CULTURAL EXCHANGE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST IN THE LATE-FOURTEENTH-CENTURY MANI:

The Soteras Church in Langada and a Group of Related Monuments

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One of the first monuments that attracted my attention when I started working in the Mani several years ago was the fourteenth-century church of Soteras (Christ the Savior) in the village of Langada, dedicated to the feast of the Transfiguration of Christ. Located in the lower neighborhood of the village and covered with plaster until the mid 1980’s (fig. 1), the church’s true importance was not understood until its masonry was revealed and some of its monumental paintings uncovered (fig. 2).

Architecturally, the church combines Eastern and Western features, placing it within a select group of monuments that witnessed cultural interactions in the wake of the Fourth Crusade. Recently, scholars studying ecclesiastical architecture have proposed that the mix of Western and Byzantine architectural styles in rural churches was employed in an ideologically neutral manner that reflected trends in fashion or taste rather than cultural or political identity. The same approach has been taken to

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2 The neighborhood is known to the locals by the name of Bloutsianika.

3 For a preliminary report on the architecture of the Soteras church, see M. Kappas, “Ὁ ναὸς τοῦ Σωτήρα στή Λαγκάδα τῆς Μεσσηνιακῆς Μάνης”, in Εκσκόποι Εβδομάδος Σπαρτού Βυζαντινῆς και Μεταβυζαντινῆς Αρχαιολογίας και Τέχνης, πρόγραμμα περιλήψεων και ανακοινώσεών (Αθήνα 2007), 40-41; idem, Η εφαρμογή τής εκπαίδευσης εξερευνητήριου στή Μάνη και τήν Έποχη Βυζαντινής περιόδο, Το παράδειγμα του ακρόπολη επαγγελματικών, PhD, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Thessaloniki, 2009), v. II, no 92, 315-318 [http://www.lib.auth.gr/toc/12442].

churches in Mystras, whose elite population showed an interest in the mixing of eclectic styles. This approach to the study of architecture seems to follow the scholarship of historians, who have emphasized the remarkable degree of inter-ethnic assimilation, coupled with the development of a regional identity that came to be shared by both Latins and Greeks. In many cases, this regional character overshadowed any imperial Byzantine identity. Although this assessment seems correct for regional church construction in areas such as Crete, Rhodes, Cyprus, and the Frankish Morea, the situation in the Mani peninsula was quite different. The study of the Langada church provides an opportunity to investigate a single monument as the nexus of cultural interactions, and to examine a group of related monuments that share a number of its unusual features.

The church of Langada is a cross-in-square building with a nearly square plan, 8.10 by 8.90 m (fig. 3). The dome is supported by four piers; both the cross arms and the corner bays are covered by barrel vaults. The vaults of the cross arms end in two-stepped arches in the central bay, a solution rarely attested in Byzantine architecture (fig. 4). The dome has an eight-sided drum, topped originally with a scalloped cornice made of poros stone, decorated with simple bosses (fig. 5). At the end of the west cross arm is an elegant belfry, one of the best-preserved examples in the Mani, where such features were quite common in the Late Byzantine period. At the east end of the church, the original apses of the prothesis and diakonikon are still preserved (fig. 6). The central chamber of the sanctuary, however, was enlarged in a later period, perhaps during the 17th century or even later. During this reconstruction, the templon was removed and attached to the eastern wall of the church, while the lateral apses were walled in their interior. Through this transformation the capacity of the nave was enlarged (fig. 7). The congregation started using the eastern corner bays, while all liturgical practices took place in the new, elongated apse. Two doors on the south and west sides of the building, provide access to the church. Refurbished in a later period, the doors no longer preserve their original form. Remains of the church’s initial sculptural decoration—two marble slabs, a few part of the colonnades, and the epistle of the templon—can still be seen in the interior of the building, either

incorporated into its later pavement or laying on the steps in front of the wooden, 19th-century iconostasis. The interior surfaces of the church remain unarticulated apart from a cornice that adorns the springing of the dome’s drum; this is decorated with simple bosses. Today the interior walls are covered by plaster; two different layers of painted decoration have been identified during the last ten years.

The combination of Byzantine features, such as the brick decoration and the articulation of the surfaces, with Western elements, mainly of Gothic inspiration, makes this church highly unusual for this region. A frieze of reticulate ornaments made by plain bricks adorns all sides of the monument, changing level and size only on the eastern façade, where the decoration was more elaborate. A similar ornament fills the upper part of the western gable. Dentil courses run around the building on two different levels, while all the stone masonry that is visible today was initially covered by plaster. Special cut bricks are used only to improve aesthetic problems such as in the corners of the dentil bands. All the lateral semi-arches framing the windows are made of bricks; in these, the recessed brick technique is applied in its simpler form with pieces of brick in the hidden courses (fig. 8). Of crucial importance is the role of the mortar in the final impression of the ceramic decoration; carefully cut, the mortar enhances the plasticity of the ornament in a way rarely attested in Byzantine architecture (fig. 9). The west façade is articulated with three blind arches; the centralmost was rebuilt in a later period. Apart from the main arch that was intended to relieve the lintel of the west door, the symmetrical lateral apses are the only synthetic values in the design of the façade (fig. 2).

Western elements are seen in the shape and the construction of the eastern original windows (fig. 10) as well as in the blind arches adorning the diagonal sides of the dome’s drum (fig. 11). In the window of the north cross arm, the mason seems to have copied some innovative forms of Gothic design known in Western monuments of the second half of the fourteenth century, although he either misunderstood them or simplified the details (fig. 12-13). The same shape would have been also applied in the south window, which is today completely destroyed. The shape of the dome’s waterspouts, which are made of poros stone, are also unusual by Byzantine standards.

A group of buildings in the Mani share many close similarities with the church of Langada: the Soteras church in Fagrianika of Melia,9 St. Georges at Konakia,10 and St. Paraskevi in Platsa.11 Their study suggests how groups of masons worked in the region. The Soteras church in Fagrianika is a cross-in-square church of the two-columned variant elongated on its west side in the 18th century, as indicated by the joints in its lateral sides as well as the fresco decoration in the interior (fig. 14). An impressive bell tower — one of the highest in the Mani — was added to its west façade in 1808. Ceramic friezes adorn the exterior walls, while the north window, which has stood intact through the centuries, imitates Gothic forms identical to those in the Langada church (fig. 15). In addition, on the south side of the church there are still remains of perhaps three arches articulating the wall, similar to ones on the west façade at Langada. Recent works of restoration and consolidation have revealed part of a first layer of frescoes in the bema that can be dated in the late fourteenth century.12

St. George at Konakia is a simple two-column cross-in-square church (8.20 x 4.40m) that today serves as the katholikon of an isolated and declining monastery (fig. 16).13 Heavily damaged on the exterior and fully repainted on the interior, the church holds little interest for architectural historians. A few preserved details, such as the two-stepped arches of the barrel-vaults below the dome, and especially the form of the north window (fig. 17), which is identical to those at Langada and Melia, betrays a close connection with this group of monuments.

St. Paraskevi in Platsa (fig. 18-19), one of the best-preserved Byzantine monuments in the Messenian Mani, follows the simpler variant of the cross-vaulted type, the only original typological creation of the Late Byzantine period.14 Its close ties with this group of monuments is demonstrated mainly by the form and the synthetic concept of its ceramic decoration, the articulation of its west façade, and the application of the recessed brick technique in the same simplified way as seen in the church of Langada, with pieces of slabs embedded in the hidden courses.

10 N. Drandakes, E. Dore, V. Kepetze and M. Konstandoudakes, Έρευνα στὴν Κάτω Μάνη (Athens, 1993), 34-46, fig. 1, pl. 10.
11 Constantinidi, “Ὁ σταυρεπίστεγος ναὸς” (n. 1 above), 423-440.
13 Drandakes et al., Έρευνα στὴν Κάτω Μάνη (n. 10 above), 34-46, fig. 1, pl. 10.
14 Constantinidi, “Ὁ σταυρεπίστεγος ναὸς” (n. 1 above), 423-440
The distinctive construction techniques shared by this group of monuments make it tempting to assign them to the same group of masons. All of the churches share identical building details, which would have been very difficult to copy. This technical knowledge seems to have been passed among masons through experiential learning and by apprenticeship under the tutelage of a master.\(^{15}\) The only securely dated monument of the group is St. Paraskevi in Platsa. An inscription immured on its west façade provides a precise chronology in the year 1412.\(^{16}\) Based on the perfection of some details of the brick decoration and mainly the trajectory of its synthetic concept, I would consider St. Paraskevi as the last creation of our group, proposing a late-14th- or early-15th-century date for the rest of buildings, including the Soteras in Langada.

One of the most interesting questions is to consider how masons involved in the construction of the Langada church were aware of Western features of architecture, especially given the remote location in the Mani. In order to answer this question, we need to consider the historical circumstances of the period.

The conquest of the Peloponnese in the early 13th century by the Crusaders and the creation of the principality of Achaia, with Andravida as its capital, radically altered the geopolitics of the region\(^{17}\). These historical changes had a discernible impact on art and architecture.\(^{18}\) It is now more evident that with Andravida as its


\(^{16}\) Constantini, “Ο σταυρεπίστεγος ναός” (n. 1 above), 424.


center, a notable local school of architecture flourished in the 13th century, combining elements from both the regional Byzantine building tradition and the newly introduced Western forms of architecture. Local groups of masons continued to build noteworthy enterprises funded by members of both the Frankish ruling class and the local Greek aristocracy, which was incorporated into the newly established feudal system of administration. Among the most prominent examples of this amalgamation of Eastern and Western forms is the church of the Dormition at Merbakas, convincingly associated with the Catholic bishop of Corinth William de Moerbeke in the 1270s, the katholikon of the Blacherna monastery close to Glarentza, and the church of Panagia Katholiki at Gastouni, erected in 1278/79 by the noble family of Kaligopouloi.

How do we account for the synthesis of Western and Eastern elements in the monuments of the Mani, far from the area of Frankish occupation in the northeastern Peloponnese? What chronological clues do Western features in the churches of the Mani provide? Both the shape of the arches and moreover the details in the construction of the two-lobed windows in three of our churches — at Langada, Melia, and Konakia — seem to copy Gothic prototypes of the mid or late fourteenth century attested in a series of monuments of western Europe.


Mediterranean such solutions, though rare, can be found in distant buildings of the late fourteenth century, from Venetian Crete, to the Medieval Kingdom of Serbia in the northern part of the Balkans. This makes a huge chronological gap of almost one century compared to the Western forms found in monuments such as the church of Merbakas, which raises another crucial question: what happened in the Mani after the mid-14th century that caused the appropriation and assimilation of brand new Western forms and ideas in the architectural design of the region?

A lost document probably written in Naples in 1336 and published in 1969 by Jean Longnon and Peter Topping may provide an answer to this question. According to the text, Aikatereni Valois, who was in charge of the administration of the Principality of Achaia for more than one decade (1332-1341), together with her son Roberto, Prince of Taranto, donated vast estates to Niccolò Acciajuoli in Langada and Melia, the two villages where the most important monuments mixing Eastern and Western features are located.

We can reliably assume that the presence of the Florentine family of Acciajuoli in the two villages of the Mani was reinforced in the next decades as was their role in the geopolitics of Southern Greece in general. After Niccolò’s death in 1365 his son Angelo inherited his colossal fortune in the Morea; a year later Niccolò’s nephew Nerio I, had taken over his uncle’s vast estates, which included the town and fortress of Corinth, expanding his power gradually. In 1388 he occupied Athens, becoming the first Duke of the glorious city, while he remain one of the closest allies


21 M. Borboudakes, “Θώρημα και παράθυρα σε εκκλησίες της Κρήτης (τέλος 14—μέσα 15” αιώνα)’’ in Γλυπτική και λιθοξοϊκή στην Ανατολή Αιώνων 14—17ο αιώνα, ed. O. Gratziou (Herakleion, 2007) 60-89; Gratziou, Η Κρήτη στην Ύστερη Μεσαιωνική εποχή (n. 23 above), 55-76, fig. 73, 92-93.

22 See for example windows in churches of the so called Morava School, V. Korać – M. Šuput, Архитектура византийског ентета (Belgrade, 1998), fig. 517-518, 520, 527.


25 In the document Langada is mentioned with exactly the same name, while Melia is mentioned by the name Xiomelia, Longnon – Topping Documents (n. 25 above), 23 and 27; see also E. Moundreas, “Τοπογνωμονική της Μεσημβρίας (ετής έποχή της Φεραγκοκρατίας),” in Προσωπικά του Α’ Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου Πελοπονησιακών Σκοπών (Sparta, 7-14 September 1975), v. Ι (Athens, 1976-1978), 197-198.

of Theodoros I Palaiologos, despot of the Morea from 1382 until 1407. To reinforce his alliance with Theodoros in 1385 he offered him his elder daughter Bartolomea as a wife, promising that on her father’s death she would inherit Corinth. He finally died in 1394 while his successors Antonio and Nerio II, Dukes of Athens, continued to play a predominant role in the geopolitics of Southern Greece until the mid 15th c.

Although the document of 1336, an estate inventory, mentions only the landed property without any reference to churches or other buildings, I would propose that connection between the Western feudal lords in the Mani and the foundation of monuments with Western features is significant. Even if this hypothesis cannot be fully proven, in my opinion, it provides the most sufficient explanation for the primary introduction of innovative Gothic features in this deeply conservative region, which had rejected any Western influence for almost two centuries.

An analogous combination of local and innovative Western ideas is also attested in some churches of Mystras, as well as in a part of the city’s palace complex attributed to the building activity of the Despot Manuel Kantakouzenos and his successors. This fashion in the architecture of the southeastern Peloponnese in my opinion is not accidental; on the contrary it may reflect a certain political and ideological tendency in the upper class society of Mystras that favored a more conciliatory position towards the relations with the West in general.

The contacts between East and West were undoubtedly improved by the presence in Mystras of the Despoina Isabella de Lusignan, whose origins were found...
in the Frankish kingdom of Cyprus. This tradition was kept over the following years. Theodoros I Palaeologos, who succeeded Manuel in the administration of the Despotate married Bartholomea Acciajuoli, as already mentioned. His successor Theodoros II Palaeologos (1407-1443) married the Italian princess Cleopa Malatesta, while his brother Constantine Palaeologos, who ruled Mystras from 1443 to 1449, married Maddalena/Theodora Tocco. What is more, the emperor Manuel II Palaeologos who strained to improve the contacts between Byzantium and the Latin West remained in Mystras for long periods to supervise his son’s administration as a despot. The most predominant building mixing high quality Westerns influence with Byzantine practices is the last structural phase of the palace in Mystras, which can be attributes to the patronage of Manuel himself during his residency in the capital city of the Despotate in the years 1408 and 1415.

In this case, neither in the monuments of Mystras nor at least in the two most important churches in the Mani presented above, the Soteras church in Langada and the Soteras church in Melia, the emulation of Western forms seems to be in a neutral manner reflecting just an architectural eclecticism. To the contrary, this osmosis in the architectural field seems to be directly related with the social status of the buildings’ patrons, reflecting their ideology. So, though in many fourteenth and fifteenth century churches of the Morea the Western features were merely a superficial veneer on standard regional constructions, there are still examples where Western details were assimilated with a strong ideological intent.

A newly discovered element supports my hypothesis. Recent work inside the Soteras church in Langada revealed part of its original paintings in the semi domes of the lateral conches. There, in a prominent location, are represented two figures: St. Peter the founder of the Church of Rome in the apse of the diakonikon (fig. 20), and St. Sylvester, Pope of Rome in the early 4th century in the prosthesis (fig. 21).

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36 See above n. 30.
38 Ibid., 68-69, 70.
39 Zakythinos, Le despotat grec de Moré (n. 30 above), 165-191; Kalopissi-Verti, “Mistra” (n. 34 above), 229.
40 See n. 34 above.
41 Kappas, “Εκκλησίες της Μητροπόλεως Μεσσηνίας” (n. 18 above), 240-249; idem, “Δυτικές επιδράσεις στην ιστορική της Μεσσηνίας (13ος-15ος αι.),” in Festschrift for Charalambos Bouras, ed. M. Korres (forthcoming).
According to legend dated back at least to the fifth century, it was Sylvester and not Eusebius who baptized Constantine after healing him from an intractable disease.\textsuperscript{42} The pope also helped the emperor to identify a vision of two men he had seen by providing him an icon with Peter and Paul. This legend was later related to the \emph{Donation of Constantine} according to which the astonished emperor granted the pope and the Church of Rome many privileges supporting his position in the Church hierarchy. Though this story was known in Byzantium from at least the early Middle Byzantine period,\textsuperscript{43} I cannot imagine anyone else in the Mani of the late 14th century who could have created such an iconographic composition other than a Western feudal lord, perhaps one of the descendants of Niccolò Acciajuoli.\textsuperscript{44}

Once Western elements were introduced in a small group of related buildings in the Mani, they were copied in other structures, establishing a path by which foreign elements became assimilated into the architectural koiné of the region.

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A second, larger group of neighboring buildings shows close typological and morphological affinities with the monuments at Langada, Melia, Konakia, and Platsa. The most impressive of these is the monastic church of St. George at Bosinianika in the region of Bardounochoria (fig. 22), which has an identical plan to the Langada church with similar dimensions and proportions.\textsuperscript{45} Its exuberant brick decoration, unique in the region, betrays a provincial quality. In some of the arches the recessed brick technique is applied (fig. 23), an element supporting the close connections with the building activity of the masons involved in the Langada group. The church of Soteras in Kastanitza, a few kilometers away from Bosinianika, used to be quite

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\textsuperscript{42} A. Kazhdan, “Silvester I,” \emph{ODB} 3: 1900.
\textsuperscript{44} The frescoes of Langada can be compare with other contemporaneous paintings in Laconia, see M. Panayiotidi, “Παρατηρήσεις επάνω ένα τοιχογραφία στην περιοχή της Ενδοτέρου Λακωνίας,” \emph{Δελτ.Χωρ.Αρχ.Ετ.} 27 (2006): 193-206.
\textsuperscript{45} Unfortunately this interesting monument remains unpublished; for short references, see N. V. Drandakes, “Ο ναός τοῦ Ἀδριανοῦ ἐν τῷ Μαρίτσι τῆς Μάνης,” \emph{Δελτ.Χωρ.Αρχ.Ετ.} 6 (1972): 158, n. 48, pl. 47b; P.L. Vocotopoulou, “The Concealed Course Technique: Further Examples and Few Remarks.” \emph{JOB} 28 (1979): 257, fig. 16; Constantinidi, “Συμβολή στη μελέτη” (n. 1 above), 69 n. 6; N. V. Drandakes, “Ἀπὸ τὶς τοιχογραφίας τοῦ Ἀγίου Δημητρίου Κροκάδων (1286),” \emph{Δελτ.Χωρ.Αρχ.Ετ.} 12 (1984): 208 n. 12; G. Velenis, Εμπειρία τοῦ χρυσήρα διακόσιον στην βυζαντινή οἰκονομική, PhD Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Thessaloniki, 1984), 96; Constantinidi, “Ὁ σταυροπλευτής ναός” (n. 1 above), 431; N. V. Drandakes, \textit{Βυζαντινές τοιχογραφίες τῆς Μέσας Μάνης} (Αθήνα, 1995), 128. For a longer description of the church, see Kappas, \emph{Ἡ εφαρμογή των σταυροπλευτικῶν εγγραμμάτων} (n. 3 above), v. II, πp. 88, 301-302.
similar (fig. 24).\textsuperscript{46} Initially constructed as compact cross-in-square building of the two-pier variant, the church was elongated on its east side at a later period (fig. 25).\textsuperscript{47} Recent work carried out by the Ephorate of Antiquities of Laconia provided valuable help define its structural phases.\textsuperscript{48} Part of the south façade that remains from the original building is adorned with the typical reticulate brick band, one of the hallmarks of this group of masons. Similar features can be identified in the churches of Hagioi Anargyroi at Nomitzi (fig. 26),\textsuperscript{49} St. Nicholas in Prasteio (modern Proastio) (fig. 27),\textsuperscript{50} the south porch of the church of St. Georgios at Dryalos (fig. 28),\textsuperscript{51} as well as in the church of the Soteras in Oitylo (fig. 29).\textsuperscript{52} Apart from the typical brick frieze, one more basic feature of this group of masons can be seen in the Oitylo church: the application of the recessed brick technique in the windows of its dome.\textsuperscript{53}

All of these buildings share common features in the fields of typology and construction with the church of Soteras in Langada and the other monuments I have assigned to the same workshop. Although I do not have sufficient evidence to ascribe their production to the same masons, they constitute a unified group, which can be differentiated from other buildings in the Late Byzantine Peloponnese.

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A closer analysis of typological and morphological issues allows us to contextualize the material and define the connections with Byzantine architecture in general. The type of compact cross-in-square church of the four-columned or four-pier variant, seen in the church at Langada, is well known in the region. Of the approximately 130 known cross-in-square churches in the Peloponnese, more than ten follow this specific variation, primarily in Laconia and Messenia.\textsuperscript{54} Almost all the

\textsuperscript{46} N. Skagos, \textit{Ὁ ναὸς της Μεταμόρφωσης του Σωτήρος στην Καστάνια (Καστάνις) της Εξοχ Μάνης} (Sparta, 2008).
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 6-9.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 4-5.
\textsuperscript{50} Drandakis, \textit{“Ἐρευναί εἰς τὴν Μεσσηνιακὴν Μάνην,”} (n. 9 above), 224; V. Palantzas, \textit{“Ὁ ναὸς τοῦ Ἁγίου Νικολάου στὸ Πραστεῖο τῆς Ὑπερτής Μάνης.”} \textit{Ἑκκλησίες στὴν Ελλάδα μετὰ τὴν Άλωση} 2 (1982): 311-326.
\textsuperscript{51} Traquair, \textit{“Laconia”} (n. 49 above), 181, pl. XI XII; H. Megaw, \textit{“Byzantine Architecture in Mani,” BSA} 33 (1932-1933): 162; Constantinidi, \textit{“Συμβολή στη μελέτη”} (n. 1 above), 71-72, fig. 5.
\textsuperscript{53} Drandakis did not realized the application of the recessed brick technique in the arches of the dome’s windows and thought they were built of alternating bricks and voussoirs, see Drandakes, \textit{“Ὁ Σωτήρας τοῦ Οἰτύλου,”} (n. 52 above), 83.
\textsuperscript{54} Hagios Charalampos in Kalamata, St. Petros in Kastania, Soteras at Nomitzi, St. Demetrios in Platsa, Soteras in Langada, St. Sergios and Bakchos at Kitta, Blacherna at Mezapos, Pantanassa at Geroumana, Cheimatissa at Phlока, the katholikon of the Old Philosophou Monastery, St. John the Baptist at Chrysapha, for all these examples see Kappas, \textit{Ἡ εφαρμογή του σταυροειδούς ἐγγεγραμμένου} (n. 3 above), v. I 134-160, v. II 298-341 with extensive bibliography. The same type was probably applied in the broadly damaged church of Panagia at Kastanochori, Arcadia that remains unpublished, on its sculptures see, G. Pallis, \textit{“Νέοτερα για το εργαστήριο γλυπτικής της Σαμαρίνας.” Δελτ.Χριστ.Αρχ.Ἑτ.} 27 (2006): 92-93.
Middle Byzantine examples are found in the Mani, where the domes are exclusively supported on four elegant marble columns especially carved for the monuments.\(^\text{55}\) During the Late Byzantine period, however, in most of the documented examples in the Mani, and also in the regions of Monemvasia, Geraki and Chryssapha, the columns were replaced by piers.\(^\text{56}\) This fundamental change in architectural design may reflect the disruption of Middle Byzantine marble workshops in the immediate region caused by the political instability that followed the conquest of the Morea by the Crusaders after the fall of Constantinople in 1204.

The two-columned variant,\(^\text{57}\) the most popular plan of the inscribed cross type among Byzantine masons in southern Greece through the Middle and Late Byzantine periods, is common in Late Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture in the Peloponnese.\(^\text{58}\) Apart from the churches of the Soteras in Fagrianika and St. Georges at Konakia, two-columned churches dated to the 14th century can be found in Prasteio (St. Nicholas),\(^\text{59}\) Kastania (Panagia),\(^\text{60}\) Germa (St. Nicholas),\(^\text{61}\) Oitylo (Soteras),\(^\text{62}\) Skoutari (St. Barbara),\(^\text{63}\) Trype (St. Theodoro),\(^\text{64}\) Leukochoma (St. Nicholas),\(^\text{65}\) Kokkinorachi (St.

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\(^{55}\) St. Sergios and Balchos at Kittia, St. Petros in Kastania, Soteras at Nomitzi, St. Demetrios in Platasa and perhaps Blacherna at Megazos where the columns are missing. On their sculpture decoration, see N. V. Drandakis, *Βυζαντινά γλυπτά της Μόνης* (Athens, 2002).

\(^{56}\) St. John the Baptist at Chrysapha, Pantanassa at Geroumana, Chermiasssa at Phloka and the katholikon of the Old Philosophou Monastery, for the date of this last monument to the late 13th c. or even later, see Kappas, *Η εφαρμογή του σταυροειδούς γεγραμμένου* (n. 3 above), v. II no 96, 331-333.

\(^{57}\) More than ten examples can be found only in the Mani; in the western part of the Laconian Mani (Mesa Mani): St. Theodotos at Bambaka (Megaw, “Byzantine Architecture in Mani” (n. 50 above), 139), Taxiararches at Glezos (Ibid., 139), St. Barbara at Eremos (Boura, “H έλλαδικά ναοδόμια” (n. 20 above), 133-135, fig. 136), A. Strategos at Ano Bouliaro (Traquair, “Laconia” (n. 15 above), pl. XI), Soteras in Gardenitsa (Ibid., pl. XI), Asomatoi at Kountoumi (N. Drandakis, “Ἐρευναί Βυζαντινά”, Byzantinisches Archiv, Heft 16 (München, 1916), 223; St. Sergios and Bakchos at Geroumana, Cheimatissa at Phloka and the katholikon of the Oldagia (Dormition) church in Kastania (M. Kappas, *Ἐρευναί Βυζαντινά*, 58-62). At Chryssapha, Pantanassa at Geroumana, Cheimatissa at Phloka and the katholikon of the Oldagia (Dormition) church in Kastania (M. Kappas, *Ἐρευναί Βυζαντινά*, 58-62).

\(^{58}\) Apart from the churches of the Soteras in Fagrianika and St. Georges at Konakia, two-columned churches dated to the 14th century can be found in Prasteio (St. Nicholas), Kastania (Panagia), Germa (St. Nicholas), Oitylo (Soteras), Skoutari (St. Barbara), Trype (St. Theodoro), Leukochoma (St. Nicholas), Kokkinorachi (St.

\(^{59}\) K. Orlandos, *]Ερευναι της Βυζαντινῆς Επαρχίας 1974*, 110-113, fig. 1). In the Messenian Mani (Eco Mani): Soteras in Melia (Fagrianika) (n. 9 above), St. Nicholas in Prasteion (n. 51 above), Panagia (Dormition) church in Kastania (M. Kappas, *Approaching Monemvasia and Mystras from the Outside: The View from Kastania*, in *Viewing Greece: Cultural and Political Agency in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean*, ed. Sh. E. J. Gerstel (Brepols, Turnhout, 2016), 162-165, fig. 11).


\(^{61}\) See n. 51 above.

\(^{62}\) See n. 57 above.

\(^{63}\) Drandakis, “Ἐρευναί εἰς τὴν Μόνην” (n. 57 above), 117-119, fig. 2; K. Diamante, “Γέραμα, Ναύς Αγίου Νικολάου, Αρχ.Δελτ. 52 (1997), B1 – Χρονικά, 216-217, pl. 90a-b.

\(^{64}\) See n. 20 above.


Nicholas), and Magoula (St. Nicholas). What differentiates all of these buildings from their Middle Byzantine examples is that in all these cases the columns are spolia, while in many Late Byzantine examples the difficulty of finding columns of appropriate size forced the masons to replace them with built piers.

In terms of typology, only the cross-vaulted type found in St. Paraskevi, Platsa, is an original creation of Late Byzantine architecture. Its earliest applications are encountered in Epirus and in the Peloponnese, while one of the earliest examples is considered to be the two-aisled cross-vaulted church of St. John the Baptist and St. Nicholas at Stavropegi in the Messenian Mani (Exo Mani), dated in the first half of the 13th century. But the type does not seem to have been widespread among the churches of the peninsula. The only example similar to St. Paraskevi, with a pair of blind arches articulating the interior, can be found in the church of Panagia in the village of Polyvaros in the eastern part of the Mani (Kato Mani), while all the other documented examples in the entire peninsula follow, in most cases, the simplest variant of the type.

66 Unpublished.
67 N. V. Drandakes, “Βυζαντινή και μεταβυζαντινή μνημεία Λακωνίας,” Αρχ. Ερημ. 1969, Αρχαιολογικά Χρονικά, 6-11, fig. 1-5.
68 The columns in all the Late Byzantine two-columned churches of Mystras (Perivelatos, Evangelistria and St. Sophia) are also spolia, see G. Millet, Monuments byzantins de Mistra (Paris, 1910), pl. 28, 31/3-5, 31/1-4 respectively and A. Louve-Kize, “Οι κτίσεις της Περιβλέψεως του Μοναστηριού. Διέλευση. Αρχ. Επ. 24 (2003): 101-118.
69 The churches of St. Athanasios (N. Moutsopoulos and G. Demetrokalles, Γεώργιος ο Ευπλήκτωρ, οι έκκλησίες του οικισμού (Thessaloniki, 1981), 139-170, esp. 216) and St. Sozon at Geraki, (ibid., 173-218, esp. 275-276, for a late 13th date of these churches, see Bouras – Boura, Η ελλαδική ναοδομία (n. 20 above), 334-336), St. Nicholas at Achragias close to the village Theologos (N. V. Drandakes, “Από τα χριστιανικά μνημεία της Λακωνίας,” Αρχ. Ερ. (1994): 23-30, fig. 5: S. Kalopissi-Veri, “Γεωργιανά παρατηρήσεις στο γραφικό διάκοσμο του Αγίου Νικολάου Αγριατή Λακωνίας,” Διέλευση. Αρχ. Επ. 27 (2006): 181-192), Soteras at Velanida in Epidauros Limeria (Y. Nagatsuka, Les églises byzantines en Laconie et dans ses environs, Thèse de doctorat. (Paris, 1994) II, pl. 59/4), Soteras at Kotronphi (ibid., 34-35, pl. 74/1), St. Nicholas in the homonymous village of Bardounochoria, unpublished, Soteras in Mikri Kastania of Bardounochoria (n. 16 above), the katholikon of Elikia monastery in Messenia (M. Kappas, “Εκκλησίες της Μητροπόλης Μεσσηνίας” (n. 18 above), 218-222). Spolia are the monolithic piers in the church of Palaopanagia at Mavillos close to the Holy Forty Martyrs monastery, see M. Kappas, “Ο ναός του Αγίου Νικολάου στο ρέμα του Ύμηρου Λακωνίας,” Βιβλίον της Λακωνικής Περιβλέπτου 21 (2011) 292, n. 116 with previous bibliography. A late 12th or early 13th date seems possible also for Panagia Chrysaphastissa (J. P. Alboni, Die byzantinischen Wandmalereien der Panagia Chrysaphastissa-Kirche in Chrysapha/Lacomien (Athens, 2000), fig. 9-11) and St. Nicholas in the homonymous village of Menonvasia, see Bouras – Boura, Η ελλαδική ναοδομία (n. 20 above), 30-32.
70 For this architectural type, see, A. Orlandos, “Οι σταυρεπίστεγοι ναοί της Ελλάδος,” Αρχ.Βυζ.Μνημ.Ελλ.1 (1935), 41-52; M. Dores, Πρόοδοι μιας της πολοντίας των σταυρεπίστεγων ναών (Athens, 1991); H. M. Köpper, Der Bautypus der griechischen Dachtransennichtkirehe (Amsterdam 1990), I-II; P. L. Vocotopoulos, Η μονή του Αγίου Δημητρίου στο Φανάρι. Συμβ. σημείωση της Υμηττικής του Λεπεσόνα της Περιφέρειας (Athens, 2012), esp. 41-43.
72 For other cross-vaulted churches in the Mani, see Constantinidi, “Ο σταυρεπίστεγος ναός” (n. 1 above), 427 n. 6.
73 Drandakes st. al., Επίκτηση στην Κάτω Μάνη (n. 10 above), 5-13, pl. 1. On this specific variant of the type, see Orlandos “Οι σταυρεπίστεγοι ναοί” (n. 69 above), 44-45, fig. 2; Constantinidi, “Ο σταυρεπίστεγος ναός” (n. 1 above), 425-427. With three blind arches in each side is articulated the interior of the ruined cross-vaulted church of Soteras close to the village of Orova in the Messenian Mani, see M. Kappas, “Οροβά, Ναοίς Μυτώμορφου του Σωτήρος,” Διέλευση. Αρχ.Επ. 61 (2006), Χρονικά 1: 399-400.
The two-stepped arches of the barrel-vaults below the dome is a feature very rarely attested in Byzantine architecture and one that requires further analysis. It is encountered in four of the monuments presented above: Soteras in Langada, St. George at Konakia, St. Nicholas in Prasteio and Hagioi Anargyroi in Nomitzi. I am not aware of any other Byzantine example in the Peloponnese.

One of the oldest known applications of such a solution can be found in the Panagia church of the impressive monastic complex of Hosios Loukas, dated to the second half of the 10th century. An even earlier date has been proposed for the two major multi-domed churches of Cyprus, St. Lazarus in Larnaca and St. Varnavas in Salamina, where the arches below the domes are formulated in this specific way. This solution has also been applied in later cross-in-square churches of the island such as the Archangels in Gialousa and St. Synesios in Rizokarpaso.

Two-stepped arches were not unknown even in the ecclesiastical architecture of Asia Minor, as indicated by the today lost dome of Çanlı Kilise documented in a valuable photograph taken by Gertrude Bell in 1907. The simultaneous appearance of this constructive detail in distant regions points, in my opinion, to a lost prototype in Constantinople. Close ties with Constantinopolitan architecture has been demonstrated both in the Çanlı Kilise and in Panagia of Hosios Loukas, while in


79 Kappas, Η εφαρμογή του σταυροειδούς εγγεγραμμένου (n. 3 above), v. II no 38, 105-108. See also A. Papageorgiou, “Η βυζαντινή τέχνη της Κύπρου (12ο–15ο αιώνα),” in Βυζαντινή Μοναστική Κλάσης, Βασιλέα στην Ανατολική και Ρήγα στην Δυτική, ed. D. Papanikola-Bakiriz and M. Iakouvou (Nicosia, 1997), 97; Papacostas, Byzantine Cyprus (n. 78 above), II 6.A 107, fig. 237-238.

80 R. Ousterhout, A Byzantine Settlement in Cappadocia (Washington, D.C., 2005), fig. 37. See also the reconstructed longitudinal section of the fig. 21.

Cyprus the tale is still very strong that Leo the VI patronized the construction of the church St. Lazarus after having transported his relics to Constantinople.83 Why this solution was introduced to the region of Mani in the Late Byzantine period only remains an open question.

The ceramic decoration of the monuments under examination consists mostly of friezes of reticulate ornament made by plain bricks.84 This seems to have been the most preferable motif among local builders after the reestablishment of Byzantine rule in the Morea in 1262, especially in Laconian monuments in Krokees,85 Chryssapha,86 and Geraki,87 but also in buildings constructed in Arcadia,88 as well as in Argolid.89

The application of the recessed brick technique, very well attested in monuments of Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly and Western Asia Minor, remained scarce in Southern Greece.90 Apart from the eleventh century church of Panagia Fraganilla in the western Peloponnese,91 all the documented examples up today are dated in the Late Byzantine period and encountered in the region of the Mani, basically among the group of buildings presented above.92 In two of these examples

85 For the earliest examples of this motif dated to the 10th c., see Vocotopoulos, Η έκκλησιατική έμφαση του βυζαντινού χώρου (n. 1 above), 84-85, 171 n. 7. For the application of this motif in the architecture of Late Byzantine Peloponnese, see Drandakes, “Ο ναός των Αγίων Θεοδώρων” (n. 64 above), 42 και n. 5; Constantinidi, “Συμβολή στη μελέτη” (n. 1 above), 65 n. 1; eadem, “Ο ναός της Αγίας Σοφιάς” (n. 1 above), 94-95; eadem, “Ο στοιχειοποίητος ναός” (n. 1 above), 431-432; K. Tsoures, Ο χρυσοπλαστικός διάκοσμος των ορθοβυζαντινών μνημείων της βυζαντινής Ελλάδος (Kavala, 1988), 173; G. Demetrukales, Άργους βιετζοντικοί ναοί Ιπποτόπιος Μητροπόλεως Μεσσηνίας, II, (Athens, 1998), 53-54. See also Kappas, “Ο ναός του Άγιου Νικολάου” (n. 68 above), 284 n. 86.
87 The west façade of the church of Prodromos, see n. V. Drandakes, “Ο στοιχειοποίητος ναός του Προδρόμου στη Χρυσάφη της Λακωνίας,” Αθ. Σπ. 9 (1988): 301-333; Kappas, Η εφαρμογή του στοιχειοποιητικού εγχρισμού (n. 3 above), v. ΙΙ, no 99, 339-341.
88 For example the churches of St. John Chrysostomos, St. Theodori, St. Athanasios and St. Sozon, see N. Moutsopoulos and G. Demetrukales, Γιακού, οι έκκλησιές του οικειοσπορικού (Thessaloniki, 1981), 1-45, 75, 81, 137-170, 171-220 respectively.
89 The church of Taxiares at Agrakona, see E. Deligianni-Dore, “Οι τοιχογραφίες του οτσερομπαντικού ναού των Ταξιαρχών στην Άργον,” Πρακτικά Β’ Τεταρτοκόμο Συνεδρίου Αρκαδικής Σπονδυλίας (Πειραιάς-Πάτρας, 11-14 Νοεμβρίου 1988), Πειραϊκονομικό (Πειραιάς-Πάτρας, 1990) 541-621.
91 Vocotopoulos, The Concealed Course Technique (n. 45 above), 247-260.
92 Ousterhout, “Observations” (n. 7 above), 163-170; Velenis, Ερμούπολες (n. 44 above), 65-106; Ousterhout, Mater Builders (n. 6 above), 174-179.
93 D. Athanasoulis, “Μεσαιωνικά εκκλησιαστικά ιδρύματα Ηλείας. Προκαταρκτική παρουσίαση μετωπών από την ερυθρομάλλητη και τοιχογραφημένη ερένα,” in Ο μνημείος στην Πειραιώνυμο 4ο-15ο αι. ed. V. Korté (Athens, 2004), 251-253; idem, Η νεοδομα στην Επικοινωνία Ολίκης (n. 21 above), 225-251. See also D. Athanasoulis and M. Kappas, “Στοιχειοποίηση εγχρισμού με συνεπτυγμένο δυτικό σκέλος,” in Αρχαία η ενετική Παναγία του Βορειοδυτικού, ed. V. Katsaros and A. Toura (Athens, 2015), 79-96.
94 Vocotopoulos, “The Concealed Course Technique” (n. 45 above) 257-258, 260; Constantinidi, “Ο στοιχειοποίητος ναός” (n. 1 above), 430-431. The same technique is also attested in the blind arched decorating the south façade of the Phaneromeni church
The technique is applied in its simplified form with brick-field mortar joints or even small stones.93

The articulation of the surfaces in Byzantine monuments of southern Greece in general is infrequent.94 The solution found in three of the monuments under examination – Soteras in Langada, St. Paraskevi in Platsa and Soteras in Melia – with three symmetrical arches not corresponding to the interior, represents a local improvisation unknown in other regions of Byzantium.95 The oldest similar articulation is found in the katholikon of the monastery of St. Theodore in Prasteion, dated by Ch. Bouras in the 12th century (fig. 30).96 This important monument, in ruins until a few years ago, has been recently restored by the Archaeological Service.97

The similarities with the monuments presented above led me to question the 12th-century chronology of this church. The crucial feature for the definition of its date lays in its exterior articulation. In my opinion the monument that introduced such innovations in the regional architecture of the Peloponnese is the Hodegetria Church, the katholikon of the most important monastery built in Mystras.98 In this monument founded in 130999, the patron, the abbot Pachomios, not only imitated metropolitan ideas of church design, but also managed to hire masons specialized in the Constantinopolitan vernacular, as is indicated in numerous morphological and structural details of the building.100 Apart from blind arches and niches articulating its façades and the drum of its dome, three symmetrical arches adorn the walls of the bell

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93 Soteras church in Langada and St. Paraskevi in Platsa. For this technique, see Ousterhout, “Observations” (n. 7 above), 163-170.
94 Kappas, Ἡ εφαρμογή του στυλογιστικού εγγραφισμοῦ (n. 3 above), v. I, 304-323.
95 Constantinidi, “Ὁ στοριεστήσεως ναὸς” (n. 1 above), 429-430.
96 Bouras and Boura, Η ελληνική ναοδομία (n. 20 above), 274-276.
100 On the Constantinopolitan characteristics of Hodegetria, see also Vocotopoulos, “The Role of Constantinopolitan Architecture” (n. 82 above), 562, 568. The crucial impact of Hodegetria to the regional architecture has not yet been evaluated in its real depth.
tower giving the prototype for later works in the churches of the Mani (fig. 31). Thus, I would date the katholikon of St. Theodore monastery in Prasteio a few years after the construction of Hodegetria, to the 1320’s, while all the later examples examined in this article, provide a further step in the evolution of this practise.

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The study of the Langada church provides an opportunity to investigate a single monument as the nexus of cultural interactions, and to examine a group of related monuments that share a number of its unusual features. I have assigned these buildings to the same workshop, based on distinctive constructive and morphological details. I also propose that the introduction of innovative Gothic features in at least two of the examined monuments – the Soteras church in Langada and the Soteras church in Melia – may be attributed to the existence of the vast estates of the Florentine family of Acciajuoli in the region. Thus, at least in this case, the amalgamation of Western and Eastern forms reveal a more complicated picture than just being the result of an architectural eclecticism. They may be much better explained within the framework of Western patronage in villages populated by Orthodox villagers. In the second part of my article I analyzed another group of churches that cannot be assigned to the same workshop, even though they share many common features with the monuments under examinations. Their study suggests how groups of masons worked in Mani may have been influenced by the creations of one another, establishing a pathway by which innovative elements became assimilated into the architectural koine of the region.
Fig. 1. Church of the Soteras, Langada, views from west and east before the removal of the exterior plaster (R. Andreadi).

Fig. 2. Church of the Soteras, view from west after its masonry was revealed (author).
Fig. 3. Plan and section of the Soteras church in Langada (G. Ninos).
Fig. 4. View into the dome of the Soteras church (author).

Fig. 5. View of the dome of the Soteras church (author).
Fig. 6. Church of the Soteras, Langada, views from southeast (author).

Fig. 7. Plan and section of the Soteras church before the reconstruction of the main apse (G. Ninos).
Fig. 8. The south cross arm of the Soteras church (author).

Fig. 9. Detail of the application of mortart in the brick decoration of the Soteras church (author).
Fig. 10. The windows the apses of the prosthesis and the diakonikon (author).

Fig. 11. Detail of the blind arches adorning the diagonal sides of the dome’s drum (author).
Fig. 12. The north cross arm of the Soteras church (author).

Fig. 13. Detail of the window of the north cross arm (author).
Fig. 14. Church of the Soteras in Fagrianika (Melia), view from northeast (author).

Fig. 15. The north cross arm of the Church of the Soteras in Fagrianika (Melia) (author).
Fig. 16. Church of St. George, Konakia, view from east (author).

Fig. 17. The window of the north cross arm of the Church of St. George, Konakia (author).
Fig. 18. Church of St. Paraskevi, Platsa, view from southwest (author).

Fig. 19. Church of St. Paraskevi, Platsa, view from east (author).
Fig. 20. Church of the Soteras, Langada. St. Peter on the semi dome of the diakonikon apse (author).

Fig. 21. Church of the Soteras, Langada. St. Sylvester on the semi dome of the prothesis apse (author).
Fig. 22. Church of St. George, Konakia, view from east (author).

Fig. 23. Detail of the south façade of the church of St. George, Konakia (author).
Fig. 24. Church of Soteras, Mikri Kastania, view from south before and after the restoration (N. Skagkos).

Fig. 25. Church of Soteras, Mikri Kastania, plan and section (redrawn after N. Skagkos).
Fig. 26. Church of Hagioi Anargyroi, Nomitzi, view from southeast (author).

Fig. 27. Church of St. Nicholas, Prasteio, view from south (author).
Fig. 28. Church of St. George, Dryalos, view from south (author).

Fig. 29. Church of the Soteras, Oitylo, view from southwest (author).
Fig. 30. Church of the St. Theodore, Prasteio, view from north (author).

Fig. 31. Church of the Hodegetria, Mystras, view of the bell tower (author).