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**PANAGIA OR THEOTOKOS MOUHLIOTISSA GREEK  
ORTHODOX CHURCH, A BYZANTINE STRUCTURE FROM  
THE PALAIOLOGAN PERIOD IN ISTANBUL, ITS HISTORY  
AND ARCHITECTURE**

*Abstract:* Constantinople, founded by the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, was the political center of the Orthodox faith and the capital of the civilization known as “Byzantium” for more than a millennium. During this period, many domed masonry Orthodox churches were built in the city. Hagia Sophia was the most widely known of them.

After the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453, almost all of these churches including Hagia Sophia have been converted into mosques. Panaghia or Theotokos the Mouhliotissa in Fener is the only domed masonry Greek Orthodox Church that was not converted into a mosque and continues to function as a church until today. The church, whose first construction dates back to the 11th century, is known as Mouhliotissa, meaning “Mary of the Mongols”, after the princess Maria of the Palaeologan dynasty, who was the founder of the last monastery here. The church, which continues its religious function until today, serves the Greek Orthodox community in Istanbul under the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

*Keywords:* Constantinople, Fener, Theotokos Mouhliotissa church, Mary of the Mongols.

Founded by the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great in 330 AD, Constantinople became the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, which would later be known as “Byzantium” after the division of the empire. The city, which quickly became the “World Capital” thanks to the political, economic and social influence of the Eastern Roman Empire, there are quite many Orthodox churches as this was the dominant faith. The most widely known of them is Hagia Sofia. With the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453, the Byzantine era ended and the city became the capital of the Ottoman Empire. In the years following the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans, certain

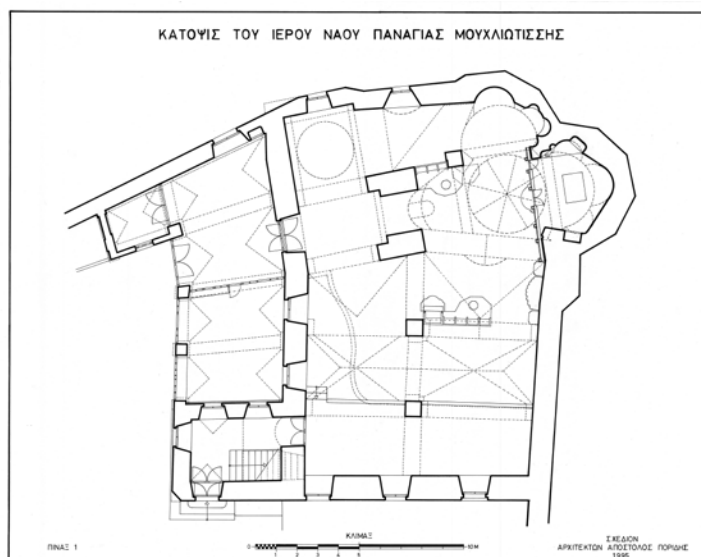


Fig. 1. Church plan.

Сл. 1. План цркве.

Byzantine churches with domes and masonry were converted into mosque.<sup>1</sup> In the period leading up to the Tanzimat, the use of domes in churches was prohibited.<sup>2</sup> In the process of converting churches into mosques, the Theotokhos Mouhliotissa Church in Fener and the Agios Georgios Kiparissas Church in Samatya were exempt from this practice. Of these, the Panagia Mouhliotissa Church was donated by Fatih Sultan Mehmet to the architect Christodoulos, who built the Fatih Mosque for him, in favor for his labor. The Agios Georgios Church in Samatya is a simple and unpretentious structure and was not accepted as a domed church by the Ottomans that is why it where not converted to a mosque. Paspatis wrote about this church as “an unimportant little church that never attracted the attention of the Ottomans” and described its dome as “ugly and unaesthetic”.<sup>3</sup> Karaca wrote about the Agios Georgios Church, which was known to have a dome during the Ottoman period, that this situation contradicted the prohibition of the use of domes in churches until the end of the Tanzimat, and explained the reason why it was not converted into a mosque as either the Ottomans did not consider it important as a church and therefore it was able to maintain its domed form or it was not converted into a mosque because it was not accepted as a church by the Ottomans although it had a dome.<sup>4</sup> In this case, although the Church of Panaghia or Theotokos Mouhliotissa in Fener is a Byzantine stone church with a distinctive dome, it stands out as the only Greek

<sup>1</sup> Karaca, Zafer, *İstanbul'da Tanzimat Öncesi Rum Ortodoks Kiliseleri*, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul 2018, 34-35.

<sup>2</sup> Karaca 2018: 175-176

<sup>3</sup> Πασπάτης, Α. Γ., *Βυζαντιναί Μελέται*, Εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει 1877, 387.

<sup>4</sup> Karaca 2018: 176

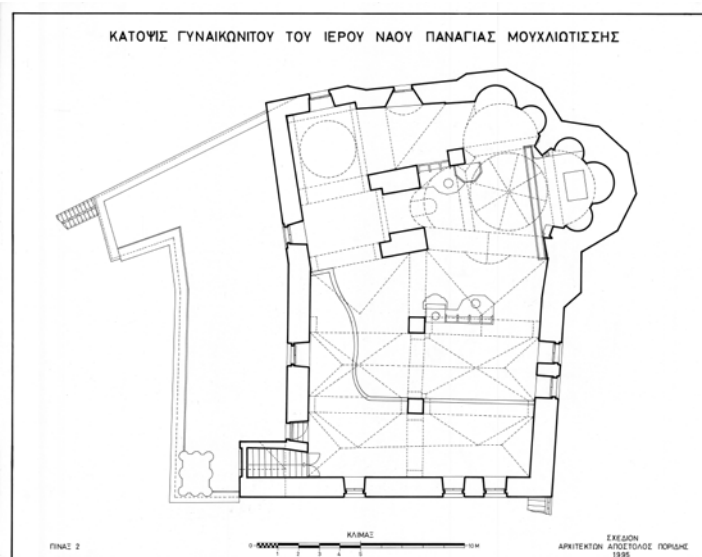
Fig. 2.  
Church plan  
showing the  
underground  
space.

Сл. 2. План  
цркве који  
приказује  
подземни  
простор.



Fig. 3. Church  
plan showing  
gineconitis.

Сл. 3. План  
цркве који  
приказује  
женску  
галерију  
(гинеκονитис)



Orthodox church with a dome that was not converted into a mosque after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople and continues to function as a church to this day.

In this study, the Panaghia Mouhliotissa church was examined in the light of historical sources and architectural studies. In the historical research, we started with the first monastery build the 11th century during the Byzantine period and called Ta Panagiou. Later we proceed our discussion with the period of its re-christening to Theotokos Mouhliotissa at 13th century. Whereas

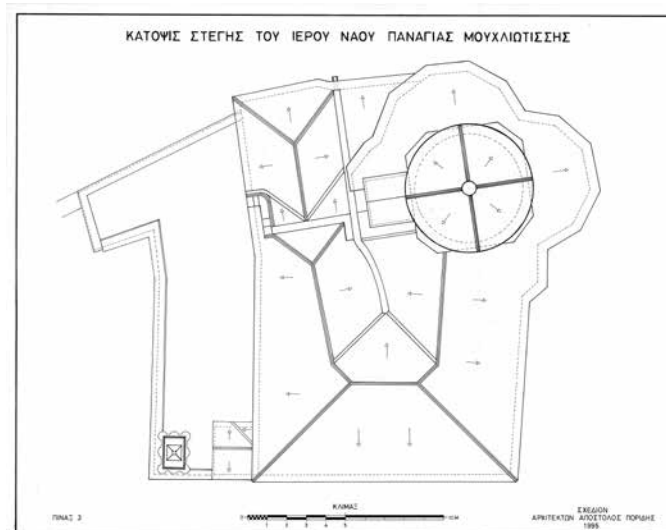


Fig. 4. Roof plan.

Сл. 4. План крова

in the Ottoman period, we examined through documents in the Ottoman State archives for the official processes and permissions followed for the restoration of the church that remained at the Christian worship without being converted into a mosque. Within the scope of architectural research, the original plan typology of the church and its current status were compared and the changes and additions that occurred over time were examined. In the study, the architectural drawings documenting the current architectural status of the church, the surveys made by Dr. Apostolos Poridis, were used and published so that they could be used for other research.

The Church of Panaghia Mouhliotissa is located on the 5th hill in the Fener (Fanarion) district of Constantinople. The Fener district, located on a steep slope descending to the Golden Horn, also includes the Petrion district, which is surrounded by the Petrion wall on the land side. Millingen states that in the Byzantine period, the Fanarion district was entered through a gate called Fanari (Lighthouse) in the Golden Horn walls, based on a document dated 1351. In the Ottoman period, this gate was known as the Fener Gate. This gate, referred to as “Porta Fari” and “Porta del Faro” on 16th century maps, indicates the existence of an important lighthouse in this region on the Golden Horn shore. According to Celâl Esat Arseven, the Golden Horn Lighthouse was located on the protrusion where the Bulgarian Church of St. Stephen (Sveti Stephan) is located today. After the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans, the Greek Orthodox population continued to live in the region. After the conquest, some noble and wealthy Byzantine families who migrated to the Mediterranean islands, Mora and Italy returned to Istanbul that were considered as a safe city in the late 15th century and settled in the Fener region. During the same period (1585), the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate was brought to the Vlahsaray Panayia Greek Orthodox Church in Fener. The Patriarchate, which moved several times within the Fener district, settled in the Fener Agios Georgios Greek Orthodox Church

Fig. 5. East -West section ( longitudinal section ).  
Сл. 5. Источно-западни пресек (подужни пресек)

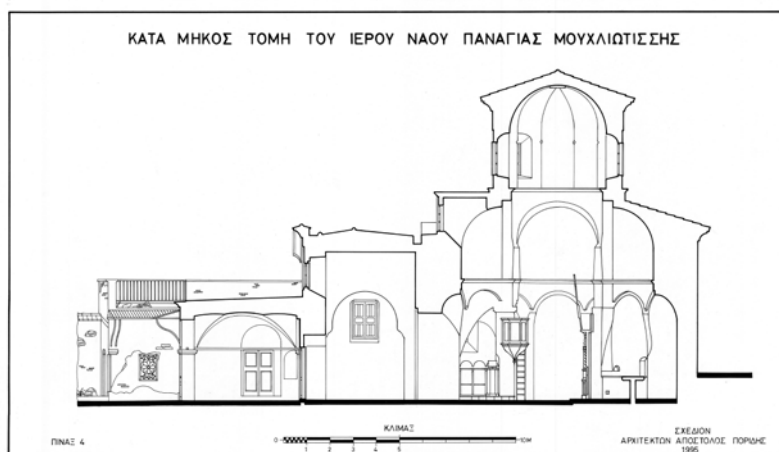
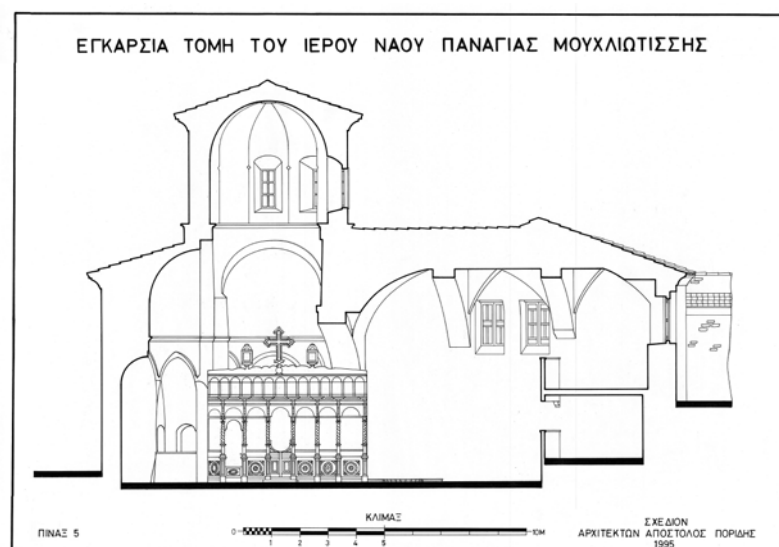


Fig. 6. North -south section ( cross section ).  
Сл. 6. Северно-јужни пресек (попечни пресек)



in 1600, where it remains to this day. The settlement of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in the Fener district increased its importance and ensured that it was remembered together with The spiritual center of the Orthodox church.<sup>5</sup> The Church of Virgin Mary Panaghia or Theotokos Mouhliotissa currently operates under the Greek Patriarchate of Istanbul. The name of the church is listed in the Patriarchate records as “Κοιμισεως tis Theotokou Mouhliou” Church (*Ιερός Ναός Κοιμίσεως της Θεοτόκου Μουχλίου*). In the official records of the Republic of Turkey, it is listed as the Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox Church.

<sup>5</sup> Artan, Tülay, “Fener” *Türk Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, cilt 12, İstanbul 1995, 341.

In the historical process, it was also mentioned in Greek records as “Monasteri Mougoulion” (*Μοναστήριον Μουγουλίων*) meaning Monastery of the Mongols<sup>6</sup>, Panagia “Moggolion” (*Παναγία Μογγολίων*) and the its derivatives Mouhliou (*Μουχλίου*) or Mouhliotissa (*Μουχλιότισσα*)<sup>7</sup>, Theotokou Magouliotissis (*Θεοτόκου Μαγουλιωτίσσης*).<sup>8</sup> The church was known as the Virgin Mary or The Bloody Church during the Ottoman period.<sup>9</sup> (Document 1,2,3,4) It is known that there have been churches and monasteries on the site of the church since the 10th century.<sup>10</sup> Manouil Gedeon writes that in the mid-11th century, on the site of the church he calls Mouhlio (*Μουχλίο*), there was a monastery called Theotokos ton Panagiu (*Θεοτόκος των Παναγίου*).<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, Antonios, a student of Saint Athanasios, the founder of the Megistis Lavras (*Μέγιστης Λαύρας*) monastery in Hagion Oros (*Αγνάρως*), was the abbot (*ηγούμενος*) of this monastery at the end of the 10th century.<sup>12</sup> In a decision of the Saint Synod written by the Greek Patriarch of Istanbul I. Callistos in 1351, this old monastery is referred to as Ta Panagiu.<sup>13</sup> Janin mentions the monastery built in the 11th century as Moni tis Theotokou this Panagiotissis (*Μονή της Θεοτόκου της Παναγιωτίσσης*).<sup>14</sup> He writes that the church built here later and called Mouhliotissa was built in 1261 by Georgios Akropolititis and that the first monastery was founded by Isaac Doukas, the uncle of Emperor Michael VIII, father-in-law of Georgios Akropolititis.<sup>15</sup>

Information about the Typikon (Typikon tis Monis - *Τυπικόν της Μονής* - that is The regulation regulating the rules of daily life in the monastery and the organization of its administration) regulating the functioning of the Ta Panagiu Monastery can be found in the Typikon prepared for the Backovo (*Μπασκόβο*) Monastery near Plovdiv (*Φιλιπούπολη*) in the 11th century. The Typiko of the Backovo Monastery was published in Leipzig in 1888 by Georgios Mouseos (*Γεώργιος Μουσαΐος*). According to this, the Typikos of the Monastery of Backovo (*Μπασκόβο*) was prepared by Grigorios Pakourianos

<sup>6</sup> Miklosich-Müller, *Acta Patriarchatus Constantinopolitani* MCCCXV-MCCCCII, 1860, 312.

<sup>7</sup> Βυζάντιος, Σκαρλάτος, *Η Κωνσταντινούπολις*, Αθήνα 1851, 577.

<sup>8</sup> Γεδεών, Μανουήλ, *Εκκλησία Βυζαντιναί*, Εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει 1900, 58.

<sup>9</sup> T.C. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı (BOA) A{DVNSMHM.d 00102 320, Min Avasiti (ortalarına) Şaban sene 1102 ila Avasiti (ortalarına) Şaban sene 1103 (30 Nisan 1691), 35,38; (BOA) A{DVNSMHM.d 00137 474, 320, Fi avahiri (sonları) Cemadiul Ahir sene 1142 ila avahiri (sonları) Zil hicce sene 1142 (22/12/1729), 74(144),159.

<sup>10</sup> Δωρόθεος, Λαοδικείας, “*Η Παναγία του Μουχλίου*” *Ορθοδοξία*, Οικουμενικόν Πατριαρχείον Φανάριον, τεύχος 97, 1/1934, 205

<sup>11</sup> Γεδεών, Μανουήλ, *Βυζαντινόν Εορτολόγιον*, Εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει 1898, 208; Μήλλας, Ακύλας, *Σφραγίδες Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, 1996, 141.

<sup>12</sup> Γεδεών, 1898, 208; Δωρόθεος, Λαοδικείας, *Ορθοδοξία*, 1934, 205; Μήλλας, 1996, 141.

<sup>13</sup> Miklosich-Müller, 1860, 312.

<sup>14</sup> Janin, Raymond, *La Géographie Ecclésiastique Du L'Empire Byzantin*, Paris 1969 Ναοί, μονές και ευαγή ιδρύματα της βασιλίδος Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, Α, Athens 2022, 164.

<sup>15</sup> Janin, 2022, Α 393.

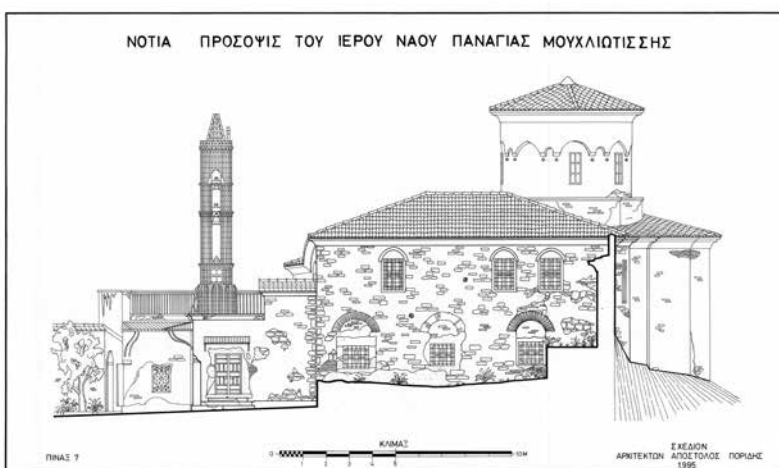
Fig. 7. West facade.

Сл. 7. Западна фасада.



Fig. 8. South facade.

Сл. 8. Јужна фасада.



(Γριγόριος Πακουρηνός) in 1084 or 1083, is taking the Typikos of the Monastery of Panagiu in Constantinople as a guide. Gedeon used Dissertationes Ienenses Volume 4, pp. 157-210 as a source for this information.<sup>16</sup>

Important information about the history of the church and monastery in the Byzantine period is obtained from a decree written by Patriarch Callistus of Constantinople in October 1351. This Holy Synod document, which includes the Patriarch's decree on the protection of the monastery's rights, was published by Miklosich and Müller in 1860.<sup>17</sup> In this document, the hill where the old monastery buildings are located is referred to as Ta Panagiu (τα

<sup>16</sup> Γεδεών, 1898, 209; Janin, 2022, B 164-165.

<sup>17</sup> Miklosich-Müller, 1860, 312-317.

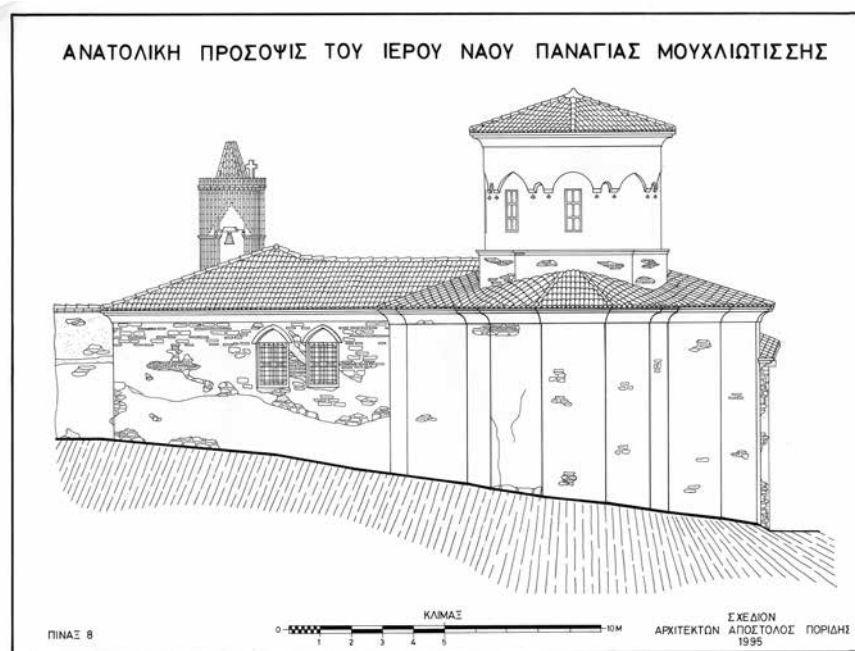


Fig. 9. East facade.

Сл. 9. Источна фасада.

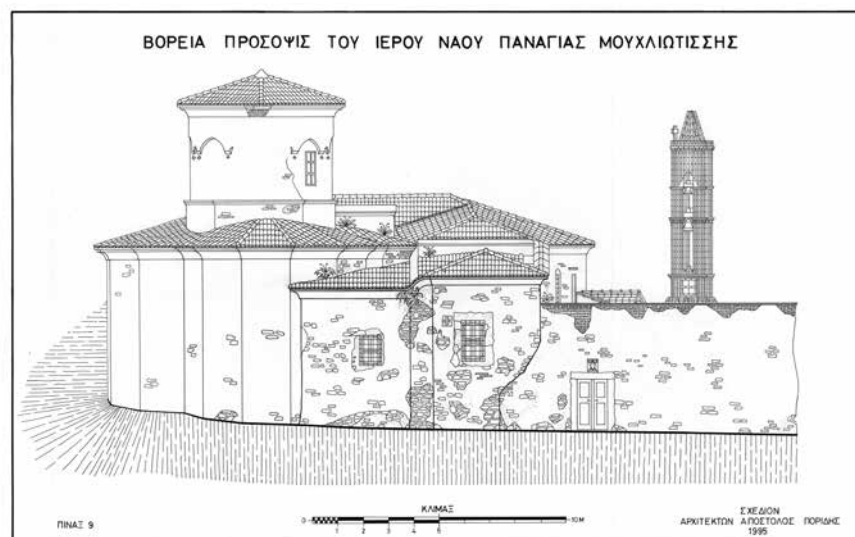


Fig. 10. North facade.

Сл. 10. Северна фасада.



Παναγίου).<sup>18</sup> After this there is no other information about the monastery of Ton or tou Panagiu (των ή του Παναγίου) up until the 13th century. The following information includes the church and monastery built in the 13th century.<sup>19</sup>

Mouhliotissa monastery was built by Maria Palaiologina who was the illegitimate daughter of Byzantine Emperor Michail the VIII from a woman of the Diplovatatz dynasty, a noble family.<sup>20</sup> Maria Palaiologina, who was given as a bride to the Mongolian (Ilkhanid) dynasty after a political decision, was sent to Tabriz together with the abbot of the Pantocrator Monastery (igumenos) and the Patriarch of Antioch (Antakya) Euthmius, to be married to Hülagü Khan. When they arrived there, Hülagü had passed away and she was married to his son Abaka Khan, who succeeded him to the throne.<sup>21</sup> Maria, a devout Orthodox Christian, lived in the Mongolian palace for 15 years and was called Despina Hatun by the Mongols. After the death of Abaka Khan, she returned to Konstantinoolis in 1282.<sup>22</sup>

As far as we learn from the patriarchal letter dated 1351; after returning to Konstantinouolis Maria Palaiologina, who was known as the Despina of the Mongols (*Δέσποινα των Μαγουλίων*) by the Byzantines or the (female) ruler-lord of the Mongols, purchased a group of properties that included a church, bathhouse, houses, orchards and vineyards and were located on the Fanarion Hill. She bought these properties from Maria Dukena Akropolitissa and her son-in-law Dimitri Kontostefanos. These properties were known as “ta Panagiu”. She repaired and revived the Panagiotissis (*Παναγιωτίσσης*) church here, built nuns’ dormitories and established a women’s monastery.<sup>23</sup> Maria Palaiologina took the name of nun Melani (*Μελάνη*) and lived in this monastery until the end of her life. The depiction of Maria Palaiologina as nun Melani is located in the inner narthex of the historical Khora Monastery, which was converted from a museum to a mosque in 2020. Maria Palaiologina equipped the monastery she founded with gold and silver ritual vessels and precious books, and enriched it by gifting 2 bakeries, 2 vineyards and 60 households in Constantinople, and farms in Tekirdağ (*Παιδεστός*) and Kiyıköy (*Μηδεία*).<sup>24</sup> Theotokou Magouliotissis, the old Panagiotissis Monastery, was generating a significant income from these 2 bakeries, 2 vineyards and 60 households serving the public in Constantinople in the 14th century.<sup>25</sup>

*From the same patriarchal letter dated 1351 we also learn information about the monastery about the period after the death of Maria Palaiologina.*

<sup>18</sup> Miklosich-Müller, 1860, 312.

<sup>19</sup> Μήλλας, 1996, 141.

<sup>20</sup> Γεδεών, 1898, 208.

<sup>21</sup> Βυζάντιος, 1851, 577; Πασπάτης, 1877, 388; Karabağ, Rabia Sena, *Moğolların Meryemi Prenses Maria ve Kanlı Kilise*, Edirne 2021, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Βυζάντιος, 1851, 577; Δωρόθεος, Λαοδικείας, Ορθοδοξία, 1934, 205; Karabağ, 2021, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Δωρόθεος, Λαοδικείας, Ορθοδοξία, 1934, 205; Janin, 2022, A 393-394; Μήλλας, 1996, 141-142; Karabağ, 2021, 2.

<sup>24</sup> Miklosich-Müller, 1860, 313; Γεδεών, 1898, 208; Δωρόθεος, Λαοδικείας, Ορθοδοξία, 1934, 205; Μήλλας, 1996, 149.

<sup>25</sup> Γεδεών, 1898, 58.

*Maria Palaiologina had an adopted daughter named Theodora, who later took the name Arachantloun. After her death, the guardianship of her adopted daughter Theodora Arachantloun and the management of the Monastery passed to the emperor. The emperor gave the management of the Monastery to Theodora, whom he married to his relative Isaac Palaiologos Asani. After the death of Theodora, who died childless, her husband Isaac Palaiologos Asani took over the management of the monastery by the written order of the emperor. He mismanaged the monastery's properties and confiscated its revenues which he used them for his own interests. During this period, the Monastery's vineyards, bakeries and houses in Constantinople were destroyed, and the animal farms were devastated by natural conditions and remained abandoned. He demolished some of the buildings that belonged to the monastery and used the resulting materials in the construction of his own houses. He also falsified the imperial order given to him for the disposal of the monastery left the monastery's properties and their revenues after his death to his son from his previous marriage Andronikos Asanin who was the cousin of the emperor and primicerius in the palace. He left the monastery church to his daughter Irini Asaninan Philantropini. Thereupon, the nuns appealed to the emperor and requested that the rights of the monastery be protected. The emperor referred the issue to the Patriarch of Constantinople, Callistos I. After the examination of the documents by experts the St. Synod decided that the documents had been falsified and that the properties and revenues of the monastery should not pass to Andronikos Asanin and his heirs. Thereupon, the Patriarch granted the nuns the right and ordered that the properties to be restored and returned to the monastery.<sup>26</sup> It is unknown how long the monastery was active, but most probably it continued its function until the collapse of Byzantium.<sup>27</sup>*

After Constantinople fell to the Ottomans, Maria Palaiologina's monastery was disintegrated and closed. The Mouhliotissa Church on the other hand although it is not known when started to serve the surrounding Christian Orthodox community.<sup>28</sup> The church was called the Bloody Church by the Ottomans. The reason for this is shown to be the fact that the soldiers of the Great Douka Notaras, who defended the city during the Conquest of Istanbul, were surrounded on the hill where this church is located, and bloody clashes occurred here. According to Doukas, the soldiers stationed at the Church were surrounded and approximately 2000 of them were slaughtered here. In this battle, the Standard-bearer of the Ottoman army was also martyred and the road leading to the hill where the church is located was named Standard-bearer (Sancaktar) Hill.<sup>29</sup> It is learned from both the inscription "Tabi-i Rum milleti Kanlı kilise (Bloody Church) kariye-i Kiremit" (*The Bloody Church, which is subject to the Greek*

<sup>26</sup> Miklosich-Müller, 1860, 313-317; Δωρόθεος, Λαοδικείας, Ορθοδοξία, 1934, 206-207

<sup>27</sup> Janin, 2022, B 394

<sup>28</sup> Μπούρας, Χαράλαμπος, *Η Αρχιτεκτονική της Παναγίας του Μουχλίου στην Κωνσταντινούπολη*, Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας, 25 (2005), 38.

<sup>29</sup> Βυζάντιος, 1851, 577; Μήλλας, 1996, 140.

Рис. 1. Marble candle holder and inscription in front of the iconostasis.

Фото. 1. Мермерни држач за свеће и натпис испред иконостаса.



nation, at settlement Kiremit) on the church seal dated 1829<sup>30</sup> and the documents found in the Ottoman archives that this place was called the Bloody Church during the Ottoman period.<sup>31</sup>

Sultan Mehmet II, who conquered Constantinople in return for his services in the Fatih Mosque, which he had built for himself, donated the church and the empty areas surrounding it to the architect Christodoulos in 1471.<sup>32</sup> Byzantios Skarlatos, referring to Dimitri Kandemir, who was the Wallachian Voivode (Lord of Wallachia) in the 18th century; It is written that the Hattı-ı Şerif (order letter-edict bearing the signature of the sultan) regarding this grant was preserved in the church. Gedeon, on the other hand, is skeptical about the authenticity of the documents found in the church archives.<sup>33</sup> However, he claims that Kandemir “undoubtedly” saw the edict and translated it, stating that it was published by Konstantinos in Konstantiniada and that Bysantios quoted from there.<sup>34</sup> In the sultan’s decree; Addressing the Subaşı of Kostantinopoulis, he orders that the Küçük Çafar road leading to the Magouliotissa Church and all the empty lands surrounding it were donated to the architect Hristodoulos in return for his services, and that he established as the absolute owner of this place. This grant was later approved to Sultan Beyazıt II, upon the request of Hristodulaos’ nephew. He was the architect of the mosque built in his name. In 1520, upon Sultan Selim I’s desire to convert the churches in Istanbul into mosques, the Greek Patriarch of Istanbul Ieremias I, in line with the secret advice of Grand Vizier Piri Pasha and Shaykh al-Islam Cemali Efendi, prevented

<sup>30</sup> Μήλλας, 1996, 140.

<sup>31</sup> (BOA) A {DVNSMHM.d 00102 320, Min Avasiti Şaban sene 1102 ila Avasiti Şaban sene 1103 (30 Nisan 1691), 35,38; (BOA) A {DVNSMHM.d 00137 474, 320, Fi avahiri Cema-diul Ahir sene 1142 ila avahiri Zil hiççe sene 1142 (22/12/1729), 74(144),159.

<sup>32</sup> Βυζάντιος, 1851, 577; Υψηλάντου, Κομνινού Αθανασίου, Τα Μετά την Άλωσιν (1453-1789), Εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει, 1870, 12,727; Μπούρας, 25 (2005), 38.

<sup>33</sup> Γεδεών, 1900, 58.

<sup>34</sup> Μήλλας, 1996, 149.

the conversion of the church into a mosque, citing this donation. In the same period, other masonry (stone-built) churches in Istanbul were converted into mosques.<sup>35</sup> Ypsilantis writes that during the reign of Sultan Selim I, stone (masonry) churches in Istanbul were converted into mosques, starting with Zeyrek, Halıcılar and Samatya regions (named after its ruler at that time Koca Mustafa Pasha). Panagia tou Mouhliou Church and Pammakaristos Church, where the Patriarchate was located by Mehmet the Conqueror at the time, were left out of this transformation. Ipsilantis, Mouhlio or Mouhliotissa, it is stated that in addition to being given as a gift by Sultan Mehmet II to Hristodoulos, who built the Fatih Mosque, in the following years, it was also donated by Sultan Selim I to the grandson of Hristodoulos, the architect who built the mosques in Istanbul and Edirne in his name, and therefore it remained as a church.<sup>36</sup> During the reign of Ahmet III, the attempt to convert the Muhliotissa Church into a mosque and to take the surrounding settlements from the Greeks was repeated, but the conversion of the church into a mosque was prevented by the Wallachian Bey Kandemir, who lived in Istanbul at that time, with the support of Grand Vizier Çorlulu Ali Pasha, by presenting the Hattı Şerif of Mehmed the Conqueror to the sultan.<sup>37</sup> On the hill where the Muhliotissa Church is located, where the Fener Greek High School (Patriarhiki Megali tou Genous Sholi) is located today, there was the mansion of Wallachian Voivode Dimitri Kandemir. The Kandemir mansion was built by his father-in-law Kantakouzinis, who was also the Wallachian Voivode. It was built on the foundations laid during the time of Sultan Mehmet IV. Byzantios, who wrote that 35,000 “skouda gold” was spent only for the excavation and wall construction, states that the completion of the mansion was prevented because it was facing the harem in the Tersane Palace at that time, but Dimitri Kandemir, with the help of Çorlulu Ali Pasha, obtained the construction permit and completed the building in 1711, just before he was appointed as Wallachian Voivode.<sup>38</sup>

The additions and structural changes observed today in the church, which was used for the religious needs of the Greek Orthodox community here during the Ottoman period, most likely occurred in the 18th century, when the religious needs of the community increased.<sup>39</sup> There are no written sources about the history of the church after 1351 until the 17th century.<sup>40</sup> The date of 1760 on the two freestanding marble candle holders located right in front of the “iconostasis” inside the church suggests that it may indicate the date of some changes made in the church. (Picture 1) During this period, the people of the neighboring Ramoundi neighborhood, which suffered a fire, were directed to this church and the number of community members increased.<sup>41</sup> A fire that occurred in 1784 is mentioned that destroyed the Mouhlio neighborhood and

<sup>35</sup> Βυζάντιος, 1851, 577.

<sup>36</sup> Υψιλάντου, 1870, 52-53.

<sup>37</sup> Βυζάντιος, 1851, 577-578.

<sup>38</sup> Βυζάντιος, 1851, 578.

<sup>39</sup> Μπούρας, 25 (2005), 38.

<sup>40</sup> Μήλλας, 1996, 149.

<sup>41</sup> Μήλλας, 1996, 143.



Pic. 2. Interior view of the Dome.  
Фото. 2. Унутрашњи поглед на куполу.



Pic. 3. Interior view of Naos, the dome and the annex on the south side.  
Фото. 3. Унутрашњи поглед на наос, куполу и анекс на јужној страни.

the surrounding neighborhoods.<sup>42</sup> Information about the repairs made in the church during the Ottoman period is obtained from Mühimme Registers. In the Ottoman Empire, a copy of the edicts issued after the sultan's approval was obtained on the issues decided at the Dîvân-ı Hümâyûn were recorded in these books.<sup>43</sup> In the Mühimme Registers, which covers the period between 30 April 1691 and 30 April 1692 (Min Avasiti Şaban year 1102 to Avasiti Şaban year 1103), it is stated that not to prevent the repair of cracked walls with grouting and the renewal of broken glass and tiles in the church called Bloody Church in Fener gate, in Eski Nişancı Cafer neighborhood. During the process, it is recommended to make repairs using the old stones and wood.<sup>44</sup> It is understood from the Mühimme Registers dated December 22, 1729 that the church was burned down together with the priest's dormitories as a result of the fire and that the board of trustees requested permission from the state to repair it in accordance with its old appearance. It is also noteworthy that in this register, it is written that the church, also known as the Virgin Mary or the Bloody Church, has continued to

<sup>42</sup> Μηλλάς, 1996, 143; Μπούρας, 25 (2005), 38.

<sup>43</sup> (Kütükoğlu, s. Mümahat, "Mühimme Defteri" *Türk Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, cilt 31, Ankara, 2020, 519-522.

<sup>44</sup> (BOA) A{DVNSMHM.d 00102 320, Min Avasiti Şaban sene 1102 ila Avasiti Şaban sene 1103 (30/04/1691), 35,38

be in the property of the Greek community since the Conquest of Istanbul.<sup>45</sup> In the Ottoman period up until the Tanzimat period, the repairs in the churches were under strict control, and the repairs were carried to their former condition with old materials and without being enlarged.<sup>46</sup> During the archive research, no document allowing structural changes for the expansion of the Mouhliotissa Church, also known as the Bloody Church, was found.

The current state of the Panagia Muhliotissa Church can be observed in the surveys made in 19945 by Apostolos Poridis, the architect of the Greek Patriarchate of Istanbul. When the architecture of the church when it was first built compared with its current state survey, it is understood that it has undergone some structural changes during the time. In the first period of Byzantium, large and monumental churches were built for ceremonial purposes in which large masses of people would participate, while in the periods when the empire was in decline, they started to build smaller churches that addressed to individuals. The Panagia Mouhliotissa Church, like the monastery churches (katholikon) of the late Byzantine period, has a small, human-scale architecture that emphasizes the individuals and individual worship.<sup>47</sup> The original plan type of the church appears to be in the form of a Greek cross, with a dome in the center, and called tetraconch<sup>48</sup> or four-leaf clover.<sup>49</sup> This plan type is formed by combining 4 semicircular niches (conchs) covered with four semi-domes around a high domed space to form a cross.<sup>50</sup> There are remains of a column head on the wall on the south side of the eastern arch, 3.05 cm above the ground. This is a Corinthian style column head and has been photographed and published by Brounov at 1927. The dome that usually in by 4 interconnected arches on supporting legs in Byzantine church architecture here is carried by 4 marble columns, forming a ciborium. These Corinthian columns, has been disappeared over time, buried under the walls and plaster layers.<sup>51</sup> Each of the main niches (conch) had three smaller (koncharia) niches, the middle one being larger, carved within its own wall section.<sup>52</sup> Today, it is seen that the lower parts of these small triple niches (concharia) have been carved in order to enlarge the space. It is observed that, the main niches (conch) are pentagonal shaped on the external facades. The interior wall surfaces of the church are covered with a thick plaster which is applied on

<sup>45</sup> (BOA) A{DVNSMHH.d 00137 474, 320, Fi avahiri Cemadiul Ahir sene 1142 ila avahiri Zil hiççe sene 1142 (22/12/1729), 74(144),159.

<sup>46</sup> Karaca 2018, 41

<sup>47</sup> Δωρόθεος, Λαοδικείας, Ορθοδοξία, 1934, 207-208.

<sup>48</sup> Günay, Görkem, *Orta Bizansın Sekiz Destekli Kilise Plan Şemasının Dönemin Konstantinopolis Mimarlığıyla İlişkileri*, İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2018, 61.

<sup>49</sup> Karabağ, 2021, 7.

<sup>50</sup> Krautheimer, R. *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.1986, s. 521.

<sup>51</sup> Δωρόθεος, Λαοδικείας, Ορθοδοξία, 1934, 209; Μπούρας, 25 (2005), 42.

<sup>52</sup> Δωρόθεος, Λαοδικείας, Ορθοδοξία, 1934, 209; Μπούρας, 25 (2005), 39.



Pic. 4. The dome and the annex on the south side and ginekonitis together.

Фото. 4. Купола и анекс на јужној страни са женском галеријом (гинеконитис).

both the interior and exterior surfaces and prevents thorough examination of the surfaces. When we look at Paspatis' lithography, it is seen that these plaster applications here existed in the 19th century.<sup>53</sup>

It is understood that the domed part of the church, the two niches (conchs) which form the two arms of the cross, in the east and north, and the two parts of the three-part narthex belong to the first Byzantine church.<sup>54</sup> The vault in the center of the building, which is the first narthex of the church, and the small hemispherical dome in the northern part are preserved in very good condition. It seems that the narthex has been added to the building in the 13th century, when Maria Palaiologina reactivated the Theotokou Monastery.<sup>55</sup> Today, we observe that the walls in the eastern part of the narthex have been demolished and integrated with the naos part of the church also the once empty part between the narthex and the niche (conch) in the north has been closed and covered with a pointed-finish vault. The broken lines observed on the northern facade of the church indicate additions that have been made to the original structure over time. It is known that the first church (katholikon) and monastery, called "Ta Panagioti" or "Theotokos ton Panagioti", were built in the early 11th century. The church, later known as Mouhliotissa, was built by Georgios Akropolis

<sup>53</sup> Πασπάτης, 1877, 388;

<sup>54</sup> Μπούρας, 25 (2005), 38-39.

<sup>55</sup> Μπούρας, 25 (2005), 40.



in 1261.<sup>56</sup> It is learned from the patriarch's letter dated 1351 that after Maria Palaiologina bought this place, she repaired and revived the existing church and had built dormitories for the nuns. Although it is not known exactly when the added narthex was built, it most likely belongs to the Palaiologos period, when the construction of such additions for narthexes and burial places was common. Considering that there were many nuns in the monastery during the time of Maria Palaiologina, it can be said that the narthex belongs to the monastery period after 1282. The marble statue of the Child Jesus (Emmanouil Hristos), which were in the narthex until recently, dates back to 1300 and supports the view that this place was built as a burial place. Today, this marble statue has been transferred to the courtyard of the Patriarchate for security purposes.

It is understood that the niche in the southern part was completely demolished and the niche in the western part was partially demolished and the church was enlarged (Figure 1,2). A lighting window was later opened at the top of the western niche. In the southern part of the original building, there is a rather large addition covered with six pointed vaults arranged within themselves. The pointed arches and vaults here are carried by two massive legs located in the middle of the space. A 7-meter-long pointed hanging arch was built in the place where the removed southern niche (conch) of the church was located. Bouras defines these arches that said to be Italian Gothic by Millingen as Ottoman arches.<sup>57</sup> The lower part of the niche (conch) located in the west part of the church was demolished and 2 massive legs (pessos) were formed here. The suspension arch, which carries the dome in the center and the vaults of the extension to the south, rests on the conch wall in the east direction, and on the south side of 2 massive pillars shaped from the remains of the niche (conch) in the west direction. (Picture 2,3,4) In the southern part of the six-part addition to the south, there is a L shaped ginekonitis (*γυναικωνίτης*), reserved for the worship of women. At the bottom of the ginekonitis, which is formed with a horizontal wooden floor, there is a second lodge surrounded by a wooden parapet, which is 75cm higher than the rest of the church and can be reached by 3 steps. While the upper lodge is accessed via a staircase in the southern part of the narthex, the lower lodge is entered both through a door in the same place and from inside the church (naos). In the southwestern part of the extension, there is a small L-shaped underground space, descending to -1.75 meters level with 5 steps. The east-west branch of this place, whose construction date is unknown, is covered with a half-vault, and there is a well mouth and a reservoir on the ground towards the east wall. Opposite the stairs, on the south side, there is a room covered with a vault, measuring 2.20 x 3.00 meters and entered through an iron door. (Figure 5,6) It is written by Bouras that the northern wall of this underground space should be in the same place as the southern wall of the collapsed narthex, but there is no evidence that this is the same wall or its foundation.<sup>58</sup> The original wall texture of the building can be observed on the northern wall of this small underground

<sup>56</sup> Janin, 2022, A 393.

<sup>57</sup> Μπούρας, 25 (2005), 39.

<sup>58</sup> Μπούρας, 25 (2005), 39.





Pic. 5. The eastern side of the underground space.

Фото. 5. Источни део подземног простора.



Pic. 6. The south side of the underground space.

Фото. 6. Јужни део подземног простора.

space. On a plastered belt at the bottom, 5 rows of brickwork using the hidden brick technique can be observed. It is seen that rubble stone was used in the upper elevations.

Another addition is the outer narthex, which is located in the west part of the church and has 5 sections, each covered with a vault. That the vault on the entrance axis of the outer narthex, whose western facade is arched, is wider than the others. The last part in the south, unlike the others, is separated by a wall and is used as the entrance hall of the gineconitis. The outer narthex, which is lower than the main church structure, is covered with a terrace roof. No written information has been found regarding when and under what conditions both the outer narthex and the additions in the southern part were built. At the southern end of the outer narthex there is a bell tower built in the late 19th century. (Picture 7) As it is known, the use of domes in churches was prohibited in the Ottoman Empire, and there were no bell towers in churches in the same period.<sup>59</sup> Within the scope of the freedoms granted to non-Muslim communities after the Tanzimat Edict, churches with domes and bell towers began to be built in the second half of the 19th century.<sup>60</sup> This bell tower, which differs from the church structure in terms of style and materials depending on the period it was built, shows similarities with the architecture of the Patriarchy Megali Toy

<sup>59</sup> Karaca 2018, 40.

<sup>60</sup> Karaca 2018, 52-54.



Pic. 7. The later added bell tower

Фото. 7. Касније додат звоник.

Genous Sholi (the Patriarchate Fener High School), which is located right next to it and was built in 1881.

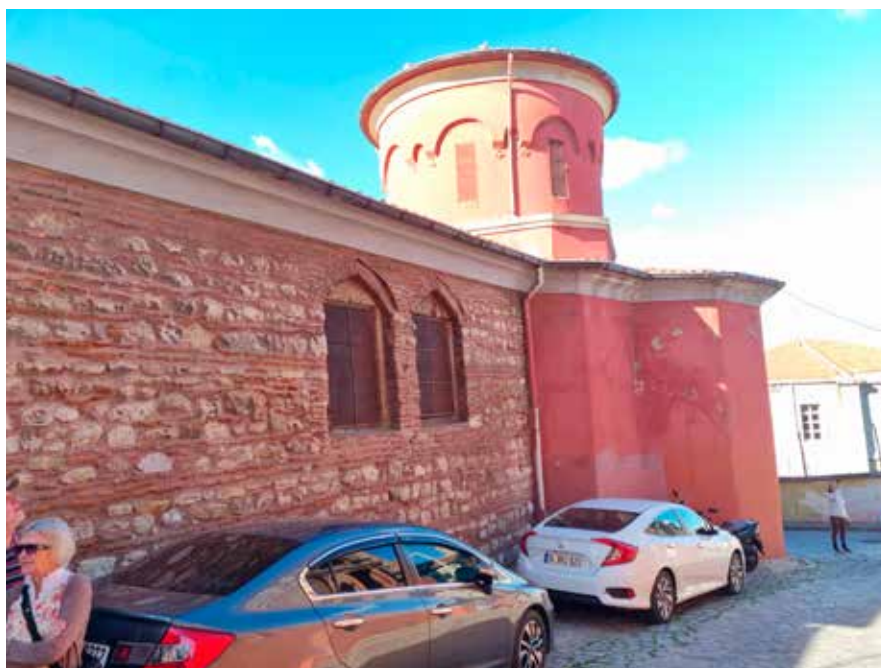
The upper parts of the main niches (conch), which form the original Greek cross-shaped plan scheme of the church, have survived to the present day intact, on the upper level of a cornice located on a horizontal plane, approximately 5 meters above the ground. Another 9 meters high ornamental cornice, forms the dome drum by connecting the spherical triangles in the corners. The dome of the church rises on a circular timban (drum). The inner part of the dome, whose internal height is 13.12 meters, consists of 8 sections with concave sections, rising along the timban (stool) and meeting at the top. While today there are five single-paned (lobed) windows on the east, south and west sides, it is thought that the number of windows was

eight when it was first built.<sup>61</sup> While the windows look rectangular with straight lintels on the exterior, they are arched on the interior of the building and widen along the section as they approach the interior wall surface. (Fig. 3, 4) The dome ends with a conical roof covered with tiles from the outside. (Picture 8) The external appearance of its dome, which is unique in churches in Constantinople, is similar to the Vatopedi monastery in Agion Oros. This similarity can be explained by the connection between the original building, built as a monastery church (kotholikon) in the 11th century, and the abbot (igumenos), who was the founder of the monastery at that time, with Agion Oros. There are eight large arches with a relief of approximately 15 cm from the facade, continuing over the windows along the perimeter of the dome. There are smaller arches in succession between the larger arches. At the starting points of the large and small arches, there are three-leaf relief decorations facing downwards, made with plaster mortar. At the end of the dome drum there is concave shaped eaves made of brick and plastered on top. The eaves on the outer surface of the conchs and the dome drum, the relief arches on the dome drum and the three-leaf relief decorations at the beginning of them can also be seen in Paspatis' lithography.<sup>62</sup> According to Bouras, the eaves were plastered later and the three-leaf motifs at the end of the arches in the dome were also formed with plaster later.<sup>63</sup> (Fig. 5,6,7,8 )

<sup>61</sup> Μπούρας, 25 (2005), 42.

<sup>62</sup> Πασπάτης, 1877, 388.

<sup>63</sup> Μπούρας, 25 (2005), 41



Pict. 8. The eastern facade and the dome

Фото. 8. Источна фасада и купола.

Mouhliotissa church attracts attention with its rare architectural typology in the Constantinople region, and creates a unique example with the conch (small semi-dome and apse niches) and the consecutive placement of columns around the domed space in the center. Although the domed tetraconchos church type was common in Byzantium, the only example of this typology in the Constantinople region, other than Muhliotissa, is the Panagia Kamariotissa church in Heybeliada (Halki).<sup>64</sup> Janin, on the other hand, defines the plan type of the Mouhliotissa church as the only example in Istanbul.<sup>65</sup> According to Bouras, although this plan type is disadvantageous in terms of function, it has a solid structure with its simple architecture and rigid form. Accordingly, the four conchos here serve as weight towers supporting the dome in the middle.<sup>66</sup>

Panagia Mouhliotissa Church still continues its religious activities under the Greek Patriarchate of Istanbul. Although the domed building was known as a church by the Ottomans, it was not converted into a mosque and continued to serve uninterruptedly. However, the Agios Georgios Church in Samatya is a simple and unpretentious structure and was not accepted as a domed church by the Ottomans that is why it where not made a mosque. Considering this detail,

<sup>64</sup> Pasadaios, A. (1971). “*Η εν Χάλκη Μονή Παναγίας Καμαριωτίσσης*”, Αρχαιολογική Εφημερίς, 1971, 1-55; Μπούρας, 25 (2005), 44; Günay, 2018, 60-66.

<sup>65</sup> Janin, 2022, A 395.

<sup>66</sup> Μπούρας, 25 (2005), 44.

as per the written sources, Panagia Mouhliotissa deserves the distinction of being the only church with a dome that was not converted into a mosque, although it was accepted as a church by the Ottomans.

Panagia Mouhliotissa Church and Monastery, which dates back to the 11th century and widely known as “Ta Panagiu” or “ton Panagiu” at that time. In the 13th century, the church and surrounding properties were purchased by the illegitimate daughter of Byzantine Emperor VIII., and turned into a women’s monastery. By a political decision, Maria Palaiologina was married to the Mongolian Khan Abaka. After the death of her husband, she returned to Constantinople and bought the “Ta Panagiu” monastery. The church, originally named Panayia or Theotokhos and dedicated to the Virgin Mary. After the purchase of Maria Palaiologina, it becomes Theotokhos Maggoulion or Panayia Moggolion. That is because Maria Palaiologina were referred as “Despina of the Mongols”, meaning “female despot”-lord of the Mongols, due to her marriage with the Mongolian Khan. This name, which has been used until today, has evolved over time to Panagia Mouhliotissa. Maria Palaiologina, A.K.A. the Despina of the Mongols, who bought the ruins of the “Ta Panayiu” monastery in the 2nd half of the 13th century, repaired the old church here and built new buildings around it for the use of nuns. She appears as nun Melani in a mosaic on the narthex wall of the Khorá (Kariye Mosque) Monastery, enriched the monastery she founded by donating gold and silver ritual vessels, valuable books, and houses and farms in Constantinople and the Thrace region.

In the years after Constantinople was conquered by the Ottomans, the monastery here was closed whereas the church was used for the worship of Christians Orthodox living in the surrounding area. Fatih Sultan Mehmet II, who conquered Constantinople demolished the 12 Apostles (12 Apostle) church and built in the site the Fatih Mosque, which bears his name. He also gifted to the architect Christodoulos with the Panagia Mouhliotissa Church together with the vacant lands and properties along the surrounding road, in return for his services in the erection of the Fatih Mosque in 1471. This incident is an important fact that will affect the future fate of the church. While the domed masonry churches in Constantinople were converted into mosques in the 16th century, the reason why the Panagia Mouhliotissa church was not converted into a mosque was attributed to Fatih Sultan Mehmet II. And the fact that he has donated the church to the architect Christodoulos with an order bearing his signature (tughra). It is understood that the church, which was a small building in the Greek cross plan type consisting of 4 niches (conchs) around a dome in the center when it was first built, was enlarged and modified with some additions. The oldest of these changes is the narthex section made during the Palaiologan period and it is accepted that it was built during the reign of Maria Palaiologina, when the number of nuns in the monastery increased. Other additions are the outer narthex, which is located in the western part of the church and consists of 5 parts, and the 6-part addition, which was built in place of the southern niche (conch) of the church. Although the hanging arch built in place of the western niche and the pointed arches supporting the vaults in the additional structure are described as Ottoman arches by Bouras, there is no information about such major structural changes in the Ottoman records. Moreover, in addition to the

fact that it was forbidden to use domes in churches until the end of the Tanzimat period in the Ottoman Empire, repairs were only permitted in case of necessity and with the condition to use old and used materials such as stone and wood and to remain faithful to the old heights and shapes of the churches. It is known that the practices carried out are punished.<sup>67</sup> As a matter of fact, it is understood from two Ottoman documents dated 1691 and 1729 that in the application made for the repair of the church, which was destroyed by fire and ruined, it was allowed to be repaired in the same way as before, using old stones and old wood. In a period when structural interventions in church buildings were limited, when and under what conditions such large-scale additions were built is seen as a phenomenon that requires further investigation.

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 БОГОРОДИЦА МОНГОЛСКА, ГРЧКА ПРАВОСЛАВНА ЦРКВА, ВИЗАНТИЈСКА  
 ГРАЂЕВИНА ИЗ ВРЕМЕНА ПАЛЕОЛОГА У ЦАРИГРАДУ, ЊЕНА ИСТОРИЈА  
 И АРХИТЕКТУРА

Цар Константин Велики основао је Константинопољ 330. године н. е., и он је постао престоница Источног римског царства, које ће након поделе царства постати познато као „Византија“. У граду, који је током трајања Царства сматран центром православног света, подигнуте су бројне православне цркве, међу којима се нарочито издваја Св. Софија. Након освајања Константинопоља од стране Османлија 1453. године и пада Царства, главне цркве су претворене у џамије, укључујући и Св. Софију. Последње цркве са куполом у Истанбулу током османског периода претворене су у џамије по наредби султана Селима I 1518. године, а употреба купола у црквеној архитектури је забрањена све до периода Танзимата. У овом процесу, све зидане цркве са куполама саграђене током византијског Царства у Истанбулу претворене су у џамије, осим цркве Панагије или Богородице Мухлиотисе у Фенеру.

У том смислу, црква Панагија Мухлиотиса (Богородица Монголска) има посебан значај јер је једина византијска црква са куполом у Истанбулу која није претворена у џамију и још увек је отворена за богослужење без прекида. Црква је изграђена у XIII веку од стране Марије, нелегитимне ћерке цара Михаила VIII, оснивача династије Палеолога. Она је била удата за монголског кана Абаку и вратила се у Цариград након смрти свог мужа. Обновила је цркву, претворивши је у женски манастир. Црква је названа Мухлиотиса, односно Марија Монголска. Ова посвета се односи како на саму ктиторку, принцезу Марију, тако и на Богородицу. Након освајања Цариграда, црква је дарована султану Фатиху II. Тако је остала ван процеса претварања у џамију током владавине султана Селима I. Црква, која и данас наставља своју религијску функцију, служи грчкој православној заједници у Истанбулу под Васељенском патријаршијом.

У овом чланку, црква Панагија Мухлиотиса (Богородица Монголска) је анализирана на основу писаних историјских извора и студија архитектонске документације коју је 1995. године спровео др архитектуре Апостолос Поридис. На почетку је фокус на два периода исте грађевине. Први је византијски период, када је први манастир изграђен у XI веку под називом „Та Панагију“, а други назив је Богородица Монголска који се помиње у XIII веку. С друге стране, током османског

<sup>67</sup> Karaca 2018, 35.

периода, проучавани су записи о захтевима за обнову и званични процеси праћени из архива Османског царства који се односе на цркву. У архитектонској анализи цркве, оцењена је оригинална типологија плана и тренутно стање зграде. У студији су коришћени подаци из анкета спроведених 1995. године (од стране др архитекте Апостолоса Поридиса), које документују тренутно архитектонско стање цркве, и они су објављени у прилогу студије.

#### Documents/ Документи

Document 1. Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives Department (BOA) 102 320, A.DVNSMHH.d 00102, (Book starting April 30, 1691) page 35 (right page third paragraph)

Док. 1. Председништво државних Архива Републике Турске, Одељење за османске архиве (BOA) 102 320, A.DVNSMHH.d 00102, (књига од 30. априла 1691), страна 35 (десна страна, трећи пасус)

Document 2. Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives Department (BOA) 102 320, A.DVNSMHH.d 00102, (Book starting April 30, 1691) page 38 (right page second paragraph)

Док. 2. Председништво државних Архива Републике Турске, Одељење за османске архиве (BOA) 102 320, A.DVNSMHH.d 00102, (књига од 30. априла 1691), страна 38 (десна страна, други пасус)

Document 3. Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives Department (BOA) 137 474, A.DVNSMHH.d 00137, (book starting 22 December 1729) page 144.

Док. 3. Председништво државних Архива Републике Турске, Одељење за османске архиве (BOA) 137 474, A.DVNSMHH.d 00137, (књига од 22. децембра 1729), страна 144.

Document 4. Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives Department (BOA) 137 474, A.DVNSMHH.d 00137, (book starting 22 December 1729) page 159.

Док. 4. Председништво државних Архива Републике Турске, Одељење за османске архиве (BOA) 137 474, A.DVNSMHH.d 00137, (књига од 22. децембра 1729), страна 159.