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**ON THE 10<sup>TH</sup>-11<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY CHURCHES IN KASTORIA  
AND RELATED BUILDINGS: THE PROBLEMS OF  
ATTRIBUTION AND DATING<sup>2</sup>**

*Abstract:* The article is dedicated to the early churches in Kastoria. None of them can be dated basing on historical evidence. The researchers mainly relied on the analysis of their wall paintings and expressed different views. Analyzing the architectural features, the author shows that the churches are closely related to each other and therefore must have been built during the life span of two-three generations of local builders during the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> - first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Some other churches in the neighboring regions may also be connected with this local building tradition.

*Keywords:* Byzantine architecture, Byzantine wall paintings, Kastoria, Panagia Koubelidiki, church of the Taxiarch, church of St Stephen, church of The Holy Anargyroi, church of St Achillius, church of St Germanus, church of Dormition in Labovo

Several Middle Byzantine churches preserved in Kastoria testify to the existence of a strong local building tradition. The historical evidence on the regional cultural history in general is fragmentary and scarce, and none of these churches is securely dated. In this paper I will review the dating and interpretations proposed by other scholars and try to clarify the relations among these churches and some other buildings through the analysis of their architectural features and wall paintings.

Among the early churches of Kastoria two domed triconches stand out: the church of Transfiguration outside the town and the church of Panagia Kastriotissa or Koubelidiki in the citadel<sup>3</sup> (Fig. 1A, 1B, 2, 3). In scholarly lit-

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<sup>3</sup> Ν.Κ. Μουτσόπουλος, *Εκκλησίες της Καστοριάς, 9ος-11ος αιώνας*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1992, 2-109.

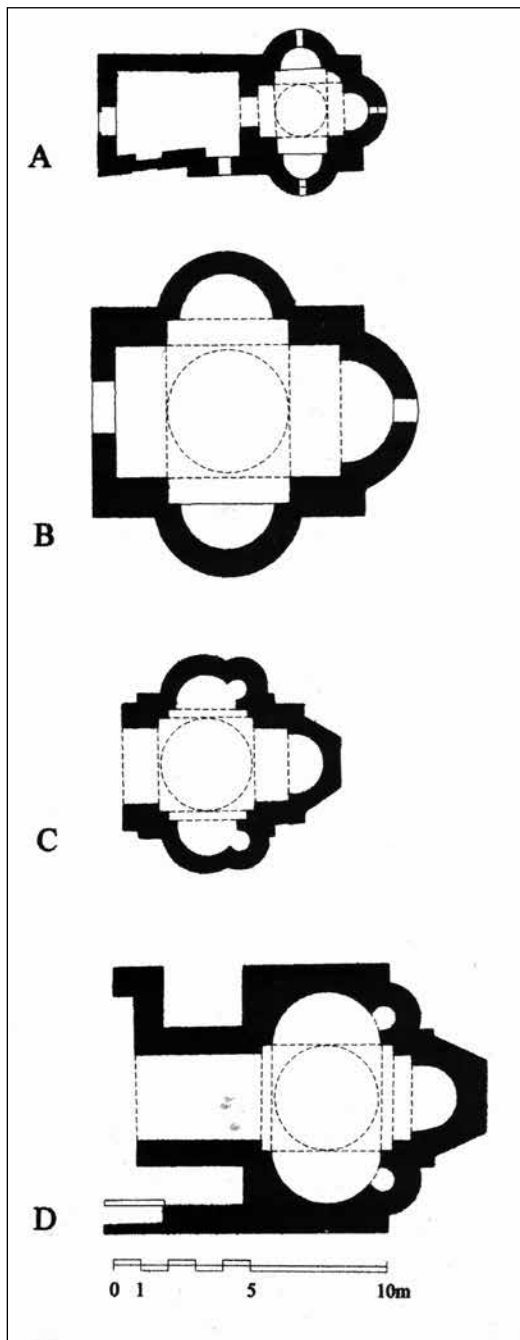


Fig. 1 Triconch churches in Ohrid and Kastoria. Plans (after: S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, fig. 346).

Сл. 1 Триконхалне цркве у Охриду и Касторији. Планови према: С. Ћурчић, *Архитектура на Балкану*, сл. 346.

erature these churches are often referred to together with the late 9<sup>th</sup> - early 10<sup>th</sup> century triconch churches of St Panteleimon and St Archangels in Ohrid which



Fig. 2 Church of Transfiguration near Kastoria. Late 9<sup>th</sup> century. Photo by the author  
Сл. 2 Црква Преображења код Касторије, касни 9. век. Фотографија аутора.

are close to them chronologically and geographically<sup>4</sup> (Fig. 1C, 1D). Yet the differences are also significant, therefore the four churches cannot be regarded as a homogenous group.

Unlike the Ohrid triconches, all apses in the Kastoria churches are semicircular both inside and outside, the lateral apses lack niches on their eastern sides<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Д. Коцо, *Климентовиот манастир „Св. Пантелејмон“ и раскопката при „Имарет“ во Охрид*, Годишен зборник. Филозофски факултет на Универзитетот 1 (Скопје 1948), 129–182; Idem, *Триконхалните цркви во Климентовото време*, Словенска писменост. 1050-годишнина на Климент Охридски (Охрид 1966), 91–100; G. Stričević, *Églises triconques médiévales en Serbie et en Macédoine et la tradition de l'architecture paléobyzantine*, Actes du XII congrès international d'études byzantines 1 (Belgrade 1963), 224–240; Ц. Грозданов, *Свети Наум Охридски* (Скопје 1995), 28–31; N.K. Μουτσόπουλος, *Εκκλησίες της Καστοριάς*, 48–58; S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans. From Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent. c. 300–1550*, New Haven - London 2010, 323–325; E. Касапова, *Доградите на светиклиментовата црква на Плаошник како одговор на современите текови во доцновизантиската архитектура*, Милениумското зрачење на свети Климент Охридски: Меѓународен научен собир, Скопје, 28–29 октомври 2017 година, Скопје 2017, 379–386.

<sup>5</sup> С.В. Мальцева, *Монастырская архитектура круга святых Наума и Климента Охридских в контексте храмового зодчества Первого Болгарского царства и архитектурных традиций византийских провинций IX–XI вв.*, Актуальные проблемы теории и истории искусства: сб. науч. статей. Под ред. А.В. Захаровой, С.В. Мальцевой, Е.Ю. Станюкович-Денисовой. Вып. 10, Москва - Санкт-Петербург 2020, 809–828; S.V. Maltseva, *Ohrid triconch churches and the Balkan architecture of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries*, Niš and Byzantium XX. The collection of scientific works, ed. M. Rakocija, Niš 2022,



Fig. 3 Church of Panagia Koubelidiki in Kastoria. Second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Photo by the author.

Сл. 3 Црква Панагија Кубелидики у Касторији. Друга половина 10. века. Фотографија аутора.

The bigger Transfiguration church in some aspects is similar to St Panteleimon church in Ohrid which could have been its model. The building technique of the Transfiguration church is different from that of other churches in Kastoria. It is constructed mainly of roughly hewn stones. The brick is used only in the vaults and the dome, and there is no ceramoplastic decoration. Basing on the comparison with some other Byzantine buildings, Nikolaos Moutsopoulos in his comprehensive and influential study on the early churches of Kastoria dated the Transfiguration church to the late 9<sup>th</sup> century<sup>6</sup>, which seems very convincing.

The church of Panagia Koubelidiki shows no direct connection neither with the two Ohrid triconches, nor with the Transfiguration church in its composition, style and technique. It is related to other churches in Kastoria, such as the churches of The Taxiarch of Metropolis, St Stephen, The Holy Anargyroi and some others, dated by different scholars to various periods from the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> to the third quarter of the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 3-6). Thus, A. Orlandos ascribed all the four churches to the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>7</sup>. A. Wharton Epstein puts the churches of the Taxiarch, St Stephen and Koubelidiki to the turn from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> century and The Holy Anargyroi to the first third of the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>8</sup>.

291–304.

<sup>6</sup> N.K. Μουτσόπουλος, *Εκκλησίες της Καστοριάς 2-20*.

<sup>7</sup> Α. Ορλάνδος, *Τα βυζαντινά μνημεία της Καστοριάς*, Αρχαίον των Βυζαντινών μνημείων της Ελλάδος 4 (1938), 10–136.

<sup>8</sup> Α. Wharton Epstein, *Middle Byzantine Churches of Kastoria: Dates and Implications*, *Art Bulletin* 62/2 (1980), 190–207; Eadem, *Art of Empire: Painting and Architecture*



Fig. 4 Church of The Taxiarch in Kastoria. Second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Photo by the author.

Сл. 4 Црква Таксијарси у Касторији. Друга половина 10. века. Фотографија аутора.

Fig. 5 Church of St Stephen in Kastoria. Second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Photo by the author.

Сл. 5 Црква Светог Стефана у Касторији. Друга половина 10. века. Фотографија аутора.



S. Pelekanidis dated St Stephen and Koubelidiki to the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Taxiarch to the 9<sup>th</sup> century and the Holy Anargyroi to the second half

*of the Byzantine Periphery. A Comparative Study of Four Provinces*, London 1988, 98-101, 112-113.



Fig. 6 Church of The Holy Anargyroi. Between 1018 and the middle of the 11th century. Photo by the author.

Сл. 6 Црква Светих Врача. Између 1018. и средине 11. века. Фотографија аутора.

of the 10<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>9</sup> M. Chatzidakis pushed the dating of St Stephen and the Taxiarch to the early 10<sup>th</sup> c. and the Holy Anargyroi to the turn from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>10</sup> N. Moutsopoulos puts St Stephen to the late 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Taxiarch to the turn from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and Koubelidiki to the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, thus separating it from the first two churches and failing to explain their utter dissimilarity with the Transfiguration church<sup>11</sup>. The Holy Anargyroi is moved to the middle or the third quarter of the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>12</sup>. These datings were repeated in some later publications with slight variations<sup>13</sup>. One should note that the scholars mainly relied on some characteristic features of the initial wall paintings preserved in the churches of St Stephen, The Taxiarch and The Holy Anargyroi.

In our view, all four churches should be placed in a narrower interval from the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> to the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. They demonstrate

<sup>9</sup> S. Pelekanidis, M. Chatzidakis, *Kastoria*, Athens 1985, 6-10, 22-23, 84, 92-93.

<sup>10</sup> S. Pelekanidis, M. Chatzidakis, *Kastoria*, 14-18, 38, 102.

<sup>11</sup> N. Μουτσόπουλος, *Εκκλησίες της Καστοριάς*, 86-305.

<sup>12</sup> N. Μουτσόπουλος, *Εκκλησίες της Καστοριάς*, 306-392.

<sup>13</sup> N. Siomkos, *L'église Saint-Etienne à Kastoria: étude des différentes phases du décor peint (Xe–XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Thessaloniki 2005, 128-132 (St Stephen: early 10<sup>th</sup> c. See also pp. 125-133, where all other opinions are summarized); I. Sisiou (ed.), *Συντήρηση ναού Αγίου Στεφάνου*, Βέροια 2008, 7, 12 (St. Stephen and the Taxiarch: late 9<sup>th</sup> century); S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 313-315, 323 (The Taxiarch: late 9<sup>th</sup> - early 10<sup>th</sup> c., Koubelidiki: middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> c., St Stephen: 10<sup>th</sup> c., The Holy Anargyroi: around the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> c.); R. Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture. The Building Traditions of Byzantium and Neighboring Lands*, Oxford 2019, 408-409 (St Stephen: 10<sup>th</sup> c., The Holy Anargyroi: around the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> c.).

Fig. 7 St Stephen and the jigsaw ornament. Wall painting in the church of St Stephen in Kastoria. Second half of the 10th century. Photo by the author.

Сл. 7 Црква Свети Стефан. Орнамент. Живопис у цркви Светог Стефана у Касторији. Друга половина 10. века. Фотографија аутора.



immediate connections and continuity in all most significant features which means that they were built during the life span of two-three related generations of masters. We shall consider these buildings in more detail.

The only domed church in our group is the triconch of Panagia Koubelidiki, others are vaulted basilicas. Nevertheless, their compositions tend to centrality and vertical development. In the basilicas of the Taxiarch and St Stephen the centrality is stressed as soon as the aisles and the narthex shape a sort of ambulatory around the nave which is not very long. In the churches of St Stephen and The Holy Anargyroi the nave and the aisles are divided by walls pierced with large arches. In all four churches the proportions are very high. The vertical development of composition is stressed by the stepwise arrangement of masses. Thus, the church of Koubelidiki has a pyramidal composition with the three apses and the narthex marking the half of the building's height, the square tambour with triangular pediments marking the next step in the rise of the attenuated drum and the dome. The basilicas of St Stephen and The Holy Anargyroi have very high clerestories. Their eastern facades demonstrate similar stepwise arrangements with elevated gables over the apses. In the churches of The Taxiarch and The Holy Anargyroi the central parts of the nartheces are heightened, while in St Stephen there is a vaulted gallery over the narthex which makes its western façade rise like a tower. Thus all the four churches share many features in common in plan, construction and composition.

The similarity is even more obvious in their building technique and decoration studied in great detail by Nikolaos Moutsopoulos<sup>14</sup>. The building technique of these churches may be called a version of cloisonnée. The rows of roughly hewn irregular stones are alternating with two-three courses of bricks. In the joints between the stones some bricks are put vertically, diagonally or in

<sup>14</sup> N. Μουτσόπουλος, *Εκκλησίες της Καστοριάς*, 431-486.



Fig. 8 Church of St Achillius at Prespa. Ca. 986–990. Photo by the author.

Сл. 8 Црква Светог Ахилија у Преспи. Око 986–990. Фотографија аутора.

combinations resembling the Greek characters kappa, ny, chi, disepsylon, etc. Various types of ceramoplastic decoration are also used: the dog-tooth friezes, opus spicatum, solar motifs, ceramic tiles etc.

The churches of Koubelidiki and The Taxiarch are smaller and simpler in their decoration. This can mean that they are somewhat earlier, although not necessarily. In the both churches the dog-tooth friezes are recessed, the triangular and diamond shaped tiles are plain. In the churches of St Stephen and The Holy Anargyroi these features are complemented with some new forms. The arched windows are framed with projecting dog-tooth archivolt. The ceramoplastic ornaments are more complex, including rosettes with solar motifs. In the church of St Stephen the size and shapes of the tiles are more diversified, including the tiles with diagonal scratches.

Some of the original wall paintings are preserved in the churches of The Taxiarch and St Stephen. In other works we considered these frescoes in greater detail<sup>15</sup>. As other scholars had rightly noted earlier, their expressive and schematic painting style was influenced by the late 9<sup>th</sup> century mosaics in St Sophia of Thessaloniki<sup>16</sup>. Yet we believe that these frescoes belong to a somewhat

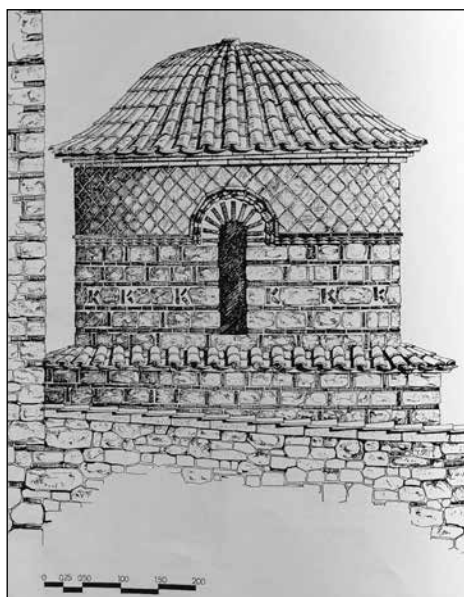
<sup>15</sup> А.В. Захарова, *Фрески IX–X в. в Македонији: проблеми датировки и развитија стила*, Византијски временник 105 (2021), 228–232; A. Zakharova, *Frescoes of the First Layer in the Church of St. Stephen in Kastoria and Their Place in Byzantine Monumental Painting of the Macedonian Period*, Collection of Articles in Honor of K. Loverdou-Tsigarida (in print).

<sup>16</sup> A. Wharton Epstein, *Middle Byzantine Churches of Kastoria*, 192; S. Pelekanidis, M. Chatzidakis, *Kastoria*, Athens 1985, 18; N. Μουτσόπουλος, *Εκκλησίες της Καστοριάς*, 190–193, 292–298; N. Siomkos, *L'église Saint-Etienne à Kastoria*, 129. We agree with Prof. Maria Panayotidi who dated the wall paintings in the churches of The Taxiarch and St Stephen to the third quarter or the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> c., see: *Panayotidi M. La peinture*



Fig. 9 Dome over the prothesis in the church of St Achillius at Prespa. Reconstruction by N. Moutsopoulos (after: N.K. Μουτσόπουλος, *Η βασιλική του Αγίου Αχιλλείου στην Πρέσπα. Ένα μνημείο κιβωτός της τοπικής ιστορίας*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1999, εικ. 222).

Сл. 9 Купола изнад протезиса у цркви Св. Ахилија у Преспи. Реконструкција Н. Муутсопулоса (према: N.K. Μουτσόπουλος, *Η βασιλική του Αγίου Αχιλλείου στην Πρέσπα. Ένα μνημείο κιβωτός της τοπικής ιστορίας*, Солун 1999, сл. 222).



later period. They may be securely dated to the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, as soon as the so-called jigsaw ornaments (Laubsäge-Ornamentik)<sup>17</sup> appear in the both ensembles<sup>18</sup> (Fig. 7). This type of decoration first emerged in the Constantinopolitan illuminated manuscripts in the 940ies, gaining popularity in the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century<sup>19</sup>. It also spread in monumental painting in the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> - early 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>20</sup>. This makes an earlier dating for

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monumentale en Grèce de la fin de l'Iconoclasme jusqu'à l'avènement des Comnènes (843–1081) // CahArch. 1986. T. 34. P. 79-82.

<sup>17</sup> K. Weitzmann, *Die Byzantinische Buchmalerei des IX und X Jh.* (2te Aufl.), Wien 1996, 18–22.

<sup>18</sup> E.g., in the church of The Taxiarch, on the saints robes in the narthex arches; in St Stephen, next to the figure of St Stephen at the gallery, above and below the figure of St Christopher on the ground floor etc.

<sup>19</sup> The earliest examples are cod. S. Marco 687 from the Laurentian Library (dated to 943) and the Berlin Hippitrica, cod. Phillipps 1538 (dated to 945–959). Other examples from the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> c. include cod. gr. 1675 and 1157 from the Vatican Library; cod. 43 and 44 from the Monastery of John the Theologian on Patmos; New Testament cod. Add. 28815 from the British Library; Gospel cod. 56 from the National Library of Greece; two manuscripts from the State Historical Museum in Moscow, Syn. Greek 226 and Syn. Greek 60 (dated to 975) and many others. See K. Weitzmann, *Die Byzantinische Buchmalerei*, figs. 102–111, 121–124, 128–133, 139, 143–149.

<sup>20</sup> The best examples are found in the wall paintings of the cave churches in Cappadocia, such as the New Tokalı in Göreme (950s), Sümbüllü Kilise in Ihlara (second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century), Direkli Kilise in Belisirma (976–1025), the trikonch in Tağar near Yeşilöz (ca. 1000), the Church of St. Barbara in Soğanlı (1006/1021) etc. See: A. Wharton Epstein, *Tokali kilise. Tenth-Century Metropolitan Art in Byzantine Cappadocia*, Washington 1986, figs. 110–116; M. Restle, *Byzantine Wall Painting in Asia Minor*; Recklinghausen 1967, figs. 359–367, 371–373, 436–437, 521–522.



Fig. 10 Church of St Germanus at Prespa. The dome. Early 11<sup>th</sup> century. Photo by the author.

Сл. 10 Црква Св. Германа у Преспи. Купола. Рани 11. век. Фотографија аутора.



Fig. 11 Church of Dormition in Labovo. Between 1018 and the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Photo by the author.

Сл. 11 Црква Успења у Лабову. Између 1018. и средине 11. века. Фотографија аутора.

the frescoes of St Stephen and The Taxiarch hardly possible. As soon as these churches are very close in all respects to the Koubelidiki, we consider all three to belong to the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, St Stephen probably being the latest among the three.

The problem of dating of the early churches in Kastoria is inevitably connected to the question of how they relate to the political, religious and cultural situation in the region during the Bulgarian-Byzantine wars. From 904 to 1018, with some short interruptions, Kastoria was under Bulgarian rule<sup>21</sup>. After the emperor John Tzimiskes (969-976) defeated the Bulgarians at Preslav (971) and advanced to Danube, Western Macedonia became the main battlefield<sup>22</sup>. The Bulgarians under the Komitopouloi regained control over significant parts of their former territory here already by 976. Tsar Samuel (980-1014) continued to fight with the Emperor Basil II (976-1025) intruding in Thessaly and Epirus. The Bulgarian capital and patriarchal see moved several times, first to Sofia and subsequently to Vodena, Moglena, Prespes and finally to Ohrid, during the rule of Samuel's successors or in his very last years<sup>23</sup>. In 1018 Basil II crushed the Bulgarian kingdom and reintegrated its lands to the Empire.

Among other arguments, the Greek scholars tended to prefer earlier dating for the churches in Kastoria because they considered the period before the Bulgarian-Byzantine wars to be more appropriate for the building activities<sup>24</sup>. To the contrary, in the opinion of Bulgarian scholars, it is the period of Bulgaria's thriving under Tsar Peter and Tsar Samuel that these churches could have been built<sup>25</sup>. Researchers rightly noted the similarity of plans of the vaulted basilicas in Kastoria and of some churches excavated in Pliska and Preslav<sup>26</sup>. Yet the latter have been preserved only at the foundations level and are inaccessible for study now, which makes any further comparisons difficult and risky. No Slavic inscriptions have been found in the churches of Kastoria so far, whereas the Greek inscriptions are numerous, including the painted inscriptions and graffiti on the frescoes and scratched inscriptions on bricks in the churches of The

<sup>21</sup> D.P. Hupchick, *The Bulgarian-Byzantine Wars for Early Medieval Balkan Hegemony: Silver-Lined Skulls and Blinded Armies*, Cham 2017, 167, 228, 253, 298.

<sup>22</sup> S. Antoljak, *Samuel and his State*, Skopje 1985; С. Пириватрић, *Самуилова држава — обим и карактер*, Београд 1997; D.P. Hupchick, *The Bulgarian-Byzantine Wars*, 247-319. See also maps reflecting the state of military affairs between 971 and 1018: I.E. Караγιαννόπουλος, *Χάρτες μέσης βυζαντινής περιόδου (565-1081)*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1991, εκ. 20-28.

<sup>23</sup> С. Пириватрић, *Самуилова држава*, 154-156.

<sup>24</sup> Thus, one of S. Pelekanidis' arguments for dating the Koubelidiki church to mid-9<sup>th</sup> century was that its only window would have been closed by the citadel wall constructed next to it in the late 9<sup>th</sup> century at the outbreak of the war (S. Pelekanidis, M. Chatzidakis, Kastoria, 84). The critics of this hypothesis is provided in N. Μουτσόπουλος, *Εκκλησίες της Καστοριάς*, 88. See also *ibidem*, 304-305.

<sup>25</sup> Н. Мавродинов, *Старобългарското изкуство. Изкуството на Първото българско царство*, София 1959, 268-271, 277-279; Н. Чанева-Дечевска, *Църковната архитектура на Първата Българска Държава*, София 1984, 53-54.

<sup>26</sup> Н. Чанева-Дечевска, *Църковната архитектура*, 53-55; N. Μουτσόπουλος, *Εκκλησίες της Καστοριάς*, 125, 211; S. Curčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 313-315.

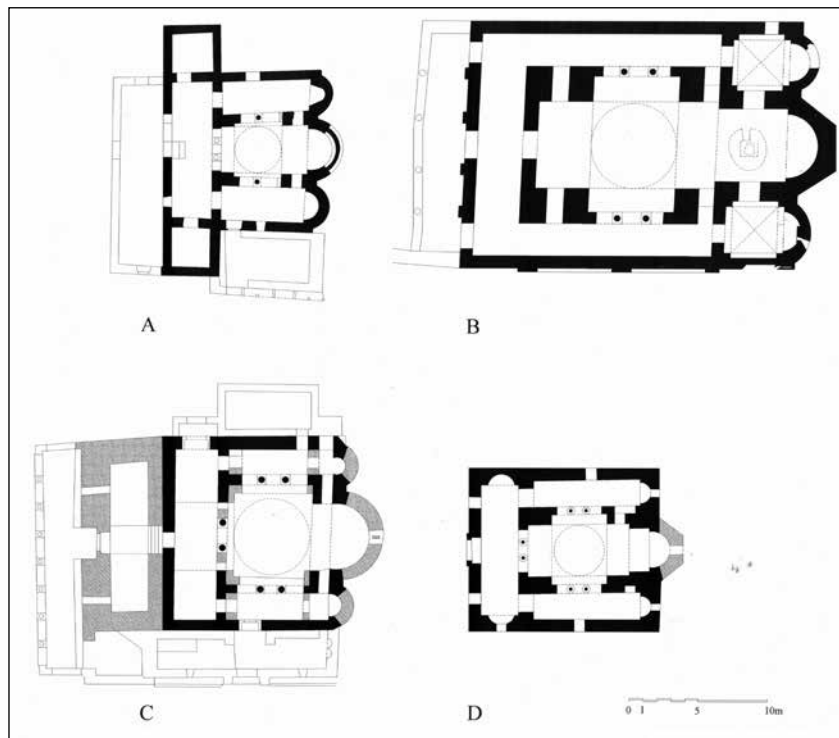


Fig. 12 Cross-domed churches with ambulatory in Macedonia and Northern Epirus. Plans. A – church of Koundouriotissa in Pieria, B – church at Pydna, C – church of Dormition in Labovo, D – church of St Sophia in Drama (after: S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, fig. 341).

Сл. 12 Крстообразне цркве са амбулаторијумом у Македонији и Северном Епиру. Приказани су планови цркве Кундуриотиса у Пиерији, цркве у Пидни, цркве Успења у Лабову и цркве Свете Софије у Драми (према: С. Ћурчић, *Архитектура на Балкану*, сл. 341).

Taxiarch and St Stephen. This leaves no doubt that the builders and the painters of these churches were Greek<sup>27</sup>. The commissioners, however, could belong to the Bulgarian church or local aristocracy, Greek or Slavic<sup>28</sup>.

According to the highly plausible hypothesis of N. Moutsopolous, builders from Kastoria could have participated in the erection of the churches of St. Achillius and St. Germanus on Prespa upon the order of Tsar Samuel<sup>29</sup>. St Achillius church was constructed after the capture of Larisa (986) from where the saint's relics were transferred to Prespes (Fig. 8). This is one of the largest churches in the Balkans intended to be the main cathedral of the Bulgarian

<sup>27</sup> N. Μουτσόπουλος, *Εκκλησίες της Καστοριάς*, 144-155, 197-201.

<sup>28</sup> S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 315.

<sup>29</sup> N.K. Μουτσόπουλος, *Η βασιλική του Αγίου Αχιλλείου στην Πρέσπα. Τ. Α'-Γ'*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1989; Idem, *Η βασιλική του Αγίου Αχιλλείου στην Πρέσπα. Ένα μνημείο κιβωτός της τοπικής ιστορίας*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1999; Φ. Καραγιάννη, *Επισκοπικοί ναοί της Μέσης Βυζαντινής περιόδου. Το παράδειγμα της Μακεδονίας. Διδακτορική διατριβή*, Θεσσαλονίκη 2006, 261-264; S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 311-312.

Fig. 13 Church of Dormition in Labovo. The dome. Between 1018 and the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Photo by the author.

Сл. 13 Купола цркве Успења у Лабову. Између 1018. и средине 11. века.



church, after the transfer of the court and the patriarchate to Prespes. It is a three-nave basilica with narthex, galleries and large apse with synthronon. The now ruined dome drums over the prothesis and the diakonnikon were decorated with diamond-shaped ceramic tiles very similar to that in the churches of Kastoria, especially Koubelidiki<sup>30</sup> (Fig. 9). The dome drum of the nearby St Germanus church is constructed in similar technique with characteristic bricks resembling characters (Fig. 10). Having analyzed the architectural features, archaeological materials and graffiti, N. Moutsopoulos concluded that the church of St Achillius was constructed by Greek builders, probably coming from the captured towns of Thessaly and Kastoria<sup>31</sup>.

Basing on photographs and descriptions of the initial wall paintings of St Achillius published by N. Moutsopoulos<sup>32</sup>, now nearly ruined, one can assume that masters from Kastoria could have participated not only in building, but also in painting the church. The frescoes shared many features in common with the paintings in the churches of The Taxiarch and St Stephen, such as the limited palette with alternating red and white, the tricolor backgrounds with black in the upper part and ochre in the middle, the planar interpretation of static figures with huge eyes and thoughtfully rendered ornamental motifs.

The activities of the local workshop continued in Kastoria after the fall of Bulgarian kingdom in 1018. In 1019 the Ohrid archbishopric was created and Kastoria was ranked as the first among its dioceses. The church of The Holy

<sup>30</sup> N.K. Μουτσόπουλος, *Η βασιλική του Αγίου Αχιλλείου*, 261-280, 288-296.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, 307-310; S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 312.

<sup>32</sup> N.K. Μουτσόπουλος, *Η βασιλική του Αγίου Αχιλλείου*, 205-213, εικ. 170-177.

Anargyroi was most probably built after that, being the last in the group of Kastoria early churches, according to all scholars<sup>33</sup> (Fig. 6). Its building technique and decoration is in many ways similar to other churches, showing the closest relation to St Stephen. Yet some new aspects also appear, such as more carefully hewn stone blocks, the extensive use of carved marble details and the two-stepped profiling of brick archivolt framing the windows and the niches. These features show the influence from the capital probably coming through the mediation of Thessaloniki. The initial wall paintings preserved in this church also correspond to the dating in the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>34</sup>. They represent a local, simplified version of the so-called “hieratic” or “monastic style”, widespread in Macedonia during this period.

One more church may be directly associated with builders from Kastoria. It is the church of Dormition in Labovo near Gjirokastra in Albania (Fig. 11-13). The church has been dated by different scholars to various periods between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>35</sup>. We attributed the wall painting with *Deesis* recently uncovered in this church to the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century thus providing a terminus ante quem for the building<sup>36</sup>. In our view, the most plausible date for the church construction would be between 1018 and the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> See notes 7-13.

<sup>34</sup> T. Malmquist, *Byzantine 12<sup>th</sup> century frescoes in Kastoria: Agioi Anargyroi and Agios Nikolas tou Kasnitzi*, Uppsala 1979, 15 (first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> c.); A. Wharton Epstein, *Middle Byzantine churches of Kastoria*, 195-198 (first third of the 11<sup>th</sup> c.); Eadem, *Art of Empire*, 112-113 (early 11<sup>th</sup> c.); S. Pelekanidis, M. Chatzidakis, *Kastoria*, 22-23 (S. Pelekanidis: second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> c.), 38 (M. Chatzidakis: late 10<sup>th</sup> - early 11<sup>th</sup> c.); M. Panayotidi, *La peinture monumentale en Grèce*, 84-86 (early 11<sup>th</sup> c.); N. Μουτσόπουλος, *Εκκλησίες της Καστοριάς*, 368-392 (middle - third quarter of the 11<sup>th</sup> c.).

<sup>35</sup> P. Vocotopoulos and G. Koch dated the church to the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> c. (Π.Λ. Βοκοτόπουλος, *Η εκκλησιαστική αρχιτεκτονική εις την Δυτικήν Στερεάν Ελλάδα και την Ήπειρον. Από τον τέλος του 7<sup>ου</sup> μέχρι του τέλος του 10<sup>ου</sup> αιώνας*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1992, 86-92; G. Koch, *The Church of Saint Mary in Labova/Albania*, LEPETYMNOS. Studies in Archaeology and Art in memory of Georgios Gounaris. Late Roman, Byzantine, Post-byzantine Period. Ed. by Ath. Semoglou, I.P. Arvanitidou, Em.G. Gounari, Thessaloniki 2018, 61-75). The dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> century was supported by other researchers: A. Meksi, *Deux églises byzantines du district de Gjirokastra*, Monumentet 9 (1975), 77-105; Idem, *L'architecture des églises à planimétrie en forme de croix à coupole en Albanie*, Αρμός. Τμηματικός τόμος στον καθηγητή Ν.Κ. Μουτσόπουλο. Εκδ. Γ. Βελένης et al. Τ. 2, Θεσσαλονίκη 1991, 1162-1165; Idem, *Arkitektura e kishave të Shqipërisë (Shekujit VII-XV)*, Tirana 2004, 230-235; D. Pallas, *Epirus*, Reallexikon zur Byzantinischen Kunst 2, Stuttgart 1971, 310-315, 324; K. Englert, *Der Bautypus de Umgangskirche unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Panagia Olympiōtissa in Ellasson*, Frankfurt am Mein 1991, 84-86; E.K. Χατζητρύφωνος, *Το περίστωο στην υστεροβυζαντινή εκκλησιαστική αρχιτεκτονική. Σχεδιασμός - Λειτουργία*, Θεσσαλονίκη 2004, 160-163, 189, 312-314.

<sup>36</sup> A.V. Zakharova, *Some Observations on the Church of the Dormition in Labovo (Albania) and its Murals*, ΔΧΑΕ 41 (2020), 157-172; A.B. Захарова, *О недавно раскрытой фреске с Деисусом в церкви Успения Богородицы в Лабово*, Вестник сектора Древнерусского искусства. Журнал по истории древнерусского искусства 2 (2020), 33-45.

<sup>37</sup> This dating was proposed by P. Damoulos: Π. Δαμούλος, *Ο ναός της Κοιμήσεως της Θεοτόκου ήτου Τιμίου Σταυρού στο Άνω Λάμποβο της Βορείου Ηπείρου*, Δωδώνη. Ιστορία και Αρχαιολογία. Επιστημονική επετηρίδα του Τμήματος Ιστορίας και Αρχαιολογίας της Φι-



Fig. 14 Church of St Stephen in Kastoria. Eastern façade. Second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Photo by the author.

Сл. 14. Источна фасада цркве Св. Стефана у Касторији. Друга половина 10. века.



Fig. 15 Church of The Holy Anargyroi in Kastoria. Window on the eastern façade. Between 1018 and the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Photo by the author.

Сл. 15 Источна фасада цркве Св. Врача у Касторији, прозор. Између 1018. и средине 11. века.

The church in Labovo has a very original composition combining the features of the cross-in-square type and the cross-domed church with an ambulatory. The latter was the most wide-spread domed church type in Macedonia before the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Its most important representative was the church of St Sophia in Thessaloniki (7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>38</sup>, emulated in a series of later buildings including the metropolis of Kitros at Pydna (10<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>39</sup>, the nearby church of Koundouriotissa in Pieria (9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>40</sup> and the church of St Sophia in Drama (10<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>41</sup> (Fig. 12). In Labovo the domed square is separated from the ambulatory by triple arcades on columns, as in St Sophia of Drama. Yet the arches supporting the dome are continued by the barrel vaults shaping the arms of the cross and reaching the outer walls. The lower corner compartments are also covered with barrel vaults. In the western part of the ambulatory there was a wooden second floor, reminding the galleries both in St Sophia in Thessaloniki and in many Constantinopolitan churches.

The building technique and decoration in Labovo is similar in many ways to the churches in Kastoria<sup>42</sup>, especially to the churches of St Stephen and The Holy Anargyroi. The same modification of cloisonnée is used with the brick 'characters' and ornaments. The opulent ceramoplastic decoration displays the same samples of the dog-tooth friezes, opus spicatum, courses of bricks placed vertically etc. The upper parts of the church in Labovo are completely covered with square and triangular tiles. The decoration of the cylindrical drum is very much similar to Koubelidiki (Fig. 3, 13). The tiles with diagonal scratches are almost the same as those used in St Stephen (Fig. 14). The shapes of the bi-lobe windows with a colonnette in the middle and stepped brick archivolt fully correspond to that in The Holy Anargyroi (Fig. 15). In Labovo, the interchange of the windows and semicircular niches in the drum is similar to that in the domes over the narthex in Panagia ton Chalkeon in Thessaloniki (1028)<sup>43</sup> (Fig. 16).

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λοσοφικής Σχολής του Πανεπιστημίου Ιωαννίνων 45-46 (2019), 119-148.

<sup>38</sup> K. Theocharidou, *The Architecture of Hagia Sophia, Thessaloniki: from Its Erection up to the Turkish Conquest*, Oxford 1988; S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 257-260; Γ. Βελένης, *Μεσοβυζαντινή ναοδομία στη Θεσσαλονίκη*, Αθήνα 2003, 79-94; Idem, *Η χρονολόγηση του ναού της Αγίας Σοφίας Θεσσαλονίκης μέσα από τα επιγραφικά δεδομένα*, *Θεσσαλονικέων Πόλις* 13 (2004), 78-81; M. Kappas, *Experimenting in Domed Constructions: Ecclesiastical Architecture in Greece during the Transitional Period*, *Transforming Sacred Spaces: New Approaches to Byzantine Ecclesiastical Architecture from the Transitional Period*. Ed. by S. Feist, Wiesbaden 2020, 95-128. See also: Φ. Καραγιάννη, *Επισκοπικοί ναοί*, 136, 138, 148-151, 155-156, 160, 252-258.

<sup>39</sup> Ε. Μαρκή, *Ο μεσοβυζαντινός ναός της Πύδνας*, Οι αρχαιολόγοι μιλούν για την Πιερία, Θεσσαλονίκη 1986, 59-64; Φ. Καραγιάννη, *Επισκοπικοί ναοί*, 258-261.

<sup>40</sup> S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 318-319; M. Kappas, *Experimenting in Domed Constructions*.

<sup>41</sup> Α. Κουντουράς, Χ. Μπακιρτζής, *Η Αγία Σοφία Δράμας*, Η Δράμα και η περιοχή της. Ιστορία και πολιτισμός, Δράμα 1992, 141-155; S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 320-321.

<sup>42</sup> Π. Βοκοτόπουλος, *Η εκκλησιαστική αρχιτεκτονική*, 194-196, 201; G. Koch, *The Church of Saint Mary*, 67-68; Π. Δαμούλος, *Ο ναός της Κοιμήσεως*, 129-134.

<sup>43</sup> Γ. Βελένης, *Η βυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική της Θεσσαλονίκης*, 10; S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 371-372; M. Kappas, *Архитектурный «идиолект» Фессалоники*



Fig. 16 Church of Panagiaton Chalkeon in Thessaloniki. Northern dome over the narthex. 1028. Photo by the author.

Сл. 16 Северна купола над нартексом цркве Панагије тон Халкеон у Солуну, из 1028. године.



The complex and original composition, based on the type of cross-domed church with ambulatory popular in Macedonia, as well as the parallels with the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century churches in Thessaloniki and Kastoria allow us to suggest that the church in Labovo was erected under the guidance of some invited architect by the local craftsmen, including some from Kastoria.

The churches of The Holy Anargyroi in Kastoria and Dormition in Labovo belong to the next stage of development of the local artistic production after the region's reintegration to the Byzantine Empire and the creation of the Ohrid Archdiocese. The building activity of the first Ohrid archbishops, John (1019-1037) and Leo (1037-1056) obviously contributed to the influx of different craftsmen, to the introduction and elaboration of new architectural types, methods and developments. The older local traditions mingled with new impulses from the Byzantine capital and other artistic centers, first of all, Thessaloniki. It is probable that builders from Kastoria, among others, took part in construction of some other churches as well, such as St Sophia in Ohrid<sup>44</sup> or Dormition

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<sup>44</sup> В. Schellewald, *Die Architektur der Sophienkirche in Ohrid. Inaugural Dissertation*, Bonn 1986, 135-139, 142; Б. Чипан, *Света Софија катедрален храм на Охридска архиепископија. Хронологија на архитектурата*, Скопје 1996; С. Коруновски, Е. Димитрова, С. Грандаковска, *Средновековна Македонија: Култура и уметност, Македонија. Милениумски културно-историски факти*, Скопје 2013, 1564-1568; S. Curčić, *Architect-*

in Drenovo, which may also belong to the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>45</sup>. On the other hand, as N. Moutsopoulos<sup>46</sup> demonstrated, in Kastoria itself the builders continued to use the characteristic building technique and decorative motives well into the late 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries, as in the churches of Panagia Mavriotissa and St Nicholas tou Kasnitzi, where some significant differences from the earlier group may be attested too.

Thus, the complex analysis of architectural features and wall paintings allows us to date the churches of Koubelidiki, Taxiarch and St Stephen in Kastoria to the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. At the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century some masters from Kastoria probably took part in constructing and painting the church of St Achillius at Prespa and some years later in building the church of St Germanus. The somewhat later churches of the Anargyroi in Kastoria and Dormition in Labovo, built and painted around the second quarter or the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, are connected with the three earlier churches in Kastoria. Therefore we can trace the continuous activity and development of the Kastorian building school in the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> - first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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О ЦРКВАМА ИЗ 10. И 11. ВЕКА У КАСТОРИЈИ И МОГУЋНОСТИ ЗА  
АТРИБУЦИЈУ И ДАТОВАЊЕ

Цркве Панагија Кубелидики, Таксијарси и св. Стефана у Касторији традиционално су сматране групом грађевина које су изградиле локални протомајстори и датоване су у временски период од 9. до 11. века. На основу анализе појединости у зидању цркве св. Стефана и цркве Таксијарси, ауторка показује да се време градње може померити у другу половину 10. века. Црква Успења у Лабову у Албанији има сличне архитектонске карактеристике, нарочито технику зидања попут наведених цркава. Композиција Деизис, која је недавно откривена у галерији овог храма, могла би се датовати у средину 11. века и по свим приликама је дело радионице која је радила и у цркви св. Софије у Охриду. Одлике архитектуре цркве у Лабову имају извесне подударности са црквом Светих Врача у Касторији. Континуиране активности ове радионице могу се пратити од средине 10. века до средине 11. века.

*ture in the Balkans*, 398-399; С.В. Мальцева, А.А. Фрезе, *Строительство в Северной Македонији в период после возвращения под византийское владычество*, Актуальные проблемы теории и истории искусства: Сб. науч. статей. Под ред. А.В. Захаровой, С.В. Мальцевой, Е.Ю. Станюкович-Денисовой. Вып. 11, Санкт-Петербург 2021, 424-426; А.В. Захарова, С.В. Мальцева, *Художественные традиции и церковно-политическая идеология в искусстве Македонији в эпоху создания Охридской архиепископии*, Византийский временник 106 (2022), 184-185.

<sup>45</sup> С. Пејић, *Архитектонска пластика Богородичине цркве у Дренову*, Старинар 36 (1985), 161-171; Е. Χατζητρόφωνος, *Το περίστωο*, 183; S. Curčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 400-401; С.В. Мальцева, А.А. Фрезе, *Строительство в Северной Македонији*, 428-429; А.В. Захарова, С.В. Мальцева, *Художественные традиции и церковно-политическая идеология*, 192-193.

<sup>46</sup> N. Μουτσόπουλος, *Εκκλησίες της Καστοριάς*, 401-430.