient, is reworked.

From these two examples it is evident that at the time of construction brand new capitals were made without any consideration of the type or style of the ancient *spolia* already available: it would have been simpler for reasons of symmetry in the case of Moni Petraki to make another Corinthian capital to create pairings two by two. The same thing is true in the case of Kapnikarea where the ratio is exactly the opposite, with three Corinthian capitals and one *Blattkelch*. In the light of these two examples, is it possible to hypothesize that the builder reused the marble pieces he has available by replacing the missing ones with new ones, perhaps for reasons of economy? This question can be answered, albeit always remaining in the field of hypotheses, only by analysing other examples, namely Agioi Asomatoi, Metamorphosis tou Soteris, Agios Ioannes Theologos and Agia Aikaterini. In the first and second case, the capitals are inverted bases on all four columns. In the third case, symmetry is sought through the superimposition of two capitals: on the right a Corinthianizing anta capital on a four-sided Ionic capital, on the left a *Blattkelch* capital on an Ionic capital. In Agia Aikaterini, the search for symmetry is given by the arrangement of the capitals in pairs: two *Blattkelch* capitals in the iconostasis and two inverted bases on the first two columns on either side of the entrance. Unlike the examples mentioned above, the church of Sotera Kottakis shows an interesting combination of three Corinthian capitals with an upside-down column base placed on the first right column.

Can all this be due to economics and making savings? Did the builder reuse the material readily available, not knowing its original function or independently of said function? The matter of cutting costs has been mentioned many times in literature to explain the phenomenon, frequently in a hasty way. Certainly, Athens does not possess large medieval buildings as Rome or Norman Sicily do where, especially between the 11th and 12th centuries¹⁶⁷,

¹⁶⁵ Pensabene 2015a, 10–19.

¹⁶⁶ Pensabene 2015a, 1; Pensabene 1990, 5–138; Fuduli 2018a, 217–234; Fuduli 2018b, 30–33.

¹⁶⁷ See Cathedral of Monreale, see Fuduli 2020, 353–368.

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fig. 390. – *Abb. 5–7, 9, 11, 12, 14–17, 19–24–34, 36–45–48, 50, 51*: © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports / Archaeological Resources Fund. – *Abb. 8, 10*: © American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Agora Excavations. – *Abb. 13*: Bouras 2016, 249 fig. 195 © Benaki Museum. – *Abb. 18*: Bouras 2016, 249 fig. 196 © Benaki Museum. – *Abb. 35*: Bouras 2016 227, fig. 171 © Benaki Museum – *Abb. 36*: © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports / Archaeological Resources Fund. – *Abb. 49*: Bouras 2016, 255 fig. 203 © Benaki Museum.

large sums of money were used to find and transport *spolia*, sometimes a process even more expensive than starting afresh. Although financial constraints and considerations cannot be totally excluded from among the reasons for reuse, they are certainly not the only ones to take into consideration. Why are marble elements belonging to a past perhaps growing nebulous but still perceived as grand positioned so as to decorate the noblest parts of a cult building, sometimes without any coherence in its application? Certainly, the meaning and structural function of the different architectural elements were very clear to the builder who could not however appreciate the styles and eras of each piece. For this reason, together with the position occupied by the *spolia* inside the buildings, it must be assumed that, as in the churches already studied in many cities of the empire, the meaning must be sought beyond the form of the *spolia* concerned.

It is plausible that the *spolia* are felt, as they were in Italy and Rome, to be elements with a strong symbolic bearing, conferring prestige and *auctoritas* to the new building. The lack of coherence is also found in the almost contemporary large buildings in Italy where space is conceived differently than in the past and the architectural decoration has lost its unity.

Which period of the past is recalled through the *spolia* in the churches of this period? Perhaps it is only the idea of a past without the constraints of time that is being perceived of as great, even though ruins were still evident in the area. This past need not necessarily be identified with Rome and the empire, although the idea of Rome had certainly penetrated via Constantinople, the New Rome, throughout the East.

This brief contribution does not exhaust a topic as vast and complex as it is sometimes elusive of comprehension. Though much unexplored, it adds a small piece to the still rather incomplete picture of this subject. The hope that other areas of Attica and Greece may be the focus of specific studies on this subject is not stimulated by some purely objective desire for erudition for its own sake, but by the need to define accurately the transformations of the ancient cityscape and the relationship of medieval society had with its past.

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