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## PALAEOLOGAN ARCHITECTURE ON THE BYZANTINE PERIPHERY: THE CASE OF OHRID<sup>2</sup>

*Abstract:* The paper is devoted to the issue of the stylistic developments of Palaeologan architecture of Ohrid, which was the leading architectural center on the northern outskirts of the Byzantine Empire around 1300. At this time three monuments were constructed here, which were associated with the influence of the architecture of Epirus. The article provides a thorough analysis of the typological, morphological and decorative features of these churches of Ohrid. The ways of assimilation and development of the tradition of Epirus in Ohrid in the context of the stylistic tendencies of Palaeologan architecture are also shown.

*Keywords:* Byzantine architecture, Palaeologan period, North Macedonia, Ohrid, Epirus, stylistic developments.

The final period in the development of Byzantine architecture called Palaeologan after the ruling imperial dynasty begins after the restoration of the Empire in 1261, when building activity revives after a long period of stagnation. The architecture of this time is characterized by reduction of the scale and more delicate proportions of the buildings, by surrounding the building core with galleries, by abundance and variety of façade decoration. In the interior the vertical development of spatial forms is emphasized. Also, the architecture tradition of Western Europe as a new source of influence is discovered<sup>3</sup>. But the main feature of the Palaeologan period is regionalism, which means the activation of various architectural centers (Arta, Constantinople, Thessaloniki, Kastoria, Veria, Ohrid, Prilep, Skopje, Mistra, Nessebar) and the establishment of a diverse regional variants of the Palaeologan style. The specificity and inter-influence of individual regional centers is the key problem in the discussion of

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<sup>3</sup> R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine architecture*. 4th ed. (revised by R. Krautheimer and S. Ćurčić), New Haven, London 1986, 292-309; C. Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*. New York 1976, 141-167.



Fig. 1. The church of St John Kaneo in Ohrid.  
Photo by author.

Сл. 1. Црква Св. Јован Канео у Охриду, фото: аутор

Late Byzantine architecture. It is of particularly important for the architectural developments on the periphery of the Byzantine Empire, and especially in case of the modern-day North Macedonia, featured by the coexistence of Greek and Slavic cultures in the Middle Ages.

Late Byzantine architecture of North Macedonia is a complex and not fully explored phenomenon. A lot of questions regarding its origins, specificity, stylistic developments of this architecture and its place in the context of the period still remain unresolved. The territory of modern-day North Macedonia roughly coincides with the borders of the medieval autocephalous Ohrid Archbishopric in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It was established in 1018 and had Ohrid as an administrative center. The Archbishopric was very influential and played a special role in political, church-ideological and cultural processes within the Byzantine Empire. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, which was a period of turmoil in Byzantium, in conditions of political instability, this region was passing from hand to hand between the rulers of Bulgaria, Epirus, Nicaea and Serbia. These circumstances led to the coexistence and constant interaction of different architectural traditions.

In the 1270s-1310s after the restoration of the Empire under the rule of Paleologos dynasty and after a long period of stagnation in construction, a group of churches appears in Ohrid. Various opinions have been expressed about the origins of the group. Some researches associated it with Thessaloniki and Constantinople<sup>4</sup>, while others were looking for arguments for the presence

<sup>4</sup> Ђ. Бошковић, *Осврт на неке проблеме развита архитектура са краја XIII и у току првих деценија XIV века, у Србији и Македонији*, Византијска уметност почетком XIV века. Научни скуп у Грачаници (уред. С. Петковић), Београд 1978, 99-104; В. Кораћ, *Византијска архитектура у XIII веку*, Између Византије и Запада. Одабране студије о архитектури, Београд 1987, 86; W. Sas-Zaloziecky, *Die byzantinische Baukunst in den Balkanländern und ihre Differenzierung unter abendländischen und islamischen Einwirkungen*, München: R. Oldenbourg, 1955, 55; Мавродинов Н. *Еднокорабната и крв-*

of local Macedonian tradition on these buildings<sup>5</sup>. But the more reasonable hypothesis connects these monuments with the architectural tradition of Epirus of the 13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>6</sup>. It is obvious in similarities in typology, morphology and in façade decoration which have been repeatedly noted by researchers. But the stylistic developments and special features of Palaeologan architecture in Ohrid have not yet been studied separately. Moreover, the place of Ohrid as a regional artistic and architectural center, its place and input in the architectural processes of the Palaeologan period are still not clear.<sup>7</sup>

In general, the question of style in the Byzantine architecture is rather complicated, largely due to the ambiguity of the exact connotation of frequently synonymous terms as “school”, “tradition”, “style”, “idiom”.

The concept of style in the Byzantine architecture was considered by Hans Buchwald as a way of spatial organization, correlating with the articulation of the interior and exterior. He singled out four styles and defined the “Style IV”, flourishing in the Palaeologan period, as retrospective, characterized by eclecticism and decorativeness<sup>8</sup>. Richard Krautheimer discerned two phases of style within the Palaeologan period: the Early (circa 1280-1300) and High Palaeologan (from 1300 onwards). The first phase is notable for extremely close characteristics everywhere, the main one being the decorativeness. The High Palaeologan phase is characterized by orderliness and archi-

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*стовидната църква по Българските земи до края на XIV в.*, София 1931, 80.

<sup>5</sup> С. Коруновски, *Црковната архитектура во Македонија во XIII век*. Докторска дисертација, Скопје 2000.

<sup>6</sup> H. Hallensleben, *Die architekturgeschichtliche Stellung der Kirche Sv. Bogorodica Peribleptos (Sv. Kliment)*, Musée Archéologique de Macédoine. Recueil des Travaux, Vol.6/7, 1967-1974, 297-316; P. Vocotopoulos, *Church architecture in the Despotate of Epirus: The problem of Influences*, Zograf, 27, Belgrade, 1998-99, 72-92; Idem, *Art Under the Despotate of Epirus*, Epirus: 4000 Years of Greek History and Civilization, 1997, 224-229; G. Velenis, *Thirteenth-Century Architecture in the Despotate of Epirus: The Origins of the School*, Studenica et l'art byzantine au tour de l'annee 1200, Beograd 1988, 279-284; K. Τσοῦρις, Ο κεραμοπλαστικός διάκοσμος των υστεροβυζαντινών μνημείων της βορειοδυτικής Ελλάδος. Κύπρου, 1988; S. Ćirić, *The Epirote Input in the Architecture of Byzantine Macedonia and of Serbia Around 1300*, Αφείρομα στον ακαδημικού Παναγιώτη Λ. Βοκοτοπούλου. Αθήνα 2015, 127-140; В. Кораћ, М. Шупут, *Архитектура византијског света*. Београд 2005, 326-328; А.В. Захарова, Е.С. Дятлова, *О строителях и художниках, работавших в македонском Прилепе в конце XIII века*, Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana, T. 28, №2, 2020, 46-72; М. Л. Заворина, *Эпирская традиция в поздневизантийской архитектуре Северной Македонии*, Актуальные проблемы теории и истории искусства: сб. науч. статей Вып. 11, ред. А.В. Захарова, С.В. Мальцева, Ю. Ю. Станюкович-Денисова, Санкт-Петербург 2021 (в печати).

<sup>7</sup> J. Ćirić, *Beyond the Wall: Structure and meaning of East Façade of Perivleptos Church in Ohrid*, Самоиловата држава и Византија: историја, легенда, традиција, наследство. Зборник на трудови од Меѓународниот симпозиум «Деновина Јустиниан I», Скопје, 17-18 октомври, 2014, Уред. М. Панов, Скопје, 2015, 162-172; Idem, *Brick Substance at Zaum Church in Ohrid*, Patrimonium. MK, Year 6, №11, 2013, 99-109; Idem, *On the Imitation (μίμησις) of Antiquity: Opus Reticulatum at the East Façade of St. John Kaneo Church in Ohrid*, Niš and Byzantium XVII, 2019, 271-284.

<sup>8</sup> H. Buchwald, *The Concept of Style in Byzantine Architecture*, Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik, 1986, Vol. 36, 303-316.

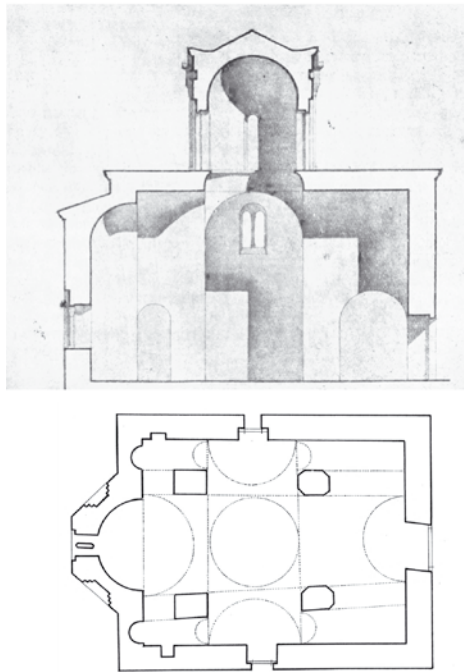


Fig. 2. The church of St John Kaneo in Ohrid. Section drawing (after M. Zloković) and plan (after S. Korunovski)

Сл. 2. Црква Св. Јован Канео у Охриду, пресек, (по М. Злоковићу) и основа (по С. Коруновском)

tectonics, the collateral subordination of the individual elements and sophistication of the composition while maintaining the formal arsenal and hewing to the general stylistic trends mentioned above. Krautheimer denoted two groups within the High Palaeologan phase. Eastern (Constantinople and Bulgaria) and North-West (Thessaloniki, Serbia). There are a number of differences between the monuments of these groups, but the stylistic development is governed by the same tendencies regardless of region. In the North-West group he mentioned also Ohrid as an active center of the Early period, subsequently superseded by Thessaloniki<sup>9</sup>.

The issue of style in Late Byzantine architecture was developed by Slobodan Ćurčić, who analyzed the very logic of the organization of church facades – compositional, structural, rhythmical capabilities, in connection with the internal structure of the building. He considered the Palaeologan style as a compilation of elements derived from the Middle Byzantine architecture in the framework of a unitary composition, the main qualities of which are the shift away from tectonics and wholeness to greater sophistication and diversity, external flamboyancy. Decorativeness is becoming the main principle in the articulation of facades, they are built on their own

compositional laws, where rhythm, diversity and externalities becomes much more important than the classical principles of architectonics. Considering the regional variations of Palaeoloagan architecture, Ćurčić defined three ‘stylistic paradigms’ – of Epirus, of Thessaloniki and of Skopje. The main characteristics of the paradigm of Epirus are the following: the essentially stressed cubical form, the solid walls with flat surfaces, the articulation of the upper parts of buildings with shallow niches, which not always correspond to the interior vaults and arches. Towards the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, in the Palaeologan time, this basic formula reached Ohrid and entered local building practice without any special changes. It became a local paradigm and spread within the region<sup>10</sup>. Ćurčić devoted a separate article to this issue in which he outlined the main trajectory of the evolution of the School of Epirus in Macedonia and Serbia, thus

<sup>9</sup> R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine architecture*, 416-428.

<sup>10</sup> S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans from Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent*, New Haven, London 2010, 600-601.

positioning Ohrid as an important regional architectural center of the Early Palaeologan time<sup>11</sup>. He also raised the issue of identifying the individual Epirote workshops operating in the region. However, these aspects were not further investigated, with the exception of a few quite successful attempts. The peculiarities and mechanics of assimilation of the tradition of Epirus in Macedonia and Serbia, and the role of Ohrid in the architectural developments of the Palaeologan era have not been accurately determined. These are the issues that we shall try to investigate in more detail in this paper.

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To begin with, it is necessary to describe in brief the main characteristics of the architecture of Epirus, which found its direct continuation in Ohrid. During the Latin occupation of the Empire (1204-1261) in the circumstances of general stagnation, building activity on the Byzantine Balkans continued in the independent Despotate of Epirus, ruled by the Komnenos Doukas dynasty. In the 1230s-1260s a fairly specific regional architectural school was formed there based on the Middle Byzantine traditions of the Hellenic schools. This school has a set of characteristic features<sup>12</sup>. Small timber-roofed basilicas prevail. Among the different variants of the cross-domed churches, the so-called two-column type is more frequent, using two different pairs of supports: the walls separating the sanctuary from the prothesis and diakonikon, and two columns, is noteworthy



Fig.3. The church of St Trinity in Berat, Albania. North façade. Photo by Anna Zakharova.

Сл. 3. Црква Свете Тројице у Берату, Албанија, северна фасада, фото: Ана Захарова



Fig.4. The church of Holy Mother of God Peribleptos in Ohrid. South façade. Photo by author.

Сл. 4. Црква Богородице Перивлепте у Охриду, јужна фасада, фото: аутор

<sup>11</sup> S. Ćurčić, *The Epirote Input in the Architecture of Byzantine Macedonia and of Serbia Around 1300*, 131-133.

<sup>12</sup> S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans from Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent*, 562-576, 600-602; G. Velenis, *Thirteenth-Century Architecture in the Despotate of Epirus: The Origins of the School*, 279-284; P. Vocotopoulos, *Church architecture in the Despotate of Epirus: The problem of Influences*, 72-92.

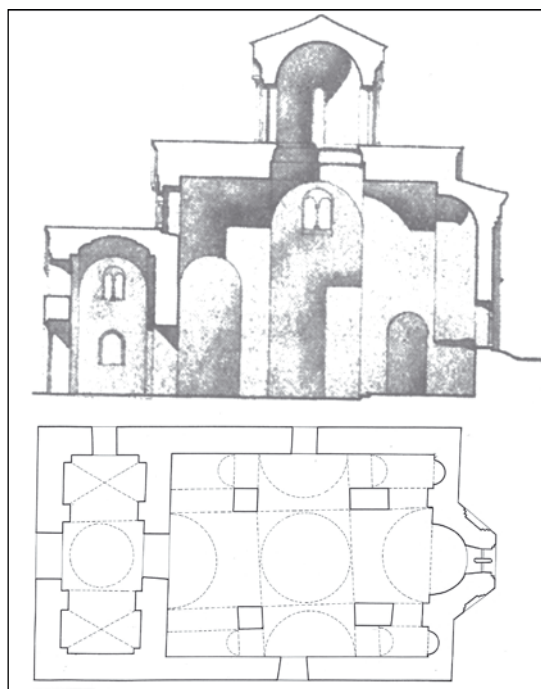


Fig. 5. The church of Holy Mother of God Peribleptos in Ohrid. Section drawing (after M. Zloković) and plan (after S. Korunovski)

Сл. 5. Црква Богородице Перивлепте у Охридју (по М. Злоковићу) и план (по С. Коруновском)

thy. The cross-vaulted type (called 'stavroepistegos' in Greek), where the dome above the crossing is replaced by the raised barrel-vault, is especially characteristic of the Epirote school<sup>13</sup>. Sustainable morphological features include faceted dome drums, often with columns on the corners, three-sided apses articulated with blind arches, triangular pediments instead of semicircular ones, as well as a very characteristic framing of windows with a three-lobed arch consisting of a semicircular arch with two quaternary adjoining. Three-bays nartheces are widespread, and from the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century surrounding the main core of building with galleries becomes popular in accordance with the general trends of Palaeologan architecture.

The articulation of the facades of Epirote churches is limited to accentuation of the cross arms or vaults of nartheces by low slightly shallowed arched niches and to the active usage of dog-tooth friezes, sandwiched in plinth. Below the level of the vaults the solid cubical volume prevails, decorated with horizontal bands of ceramoplastic orna-

ments. The wide specific and iconographic vocabulary of the façade decoration is the hallmark of the Late Byzantine Epirus: there are simple and special-cut brick ornaments, glazed ceramic inserts and special vessels, facing masonry in *opus reticulatum* and *opus spicatum* that have been arranged in complex, rich decorative programs on the flat wall surfaces<sup>14</sup>. The *cloisonné* masonry used in Epirus is also characterized by its decorative properties<sup>15</sup>.

Three stages can be distinguished in the development of the Epirote school. Under the first Komnenos Doukas (1205-1230s), the connection with the Helladic school is still strong: the simplicity and laconism of forms, the predominance of traditional types, the tenuity of façade decoration. The reign

<sup>13</sup> On this type see: A. Орλάνδος, *Οι Σταυρεπίστεγοι Ναοί της Ελλάδος*, Αρχαίον Βυζαντινών Μνημείων της Ελλάδος, 1, 1935, 70-87; H. M. Küpper, *Bautypus und Genesis der griechischen Dachtranseptkirche*, Wien, 1996.

<sup>14</sup> S.V. Maltseva, M.L. Zavorina, *Late Byzantine Architectural Ceramics of Epirus and Macedonia*, Proceedings of the International Conference SmartArt – Art and Science Applied, Faculty of Applied Arts, Belgrade 2021 (in print).

<sup>15</sup> P. Vocotopoulos, *Church architecture in the Despotate of Epirus: The problem of Influences*, 84-85.



of Michael II (1231-1268) was the time of the final establishment and the main achievements of the Epirote school: new types of churches appeared, morphology was further developed, façade decoration became more complicated, the influence of architectural traditions from Constantinople, Nicene and Western European became more conspicuous. Finally, during the reign of Nikephorus I and his successors (1268-1310s), the architecture of Epirus was already developing in accordance to the tendencies of the Palaeologan period: we can detect the standardization and ordering of decorative programs, a tendency to envelop the core of the building



Fig.6. The church of Holy Mother of God Peribleptos in Ohrid. East façade. Photo by author.

Сл. 6. Црква Богородице Перивлепте у Охриду, источна фасада, фото: аутор

with peripheral zones, a change in the interpretation of forms towards greater plasticity and expression, the strengthening of the influence of Southern Italy, which manifested itself in borrowing decorative elements (architectural sculpture and glazed ceramics of Italian production) and affecting the iconography of architecture (the Church of Parigoritissa in Arta, 1294-1296).

After the restoration of the Empire in 1261, in the last decades of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the architectural tradition of Epirus spread beyond the Despotate along with the migration of building workshops and became one of the sources for the formation of the Palaeologan style in Constantinople and in the regional centers of Aegean Macedonia (Thessaloniki, Veria, Kastoria, Athos). On the northern outskirts of Byzantium, Ohrid – the center of the autocephalous archbishopric became a new focus of building activity<sup>16</sup>. In the 1270-1310s three churches appear in Ohrid, which researchers associated with three different building workshops<sup>17</sup>. This time corresponds to the Early Palaeologan phase of the development of the Epirote school of the time of Nikephorus I and his successors, and we suppose it is a reason to consider the Macedonian direction in the context of the Palaeologan architecture of Epirus.

The Church of St. John the Theologian Kaneo dates back to 1270-1280s<sup>18</sup>. This is a cross-in-square church, with slightly elongated longitudinal axis due to

<sup>16</sup> S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans from Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent*, 571-577.

<sup>17</sup> S. Ćurčić, *The Epirote Input in the Architecture of Byzantine Macedonia and of Serbia Around 1300*, 127-140; H. Hallensleben, *Die architekturgeschichtliche Stellung der Kirche Sv. Bogorodica Peribleptos (Sv. Kliment)*, 297-316.

<sup>18</sup> On this church see: 10, с. 84-90, 195-200; 12; 17 p.572-574; 18 П. Миљковиќ-Пепек, *Црквата Св. Јован Богослов-Канео во Охрид*, Културно наследство III, №4,



Fig. 7. The church of Panagia in Voulgareli near Arta. South façade. Photo by author.

Сл. 7. Црква Панагија Вулгарели у Арти, јужна фасада, фото: аутор

the elongation of the western cross arm, without a narthex. The dome rests on two different pairs of supports. In the East these are rectangular walls separating the sanctuary from prothesis and diakonikon, and in the West these are low pillars with cut corners and adorned with pseudo-capitals. Supports of similar shape with cut corners are found in Epirus, for example, the church of the Dormition in Paramythia, the church of Taxiarches in Kostaniani (both are of the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century)). But in the St. John church this combination of supports is rather a modification of two-column typical of the Helladic and Epirote schools<sup>19</sup>.

The exterior of the building clearly shows the cross arms articulated in Epirote manner by flat semicircular niches inscribed in triangular pediments. The design of the facades is ascetic: the walls are built in cloisonne masonry, the facades are devoid of articulation up to the height of the vaults. On the three sides of the church three narrow portals are arranged, which are located with a slight shift along the axis. The decoration is concentrated on the eastern façade. In the upper part of the three-sided apse there is a wide frieze of *opus reticulatum*, below there are three low flat niches with triple skewbacks, filled with simple brick patterns and surrounded by a dog-tooth frieze sandwiched in plinth. It is worth to note the design of the drum of the dome: the flat faces are decorated with blind single arches with double archivolt lined with plinth, and are separated by stone columns. This type of the dome is well known from the Middle Byzantine monuments of Central Greece<sup>20</sup>, especially in Attica. A

Скопје 1967; С. Коруновски, *Црковната архитектура во Македонија во XIII век*. Докторска дисертација, Скопје 2000, 84-90, 195-200; Idem, *The Architecture of the Church St. John Kaneo and its Chronological Stylistic Correlation with some Ochrid Churches*, Зборник Средновековна уметност на музеј на Македонија, №5, Скопје 2006, 15-23; S. Ćirić, *Architecture in the Balkans from Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent*, 572-574; Idem, *The Epirote Input in the Architecture of Byzantine Macedonia and of Serbia Around 1300*, 127-140; J. Ćirić, *On the Imitation (μίμησις) of Antiquity: Opus Reticulatum at the East Façade of St. John Kaneo Church in Ohrid, Niš and Byzantium XVII*, 2019, 271-284.

<sup>19</sup> С. Коруновски, *Црковната архитектура во Македонија во XIII век*, 195.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 251-252.



Fig. 8. The church of St Panteleimon in Thessaloniki. South façade. Photo by author.

Сл. 8. Црква Св. Пантелејмона у Солуну, јужна фасада, фото: аутор



specific feature is the crowning of the facets of the drum with miniature Epirote three-lobed arches and triangular gables, but it is not clear whether these gables are original <sup>21</sup>.

The absence of supporting arches in the aisles is another remarkable constructive feature: the barrel vaults in the corner bays merge into the walls. The same feature is found, among other examples, in an earlier monument in Macedonia, the church of St. Germanos on Prespa (before 1006), of similar cross-in-square type, but not only there. The absence of small supporting arches and the articulation of the cross arms with flat niches was defined by Macedonian researcher Sasho Korunovski as a local North-Macedonian specificity<sup>22</sup>. But it seems to us that the point of view of Sl. Ćurčić is more correct: he connected the church of St John Kaneo with Northern Epirus, namely with Berat, although without sufficient arguments. We partly agree with Ćurčić' assumption: the absence of the strengthened arches in the aisles, the building technique, the arrangement of narrow portals on three sides with a shift along the axis, the modification of the two-column type – all these peculiarities reveal similarities with the church of the Holy Trinity in Berat (late 13<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>23</sup>. The blind arches with double archivolt on the facets of the dome drum appears in the small church of St Savior in Borje near Korçe in Albania too (late 13<sup>th</sup> century). But there are also many differences, the main one being the very nature of the buildings. The churches in Berat and Borje are works of provincial and simplified Epirote school, whereas St John Kaneo is a high-quality and rather original, although somewhat archaic version referring not so much to the actual architecture of Epirus of the 1270s-1280s, but rather to the Helladic School. In addition to the "Athenian" type of the dome, the features of the Helladic school can be noted in the decoration of the apse with a wide band of *opus reticulatum* (simi-

<sup>21</sup> П. Миљковиќ-Пепек, *Црквата Св. Јован Богослов-Канео во Охрид*; S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 574.

<sup>22</sup> С. Коруновски, *Црквната архитектура во Македонија во XIII век*, 188-200, 297-300.

<sup>23</sup> On this church see: A. Meksi, *Le trois eglises byzantines de Berat*, Monumentet, 4, 1972, 59-102.

lar one we can see, for example, in the church of Sergius and Bacchus at Kitta, Peloponnese, of the third quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> century), and in the articulation of the apse with low niches of equal height (the earliest example is the Church of St. Demetrius in Eani, Western Macedonia, before the 13<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>24</sup>.

One of the excellent masterpieces of Late Byzantine architecture is the church of the Holy Mother of God Peribleptos, that was built in 1295 by local Byzantine nobleman Progon Zgur<sup>25</sup>. The main typological and morphological characteristics are similar to the church of St John with the only difference that a tree-bays narthex appears in Peribleptos church, well known in the Epirote school. In spatial conception equilibrium and monumentality are combined with the strengthening of the vertical accent, which is manifested in proportions – in a decrease of the side of the dome square and an increase in the height of the supporting arches. In external appearance the structure is visible at the level of the vaults: the cross arms stressed by the raised triangular pediments, clearly rise above the lowered rectangular slightly elongated corner bays. In accordance to the stylistic paradigm of Epirus described by Ćurčić<sup>26</sup>, there is a simple cubical volume with flat surfaces of the walls without any articulation below the level of the vaults. The design of the facades also follows the Epirote tradition: the ends of the cross arms are accentuated by the slightly elongated flat niches, their tympana are filled with brick ornaments. On all four sides of the church there are wide bands of pseudomeander and *opus reticulatum*, located one above the other. Similar ornaments are found in the monuments of Arta that are close in time – in the Church of Parigoritissa (1294-1296)<sup>27</sup> and in the church of Panagia in Voulgareli near Arta (1294)<sup>28</sup>.

The three-sided apse of Peribleptos church is marked by tall and narrow blind arches filled by brickwork. These niches framed by triple skewbacks and dogtooth freeze are filled with decorative brickwork to that on the facades:

<sup>24</sup> G. Velenis, *Thirteenth-Century Architecture in the Despotate of Epirus: The Origins of the School*, 283.

<sup>25</sup> On this church see: М. Злоковић, *Старе цркве у областима Преспе и Охрида*, Старинар, 1925, 115-149; Д. Корнаков, *По конзерваторските работи во црквата Св. Богородица Перивлептос (Св. Климент) во Охрид*, Културно наследство, 2, 1961, 74-89; Ђ. Бошковић, К. Томовски, *Средновековната архитектура во Охрид*, Зборник на трудови, Народен музеј во Охрид, 1961, 71-100, В. Кораћ, М. Шупут, *Архитектура византијског света*, 327-328; И. Заров, *Архитектурата на манастирската црква Св. Богородица Перивлепта во контекст на тенденциите на византиската архитектура од XIII-XIV век*, Патримониум, 7-8, Скопје, 2010, 161-169; Idem, *Ктиторството на великиот хетеријарх Прогон Згур на Св. Богородица Перивлепта во Охрид*, Зборник за средновековна уметност на музеј на Македонија, 6, Скопје, 2007, 49-61; H. Hallensleben, *Die architekturgeschichtliche Sfellung der Kirche Sv. Bogorodica Peribleptos (Sv. Klement)*, 297-316; J. Poposka, *Church Mother of God Peribleptos (St. Clement)*, Ohrid, 2006.

<sup>26</sup> S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 600-601.

<sup>27</sup> On this church see: А. Орландос, *Η Παρηγορήτισσα της Άρτης*, Αθήνα, 1963; L. Theis, *Die Architektur der Kirche der Panaghia Paregoritissa in Arta, Epirus*, Amsterdam, 1991; Παπαδοπούλου Β. Η Βυζαντινή Άρτα και τα μνημεία της, Αθήνα, 2002, 136-137.

<sup>28</sup> On this church see: Β. Παπαδοπούλου, *Η Κόκκινη Εκκλησιά στο Βουργαρέλι της Άρτας. Στοιχεία από τη νεότερη έρευνα, Τζουμερκιώτικα Χρονικά*, τόμ. 12, 2011, 185-199. Idem. Η Βυζαντινή Άρτα και τα μνημεία της, Αθήνα, 2002, 118-124.

wide stripes of *opus reticulatum*, *opus spicatum* and pseudomeander are inscribed in narrow fields of vertical elongated arches. Thus, the Epirote aesthetics of the wide friezes is preserved, but these friezes are combined with narrow vertical niches there.

The church is crowned with a dome on a low octagonal drum of graceful proportions. The faces of the drum are decorated with triple skewbacks outlined by dogtooth ribbon, a wavy ledge is developed in plastically manner by alternating rows of plinth and dogtooth.

On the whole, the composition of the Peribleptos church is distinguished by its integrity, a successfully realized combination of stability and verticality. Stability and balance are

preserved in the horizontal orientation of the building, in emphasizing the longitudinal axis in the external appearance due to the elongated eastern and western cross arms and corner bays, and in the wide bands of the decorative friezes encircling the facades. Several vertical accents are manifested not only in the change of proportions of the domed core, but are also indicated on the facades by the elongation of flat niches of the cross arms, by the shape of the tall slender apse marked by thin graceful blind arches with triple skewbacks. The flatness and graphics of the decorative friezes, which are characteristic of Epirus, are combined with rather plastic round shapes of the archivolts of arches and flat niches. Notable plasticity is achieved due to the abundance and richness of the skewbacks made of bricks, and also due to the use of the light and shade accents created with dogtooth friezes framed by plinth. A high level of skill in creating the composition, revealed in the structural and proportional relationship of individual elements of the building, and also in façade decoration, and equally high quality workmanship – all these features indicated that the builders came from the capital of the Despotate of Epirus, Arta. This is confirmed by the close similarity of Peribleptos church with the church of Panagia in Voulgareli near Arta (1294), noted for the first time by Horst Hallensleben, who suggested that both of them were built by the same workshop from Arta<sup>29</sup>. Thus, the church of Peribleptos is an example of a mature Epirote School, where all its characteristic elements are combined in a more developed and elaborate way, which is probably associated with the tendencies of the Early Palaeologan period.

It is interesting to compare the church of Peribleptos with an example of Early Palaeologan architecture in Thessaloniki, the contemporary church of St

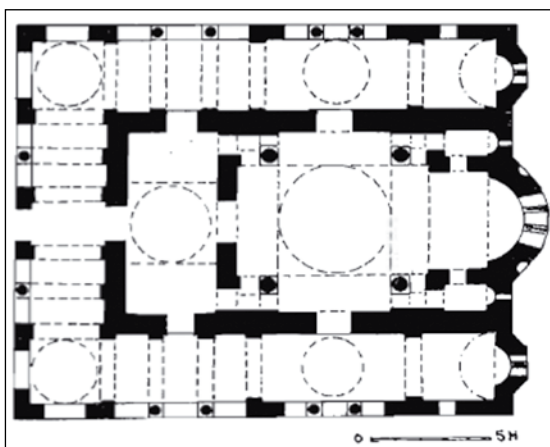


Fig. 9. The church of St Panteleimon in Thessaloniki. Plan (after Sl. Ćurčić)

Сл. 9. Црква Св. Пантелејмона у Солуну, основа (по С. Ђурчићу)

<sup>29</sup> H. Hallensleben, *Die architekturgeschichtliche Sfellung der Kirche Sv. Bogorodica Peribleptos (Sv. Kliment)*, 297-316.



Fig. 10. The exonarthex of the church of St Sophia in Ohrid. West façade. Photo by author.

Сл. 10. Спољна приправа цркве Св. Софије у Охриду, западна фасада, фото: аутор

Panteleimon (1295-1315) close to it in time<sup>30</sup>. The latter, according to Georgios Theocharidis, was originally the catholicon of the Kyr Isaak monastery and was also dedicated to the Panagia Peribleptos<sup>31</sup>. This is a complex cross-in-square church, with an almost square naos. The dome rests on four columns placed close to the corners. This feature was linked by researchers with the influence of Nicaea<sup>32</sup>. A domed narthex adjoins on the west, and the entire building originally was surrounded by partially preserved galleries with two pairs of domes, along the transverse axis and above the western corners of the gallery, which are believed to indicate the influence of Constantinople<sup>33</sup>. The façade decoration is limited to a number of small niches in the upper parts of the side wings of the galleries, which were associated with the influence of Epirus, and rounded niches on the apse in imitation of the Constantinopolitan tradition. The composition of the building consists of forms which height increases stepwise. In the exterior the cross-domed core is clearly visible, the bema and the altar part are structurally highlighted. The approach to the forms and to the architectural volumes follows the classical principles of architectonics, of structural expression, plasticity of forms, which, however, have not yet been formalized into a general

<sup>30</sup> On this church see: Γ. Θεοχαρίδης, *Ο Ματθαίος Βλάσταρις και η μονή του κύρ Ισαάκ εν Θεσσαλονίκη*, Byzantion, 1970, XL, 454-459; S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 549-550; Idem. *The Role of Late Byzantine in Thessaloniki in Church Architecture in the Balkans*, *Dumbarton Oaks Paper*, Vol.57, 2003, 65-84; М. Каппас, *Архитектурный «идиолект» Фессалоники в средне- и поздневизантийский периоды: сходства и различия с Константинополем*, *Византий и Византия: провинциализм столицы и столичность провинции*, Санкт-Петербург, 2020, 127-153.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 549-550; Idem. *The Role of Late Byzantine in Thessaloniki in Church Architecture in the Balkans*, 82-84; М. Каппас, *Архитектурный «идиолект» Фессалоники в средне- и поздневизантийский периоды: сходства и различия с Константинополем*, 144.

<sup>33</sup> S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 549-550; Idem. *The Role of Late Byzantine in Thessaloniki in Church Architecture in the Balkans*, 82-84.

concept and are applied in different ways. In the composition the vertical is noticeably emphasized, the desire to emphasize the cross-domed core is visible, but it is not yet so clearly expressed.

Comparing the two churches – in Thessaloniki and in Ohrid, the difference of these architectural traditions becomes obvious: it is clear that in Thessaloniki the influence of Constantinople was decisive, although it was largely reformed into a local provincialized version, while in Ohrid belonging to the architectural tradition of Epirus becomes more pronounced. At the same time, at certain points one can discern a general direction of the search for a way to synthesize elements within unified architectural composition, which is carried out in different ways. These general tendencies include, firstly, the desire to accentuate the cross-domed core – to preserve the spatial unity, the balance of the masses and volumes, and at the same time to give it vertical development. The second important tendency is the conformity of the decoration to the architectural forms, the supremacy of form and structural logic. In Thessaloniki, where Late Byzantine architecture was based on the tradition of Constantinople with its principles of architectonics and structural order, these tendencies are reflected more clearly. In Ohrid, the basis of Late Byzantine architecture was formed by the Epirote tradition, different in its approach. Yet this tradition also developed in the same direction resulting in different forms, but similar general principles. The compositional and decorative features of the church of Peribleptos described above are not found embodied so consistently in other contemporary monuments, either in Epirus of the Ohrid Archbishopric that are close to it in time (the church of St. John Kaneo, churches of Prilep of the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> – first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century). Therefore we suggest to consider the Peribleptos church in Ohrid to be an example of the Epirote tradition at the formation stage of the Early Palaeologan style outside the Despotate.

It is also necessary to make some remarks regarding the formation of the local specifics of the Late Byzantine architecture in Ohrid. Architect Milan Zloković, who researched these monuments in the 1920s, suggested the existence of the so-called “School of Ohrid”, which includes the churches of St. John Kaneo and Peribleptos<sup>34</sup>. However, we suppose that the commonality of these churches concerns only typology and architectural iconography, while the stylistic and technical characteristics of the monuments differ markedly, and one can hardly speak about the local “school”. Rather it should be regarded as a priority building type.

The last Palaeologan monument in Ohrid is the exonarthex of St Sophia cathedral built in 1314 upon the commission of archbishop Gregorios<sup>35</sup>. Its elongated prismatic volume unites the basilica itself and a staircase on the north,

<sup>34</sup> М. Злоковић, *Старе цркве у областима Преспе и Охрида*, Старинар, 1925, 115-149.

<sup>35</sup> On this monument see: Ђ. Бошковић, К. Томовски, *Средновековната архитектура во Охрид*, 76-84; В. Schellewald, *Die architektur der Sophienkirche in Ohrid*, Bonn, 1986; В. Cipan, *St. Sophia – The Cathedral Church of the Ohrid Archbishopric. A Chronology of the Architecture*, Скопје, 1996; S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 573-574, 599-600; Idem. *The Epirote Input in the Architecture of Byzantine Macedonia and of Serbia Around 1300* 133



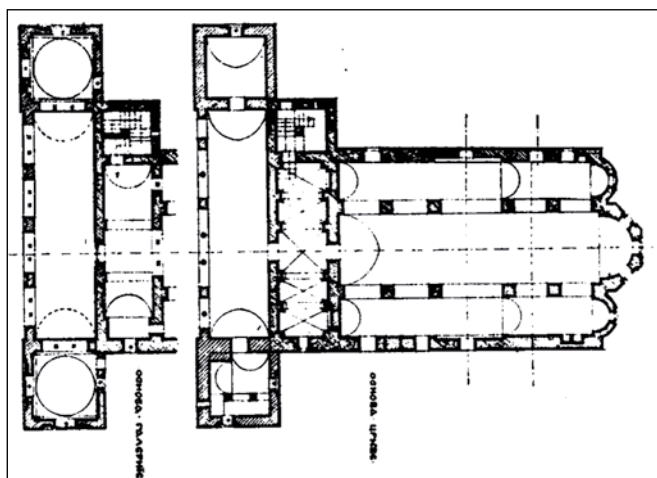


Fig. 11. The church of St Sophia in Ohrid, plan (after M. Zloković).

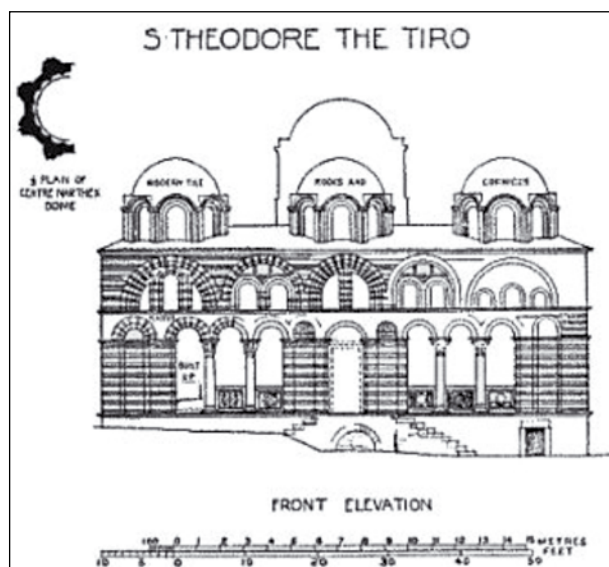
Сл. 11. Црква Св. Софије у Охриду, основа (по М. Злоковићу)

thus completing the whole complex. The domed chapels protrude from the sides as separate solid volumes. The ground plan of the exonarthex shows an asymmetry about the central axis of the basilica, but visually it is surmounted by the composition of the west façade, which is based on the motif of the arch, and its rhythmical, proportional and figural variations. The western façade of the central part of the exonarthex opens with a double-storied arcade. On the ground floor, two double arches flank a massive triple one, and from the north, opposite the staircase tower, an additional single arch appears. The resulting asymmetry is completely leveled by the even accelerated rhythm of a row of small flat niches, filled with brick ornaments, as well as an arcade of the second floor, passing above. The motif set in the arcade of the ground floor is repeated in the upper arcade in lighter and more graceful proportions. There are four triple arches on thin columns alternating in equal rhythm with piers filled with rounded niches. On the top of the wall at the level of the archivolt of the arches, there is a frieze of brick ornament with motive of grid. This is an inversion – the decoration filling the decorative niches under the arcade of the second floor is freed from the framing and fills the empty piers between the arches of the second floor. Instead of flat decorated niches there appear concave niches on the piers, without any decoration, but plastically expressed.

The central part of the exonarthex is flanked by massive, solid tower-like side chapels crowned by domes with octagonal drums. These are high cubical volumes, their upper parts are decorated with low flat niches with inscribed three-lobed arches framing the windows. The niches are filled with brick ornaments. Eastern facades are topped with a wide stripe of pseudomeander. The faces of the octagonal dome drums are separated by stone columns, articulated by triple skewbacks, surrounded by a dogtooth stripe. They originally had a wavy cornice. These domes resemble some Epirote examples (the church of St. Demetrius at Kypseli, 1296-1318), as well as the dome of Peribleptos church. Yet they look more graphically, without overlapping dogtooth stripes, which also corresponds to the tectonic interpretation of the prismatic tower-like volumes themselves.

Fig. 12. Kilise Camii in Constantinople. West façade of the exonarthex (after A. Van Milingen)

Сл. 12. Килисе цамија у Цариграду, западна фасада спољне припрате (по А. Милингену)



The decorative elements, the *cloisonne* masonry, the iconography of the façade décor, the brick dedicatory inscription crowning the west façade of the exonarthex – all these features derive from the architecture of Epirus. In terms of style, the exonarthex fully corresponds to the tendencies of the final phase in the development of the architecture of Epirus. The church of Parigoritissa in Arta can be proposed as a parallel. It is quite possible that the workshop that built the exonarthex came from Arta<sup>36</sup>. In addition to the commonality in the interpretation of the forms as well as in façade decoration, both monuments are marked by the influence of Western European, namely Italian architecture. The facades of Parigoritissa, as has been repeatedly noted in historiography, resemble the facades of the Italian Proto-Renaissance palazzo. The exonarthex of St. Sophia can be compared, for example, with the façade of the Venetian 13<sup>th</sup> century palazzo Fondaco dei Turchi, which also has on the basis of the commons in the composition with double-storied central part with opened arcades, flanked by the lateral segments.

In the context of Palaeologan architecture of the 1300-1310s, the exonarthex of St. Sophia has a special place. It belongs to a very rare type of nartheces which represents the front façade. There is only one similar example in the Palaeologan architecture – the exonarthex of Kilise Camii in Constantinople, of the early 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>37</sup>. It is close to the Ohrid exonarthex in terms of the composition: it is an elongated prismatic volume with the central part of which is flanked by symmetrical domed bays protruding beyond the width of the church itself. There are similarities in the facades: in both monuments there is a divi-

<sup>36</sup> S. Ćurčić, *The Epirote Input in the Architecture of Byzantine Macedonia and of Serbia Around 1300*, 132-133.

<sup>37</sup> Вл. В. Седов, *Килице Джамии. Столичная архитектура Византии*, Москва 2008, 233-262.



Fig. 13. The church of the Holy Apostles in Thessaloniki. The South-West of the exonarthex. Photo by author.

Сл. 13. Црква Св. Апостола у Солуну, југозападна страна спољне припрате, фото: аутор

sion of the façade into two tiers by a cornice, with an open arcade on the columns below. But the composition of Kilise Camii façade is more complex, varied and intense. The tendency for decorativeness of facades in Constantinople is realized not in the abundance and variety of ceramoplastic ornaments, but in the active use of architectural decorative elements such as arcades, flat and rounded niches, columns, cornices, and their various combinations. There is an actualization of classical Late Antique architectural forms, which are reinterpreted in a decorative way. The parekklesia of Pammakaristos (circa 1310-1315) and of Chora monastery (1316-1320/21) belongs to this direction of the style. There is also a tendency to open the façade with arcades in the ground level in secular architecture, as in Tekfur Saray (first third of the 14<sup>th</sup> century). This style of High Palaeologan architecture of Constantinople reflects an anticlassical tendency of the in architectural decoration losing its constructiveness<sup>38</sup>. The main idea of this style is that the very logic of the façade articulation remains decorative, but it subordinates the Antique elements. In its pure form this tendency is present only in Constantinople. In Thessaloniki, another important center of the Palaeologan period which was in the sphere of the metropolitan influence, this tendency manifests itself only in the exonarthex of the church of the Holy Apostles (1310-1314). It is a low rectangular volume commensurate with the west wing of the gallery. The west façade of the narthex opens with two triple arches of complex configuration on the sides of the portal. These arches are flanked by rounded niches and brick semi-columns intercepted by a cornice. Such decoration resembles Constantinople, but in a simplified version.

Thus, we suppose that the exonarthex of St Sophia of Ohrid represents a new stage in the development of the Epirote architectural tradition outside the Despotate. The achievements of the Epirote School of the end of the late 13<sup>th</sup> century are synthesized with the current tendencies of the High Palaeologan architecture of Constantinople and its sphere of influence. The tradition of Epirus is presented not only in individual elements, such as the three-lobed

<sup>38</sup>

S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 535-543.

arches and simple brick ornaments, but also in the interpretation of forms, in the laconicism of prismatic volumes, in the simple configuration of arches and niches. But the features of the Epirote School are combined with the influence of the Palaeologan architecture of Constantinople, which is expressed both in a rare typology and in peculiarities of the composition of the façade, based on the use of the classical forms and their rhythmic and plastic options. The concept of adding of the peripheral spaces and representative facades opening with arcades belongs to the High Palaeologan architecture, but it is implemented here in a simplified form, the originality of which is determined by the influence of Epirus.

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After the Serbian conquest in 1334 Ohrid became a part of Serbian kingdom and never returned under the Byzantine rule. The Archbishopric retained its independence but lost its significance. Since the 1330s the main direction of development of architecture in Ohrid has changed. Instead of the representative buildings of the 1280-1310s we can see lots of plain tiny single-nave churches without any decoration, built of rough masonry. So, the development of architecture in Ohrid was gradually stopped.

Thus, Ohrid was an advanced, but a currently important center of architecture development in the late 13<sup>th</sup>-early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries on the north periphery of the Byzantine Empire, which responded to the current general stylistic trends in the development of architecture. It's architecture based on the Epirote tradition, which continued to develop outside the Despotate. In the 1270-1310s three different workshops from different parts of Epirus and of different skills worked here. The tradition of Epirus comes to Ohrid in the 1270-1280s, which corresponds to the mature stage of its development. But in Ohrid, its further development was guided by the tendencies of the Palaeologan period, where the role of Constantinople was strong. At the same time, a gradual turn took place from a variety of solutions and decorative and plentiful façade decoration of the period of the turmoil (1204-1261) to the formation of a stylistic commonality based on architectural forms and elements inherited from previous decades took place in Byzantine architecture<sup>39</sup>.

In Ohrid the type of a cross-in-square church with a dome resting on four pillars was established. The composition of the architectural volumes is characterized by thoughtfulness, integrity and harmony. The façade decoration is plentiful, but obeys general compositional rules. There is a transition from the indeterminism of the architecture of the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the orderliness and refinement of the maturing Palaeologan style. The branch of representative architecture of the 1270-1310s begins in the quite simple and archaic church of St. John Kaneo, then it continues in the church of Peribleptos in a variant of Early Palaeologan style, and it sets to expire in the exonarthex of St. Sophia in the fully developed High Palaeologan style, although in provincial, not Constantinopolitan version based on the architectural tradition of Epirus. A distinct Ohrid specificity cannot be traced in these churches. There is no appeal to earlier monuments of the region, or development of a unique local

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<sup>39</sup> R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine architecture*, 416-429.

architectural variant. Thus, we suppose that the architecture of Ohrid around 1300 in its essence is the Epirote tradition at the stage of the Palaeologan style, which adopted the leading tendencies of Constantinople and Thessaloniki, and developed the classical direction based on absorption and interpretation of Late Antique architectural decorative forms and use of their compositional, plastic and rhythmic options.

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ПАЛЕОЛОГОВСКА АРХИТЕКТУРА НА ПЕРИФЕРИЈИ ВИЗАНТИЈСКОГ ЦАРСТВА: ХРАМОВИ ОХРИДА КРАЈЕМ XIII И РАНОГ XIV ВЕКА

Специфичност и узајамни утицај индивидуалних центара је проблем око којег се гради дискусија о касној византијској архитектури. Од посебног је значаја за архитектонске процесе на периферији Византијског царства, посебно на територији Северне Македоније, обележене суживотом грчке и словенске културе. Стара византијска архитектура Северне Македоније је комплексни и неистражени феномен, што оставља бројна нерешена питања везана за порекло, специфичност, стилистички развој ове архитектуре, као и њено место у контексту архитектонског процеса тог периода.

У 1280–1310 у Охриду, центру аутокефалне архиепископије, после дугог периода стагнације, појавила се група споменика, о чијем пореклу постоје различита мишљења сагледљива у историографији. Преовладава повезивање најпознатијих византијских храмова Северне Македоније са архитектонском традицијом Епира.

Стилистичка и компаративна анализа храмова Охрида у контексту архитектонских процеса XIII и раног XIV века, показује да присуство Епирске традиције овде није ограничено на репродукцију појединачних елемената, него се води главним трендовима палеолошког периода. На тај начин архитектура цркве Перивлепте, са једне стране, одговара стилским трендовима епирске школе касног XIII века, а са друге стране, она се уклапа у контекст развоја раног палеолошког стила показујући ново разумевање уобичајеног арсенала облика и значења. У егзонартексу Св. Софија охридског склопа и ритмичке организације фронталне фасаде показује жељу за употребом експресивних облика, који замењују декорацију Епирске школе средином века. Одсуство изражених локалних специфичности даје основу за разматрање архитектуре Охрида из 1280–1310-их година као конзистентан наставак Епирске традиције изван деспотата у фази додавања Палеолошког стила.