

THE
HOLY AND GREAT
MONASTERY
OF VATOPAIDI

TRADITION - HISTORY - ART

VOLUME ONE



MOUNT ATHOS

1998

CONTENTS

VOLUME ONE

PATRIARCH'S LETTER	7
ABBOT'S FOREWORD	13
FOREWORD OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE IONIAN BANK	15
TRADITIONS AND ESSENTIALS	19
THE MONASTERY IN TRADITION AND TODAY	
<i>Archimandrite Ephraim, Abbot of Vatopaidi</i>	20
MONASTICISM: THE IMITATION OF CHRIST <i>Elder Joseph, Monk of Vatopaidi</i>	37
THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY	43
BYZANTINE VATOPAIDI: A MONASTERY OF THE HIGH ARISTOCRACY	
<i>Nikolaos Oikonomides</i>	44
FROM THE OTTOMAN CONQUEST TO THE 20th CENTURY <i>Kriton Chryssochoidis</i>	54
VATOPAIDI AND THE GREEK CULTURAL TRADITION. THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE ATHONITE ACADEMY <i>Paschalis M. Kitromilides</i>	72
THE METOCHIA OF THE MONASTERY	81
THE METOCHIA IN GREECE, ASIA MINOR, BULGARIA AND SERBIA	
<i>Ioakim A. Papaggelos</i>	82
THE METOCHIA IN ROMANIA <i>Florin Marinescu</i>	89
SANCTIFIED AND SANCTIFYING	97
THE MONASTERY'S SAINTS <i>Georgios Martzelos</i>	98
MIRACULOUS ICONS - HOLY RELICS <i>Georgios Mantzaridis</i>	118
THE ARCHITECTURE	131
THE BUILDING COMPLEX OF THE MONASTIC PRECINCT	
<i>Ploutarchos L. Theocharidis</i>	148
THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE KATHOLIKON <i>Stavros V. Mamaloukos</i>	166
THE MARBLE SANCTUARY SCREEN <i>Theocharis N. Pazaras</i>	176
THE TOMB OF THE FOUNDERS <i>Theocharis N. Pazaras</i>	180
THE POST-BYZANTINE CHAPELS WITHIN THE MONASTERY PRECINCT	
<i>Miltiadis D. Polyviou</i>	183
THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE MONASTERY AND THE BUILDINGS SURROUNDING IT	
<i>Petros Koufopoulos, Diomedes Myrianthefs</i>	191
MONUMENTAL PAINTING	219
THE MOSAICS AND THE BYZANTINE WALL-PAINTINGS <i>Efthymios N. Tsigaridas</i>	220
THE POST-BYZANTINE WALL-PAINTINGS <i>Ioakim A. Papaggelos</i>	285
THE WALL-PAINTINGS OF THE CHAPEL OF ST DEMETRIUS <i>Nikolaos Zias</i>	309
NOTES TO VOLUME ONE	319

VOLUME TWO

PORTABLE ICONS <i>Efthymios N. Tsigaridas</i>	349
GOLD EMBROIDERIES	419
GOLD-EMBROIDERED ORNAMENTS <i>Maria Theocharis</i>	420
ECCLESIASTICAL SMALL-SCALE ART	457
BYZANTINE SMALL ART WORKS <i>Katia Loverdou-Tsigarida</i>	458
POST-BYZANTINE AND OTHER SMALL ART WORKS <i>Anna Ballian</i>	500
WOODCARVING AND ENGRAVINGS	535
WOODCARVING <i>Nikolaos Nikonanos</i>	536
THE ENGRAVINGS <i>Ioannis E. Tavlakis</i>	547
THE LIBRARY	561
THE LIBRARY OF VATOPAIDI AND ITS MANUSCRIPTS <i>Erich Lamberz</i>	562
THE ILLUSTRATED MANUSCRIPTS <i>Sotirios Kadas</i>	575
THE MUSICAL MANUSCRIPTS <i>Grigorios T. Stathis</i>	598
THE LIBRARY OF PRINTED BOOKS <i>Triantafyllos Sklavenitis</i>	605
THE ARCHIVES	613
THE GREEK ARCHIVE <i>Kriton Chrysochoïdis</i>	614
THE ROMANIAN ARCHIVE <i>Florin Marinescu</i>	621
THE TURKISH ARCHIVE <i>Vassilis Dimitriadis</i>	627
THE SLAVONIC ARCHIVE <i>Constantinos Nihoritis</i>	632
NOTES TO VOLUME TWO	639
BIBLIOGRAPHY	683
GLOSSARY	715
INDEX	717

THE MONASTERY IN TRADITION AND TODAY

Archimandrite Ephraim,
Abbot of the Holy and Great Monastery of Vatopaidi

A place of sanctity; a place of quietude for a life far from cares, ideal to distance the mind from the concerns of life which impede its ascent to another sphere of existence - close to the One who has no beginning; close to the God who is the object of our love.

The observation of the historians that "the natural formation of the peninsula favoured, and indeed imposed, the isolation of its inhabitants¹" is certainly true.

The sole access by land to the peninsula of Athos is its narrow western side, where even now remains of the canal of Xerxes, dug around 481 BC, can still be seen.

The terrain of the peninsula is rugged, covered with forests and ravines; it has thus naturally been a refuge for those who meditate on things above. However, the monks who live in this place are spiritually nourished not so much by the physical landscape and the other natural beauties, which indeed contribute to the peace and aspiration of the soul, as much as by the special assurances and blessings which have been given to them by the Mother of God, our Lady the Theotokos. Tradition relates that the Holy Mountain was given to her by her Son as her portion, just as portions were allotted to all the Apostles. Again according to tradition, the Theotokos herself during her lifetime visited Athos, disembarking at the port of Clement. We find this tradition set down as early as the end of the 15th century.

St Maximus of Vatopaidi tells us that: "*The Mother of God then journeyed by ship to the Holy Mountain with the Apostle John, having first cast anchor at the place where the Monastery of Iveron now stands. From there they went on foot to the place where the Monastery of Vatopaidi is today. At that time unbaptised Greeks lived there...*"² As soon as she disembarked on her allotted portion, miraculous events occurred, together with the conversion to Christianity of the majority of pagans who in ancient times inhabited

cities here whose existence is known to us from the historians of antiquity³. Unfortunately we lack proof of the existence of Christians on Athos during the first centuries after Christ. In our Monastery of Vatopaidi there is a sarcophagus of Germanus, the son of a certain Heraclas, made in 203 AD and probably the last known trace of the pagan inhabitants of Athos⁴.

The Holy Mountain was called Acte by the ancients. During the early Middle Ages it was known as Athos, while from the 10th century on, the name of the 'Holy Mountain' has prevailed - this title originating not, as in the case of the earlier ones, from its geographical position or from the majestic peak of Athos, but from the immovable '*mountains of the virtues*' which guide man to perfection.

It is not clear when monastic life began on Mount Athos. The traditions sometimes are an expression of mystical yearnings, but at others they convey hidden messages. To the degree that historical testimony is lacking, these traditions do not constitute sources for history. But for the Church of Christ they are a joy to study, and usually at their core there is a truth which has often prompted scholars to embark upon important research which has led them to remarkable discoveries.

Even now, historical research on the subject is inadequate in the extreme - especially as the historians and chroniclers of old did not readily concern themselves with the details of monastic life on a distant peninsula⁵.

The first historical testimonies to the existence of monastic life on the Holy Mountain come from the Canon of St Joseph the Hymnographer, which was composed around 831-841⁶. In this, St Peter

Fig. 5 (preceding double page). Copper engraving showing the two sides of the Athos peninsula.



Fig.6. Part of the nave of the Katholikon.

the Athonite is extolled in hymns on the occasion of the finding of his holy relics, while in his *Life*, which was written around the middle of the 10th century, we are told that the Saint lived an ascetic life on Athos in a remote cave for about 50 years with strict fasting, vigil, and prayer. In this way we know that the ascetic life was being lived on the Holy Mountain before the middle of the ninth century. The second ascetic known to us is St Euthymius the Younger, who to begin with was a monk at Olympus in Bithynia. However, he lived at different times on the Holy Mountain between 859 and 866, and later built the Monastery of Peristeron, south-east of Thessaloniki, around 898. From his *Life*, which was compiled by his disciple Basil, we learn that before the arrival of St Euthymius in 859, there were monks living on the Holy Mountain. We do not, of course, know when exactly they first arrived. Several of these monks, however, founded monasteries beyond the Holy Mountain; as, for example, in the case of John Colobus and the monastery named after him at Ierissos.

From the *Life* of St Euthymius it also emerges that not only monks in ones or twos were living on the Holy Mountain, but also ascetics in groups. After the foundation of the Megiste Lavra in 962 by St Athanasius, the coenobitic way of life greatly flourished. It is true that monasteries existed before the Megiste Lavra, but the scarcity of sources and the incomplete state of research at present do not allow us to determine when exactly they first made their appearance.

Traditions concerning the Monastery

We have the first evidence of the Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi in a document of 985 which bears the signature of its first Abbot, Nicholas. In the case of the First Typikon* of Tsimiskes (972), we are unable to identify precisely all those involved, while in that of Monomachus, we see that Vatopaidi is second in the hierarchical order of the monasteries of the Holy Mountain. Furthermore, the Abbot of the Monastery attends the common assemblies and is accompanied by four monks. Vatopaidi, as a monastery with many monks, enjoys other special privileges.

Such a rapid rise in the position of Vatopaidi

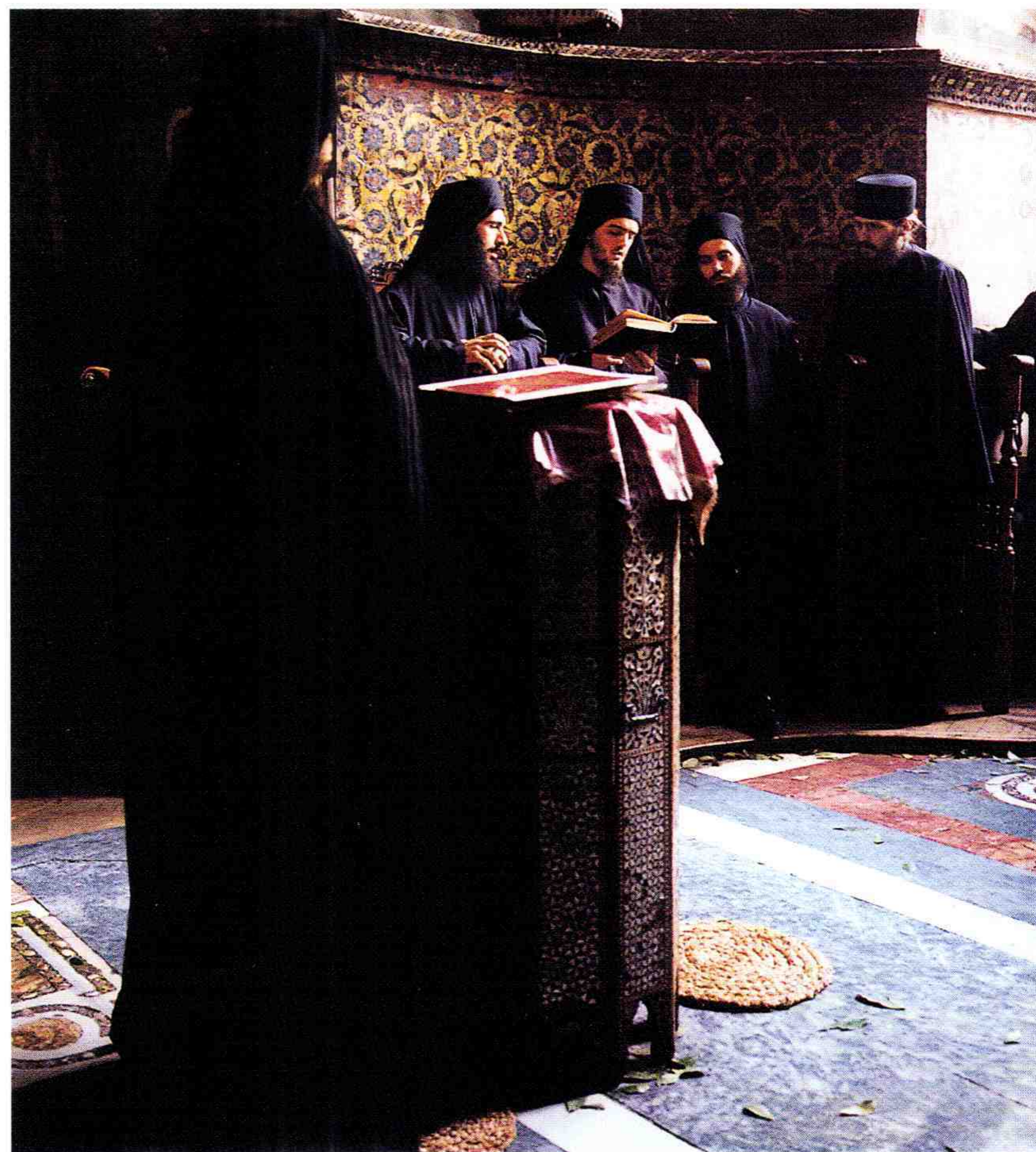


Fig. 7. Cantors with their prompter (canonarch) in the right-hand choir.

is perhaps difficult to explain in the case of a monastery newly-established in 980-985. However, the *patria*, that is, its traditions, recorded in manuscript codices, speak of the existence of the Monastery before the 10th century - from the time of Theodosius the Great and his children Arcadius, Honorius, and Placidia. The reason why they founded the Monastery was the miraculous rescue of Arcadius from a shipwreck, after which he was set down near a bush (*vatos*) and a church founded by Constantine the Great, laid waste by Julian the Apostate⁷. During the period between the 4th and approximately the beginning of the 10th century, the traditions tell of a monastery which was so prosperous and splendid that it attracted pirates, who left it ruined.

After this destruction of the Monastery, we meet up with history again in the figures of the three holy founders Nicholas, Athanasius, and

Antony⁸. These saints were sent by St Athanasius of the Megiste Lavra to rebuild the Monastery after its destruction by pirates. Thus from 985 onwards, the Monastery of Vatopaidi becomes one of the most powerful institutions on the Holy Mountain and its renown soon attracts a host of monks and outstanding personalities, of whom many are saints of the Orthodox Church.

The Administration of the Monastery

The administration of the Monastery of Vatopaidi, like that of the other monasteries, is in the hands of its Abbot and its senior monks, who together make up the Council of Elders, that is, the Holy Synaxis of the Monastery. The Abbot and the two commissioners are the executive power which implements the decisions of the Council of Elders and the managing authorities of the coenobium.

The internal regulations order the details and the formalities of the administration, as well as the meetings of the Holy Synaxis, both regular and extra-ordinary.

The Abbot, who is elected, once chosen by those monks who have the right to vote in the brotherhood, holds office for life. Every year, on 1 January, the Holy Synaxis decides on the special tasks (*diakonema*) of each monk.

The programme of the monks during the 24-hour day is divided into three equal eight-hour periods, devoted to prayer, work, and rest, respectively.

Prayer in the Monastery

Prayer usually takes place in the *katholikon* at the times of common prayer in the services of the Midnight Office, Matins, the Canonical Hours, the Divine Liturgy, Vespers, and Compline.

Of course, apart from common prayer in the *katholikon*, each monk has the opportunity to engage in the practice of prayer in his own cell, the ultimate goal being to attain to St Paul's injunction to "pray without ceasing"⁹. This is accomplished through the repetition of the prayer "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me". Through this prayer it is also possible for every monk to pray over and above the times of the offices prescribed by the *typikon*^{*}, and even, depending on measure



Fig. 8. The Vematarissa, with the 'lemon tree' in front of her, in the position where she is placed for festivals, when she is brought out from the *synthronon*^{*}.

of his purity, right conduct and progress, in his sleep - in the words of Scripture, "I sleep but my heart is awake"¹⁰. Furthermore, the study of patristic literature is a welcome spiritual occupation for every monk and is considered to be an extension of prayer. Among the principal writings read by the monks are the works of Basil the Great, John Climacus, Abba Dorotheus, John of Damascus and the *Philokalia*. In addition, during the common meals in the refectory, lives of the saints, festal discourses, commentaries on the Scripture readings for the day, etc. are read aloud.

Monastic Tasks

Monastic tasks (*diakonemata*) are allotted by the Holy Synaxis of the Monastery according to what is necessary for a smooth ordering of admin-

THE
HOLY AND GREAT
MONASTERY
OF VATOPAIDI
TRADITION - HISTORY - ART
VOLUME TWO



MOUNT ATHOS
1998

PORTABLE ICONS

Efthymios N. Tsigaridas

The Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi preserves as a sacred inheritance a large number of portable icons - somewhere in excess of 3,000 - which make up one of the most important collections of sacred treasures of this kind anywhere in the world.

These icons, as far as research up to the present has established, range chronologically from the 12th to the early 20th century, and represent a variety of iconographic subjects and of figurative types of sacred persons which supply the needs of the feasts and saints' days of the Church and of veneration and liturgical use, and of the private prayer of the monks.

They also provide invaluable evidence, directly and indirectly, for the history of the Monastery and of Athonite monasticism generally, while at the same time they permit the derivation of data on the course followed by Byzantine and post-Byzantine painting, artistic activity on the Holy Mountain, and the relations of the Monastery with those countries where it had metochia*.

Furthermore, the high artistic quality of many of the Monastery's icons makes it possible to trace the direct relations - cultural and economic - which the Monastery had with the major centres of the Byzantine Empire, Constantinople and Thessaloniki, and to assess the leading spiritual role which, from the time of its foundation, it played in the sphere of Orthodoxy and of the

Greek nation.

It should be noted that a large number of the icons made their appearance at the Monastery at certain periods of history, such as that of the Palaeologues (1261-1453), and in the 18th and 19th centuries, as a result, without doubt, of its flourishing spiritual life and economic prosperity at those times.

In the text which follows an attempt is made, by means of a certain number of icons, which are discussed in chronological order, within the framework of historical groups and artistic trends, to give as representative a picture as possible of the wealth of treasures in the category of icons which is preserved in the Monastery. It should be noted that the dating of the icons, in the absence of chronological data and evidence from inscriptions, is based as a rule on iconographic and, above all, artistic criteria.

The selection of the icons proved an exceptionally difficult task, because of the absence of any scholarly catalogue. The opportunity for an academic approach to the Monastery's icons was provided for the first time by the organisation of the store of icons and the compilation of a restoration programme¹. Thus the selection was based chiefly on icons which have been restored, on the criteria of a good state of preservation, iconographic interest, artistic quality, and their place within the artistic trends of their times.





Fig. 296. Epistyle icon. *The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin in the Temple and the Delivery of the Blessed Virgin to Joseph* (first section, 40.5-45.5 x 71.5 cm.). Second half of the 12th century.

BYZANTINE ICONS

The oldest icons preserved in the Monastery - if we except those cult icons which tradition attributes to earlier times - date from the period of the Comneni, and, more exactly, the second half of the 12th century. The icons which have survived from this period are very few in number; it is, nevertheless, represented by a particularly interesting epistyle of the sanctuary screen of the katholikon with 13 surviving subjects in which the Great Deisis* is combined with scenes from

the life of the Theotokos and of Christ.

The absence of icons from the first half of the 13th century is striking, but, by way of contrast, the icons which have survived from the Palaeologue period (1261-1453) are more in number and, moreover, of exceptional artistic quality. Some of them can be described as masterpieces of the Palaeologue renaissance and can be linked with the production of workshops of Constantinople and Thessaloniki. More specifically, the



Fig. 297. Epistyle icon. *The Annunciation of the Theotokos and the Visit of the Blessed Virgin to Elisabeth* (second section, 75 x 69 cm.). Second half of the 12th century.

majority of the icons of this period represent the spiritual, intellectual and artistic renaissance of the Palaeologues which coincides chronologically with the reign of the Emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus (1282-1328), a patron of monasticism, who gave his support to the Monastery in a variety of ways. It was in his reign that the katholikon was decorated with wall-paintings (1312).

From the first Palaeologue period (1261-1328), we shall discuss 13 icons, two of which are mosaics. The icons of this period are limited in their subject-matter, since the majority of them are icons from the sanctuary screen which depict chiefly Christ, the Blessed Virgin, St Demetrius, and St George.

From the second Palaeologue period (1328-1453), 15 icons will be examined. These show a variety of subject-matter, since in terms of their use they are icons of the Lord from the sanctuary screen, icons of the Great Deisis*, also from the sanctuary screen, from the sanctuary doors, and

icons which are for veneration or for private devotion. From an artistic point of view, the icons of this period which we discuss here represent in high quality the artistic production of the age and demonstrate the contacts which the Monastery had with the major centres of the Empire, Constantinople and Thessaloniki.

On the Byzantine icons which have so far been restored there are no artists' names or any other data in connection with their place of production or origin. Nevertheless, on the basis of the findings of research, two icons, one of St Demetrius (Fig. 315) and one of St George (Fig. 316) have connections, in our opinion, with the workshop of the Protaton (c. 1290) Manuel Panselinos, while others seem to have come from workshops in Constantinople or Thessaloniki. Indeed, two icons (Figs 438, 439) are said by tradition to have come from the Church of Aghia Sophia in Thessaloniki, and this tradition seems to be not wholly without foundation.



Fig. 298. Epistyle icon. *The Crucifixion and the Deposition from the Cross* (fourth section, 71.5 x 69 cm.). Second half of the 12th century.

The Monastery's Byzantine icons, as a rule, are not accompanied by inscriptions. Nevertheless, on two icons, that of Our Lady Glykophilousa* from the diptych known as the 'Ninia of Theodora' (Figs 436, 437) and that of the Apostles Peter and Paul (Fig. 29) inscriptions have survived which demonstrate a link with fig-

ures of the Byzantine court: Anna Philanthropina, wife of Manuel II, Emperor of Trebizond (1390-1412), in the case of the former, and the Despot Demetrius Palaeologus, son of the Emperor Manuel II Paleologus (1391-1425), in the case of the latter. Furthermore, the mosaic icon of St Anne (Fig. 313), a work of the 13th-