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**ART, MEMORY, AND TRADE IN SOUTHERN EPIRUS VETUS:  
ON THE SOLID AND PERFORATED MARBLE SLABS OF  
THE BASILICA OF MYTIKAS, AKARNANIA**

*Abstract:* The study embarks on the marble slabs of the three-aisled basilica of Mytikas, Akarnania, a cemetery church at a small coastal settlement, to the south of Nikopolis, the capital of the province of Epirus Vetus. They belong to three distinct groups: the first comprises solid plaques decorated with crosses in relief, the second is formed by slabs with perforated scale motifs and lozenges, and the third includes perforated floral and geometric patterns. The plaques of the first group were made for a monumental tomb dedicated to an “adorable man,” probably a high-rank member of the late antique local community, erected in the north aisle. The slabs of the other two groups were fastened to small pillars and closed the sanctuary area as well as the east ends of the side aisles. The iconographic and technical study of the slabs of the Mytikas basilica helps us to better understand the role of the decoration, the relation between the location of the slabs and their ornaments, as well as the symbolism of their motifs. Moreover, the similarities found with marble plaques found in basilicas on the coasts of the Aegean, the Ionian and the Adriatic Seas, indicate the commercial sea routes of their trade.

*Key words:* Late antiquity, Epirus Vetus, Mytikas (antique Alyzia), basilica, marble slabs, solid slabs, perforated slabs

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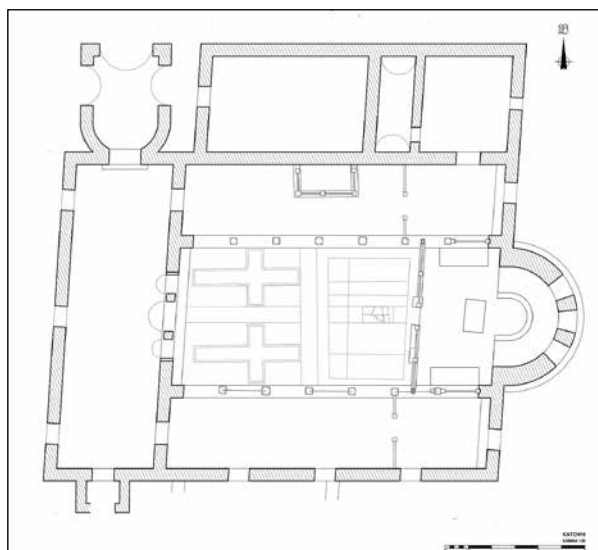


Fig. 1 Mytikas, Akarnania, Greece, basilica, plan, initial phase (reconstruction) (plan: G. Orestidis)

Сл. 1 Митикас, Акарнанија, Грчка, базилика, основа, првобитна фаза, реконструкција (план: Г. Орестидис)

during all these months of confinement because of the pandemic. Nevertheless, this period has also been proven quite fruitful for our study of the material that has been unearthed at the basilica of Mytikas.

The church is situated to the east of the ancient port of *Alyzia*, which during classical antiquity was known as the “sacred port of Hercules”.<sup>1</sup> The excavations were carried out by Professor Panayotis L. Vocotopoulos, Member of the Academy of Athens, and his collaborators under the auspices of the Archaeological Society at Athens mainly from 1972 to 1984; between 1973 and 1978 no excavation took place.<sup>2</sup> It is a three-aisled basilica with a semicircular apse to the east and a narthex added to the west (fig. 1). Outside the north wall, a series of auxiliary rooms has been built from

the outset; the westernmost room was used as a funerary chamber with three tombs and a sarcophagus. Little evidence has come to light concerning the structures surrounding the church and a number of other peculiarities have not yet been studied and explained. This study is focused on the marble slabs of the church. They belong to three distinct groups: the first group comprises solid plaques decorated with crosses in relief (fig. 2) which were made for a monumental tomb erected in the

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<sup>1</sup> For the history and the topography of ancient Alyzia, see Katopodis G., *Αρχαία Ακαρνανία*, Athens 2000, pp. 66-68. Liagos V., *Αλυζία: Ένας μικρός τόπος, μια μεγάλη ιστορία*, Agrinion 2002. Moschos I., Portelanos A., *Alyzia: The Region of Kandela from Pre-history up to the End of Ancient Times. Technical and Defensive Works* (in Greek and in English), Kandela 2010. Cf. also Murray W.M., “The Coastal Sites of Western Akarnania. A Topographical – Historical Survey,” PhD (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1982), pp. 82-133 and *passim*. Gehrke H.-J., Wirbelauer E., “Akarnania and Adjacent Areas”, in: Hansen M.H., Nielsen Th.H. (eds.), *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis. An Investigation conducted by the Copenhagen Polis Centre for the Danish National Research Foundation*, Oxford 2004, pp. 351-378.

<sup>2</sup> Vocotopoulos P.L., “Μεσαιωνικά μνημεία του Μύτικα Ακαρνανίας”, *ΑΑΑ* 1 (1968), 152-154. Idem, *Prakt* 1972, pp. 109-113; 1979, pp. 121-126; 1980, pp. 34-36; 1981, pp. 79-81; 1982, pp. 91-94; 1983, pp. 84-86; 1984, pp. 129-130.

north aisle. The second group is formed by slabs with perforated clamshells and lozenges (figs. 3 and 4) and the third includes latticework slabs with floral and geometric motifs (fig. 5). The slabs of the two latter groups were used in the barriers that screened off the east parts of the side aisles and in the chancel screen of the sanctuary. There is no evidence that any plaques closed the intervals between the columns of the colonnades of the nave.

The memorial of the north aisle was dedicated to an “adorable man,” probably a high-rank member of the Christian local community;<sup>3</sup> an eight-line epitaph has been carved on a marble slab that formed the lid of the tomb, but the inscription does not mention if this man had been a member of the clergy or a layman.<sup>4</sup> Structures with similar arrangement, with slabs between pilasters set on separate stylobates, are found in the south part of the transept of the basilicas Beta and Delta at Nikopolis,<sup>5</sup> dated to the last quarter of the fifth century. They were undeniably later additions, but their use is debated: late Demetrios Pallas proposed that the structure at the basilica Delta was a *pastophorion* (named as “*pastophorion K*”), i.e. a secondary table for the celebration of the liturgy<sup>6</sup>. A similar tomb-like structure affixed to the east wall of the south compartment of the transept at the basilica Beta has

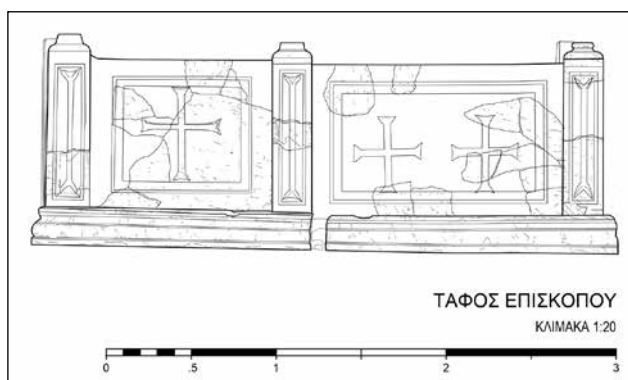


Fig. 2 The tomb of the north aisle, present situation, front view from the south (plan: G. Orestidis)

Сл. 2 Гробница из северног брода, тренутно стање, изглед са јужне стране према фронталној, (план: Г. Орестидис)

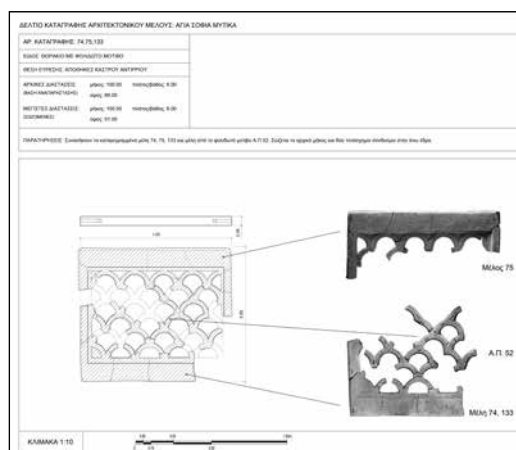


Fig. 3 The perforated marble slabs: clamshells' pattern (plan: G. Orestidis)

Сл. 3 Перфориране мермерне плоче: мотив шкољке (план: Г. Орестидис)

<sup>3</sup> The tomb, which is 2.12 m long and 0.65 m wide, abutted the north wall of the church at 4.45 m from the east wall. Cf. a reconstruction in Vocotopoulos P.L., *Prakt* 1983, pp. 84-86, figs 1-4 (plans by G. Velenis).

<sup>4</sup> For the inscription, see Vocotopoulos P.L., *Prakt* 1972, pp. 112-113, pl. 90b.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Varalis I.D., “Τα χαρακτηριστικά της εκκλησιαστικής αρχιτεκτονικής της Νικόπολης: παραλληλίες και διαφοροποιήσεις”, in: Zachos K. (ed.), *Νικόπολις Β'. Πρακτικά του Δεύτερου Διεθνούς Συμποσίου για τη Νικόπολη (11-15 Σεπτεμβρίου 2002)*, Preveza 2007, pp. 597-598 (basilicas Beta and Delta).

<sup>6</sup> Pallas D., *Realexikon zur Byzantinischen Kunst* II (1971), 222, 226, s.v. “Epirus”.

passed completely unmentioned by earlier research.<sup>7</sup> A funerary character for both these installations is possible, but evidence is still needed. A long tradition of funerary receptacles set along the long walls of Early Christian churches is attested on both the shores of the Adriatic and the Ionian Sea, like at the basilica of Sant' Apollinare in Classe,<sup>8</sup> and further inland as in the basilica of Saint Achilleios on the homonymous island of the Small Prespa Lake.<sup>9</sup> As for the crosses in low relief on the slabs at the Mytikas' memorial, sufficient similarities can be found with slabs from the Nikopolis basilicas mentioned above,<sup>10</sup> but it is not known if these slabs originally formed part of any funerary installations the Nikopolis churches. Slabs decorated with Latin crosses with expanding ends in low relief have been found in grave contexts, like the cover plaque of the tomb no. 3 at the cemetery explored at 74, Nikita Str., Patras,<sup>11</sup> or like the one found in the cemetery basilica at Dion, which has been used as an offerings' table for the tomb found nearby, which was dedicated to an unknown saint (or martyr?) named Magna.<sup>12</sup>

The slabs of the other two groups were initially parts of the barriers that screened off the east parts of the side aisles and on the pi-shaped chancel screen. The latticework slabs occupied the front side of the chancel screen, while the perforated slabs with the scale and the lozenge patterns were possibly put on the flanks of the bases for the clergy benches and on the barriers that screened off the east parts of the aisles.

The scale pattern in screens has probably derived from models made of wood or bronze.<sup>13</sup> The bronze window *transenna* from the crypt of Sant' Apollinare in Classe, dated to the sixth century, shows that metallic railings were also made in late

<sup>7</sup> This tomb is drawn – although not entirely accurately – on the recently published plan of the church in Zachos K., *Αρχαιολογικός οδηγός Νικόπολης. Περιδιάβαση στο ιστορικό, ιερό και αστικό τοπίο*, Athens 2015, on p. 185.

<sup>8</sup> For the church of Sant' Apollinare in Classe, see Maukopf Deliyannis D., *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Delhi 2017 (repr.), pp. 259-274. For the sarcophagi kept at the churches of Ravenna, see Kollwitz J., Herdejürgen H., *Die Sarkophage der Westlichen Gebiete des Imperium Romanum, II. Die Ravennatischen Sarkophage*, Berlin 1979.

<sup>9</sup> See most recently, Moutsopoulos N.K., *Η βασιλική του Αγίου Αχιλλίου στην Πρέσπα, Ένα μνημείο κιβωτός της τοπικής ιστορίας*, Thessaloniki 1999, pp. 135-184.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. slabs from basilicas Delta (Papadopoulou V., “Παλαιοχριστιανική Ήπειρος (4ος- 7ος): Η μαρτυρία της γλυπτικής,” PhD (University of Ioannina, Ioannina 2013), pp. 458-459 no. 93. Chalkia E., “Συμπληρωματική ανασκαφή στη βασιλική Δ της Νικόπολης,” in: Zachos, *Νικόπολις Β΄*, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 660, fig. 4 and eadem, *Η βασιλική Δ της Νικόπολης*, Athens 2015, p. 54), and Beta (Papadopoulou, “Παλαιοχριστιανική Ήπειρος (4ος- 7ος),” *op. cit.*, pp. 471-473, 475, nos 102-104, 106, with previous bibliography).

<sup>11</sup> Koumoussi-Vyenoropoulou A., “Ανασκαφικές «μαρτυρίες» του σεισμού του 552 μ.Χ. στην Πάτρα”, *ΑΑΑ* 29-31 (1996-1998), pp. 53-54, figs. 4, 5γ. Bozini Ch., “Πλήρη θωράκια του Ελλαδικού χώρου από την παλαιοχριστιανική περίοδο έως το τέλος της Εικονομαχίας,” MA Thesis (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki 2008), p. 55, no. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Mentzos Ar., “Η κοιμητηριακή ή έξω των τειχών βασιλική του Δίου”, in: *AErgo-Mak* 4 (1990), p. 234, figs. 7-8. Pantermalis D., *Δίον. Η ανακάλυψη*, Athens 1999, figs. on pp. 260-261. Chalkia Eug., *Le mense paleocristiane. Tipologia e funzioni delle mense secondarie nel culto paleocristiano*, Città del Vaticano 1991, pp. 84-85, figs. 69-70.

<sup>13</sup> Orlandos A., *Η ζυλόστεγος παλαιοχριστιανική βασιλική της Μεσογειακής λεκάνης*, Athens 1952-1954, pp. 512-513. Stoufi-Poulimenou I., *Το φράγμα του ιερού βήματος στα παλαιοχριστιανικά μνημεία της Ελλάδος*, Athens 1999, p. 98 and n. 204 with previous bibliography.

periods.<sup>14</sup> Marble slabs with clamshells are found in a number of basilicas which have been erected in places not very far from the coasts of the Aegean, like the ones on Thasos Island,<sup>15</sup> the Vrondismeni basilica in Pieria,<sup>16</sup> the basilica Alpha at Phthiotic Thebes,<sup>17</sup> and at Argos in the Peloponnese;<sup>18</sup> these are selected examples in which the scales of the top and bottom rows are cohesive with the frames, like the ones at the Mytikas basilica. These examples have been dated in a large time-span, from the late fourth to the sixth century.

Barriers with a lozenge mesh made of metal are also known from the Roman period, like the railing uncovered at Mediana and exhibited at the Niš Archaeological Museum, which preserves a complex design of rectangles containing diagonals and crosses.<sup>19</sup> Simple railings with lozenges are shown on the base of the obelisk at the Hippodrome of Constantinople, dated *ca.* 390,<sup>20</sup> and are preserved on the iron bema door leaf that has been found at Tegea, in the center of Peloponnese, dated to the sixth century.<sup>21</sup> Lozenge-patterned marble slabs are found in basilicas that have been excavated on Aegean islands like Delos<sup>22</sup> and Thasos,<sup>23</sup> on coastal settlements like Aigosthena<sup>24</sup> and Demetrias,<sup>25</sup> as well as on sites in small distance from the sea-

<sup>14</sup> Guidoni Guidi G., "Oggetti in metallo," in: Bermond Montanari G. (ed.), *Ravenna e il porto di Classe, venti anni di ricerche archeologiche tra Ravenna e Classe*, Imola 1983, p. 190 no. 16.33. Farioli Campanati R., "La cultura artistica nelle regioni bizantine d' Italia dal' VI all' XI secolo," in: Scheiwiller V. (ed.), *I Bizantini in Italia*, Milano 1986, 2nd ed., p. 178 no. 34, fig. 84.

<sup>15</sup> Sodini J.-P., Kolokotsas K., *Aliko II, La basilique double, Études thasiennes X*, Athènes, Paris 1984, pp. 45-48, fig. 44 (South basilica); pp. 155-156, fig. 130, pl. 56b-c (North basilica).

<sup>16</sup> Marki Ef., "Παλαιοχριστιανικά μνημεία Βροντισμένης," in: Tsiro D. (ed.), *Οι αρχαιολόγοι μιλούν για την Περία. Καλοκαίρι 1986*, Katerini 1990, pp. 26-27, figs. 14-15.

<sup>17</sup> Karagiorgou O., "'Christian' or 'Thessalian' Thebes: the Port City of Late Antique Thessaly," in: Albani J., Chalkia E. (eds), *Heaven and Earth. Cities and Countryside in Byzantine Greece*, Athens 2013, pp. 160-161, fig. 140.

<sup>18</sup> Athanassoulis D., Vassileiou A., *Βυζαντινό Μουσείο Αργολίδας. Κατάλογος μόνιμης έκθεσης*, Athens 2016, p. 39 no. 16.

<sup>19</sup> Vasić M., "Bronze Railing from Mediana", *Starinar* 53-54 (2003-2004), pp. 79-109. Rakočija M., *Konstantinov grad. Starohrištjanski Niš*, Niš 2013, p. 42, figs. 59-61.

<sup>20</sup> For the railings depicted on the base of Theodosius' obelisk, see Bruns G., *Der Obelisk und seine Basis auf der Hippodrom zu Konstantinopel, Istanbul Forschungen 7*, Istanbul 1935. K. Weitzmann (ed.), *Age of Spirituality. Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*, exhibition catalogue, New York 1979, pp. 107-108 no. 99, with further bibliography.

<sup>21</sup> Orlandos A., "Παλαιοχριστιανική θύρα Τεγέας", *ArchByzMnem* 1 (1935), pp. 103-104. Idem, *H ζυλόστεγος*, *op. cit.*, p. 513, fig. 474.

<sup>22</sup> Orlandos A., "Délös chrétienne", *BCH* 60 (1936), p. 75, fig. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Sodini, Kolokotsas, *Aliko II, op. cit.*, p. 46-47, figs. 45-46, pl. 18e-i (south basilica) and p. 122, fig. 112, pl. 41d (enclosure of the east end of the south aisle of the north basilica).

<sup>24</sup> Orlandos A., *Prakt* 1954, p. 140, fig. 12.

<sup>25</sup> Theocharis D., *ADelt* 18 (1963), *B'I-Chronika*, p. 140, pl. 172a. Assimakopoulou-Atzaka P., "Παλαιοχριστιανική και βυζαντινή Μαγνησία," in: Chourmouziadis G., Assimakopoulou-Atzaka P., Makris K., *Μαγνησία. Το χρονικό ενός πολιτισμού*, Athens 1982, p. 149, fig. 58.



Fig. 4 The perforated marble slabs: the lozenges pattern (source: Y. Varalis)

front like Daphnousia<sup>26</sup> and Olympia.<sup>27</sup> They are usually dated to the late fourth century, but examples like those from the double basilica on Thasos seem to attest their presence (or re-appearance) in the sixth century, in a more ornate style. The latticework slabs, with floral motifs contained in interlaced rectangles and circles or in interlaced tetralobes, find specific similarities on slabs from Ravenna, dated to the sixth century.<sup>28</sup> Analogies are also obvious with slabs from coastal areas, not only from the Aegean, like the splendid chancel screen from Argos,<sup>29</sup> but also from the Ionian Sea, from Nikopolis as well as from other settlements of minor importance to the north.<sup>30</sup> The date of

these latticework slabs is fixed to the sixth century, because they seem corresponding to latticework column capitals, like those well-known from Constantinople dating from the Justinianic era.<sup>31</sup> However, it is difficult not to be distracted by decorations that are securely dated to the fifth century and contain depictions of such latticework panels. For example, the mosaics of the dome in the Orthodox baptistery at Ravenna are dated to the third quarter of the fifth century, when Neon was holding the bishop's See (ca. 450-473).<sup>32</sup> The thrones depicted on the third zone are placed in architectural settings consisting of recessed niches flanked by square

<sup>26</sup> Orlandos A., "Une basilique paléochrétienne en Locride", *Byzantion* 5/1 (1925), p. 214, fig. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Adler F., "Die byzantinische Kirche", in: Curtius E., Adler Fr., *Olympia. Die Ergebnisse der von dem Deutschen Reich Veranstateten Ausgrabung, II. Die Baudenkmäler*, Berlin 1892, pp. 94, 96, fig. 52 (the north slab of the chancel screen; the reconstruction of the original aspect of the screen on pl. LXIX.1 is not accurate).

<sup>28</sup> For latticework slabs from Ravenna, cf. Angiolini Martinelli P. "Corpus" della scultura paleocristiana bizantina ed altomedioevale di Ravenna. I. Altari, amboni, cibori, cornici, plutei con figure di animali e con intrecci, transenne e frammenti vari, Roma 1968, vol. I, nos 125-130.

<sup>29</sup> Athanassoulis D., Vassileiou A., *Βυζαντινό Μουσείο Αργολίδας. Κατάλογος μόνιμης έκθεσης*, Athens 2016, p. 39 no. 17.

<sup>30</sup> Chalkia E., "Διάτρητα θωράκια από τη Θεσπρωτία," in: Chouliaras I.P., Pliakou G.Th. (eds), *Thesprotia I, 1st International Conference on the Archaeology and History of Thesprotia (Igoumenitsa, 8-11 December 2016), Proceedings*, vol. 2, Ioannina 2019, pp. 429-438.

<sup>31</sup> For latticework capitals of Constantinople, cf. Strube Chr., *Polyeuktoskirche und Hagia Sophia. Umbildung und Auflösung antiker Formen Entstehen des Kämpferkapitells*, München 1984, esp. pp. 61-62, 71-75, 88-90, 95-101, 107-108, pls 14-24, and recently Zollt Th., *Kapitellplastik Konstantinopels vom 4. bis 6. Jahrhundert n. Chr. mit einem Beitrag zur Untersuchung des ionischen Kämpferkapitells*, Bonn 1994, pp. 21-24 nos 27-33; pp. 53-54 nos 113-116; p. 55 no. 119; and pp. 84-91 nos 207-223.

<sup>32</sup> Kostof Sp., *The Orthodox Baptistery of Ravenna*, New Haven 1965, pp. 79-82. Wharton A.J., "Ritual and Reconstructed Meaning: The Neonian Baptistery in Ravenna," *ArtB* 69/3 (1987), pp. 358-375, with earlier bibliography. Muskopf Deliyannis, *Ravenna, op. cit.*, pp. 88-100, esp. pp. 96-97, figs. 24-25 and pl. IIa-b.

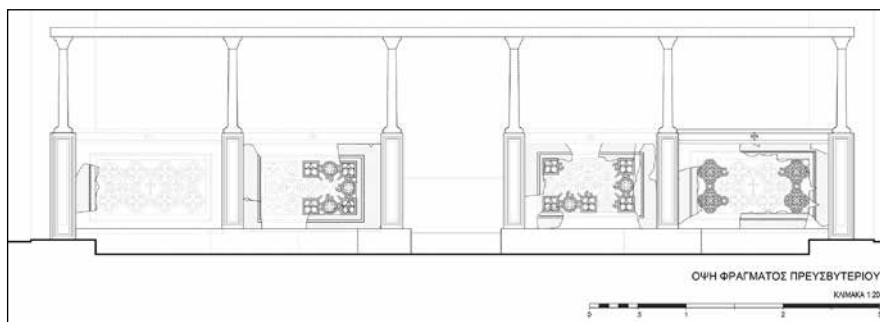


Fig. 5 The front of the chancel screen: the latticework marble slabs (plan: G. Oerstedis)

Сл. 5 Предња страна плоче са мотивом решетке (план: Г. Орестидис)

compartments with coffered ceilings; the columns are closed in their lower parts by latticework panels. The white color of these panels indicates that they were meant to be understood as marble slabs. These slabs are decorated with scales, intersecting circles (unfortunately not lozenges), and floral motifs, which are surprisingly similar to the Argos panel, mentioned above. At the beginning of the fifth century the tomb of Saint Felix at Cimitile has been embellished with marble slabs showing a perforated lozenges' pattern.<sup>33</sup> The decoration allowed the view through the punctured diamonds to the saint's tomb under the upper slab. The tomb was the center of the saint's cult, as has been established by saint Paulinus of Nola around 401, and the slab on top of the tomb, enveloped in a silver sheet, served as a table for the offerings to the saint.<sup>34</sup> A similar arrangement can be found at the basilica of Sant' Alessandro in the seventh mile of the Via Nomentana, to the northeast of Rome. The tombs of Saints Alexander and Eventius have been covered by an altar in the early fifth century.<sup>35</sup> The inscription of the donor Delicatus on the upper frame of the front slab mentions that bishop Ursus dedicated the altar above the saints' tombs.<sup>36</sup> The

<sup>33</sup> Ebanista C., *et manet in mediis quasi gemma intersita tectis. La basilica di S. Felice a Cimitile: storia degli scavi, fasi edilizie, reperti*, Napoli 2003, pp. 135-137, figs. 44, 80, 168. Idem, *La tomba di S. Felice nel santuario di Cimitile a cinquant'anni dalla scoperta, Coemeterium 4*, Marigliano 2006, pp. 58-61, figs. 31-33, 105-107. The tomb, after the dormition of saint Paulinus on 22 June 431, has been enlarged to the south to receive the tomb of the saint, by adding two marble pillars and three *transennae* decorated with lozenge and scale patterns in low relief (not perforated). See idem, *La tomba di S. Felice*, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-68, figs. 35-36.

<sup>34</sup> Idem, *La tomba di S. Felice*, *op. cit.*, pp. 62 and n. 218.

<sup>35</sup> Holtzinger H., *Die altchristliche Architektur in systematische Darstellung. Form, Einrichtung und Ausschmückung der altchristlichen Kirchen, Baptisterien und Sepulkralbauten*, Stuttgart 1889, p. 123, fig. 96. Braun J. S.J., *Der christliche Altar in seiner Geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, vol. I, München 1924, pp. 193, 532, 567-568, 618, 651, pls. 28a, 100a. Fiocchi Nicolai V., *I cimiteri paleocristiani del Lazio. II. Sabina*, Città del Vaticano 2009, pp. 338-343. For examples in Rome, cf. Pergola A., "Nuove considerazioni sull'attività dei presbiteri Urso e Proclino a Roma: Altari a confronto," in: Martorelli R., Piras A., Spanu P.G. (eds.), *Isole e terraferma nel primo cristianesimo. Identità locale ed interscambi culturali, religiosi e produttivi, Atti XI Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia Cristiana, Cagliari, Sant'Antioco, 23-27 settembre 2014*, Cagliari 2015, pp. 695-702.

<sup>36</sup> On the inscription, see Fiocchi Nicolai, *I cimiteri*, *op. cit.*, pp. 340 ff., figs. 321-323.

front slab of the altar was restored in the nineteenth century from many fragments that formed a scale pattern. In addition, the central part of the slab had a *fenestella*, a small window, which facilitated the view to the tombs of the saints and enabled access or touching contact with the sacred earth that covered the relics. If we turn back to the marble slabs of the Mytikas basilica, we must admit that their study opens some new areas of research. The perforated slabs have been used to enclose the sanctuary area from all sides without blocking the view to the altar and to the celebration of the liturgy around and over the altar table. Apart from that, the slabs adopt the decoration of early and mid-fifth century screens that originally were used for altars and tombs, or altars above the tombs of saints, in Italy;<sup>37</sup> the solid slabs are saved only for the tomb of an “adorable man”, forming a kind of monumental receptacle, a privileged cist for an eminent deceased, in the words of Professor Jean-Pierre Sodini.<sup>38</sup> We perhaps should not lose from our view that the Mytikas basilica is situated at a coastal settlement of the Ionian Sea, perhaps a refuge port of a sea trade route that was used by ships carrying architectural and decorative marbles from the east to west and vice versa. Pending the chemical analysis of the marbles of the church, we can only think over their shape and decoration. If we place them on a time-line and try to interpret their specific position in the church asking the right questions, we might get extremely interesting answers.

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УМЕТНОСТ, МЕМОРИЈА И ТРГОВИНА У ЈУЖНОМ ЕПИРУ: О МАСИВНИМ И  
ПЕРФОРИРАНИМ МЕРМЕРНИМ ПЛОЧАМА ИЗ БАЗИЛИКЕ ИЗ МИТИКАСА,  
АКАРНАНИЈА

Мермерне плоче из тробродне базилике у Митикас, Акарнанија и њихова декорација предмет су овог рада. Припадају трима различитим групама: прва садржи масивним плочама украшеним крстовима, друга је формирана од перфорираних плоча са растерима и ромбовима, а трећој припадају плоче са флоралним и геометријским мотивима. Плоче припадају монументалној гробници неког племића високог ранга касноантичког друштва. Гробница се налазила у северном броду. Иконографска и техничка студија плоча указује на сличности са плочама из Никополиса и других крајева Егејског, Јонског и Јадранског мора. Декорација њихових прототипова очигледно се одразила и на мозаике попут оног у баптистеријуму из Равене датованог у крај IV и почетак V века; било их је и раније као што је то случај у Риму и Кампањи, као и на олтару базилике Светог Александра на *Via Nomentana* и црквеи Светог Феликса у Тимитилеу (Нола). Сличности плоча указују на постојање трговачких рута које су функционисале преко мора.

<sup>37</sup> For altars in Italy, cf. Guidobaldi F., “Strutture liturgiche negli edifici cristiani di Roma dal IV al VII secolo,” in: Cecchelli M. (ed.), *Materiali e tecniche dell’edilizia paleocristiana a Roma*, Roma 2001, pp. 171-190. Brogiolo G.P., Chavarría Arnau A., Y.A. Marano Y., “Altari in Italia settentrionale (secoli IV-VIII),” *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 11 (2005), pp. 49-62. Sotira L., *Gli altari nella scultura e nei mosaici di Ravenna (V-VIII secolo)*, Bologna 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Sodini J.-P., “Les ‘tombes privilégiées’ dans l’Orient chrétien (à l’exception du diocèse d’Égypte),” in: Duval Y., Picard J.-C. (eds.), *L’Inhumation privilégiée du IVe au VIIIe siècle en Occident. Actes du colloque tenu à Créteil, les 16-18 mars 1984*, Paris 1986, pp. 233-243.