



Summary :

The Chora Monastery was built on the sixth hill of Constantinople, about 150m. from the Theodosian wall. It was dedicated to Christ as the Life-giving Saviour and to Mary as the container of life. It is one of the most significant examples of Byzantine art, its architecture representing the Middle Byzantine period and the decoration representing the Late Byzantine period. The exceptional, elegant mosaics and frescoes of the Chora monastery are characteristic of the second phase of the Palaiologan Renaissance. The gracefulness of the shapes, the colours and the depiction of apocryphal traditions render this monument unique.

Date

11th century: architecture, 14th century: decoration

Geographical Location

Constantinople, Istanbul

Topographical Location

Sixth hill of Constantinople, mod. Edirnekapı district in Istanbul

1. General Information

Some of the best examples of Byzantine mosaics are still preserved today in the Chora monastery in [Constantinople](#). This edifice is a brilliant example of Middle Byzantine architecture in the capital, while its decoration was created in the [Palaiologan period](#). After the [fall of Constantinople](#) it was dedicated to Islam and today it is known as Kariye Camii. After the Second World War the building has been restored, operating as a museum ever since. The walls and the [dome](#) of the [katholikon](#) were decorated with mosaics and frescoes of exceptional artistic style, depicting scenes from the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary.

2. Location - Name

The Chora monastery was built on the sixth hill of Constantinople, to the south of the Golden Horn, in the district of Edirnekapı of the modern city. The full name of the *katholikon* of this monastic complex was, according to some scholars, 'the church of the Holy Saviour in the countryside (*en te Chora*)'; therefore, it was dedicated to Christ.¹ The term *Chora* refers to the location of the church outside the city walls, and it became its shortened name. The original church on this site was an early 5th century monument, a *katholikon* of a monastery, located outside the [walls of Constantine I](#) (306/324-337).² The designation «en tè Chora» (in the countryside), from which the shortest name Chora monastery derives, is usually attributed to the location of the original structure outside the city walls. When Theodosios II (408-450) built [new walls](#) between 412-441, the monastery was included within the city's defences; however, it retained its traditional name *Chora*.

However, the name of the church also assumed a symbolic meaning, as the two main mosaics of the [narthex](#) of the *katholikon* imply: the inscriptions they bear refer to Christ as the *Land of the Living* (*he Chora ton zonton*) and to Mary as the *Container of the Uncontainable* (*he Chora tou Achoretou*) (this issue will be discussed in more detail as part of the monument's iconographical programme).

3. History of the building

At some point the core of the Chora monastery was considered to belong to the 7th c, because of some archaic architectonic elements in the nave, characteristic of Early Byzantine architecture, in churches like St Sophia in Thessalonike and the [church of the Dormition](#) in [Nicaea](#).³ However, the systematic research of P.A. Underwood⁴ has shown that the church was built between 1077 and 1081 upon older structures, from the 5th and 9th centuries, founded by Maria Doukaina, the mother in law of [Alexios I Komnenos](#) (1081-1118). Due to damages possibly caused by an earthquake, the building was thoroughly remodeled in ca. 1120 by the



sebastokrator Isaak Komnenos, son of Alexios I. Under the **Palaiologoi**, between 1316-1320/1321, **Theodore Metochites** built the **exonarthex** and the south **parekklesion**, additions very characteristic in **Late Byzantine religious architecture**; he also endowed the monastery with its fine mosaics and frescoes.

Almost half a century after the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans, the building was converted into a mosque, under the orders of the **grand vizier** of the sultan Bayezid II (1481-1512), and was renamed Kariye Camii. The mosaics and frescoes were covered behind a thick layer of plaster which, combined with the frequent earthquakes in the region, have taken their toll on the original decoration of the building. In 1948, a programme of restoration began after the initiative of Thomas Whittemore and Paul A. Underwood, researchers in the Byzantine Institute of America and the Dumbarton Oaks Centre for Byzantine Studies. From that time on the monument ceased to operate as a mosque; in 1958 it was opened to the public as a museum, called Kariye Müzesi.

4. Presentation of the monument

4.1. The architectural type of the *katholikon*

The nave of the *katholikon* in the Chora monastery, as it is preserved until today, is cruciform and covered by a large central dome on a high **drum**. The arms of the cross are of equal size and length, without depth and resting on massive corner **pillars**. It belongs to the type of the **cross-domed basilica**, of which other survivals too occur in the religious architecture of Constantinople in the 12th century (**church of Pammakaristos**, **Gül Camii**, **Kalenderhane Camii**). However, this arrangement of the church nave is due to the repairs of **sebastokrator** Isaac Komnenos (ca. 1120). The structure of Maria Doukaina (1077-1081) must have been a **cross-in-square** with four columns, belonging to the most common and popular architectural type at the time. The damages that the church suffered, probably due to some earthquake (falling in of the apses), called for repairs: during them a remodelling was carried out. The wide, central **apse**, semicircular on the inside and five-sided externally, still standing today, was built then. The columns were replaced by the massive piers, which creates a heavy effect to the main body of the fragmented interior space, but serves for supporting the larger dome. Besides, the heavy effect is alleviated by the rich decoration of coloured marbles and mosaics. The foundation of the church preserves parts of the 6th and the 9th centuries.

The appearance of the *katholikon* as seen nowadays has been the result of further repairs in the 14th century, between 1315 and 1321. Theodore Metochites, *megas logothetes* of **Andronikos II Palaiologos** and one of the most prominent figures of the intellectual and artistic movement known as the «**Palaiologan Renaissance**», undertook the renovation and redecoration of the monument, when he was on the peak of his power. During this renovation, the middle-byzantine core of the structure remained essentially unaltered. The inner narthex with its dome was built, an outer narthex and the south chapel - also domed - were added, and the north passage took its final form, with a **gallery**. On the eastern side the two small side apses of the **pastophoria** were added.⁵

The *katholikon* of the Chora monastery is not as large as other Byzantine churches in Constantinople, covering only 742.5 m². However, the lack of monumental size is overshadowed by the beauty of its interior. The building is divided into three main areas: the narthex, the nave and the side chapel (*parekklesion*). The edifice is covered by six domes: two cover the corners of the inner narthex, another one is crowning the south chapel, the central one covers the nave and there are two more covering the east **corner bays**.

4.2. The decoration of the Chora monastery

After 1300-1310, the so-called second Palaiologan artistic style (ca. 1300-1330) dominates the Byzantine art. The main characteristics of this style are the harmonic dimensions and classical plasticity, combined with elegance, free of the stress on size and bulk that were characteristic of the heavy style of the end of the 13th century. The depth of the architectural works helps create a special effect in space, while the wider use of still life and graphic details creates a sense of familiarity.

The Chora monastery is the most significant monument of the Palaiologan era also due to its unique iconography, one of the best examples of Byzantine art. The mosaics of the church and the frescoes of the side chapel testify to the high level of quality, the ideology, the rebirth in classical studies and the artistic recognition of the Palaiologan Renaissance during the 14th century.⁶



4.3. The iconography

The decoration of the Chora monastery reflects the subtle taste of its patron, the **megas logothetes** Theodore Metochites (1270-1332), one of the best educated and renowned Byzantines of the 14th century, an expert in ancient Greek literature and science, and a man who was fond of the ancient idea of ‘grace’ in art.⁷ The mosaics and frescoes of the *katholikon* of the Chora monastery decorates the inner narthex, the narthex and the nave. In the eastern **arches** of the **Bema** there are depictions of Christ⁸ and the Virgin with the Christ child (the Mother of God, the «dwelling place of the Uncontainable»⁹). In the western wall, the large composition of the Dormition of the Virgin¹⁰ was discovered. Important episodes from the Gospel, as part of the cycle of the **Dodekaorton**, probably decorated the walls of the *katholikon*, but do not survive today.¹¹

The main theme of the surviving representations in the narthex of the *katholikon* and the chapel are two detailed cycles from the life of the Virgin Mary¹² and the childhood of Christ,¹³ combined with his Genealogy and a **ministry cycle**.¹⁴ The information for most of these scenes derives from the narratives of apocryphal theological texts, such as the *Protoevangelion* or the Apocryphal Gospel of St James, which were widely spread in the Middle Ages. On the domes and the arches of the **niches** of the *narthex*, there are depictions of Christ, the Virgin Mary in the type of **Blachernitissa**,¹⁵ the patriarchs, the kings of the Old Testament, prophets, the apostles and other saints, either in full-body portrayals or as busts in **medallions**. Over the entrance of the inner narthex, leading to the nave, there is a mosaic portraying Christ on a throne, with the **donor** Theodore Metochites kneeling at his feet offering him a small model of the church.

5. Artistic technique

The mosaics of the *katholikon* of the Chora monastery reflect the brilliance of Constantinopolitan art. Most scenes unfold within a complex architectural scenery on the background, largely reminiscent of the Hellenistic artistic heritage. The saints are depicted in uncommon positions – almost as if they are hovering – and they have been depicted from different angles; they were probably inspired by several sources, such as Byzantine manuscripts (for example the codices Par. gr. 510, Par. gr. 115, Laur. Plut. VI, 23 etc.) and working sketches.¹⁶ The general effect is largely that of lyricism and smoothness, compared to 13th century Byzantine frescoes, and it is especially evident in the scenes from Christ’s childhood.¹⁷ What is especially impressive is the new perception of artistic space, with the human forms and the landscape presenting a harmonic ethereal whole, despite the fact that there are several axes, even vertical ones, applied, especially in the multi-person scenes. This is evident in the scene of the Annunciation, where the edifices in the background face each other, creating a triangle that provides the frame for the main scene.

From an artistic point of view, the wall-paintings of the Chora monastery do not rely on rendering any shadowing but on stretching the contrast between the coloured surfaces. The colours are more pompous, brighter and livelier – often ever unnatural – and they remind us more of **enamel** artwork; they differ completely from the ascetic style of 11th and 12th century hagiographers. The artists that worked on the mosaics of the Chora monastery preceded for 200 years the Italian renaissance painter Raphael in some of his artistic accomplishments.¹⁸

6. Other works

6.1. Deesis

The large representation of the **Deesis**, decorating the eastern wall of the narthex, holds a significant place among the mosaics of the Chora monastery.¹⁹ It is a work of art following the Palaiologan style (1258/1261-1453), created after 1307, when the donor of the mosaic **Maria Palaiologina** became a nun, adopting the name Melania. It has been suggested that underneath this Deesis there was the tomb of Maria, sister of Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282-1328).²⁰ The mosaic is, therefore, connected with funerary tradition and worship, since the Virgin Mary prays for absolution of sins and the salvation of the souls of the dead. To Mary’s side, there is the *sebastokrator* Isaak Komnenos, on his knees, praying (only his head and right shoulder survive), while next to Christ, the nun



Melania is also on a pose of prayer (only her face survives). Paul Underwood mentions that Melania was Maria Palaiologina, daughter of [Michael VIII Palaiologos](#) (1258/1261-1282), who had been married to the Mongolian **khan** of Bagdad Abax; in the inscription she is mentioned as 'lady of the Mongols, nun Melane'.²¹

In the scene of the Deesis, the figures of Mary and Christ are very archaic and do not have the lightness and subtlety of most Constantinopolitan monuments in this period. It is possible that the artists of this work were imitating a previous example, as shown by the use of the adjective *Chalkites* in Christ's inscription; it is possible that this is a representation of the renowned icon of Christ in the [Chalke Gate](#). Christ's face shows the characteristic elements of the 14th century artistic style, while the Theotokos reminds us more of the artistic tradition of the Komnenian era (1081-1184).²²

6.2. Christological and Mariological scenes

The frescoes of the narthex of the side chapel, founded by Theodore Metochites, were created at the same time as the mosaics of the church.²³ This space with four tombs was built as a burial chapel or cemetery,²⁴ a fact that is highlighted by the iconography of the decorations; the frescoes contain symbolic representations of the Theotokos, and scenes of the Resurrection and the Last Judgement.²⁵

As in the narthex of the *katholikon*, the iconography of the chapel is divided into cycles from the lives of Mary and Christ, but the central focus of the composition is on the theme of salvation, since it decorates a burial church.

The western side of the chapel's **barrel-vault** is dedicated to Mary. The upper levels represent prefigurations of her in the Old Testament, establishing her role in the salvation of souls. The eastern dome focuses on the Last Judgement, while the central idea of the iconographic programme manifestates itself clearly in the apse of the bema, with the monumental scene of the Resurrection, flanked by two other Easter evangelical scenes. In those, the Fathers of the Church are depicted in their liturgical garments, strengthening the symbolism of the Eucharist.²⁶ On the lower level of the chapel apse there is a full length depiction of the Virgin Mary, her hands gently pulling the Christ child towards her cheek; this has been characterised as one of the most sentimental types of the **Eleousa** in Byzantine art'.²⁷ Also connected to the worship of Mary are the portrayals of the four melodist saints, John Damaskenos, Cosmas the Hymnographer, Theophanes *Graptos* and Joseph the Hymnographer, who basically created the most important orthodox hymnography relating to Mary. Of great importance is also the depiction of **Heavenly Ladder** on the western side of the southern wall.²⁸

7. Evaluation

The technique of the frescoes of the side chapel is very similar to the mosaics of the narthex; the compositions are free-handed and forceful, the shapes are light with smooth folds in the clothing and similar colour motifs. Both completely differ from the austere vertical arrangement of frescoes and icons of the 12th century. The heads of the people are somewhat stereotypical, while the facial characteristics are soft and thin. Despite the similarities, from an artistic point of view, the mosaics are on a higher level than the frescoes, indicating the existence of work designs prior to placing the tesserae.²⁹ The mosaics also show a wider colour range and better use of colour, and they have been better preserved. The frescoes, on the other hand, create a sense of melancholy, they show a somewhat persistent repetition of techniques and have more austere effect. A few decades after these frescoes were created, their strict and severe technique would dominate Byzantine art.³⁰

8. The name of the monument: symbolism

8.1. Land of the Living, Container of the Uncontainable

The two accompanying inscriptions, Land of the Living (*he Chora ton zonton*) and the Container of the Uncontainable (*he Chora tou Achoritou*), in the Chora monastery, indicate the direction of scholarly research as far as epigraphy, theology and iconography



are concerned and possibly hold the answer to decoding the symbolic name of this monument.³¹ Christ is described as 'uncontainable' in iconoclastic hymnography, while Mary is linked to that particular adjective in the Canon of the Annunciation of the Virgin by Theophanes Graptos (+847): "Διά σου γαρ αχώρητος βροτοίς αναστραφήσεται...".³² In order to 'contain the uncontainable (God)', the mother of God becomes a vessel (*chora*) in the writings of another iconoclast poet, Joseph the Hymnographer (+883), in the *Akathistos Hymn*, as the *chorion* of God in the 11th homily of Klemes of Alexandria, in the 7th homily on the Birth of the *Theotokos* by John Damaskenos, in the works of Gregory Palamas, Theodore Metochites etc.³³

Representations of Mary as Container of the Uncontainable (*Chora tou Achoritou*) adorn the 20th line of the *Theotokion tou Savvatou* in the *Akathistos Hymn*, composed in the 9th century by Joseph the Hymnographer. We read:

"Στάχυν η βλαστήσασα τον θεϊον
Ως χώρα ανήροτος σαφώς,
Χαίρε, έμψυχε τράπεζα,
Άρτον ζωής χωρήσασα,
Χαίρε του ζώντος ύδατος
Πηγή ακένωτος, Δέσποινα".

Here the word *chora* symbolises the earth and the ground, directly linked to the participle *choresasa*.

8.2. Monastery of the Land of the Living, of the Uncontainable

The infamous name of the Chora Monastery in Constantinople can be approached in a similar manner. Most scholars until today agree that the monastery was dedicated both to the Life-giving Christ and to the *Theotokos* as the Container of the Uncontainable by Theodore Metochites, in order to interpret the word *chora* in the sense of land or a vessel, as an unusual epithet of Christ and not as another name for Mary. However, this name is first and foremost a characterisation not of Christ but of the monastery itself. It was inspired by a written source, possibly from the Chronography of Georgios (15th century), where we read about 'the monastery of the *Zoodotes* (Life-giving [Christ]), the so called *Chora*' («...την μονήν του Ζωοδότου την καλούμενην της χώρας»).³⁴ The word 'so called', in this case, refers to 'the monastery' and not to the 'Zoodotes'. This indicates that other meanings of the word 'chora' should be explored. Other than place, land, vessel, earth, area and state, the word *chora* could also signify a large, populated city. For example, that is the name for the central, fortified coastal town in Greek islands, where people would flee in the case of enemy invasion. The passage from the Chronography should be translated as 'the monastery of the *Zoodotes* in the *chora*', especially since churches dedicated to the Life-giving Christ appear in the 14th century in Mystras and Empore (mod. Albania). It is my belief that the name of the monastery should be interpreted as a place and not as an epithet for Christ; it signifies the monastery of the *Zoodotes* in the City (Constantinople), indicating with this dedication that it was a central church. It should also be noted that, after the walls of Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180) were built, the monastery of the *Zoodotes* was found within the borders of the fortifications of Constantinople.

8.3. The Theotokos as chora – Christ as chora

In later interpretations of art, such as that of Daniel in the 17th century, it is only Mary who is called '*Chora* (Land) [of the Living]'.³⁵ In the Chora monastery, it is Christ who appears as 'the Land of the Living'; this characterisation can only be interpreted in relation to the representations of Mary above the entrance and on the apse's columns. These representations, the '*Theotokos*, Container of the Uncontainable' and 'Christ, Land of the Living' surround the entrances that lead to the nave and the *Bema*, or – according to Christianity – the entrances leading to the Christian *proskynesis* and to the reward in heaven, through immortality. From a symbolic point of view, these two representations remind us of the conception and Birth of the Saviour, and of his transformation to a Church, that is to a place of the living and of those saved from sin. Christ as 'Land of the Living', in this case, embodies the idea of the Church as the body of the Lord (entrance that leads from the outside world to the temple) and represents the only entrance to Heaven (*bema*). Therefore, the depiction of Christ above the entrance of the *katholikon* should probably be interpreted as 'the realm of the



living’, that is of the Church, while the image in front of the apse of the *Bema* signifies the ‘realm of the immortals (those living forever)’, that is the heavenly kingdom. The epithet ‘Land of the Living’ does not appear in other monuments. It is possible that this theological idea behind the iconography of the Chora monastery did not become popular, for the additional reason that *chora* is a feminine noun, mostly referring to the Theotokos (in three known instances).

8.4. Interpretation

In my opinion, the name of the Chora Monastery means ‘the monastery within the walls of Constantinople’; the word *chora* as an iconographical epithet refers mainly to the Theotokos and derives from hymnography. Christ as the ‘Land of the Living’ appears as such, in this instance, only in relation to Mary as ‘Container of the Uncontainable’. This is why the church was dedicated both to the Life-giving Saviour and to Mary, ‘containing’ life. On the other hand, the iconographic programme of the chapel symbolises the ‘land of the dead’, who await the absolution of their sins and the Second Coming through Resurrection.

1. For this reason it is sometimes falsely called ‘Holy Saviour of the Chora’. See Ousterhout, R. G., *The Architecture of the Kariye Camii in Istanbul* (Washington D.C. 1987); Ousterhout, R. G., *The Art of the Kariye Camii* (London - Istanbul 2002) etc.
2. Underwood, R. A., “First Preliminary Report on the Restoration of the Frescoes in the Kariye Camii at Istanbul by the Byzantine Institute (1952-1954)”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 10 (1956), pp. 253-288, esp. 284-285.
3. Γκιολέξ, Ν., *Βυζαντινή ναοδομία (600-1204)* (Αθήνα 1992), p. 94.
4. Underwood, P. A., *The Kariye Djami* 4 (New York 1966); Ousterhout, R. G., *The Architecture of the Kariye Camii in Istanbul* (Washington D.C. 1987).
5. Ousterhout, R.G., *The Architecture of the Kariye Camii in Istanbul* (Washington D.C. 1987). Mango, C., *Byzantinische Architektur* (Stuttgart 1975), figs. 263-265; Krautheimer, R., *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Harmondsworth - Middlesex 1965), table 187; Müller-Wiener, W., *Bildlexikon Zur Topographie Istanbul: Byzantion, Konstantinupolis, Istanbul Bis Zum Beginn D. 17 Jh* (Tübingen 1977), figs. 156-162; Γκιολέξ, Ν., *Βυζαντινή ναοδομία (600-1204)* (Αθήνα 1992), pp. 94-5.
6. Richter, J. P., “Abendlandischew Malerei und Plastik im Orient”, *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst* XIII (1878), pp. 205-206; Кондаков, Н. П., *Мозаики мечети Кахрие-Джамиси – монѣ της Χώρας – в Константинополе* (Одесса 1881), pp. 21-23.
7. Hunger, H., “Theodoros Metochites als Vorläufer des Humanismus in Byzanz”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 45 (1952), pp. 4-19; Beck, H. G., *Theodoros Metochites. Die Krise des byzantinischen Weltbildes im 14. Jahrhundert* (München 1952); Ševčenko, I., “Theodore Metochites, the Chora, and the Intellectual Trends of His Time”, στο Underwood, P. A. (ed.), *The Kariye Djami. Studies in the Art of Kariye Djami and Its Intellectual Background* (Princeton 1975), pp. 93-106.
8. Underwood, P. A., *The Kariye Djami* 4 (New York 1966), plan 186.
9. Underwood, P. A., *The Kariye Djami* 4 (New York 1966), plan 187. See also Underwood, P. A., “Notes on the Work of the Byzantine Institute in Istanbul: 1955-1956”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12 (1958), pp. 267-287, esp. 283, fig. 16.
10. Underwood, P. A., *The Kariye Djami* 4 (New York 1966), plan 185. See also Underwood, P. A., “Notes on the Work of the Byzantine Institute in Istanbul: 1955-1956”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12 (1958), pp. 282-287.
11. Лазарев, В. Н., *История византийской живописи, М.* (Искусство 1986), pp. 158-159.
12. Underwood, P. A., *The Kariye Djami* 4 (New York 1966), plans 82-95; See Lafontaine-Dosogne, J., “Iconography of the Cycle of the Life of the Virgin”, in Underwood, P. A. (ed.), *The Kariye Djami. Studies in the Art of Kariye Djami and Its Intellectual Background* (Princeton 1975), pp. 161-194.
13. Underwood, P. A., *The Kariye Djami* 4 (New York, 1966), plans 100-116; Lafontaine-Dosogne, J., “Iconography of the Cycle of the Infancy of Christ”, in Underwood, P. A. (ed.), *The Kariye Djami. Studies in the Art of Kariye Djami and Its Intellectual Background* (Princeton 1975), pp. 195-242.



14. Underwood, P. A., *The Kariye Djami 4* (New York 1966), plans 7-81 (genealogy) and 117-141 (miracles); Underwood, P. A., "Some Problems in Programs and Iconography of Ministry cycles", in Underwood, P. A. (ed.), *The Kariye Djami. Studies in the Art of Kariye Djami and Its Intellectual Background* (Princeton 1975), pp. 243-301.
15. Underwood, P. A., *The Kariye Djami 4* (New York 1966), plans 1 (Christ) and 2 (Virgin Mary Blachernitissa).
16. Millet, G., *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'Évangile aux XIVe, XVe et XVIe siècles, d'après les monuments de Mistra, de la Macédoine et du Mont-Athos* (Paris 1914); Underwood, P. A. (ed.), *The Kariye Djami. Studies in the Art of Kariye Djami and Its Intellectual Background* (Princeton 1975), pics 17, 24-28, 48, 57, 58 in Demus' paper; figs. 2, 319, 21, 24-27, 29, 32, 34, 35, 43, 46, 50, 52, 55, 60, 63 in Lafontaine-Dosogne's papers; figs 18, 23-25 in Underwood's paper.
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18. Шмит, Ф. И., *Мозаика и фрески в Кахриэ-Джами. I История монастыря Хоры. Архитектура мечети. Мозаики нарфиков* (Константинополе 1903), p. 160.
19. Underwood, P. A. "Notes on the Work of the Byzantine Institute in Istanbul: 1955-1956", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12 (1958), pp. 295-296 (with the earlier bibliography), and Underwood, P. A., "The Deisis Mosaic in the Kahrie Cami at Istanbul", in Weitzmann, K. – der Nersessian, S. – Forsyth, G. H. Jr. – Kantorowicz, E. H. – Mommsen, T. E. (eds.), *Late Classical and Medieval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.* (Princeton 1975).
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21. Underwood, P. A. "Some problems in Programs and Iconography of Ministry cycles", in Underwood, P. A. (ed.), *The Kariye Djami. Studies in the Art of Kariye Djami and Its Intellectual Background* (Princeton 1975), p. 251.
22. Лазарев, В. Н., *История византийской живописи, М.* (Искусство 1986), pp. 160-161.
23. Underwood, P. A., *The Kariye Djami 1* (New York 1966), pp. 187-309; Underwood, P. A., *The Kariye Djami 3* (New York 1966), photos 335-553.
24. Der Nersessian, S., "Program and Iconography of the Frescoes of the Parekklesion", στο Weitzmann, K. – der Nersessian, S. – Forsyth, G. H. Jr. – Kantorowicz, E. H. – Mommsen, T. E. (ed.), *Late Classical and Medieval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr* (Princeton 1975), pp. 303-350.
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28. Underwood, P. A., *The Kariye Djami 4* (New York 1966), plans 249 (Virgin Mary Eleousa), 224-227 (Virgin Mary's hymnographers), and 228 (the ladder).
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Glossary :

	apse An arched sructure or a semi-circular end of a wall. In byzantine architecture it means the semicircular, usually barrel-vaulted, niche at the east end of a basilica. The side aisles of a basilica may also end in an apse, but it is always in the central apse where the altar is placed. It was separated from the main church by a barrier, the templon, or the iconostasis. Its ground plan on the external side could be semicircular, rectangular or polygonal.
	arch, the A curved structure, as a masonry, that covers openings in the stonework and is capable to supports the weight of material over an open space, as in a bridge, doorway, etc. It is often used as a decorative element.
	barrel-vault vaulted, semi-cylindrical construction used often as roof.
	bema The area at east end of the naos in Byzantine churches, containing the altar, also referred to as the presbetry or hierateion (sanctuary). In these area



take place the Holy Eucharist.

Blachernitissa

Iconographic type of Virgin Mary, whose name is based on a supposedly miraculous prototype located in the monastery of Blachernai. Theotokos is depicted in bust, while in front of her chest a medallion of Christ.

corner bays

In a cross-in-square church, they are the four compartments between the arms of the cross, that make inscribe the central cross into a square. They were usually covered with cross-or domical vaults.

cross-domed basilica

Type of domed basilica. A church plan, whose core, enveloped on three sides by aisles and galleries with a transept, forms a cross. The core is surmounted by a dome in the centre.

cross-in-square church

Type of church in which four barrel-vaulted bays form a greek cross; the central square of their intersection is domed. The cross is inscribed into the square ground plan by means of four corner bays.

Deesis

Iconographic theme, an image of intercession for the salvation of the human race, which represents Jesus as the central figure, between the Virgin and St. John the Baptist

Dodekaorton

The twelve important Great Feasts of the liturgical year: the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, the Baptism of Christ, the Transfiguration, the Entry into Jerusalem, Raising of Lazarus, Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Dormition of the Virgin and Pentecost. During the middle and late Byzantine period, the Dodekaorton was represented in a series of scenes that were included in the typical iconographic programme of a byzantine church.

dome

A characteristic element of Byzantine architecture. The dome is a hemispherical vault on a circular wall (drum) usually pierced by windows. The domed church emerges in the Early Byzantine years and its various types gradually prevail, while they are expanded in the Balkans and in Russia.

donor

Whoever subscribes, financially, to the erection of a certain structure (monument etc). In the case of the buildings, donors might lawfully relate to them via a special connection (usufruct or other).

drum of dome

Part of the church, semicircular or polygonal, on which rises an hemispheric dome

Eleousa

An icon type of Virgin Mary. She is depicted holding the Child, bending her head so as to touch his cheek with hers, while Jesus puts his arm around her neck.

enamel

Powdered glass of various colours which is heated and used as a decoration coat.

exonarthex (outer narthex)

The transverse vestibule or portico preceding the narthex of the church.

gallery

The upper level of a house where the women resided. In ecclesiastical architecture it is the corridor above the aisles and narthex of a church, from where women attended the Liturgy. Originally (in the Byzantine period) the gallery, having a special entrance, was used exclusively by the emperor and the members of the royal family.







grand vizier

Highest government official in the Ottoman Empire, second only to the Sultan. Before the 19th century he led the Ottoman army to war, when the Sultan could not go. He had vast administrative, legislative and judiciary responsibilities. During the reforms of the 19th century the office became even more important, as the grand vizier became in fact the head of the Ottoman government, very similar to the prime minister.

Heavenly Ladder

The Heavenly Ladder, also known as Jacob's Ladder, refers to the vision of the biblical patriarch, as it is related in Genesis 28:11-19. In theological tradition, the Ladder is interpreted as a prefiguration of Christ (who bridges the gap between the Earth and the Heaven), but more oftenly it appears as a paradigm for the spiritual ascetic life. A well-known and popular Byzantine text exposing this analogy was written by the Sinai monk John of the Klimax; an 11th-C. illustrated copy of it had a certain impact on monumental iconography, too.



	katholikon
The main church in a monastic complex, heart of the monastic activity.	
	khan (Ilkhan), khagan
This title was used in Turkic and Mongolian languages to designate the supreme ruler. The Byzantines used it to refer to the rulers of the Avars, Khazars, Turks and Bulgarians.	
	medallion
In byzantine painting the term indicates the circle containing representations of the busts of holy figures, floral or geometrical patterns as well as inscriptions.	
	megas logothetes
The head of the civil Byzantine administration. Megas logothetes was a title used at the end of the 12th century during the reign of Isaac II Angelos (1185-1195), replacing the "logothetes ton sekretou", an office which was created during the reign of Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118) to bring the entire civil administration under the control of a single individual.	
	ministry cycle
An iconographic cycle compiling scenes of the miracles of Christ.	
	narthex
A portico or a rectangular entrance-hall, parallel with the west end of an early Christian basilica or church.	
	niche
Semi-circular recess on the surface of the wall.	
	parekklesion
A chapel of small dimensions attached to a foundation or a larger church. Byzantine chapels were often used as burial places.	
	pastophoria (parabemata)
Rooms or places that as a rule surrounded the apse, next to the Holy Bema, of the Paleo-Christian or Byzantine churches, namely the diakonikon and the prothesis.	
	pillar
Pier of square or rectangular cross-section.	
	sebastokrator
Honorary title of the Byzantine court. The office was established in 1081 by Alexios I Komnenos for his elder brother Isaac, equivalent to the one of regent	

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Quotations

The Byzantine historian Nikephoros Gregoras, a pupil of Theodore Metochites, refers to his stay at the renovated Chora monastery:

ἀφ' οὗ γὰρ περὶ πλείονος ποιησάμενος ἐμὲ κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶ νεουρηθηῖσαν μονὴν τῆς Χώρας φέρων κατῴκησε, πολλὴν ἔπειτα τὴν στρογὴν ἐδείκνυ πρὸς ἐμὲ καὶ ἰλαρὰν τὴν διάθεσιν καὶ μικροῦ τοῖς αὐτοῦ παισὶν ἐπίσης ἐδίδου τὴν σχέσιν κάμοι:

Bekker I. - Schopen L. (ed.), *Nicephori Gregorae historiae Byzantinae*, 1 (CSHB, Bonn 1829), p. 309.

Cantacuzene mentions the monastery: the name «Chora» appears having assumed symbolic meaning:

... τοῖς ἐν τῇ μονῇ τῆς ἀχωρήτου χώρας τοῦ σωτήρος Χριστοῦ προσαγορευομένης προσέτατον μοναχοῖς, ἐπεὶ καὶ Γρηγορᾶς αὐτοῖς



χρόνον συχνόν συνήν...

Schopen, L. (ed.), *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris historiarum libri iv*, τ. 3 (CSHB, Bonn 1832), p. 171.

Chronological Table

Between 1077-1081: Building of the monastery *katholikon* by Maria Doukaina, upon older remnants of the 6th- and the 9th C. The plan was according to the cross-in-square type

Between 1081 - 1120: The church is damaged by an earthquake

ca. 1120: The *sebastokrator* Isaac Komnenos repairs the church. Remodeling results in change of the architectural type (cross-domed basilica)

1316-1321: Renovation of the monastery and the church from the *megas logothetes* Theodore Metochites. Addition of the narthex and the fuerary chapel. Decoration with superb mosaics and frescoes

Under sultan Beyazit II: the church is converted to a mosque, under the name Kariye Çamii

1948: Systematic research of the Byzantine Institute of America, directed by Paul A. Underwood for the uncovering of the wall-paintings and the restoration of the monument. It ceases to function as a mosque

1958: The monument opens its gate as a museum (Kariye Müzesi)