ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΜΕΙΖΟΝΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΜΟΥ

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Summary :

The basilica of the Virgin Mary of Blachernai became the most popular Constantinopolitan pilgrimage shrine of Theotokos. Its erection was traditionally attributed to Pulcheria and Emperor Maurice; it seems, however, that it was erected by Justin I (518-527). Earlier mentions of pilgrimage shrine of the Virgin Mary of Blachernai probably referred to the chapel (Soros), where the *maphorion* (the holy veil) of the Virgin was kept after its translation from Palestine in the 460s. Until the 7th century the basilica stood outside the city walls, since the Theodosian enclosure was not extending as far as the region of Blachernai; thus, the fact the the church was spared during the Avar siege in 626 was considered a miracle. The lifting of the Avar siege, which was attributed to a miraculous intervention of Theotokos, was associated with Virgin Mary of Blachernai (the Virgin *Vlachernitissa*). During the following centuries, the Virgin *Vlacernitissa* came to be considered as the city's divine protector par excellence. The church was entirely destroyed by a fire in 1070; by 1077 it had already been rebuilt. This second building was destroyed, again by fire, in 1434. The existing church is dated to the mid-19th century.

Date

2nd half of the 5th c. - 1434

Geographical Location

Constantinopole, Istanbul

Topographical Location

Blachernai region

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1. Introduction

The cult of Theotokos held a central place in the religious life of Constantinople. Already from the 7th century Constantinople became, according to C. Mango's expression, "Theotokoupolis" (=city of Virgin Mary), with an ever growing emphasis on Virgin's cult which is also apparent in the effort to gather relics of hers in the capital. In one of his orations in 624/625, Theodore Synkellos mentions the density of churches and chapels dedicated to Theotokos, situated almost in every public building, palace or religious foundation.[1]

The most important pilgrimage shrine of Theotokos at Constantinople was the church of Blachernai.[2] In reality, it was a complex including the basilica (it is also mentioned as the Great Church in the *De Cerimoniis*), the Hagia Soros, where Virgin's maphorion was kept, as well as other holy relics, and a bath edifice, the so-called *lousma* (λού[σ]μα).[3] The date of the structure is uncertain. Earlier, the basilica was believed to have been founded by the empress Pulcheria;[4] however, more recent research attributes the erection of the basilica to Justin I (518-527). The Soros was most probably an older structure than the basilica, whereas its erection was associated with the translation of the *maphorion* from a village near Nazareth to Constantinople, in the last years of Leo's I reign (457-474).

Blachernai was a quarter on the shores of Golden Horn, lying outside the enceinte of Theodosian land walls. Breezy and woody region, it was a fine suburb where some wealthy Romans built their mansions. Furthermore, at Blachernai there was natural spring of mineral water, which was used for baths, to which healing qualities were attributed at some point by the 5th century. such qualities, connected with the local Virgin's cult.[5]

2. The monument. Architectural description

The appearance of this early-Byzantine monument is partially known by descriptions, since the monument itself has not been preserved. Procopios describes it (around 554), as a three-aisled basilica, with two colonnades made of Parian marble. It was a structure of overwhelming dimensions, with 50 m. length. During the repairing-works that took place under Justin II (565-578), two niches were added, on the northern and the southern wall of the initial building, so as to form a transept visible in the groundplan.[6] The basilica had a narthex and galleries accessible through a staircase, as well as an ambo and a solea. On the gallery there was a chapel

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and a chamber. To the south of the bema there was a small skeuophylakion (sacristy).[7] It seems that the bath edifice was located to the south of the basilica, towards the Palace.

To the southeast of the basilica there was the shrine of Hagia Soros. This edifice probably predated the basilica, and was circular in groundplan.[8] The Hagia Soros was not just a chapel, since it was a building of significant dimensions, with a separate narthex, to which a chamber behind the basilika's *skeuophylakion* gave access. The Soros also included a *triclinus* for the emperor.[9] Beneath the Altar of the Soros there was a reliquary, to which the sources are referring as *episkepsis* (**ἐ πίσκεψις**).[10] From other sources we learn that inside the Soros there was an ambo,[11] which means that the place was intended from the beginning to host holy services. In all probability it had a gallery as well with a chapel and a *metatorion* (a changing room). Via the *triclinus* a pass with a staircase gave access from the Soros to the Blacharnai palace.[12]

3. The history of the Virgin Mary of Blachernai

3.1. The date of the basilica

In the earlier bibliography the basilica of Blachernai was believed to have been founded by the empress Pulcheria and her husband Maurice (450-457) between the years 450-453. This attribution was based on the testimony of ample later sources.[13] Nevertheless, Procopios records it as a Justin's I edifice (518-527). Under Justin II the basilica acquired its trancept that gave it a cruciform shape, a work that is attested in two epigrams of the Anthologia Palatina (1.2-3); In the second of these epigrams, founder of the church appears again Justin I.[14] According to C. Mango, these two testimonies are clearer and more reliable than the imprecise information we collect from later sources, and thus, we must consider the chronology that places the monument's erection in the years of Justin I safe enough.[15]

3.2. The Hagia Soros and the tradition related to Pulcheria

The *eukterion* (place of worship) of Blachernai already existed there in the year 475, when Verina, Leo's I wife (457-474) and Basiliskos' sister (475-476), against whom he had turned after his accession to the throne, sought refuge there. However, the building in question must have been the Soros and not the basilica, which is a later addition, as we have seen.[16] The foundation of the Soros is associated with the translation of Virgin's *maphorion* from Nazareth to Constantinople, during the decade of 460. Neither is Pulcheria's role believed to be certain regarding the erection of this older edifice. According to C. Mango, the Soros was built by Verina during the last years of Leo's reign.

Verina's relation to the Soros and the foundation at Blachernai generally passes in silence in the written sources. The later tradition, repeated among others by Theophanes, associates Pulcheria's name not only with Virgin Mary of Blachernai, but with the Virgin Mary of Chalkoprateia as well,[17] attributing, thus, to this empress an important role in the introduction and the consolidation of the Virgin's cult at Constantinople: because both of these churches, not only were dedicated to Theotokos, but they also sheltered, supposedly or not, important relics of Theotokos: the holy girdle (Virgin Mary of Chalkoprateia) and the *maphorion* (Virgin Mary of Blachernai). Nevertheless, the evidence on Virgin Mary of Chalkoprateia imply that it was rather a foundation of Verina than of Pulcheria. As far as the relic of the holy girdle is concerned, it is a tradition of uncertain origin and in any case subsequent to the one referring to the *maphorion*; however, since the moment it made its appearance, in the beginnings of the 8th century, it has been usually associated with the story of *maphorion*;[18] after the fall and the sack of Constantinople by the knights of the Fourth Crusade, a fragment of the holy girdle was supposedly kept in the Virgin Mary of Blachernai.[19]

In relation to the decoration of the Hagia Soros, some testimonies have been preserved about two of its decorative scenes: the first one was probably covering the apse conch and portrayed the figure of enthroned Theotokos, flanked by the emperor Leo I, Verina and their daughter Ariadne. Verina was pictured in a posture of veneration, with her grand-son Leo in her arms. The second scene (or a big portable icon, it is not clear) was found in the diakonikon and depicted Theotokos flanked by two angels and two saints, John

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Prodromos and Conon. In a posture of prayer were depicted the patrikioi Galbius and Candidus, who transferred, according to the tradition, Virgin's maphorion to Constantinople.[20]

3.3. The glory of the shrine

Until the beginnings of the 6th century, the pious foundation of the Virgin Mary of Blachernai seems to have already rose to prominence as a place of miraculous healings – an attribute connected with the relic of the maphorion as well as with the spring on that spot) and this reputation eventually urged Justin I to built a grand basilica at Blachernai, which remained the largest Constantinopolitan church of Theotokos in dimensions.

Always according to C. Mango, it is probable that the foundation of the Soros church and the translation of the maphorion to Constantinople were connected with Monophysitic cycles of the capital city, a hypothesis based on the testimony of the sources referring to the origin of the two patrikioi, of Galbius and Candidus. In that case, the erection of a splendid church by Justin I could have been interpreted as an effort to associate the already famous relic with the Orthodox tradition. This may explain as well the evolution, during later times, of the tradition connecting the translation of the maphorion and the foundation of the church at Blachernai with the pious Orthodox empress Pulcheria.[21]

Under Justin II (565-578) the basilica was renovated and acquired a cross shaped ground-plan. A large number of clergy served at the temple, which was second only to the clergy of Hagia Sophia. In 588 the emperor Maurice established a weekly patronal feast at the church of Blachernai, while a Novel of Herakleios (610-641) ordained the reduction of the number to 74 persons:[22] 12 presbyters, 18 deacons, 6 deaconesses, 8 subdeacons, 20 lectors, 4 chanters and 6 doorkeepers. According to Theodore Synkellos, by the 7th century Blachernitissa was already considered as the most important oikos of the Virgin at the capital.[23]

In 1070 the church of the Virgin Mary of Blachernai was destroyed by fire[24] and was restored by the emperors Romanos IV (Diogenes) (1068-1071) and Michael VII Doukas (1071-1078). The new building most probably followed the previous basilica-with-transept plan. From de Clavijo's description we are informed that it was a three-aisled basilica with an attic window, without dome, with superb inner decoration.[25] In 1434, short before the Fall of Constantinople the church was burnt down for the second time. After 1434 only the place of the holy fountain remained intact, while afterwards, in 1453, the wider region came within the Ottomans' sphere of authority. Traces of the edifice were visible until the middle of the 16th century, but soon afterwards they disappeared as well.[26]

In 1867 the land belonged to the property of a Turk. It was bought by the guild of Constantinople's furriers, which erected a small shrine around the hagiasma (holy spring).[27] Gradually, as the time passed the Patriarchate of Constantinople erected new buildings, giving to the area its present form. The church was decorated with paintings in 1964, depicting themes from the pilgrim's history.

4. The Virgin Mary of Blachernai as Constantinople's divine protector

4.1. Akathistos Hymn

It is not clear when the Virgin Mary of Blachernai was first considered Constantinople's divine protector. It seems, however, that it was an evolution predating the great siege of Constantinople by the Avars in 626.[28] According to the tradition, during the siege of 626 the patriarch of Constantinople Sergios (610-638) walked in procession holding the maphorion (and/ or the icon of Theotokos Blachernitissa) around the city and on its walls, encouraging thus its not numerous defenders. A little later, while the Avars tried with small boats (monoxyla) to get Persian reinforcements ferried across, from the opposite Asian shore, a storm burst out which destroyed their fleet and forced them to abandon the siege. After the raising of the siege the entire people of Constantinople gathered at the church of the Virgin Mary of Blachernai, where a thanks-giving agrypnia (vigilance) was performed. During the vigilance the Akathistos Hymn was chanted, which according to the tradition was supposed to have been composed the same day by patriarch Sergios,[29] in an act of gratitude for rescuing the city. The event has been depicted on the inner side of the latest edifice.

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This tradition is later; the narrations closest to the 7th-century events record neither the procession (litany) of Virgin's icon (there are some narrations recording a certain acheiropoietos icon of Christ and a Virgin's icon situated on the western walls) nor the storm inflicted upon the Avars.[30] As far as the maphorion is concerned, in reality it had already been transferred in 623 from the Virgin Mary of Blachernai, which remained extramural, in order not to run any danger during the siege. However, already the 7th-century sources attributed the raising of the siege of 626 to a miracle of Theotokos Blachernitissa, whose vision supposed to have appeared before the khagan of the Avars and to have put him to flight. An epigram of George Pisides in the Palatine Anthology praises Virgin Mary of Blachernai for protecting the city from the barbarians. To the Virgin's miraculous intervention was attributed as well the rescue of Constantinople during the sieges of 676-678 and 717-718 by the Arabs; the Akathistos Hymn had been associated with the raising of the second siege. Finally, the siege of the Rus in 860 was ended thanks to a storm disastrous for the enemy fleet, attributed to the fact that patriarch Photios sank into the waters Virgin's maphorion. Generally speaking, between the 6th and the 9th century Theotokos was distinguished as Constantinople's par excellence supernatural protector; in this belief central place possessed the shrine of the Virgin Mary at Blachernai.[31]

4.2. The miraculous icon of Theotokos Blachernitissa

In the 11th century, the historian Michael Attaleiates referring to Virgin's icon that Romanos IV Diogenes had brought along with him in his campaign against the Seljuks, defined it as the one of Blachernitissa, the miraculous icon from the church of Blachernai.[32] The first time a Virgin's icon that was associated with military campaign dates already to the beginnings of the 7th century, during Herakleios' campaign against Phokas (602-610), however until the 11th century Virgin's icons regarding military events were not defined due to specific names.

The iconographic type of Theotokos which is defined as Blachernitissa on coins and seals portrays Theotokos with her hands raised, in a gesture of entreaty; the variation of Virgin Orans with Christ-Child in bust, within a medallion in front of her chest is also called Blachernitissa, as well as Episkepsis. Finally, an 11th-century icon from the Sinai monastery portrays Theotokos holding Christ-Child, according to the Eleousa type, but is defined as Blachernitissa.[33] Obviously Virgin's icons such as the above-mentioned ones were found in the shrine of the Virgin Mary at Blachernai, but it is hard to define which one of them was considered to be the miraculous one associated with the celebration of triumphs and the protection of the city. A description of Leo the Deacon about Virgin's icon that John I Tzimiskes used during his triumph in 971, after his victory over the Bulgarians, seems to fit in with the type that we call today Eleousa, while other sources as well point out that such an icon, believed to be miraculous, was kept inside the church of Blachernai.[34] Besides, from the 12th century on another icon of Theotokos, that of Hodegetria, very close to the Eleousa type from an iconographical viewpoint, became the par excellence palladium of Constantinople. This icon, for which also existed the legend of being made by the hands of the Evangelist Luke, was connected with illuminations of the Akathistos Hymn on 14th-century manuscripts, while each year it was been carried to the palace of Blachernai from the Palm Sunday until Easter Sunday.[35] The close relation of these two Theotokos icons, associated both with Constantinople's supernatural protection, becomes clear on the Virgin of the Tretyakov gallery (fig. 3), a Constantinopolitan icon of 1130 according to the Eleousa type, that was gifted to the prince of Kiev and believed to possess Blachernitissa's qualities, while it was from the 15th century onwards that its attribution to the Evangelist Luke commenced, following the example of Hodegetria icon of Constantinople.[36]

5. Theotokos Blachernitissa – The "Great Panagia" of the city

In Byzantine and post-Byzantine liturgical pattens (*panagiaria*), as well as in 14th-15th-c. paintings and mosaics in the apses of the bema, we find quite often representations of the Theotokos in the type of Blachernitissa inscribed "Great Panagia". In relation to this observation it is worth-mentioning that, monasteries under the name "Great Panagia"[37] existed already during the 10th century at Athens and at Irtakion, near Kyzikos. However, the use of the epithet associated with the imperial cult point to Constantinople, because it was there that many monuments were venerated under the title "Great"; ti was also there that Theotokos Blachernitissa was

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originally considered as the city's divine protector.[38]

It is very probable that the "Great Panagia" constituted the every-day name of the shrine of the Virgin Mary at Blachernai, because besides the relation of the iconographic types between Great Panagia and Blachernitissa, we may suppose that this name was used as a way to denote the church at Blachernae and differentiate it from other, smaller churches at Byzantine Constantinople dedicated to the Mother of God. Furthermore, besides its size, the Virgin Mary of Blachernai was, as we have said, by far the most celebrated church of Theotokos at Constantinople, which, already before the 7th century, had been associated with miraculous healings.[39] In addition, the existence of other extramural churches dedicated to Blachernitissa, mainly at Ravenna and the Greek mainland, most probably urged the Byzantines to ascribe the name "Great Panagia" to the original Virgin Mary of Blachernai (meaning the church).[40]

Following the course of this hypothesis, we may think that the "Acolouthia of the lifting of the Panagia" ("Panagia" was for the first time celebrated at the church of Blachernai, since the scenes of the Great Panagia are related to the imperial ideology, whereas we are not obliged to associate this Eucharistic rite ceremony exclusively with monastic refectories in the 10th c.[41] Thus, we can not exclude the possibility that the "Acolouthia of the lifting of the Panagia" had been introduced exactly at Blachernai, by far the most important Constantinopolitan church among those dedicated to Theotokos, since the clergy serving there possessed the statue and the power, because of its close relations with the imperial court, to introduce novelties in the Divine Liturgy.

During the last centuries of the empire's decline (14th -15th c.), at churches under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Ohrid appeared frescoes with the inscription ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑ (the Great Panagia), that, besides the spread of this iconographic type, perhaps they attest an effort to promote the Archbishopric as the guardian of the liturgical tradition under threat, at the decayed capital, by non Christian presumptive conquerors.[42] On the other hand, the naming Great Panagia which accompanies many a variation of Blachernitissa's imagery inside encolpia, medallions and objects of personal use in general, could be associated with the fame of the Virgin Mary of Blachernai miraculous cult mainly in relation to healings; it acquired, thus, during the post-Byzantine period an apotropaic and soteriological nature, and not so much an Eucharistic one.

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18. Mango, C., "Η Κωνσταντινούπολη ως Θεοτοκούπολη", in: *Μήτηρ Θεού. Απεικονίσεις της Παναγίας στη βυζαντινή Τέχνη*, (Benaki Museum, Athens2000), p. 19. For a more detailed critical presentation of the traditions with regard to Pulcheria's role in the foundation of the Virgin Mary of Blachernai and the translation of the maphorion to Constantinople see Mango, C., "The Origins of the Blachernae Shrine at Constantinople", in: Cambi, N., Marin, E., (eds.), *Radovi XIII Međunarodnog Kongresa za starokršćansku arheologiju* (Split, Poreč 25.9 -1.10. 1994) [Acta XIII Congressus Internationalis Archaeologiae Christianae II] (Split-Vatican City 1998), pp. 65-73.

19. The last report of this holy relic is an anonymous Russian pilgrim to Constantinople between the years 1424 and 1453. We are unaware of what happened to this piece of the Timia Zone after 1453. Thus, the only surviving piece is the one kept in the Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi, where it ended up after a very adventurous way.

20. Mango, C., "The Origins of the Blachernae Shrine at Constantinople", in: Cambi, N., Marin, E., (eds.), *Radovi XIII Međunarodnog Kongresa za starokršćansku arheologiju* (Split, Poreč 25.9 -1.10. 1994) [Acta XIII Congressus Internationalis Archaeologiae Christianae II] (Split-Vatican City 1998), pp. 70-1. Especially for the wall mosaic on the apse conch see Grabar, A., L'iconoclasme byzantin. Dossier archéologique (Paris 21984), pp. 29, 54· Mango, C., *The art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453. Sources and documents* (London^2 1986), pp. 34-5.

21. Mango, C., “The Origins of the Blachernae Shrine at Constantinople”, in: Cambi, N., Marin, E., (eds.), *Radovi XIII Međunarodnog Kongresa za starokršćansku arheologiju* (Split, Poreč 25.9 -1.10. 1994) [Acta XIII Congressus Internationalis Archaeologiae Christianae II] (Split-Vatican City 1998), pp. 73-4.

22. Konidaris, J. (ed.), «Die Novellen des Kaisers Herakleios», *Fontes Minores* 5 (1982), pp. 68, 70.

23. Θεόδωρος Σύγκελλος, “Theodore Syncellus, In depositionem pretiosae vestis”, in Combefis, F. (ed.), *Novum auctarium, vol. II. Historia haeresis monotheliarum santaque in eam sextae Synodi actorum vindiciae* (Paris 1648), p. 774. Angelidi, C.- Papamastorakis T., «Picturing the spiritual protector: from Blachernitissa to Hodegetria», in Vassilaki, M. (ed.), *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium* (Ashgate 2005), p. 209.

24. Μιχαήλ Ατταλειάτης, *Ιστορία*, ed. I. Bekker (CSHB, Bonn 1853), p. 138.

25. Janin, R., *Le géographie ecclésiastique de l’ empire Byzantine, I: Le siège de Constantinople et le Patriarchat Oecuménique, 3: Les églises et les monastères* (Paris 21969), p. 168, with a reference to Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, *Historia del Gran Tamorlan* (Madrid 1782), p. 63.

26. Gyllius, P., *De topographia Constantinopoleos* (Lyon 1561), IV.5, p. 204.

27. Πασπάτης, Α. Γ., *Βυζαντιναί μελέται* (Constantinople 1877), p. 185.

28. Mango, C., "Η Κωνσταντινούπολη ως Θεοτοκούπολη", in: *Μήτηρ Θεού. Απεικονίσεις της Παναγίας στη βυζαντινή Τέχνη* (Benaki Museum, Athens 2000), pp. 20-22.

29. The tradition associating the Akathistos hymn with the siege of 626 goes back already to the 10th century, see Angelidi, C.- Papamastorakis T., «Picturing the spiritual protector: from Blachernitissa to Hodegetria», in Vassilaki M. (ed.), *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium* (Ashgate 2005), p. 212 and note 23.

30. The 7th-century sources are a poem of George of Pisidia, Perusi, A. (ed.), *Giorgio di Pisidia Poemi* (Studia Patristica et Byzantina 7, Freising 1960), pp. 176-224; a homily attributed to Theodore Synkellos, Makk, F., *Traduction et commentaire de l’homélie écrite probablement par Théodore le Syncelle sur le siege de Constantinople en 626* (Opuscula Byzantina III, Szeged 1975); and an excerpt in the Chronicle Paschale, ed. L. Dindorf (CSHB, Bonn 1832), pp. 716-7. See Pentcheva, B.V., «The supernatural protector of Constantinople: the Virgin and her icons in the tradition of the Avar siege», *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 26 (2002), pp. 5-12, for the 7th-century sources, and pp. 22-27, for the middle Byzantine sources concerning the event and the formation of the later tradition.

31. Mango, C., "Η Κωνσταντινούπολη ως Θεοτοκούπολη", in: *Μήτηρ Θεού. Απεικονίσεις της Παναγίας στη βυζαντινή Τέχνη* (Benaki Museum, Athens 2000), pp. 22-3; Angelidi, C.- Papamastorakis T., «Picturing the spiritual protector: from Blachernitissa to Hodegetria», in Vassilaki M. (ed.), *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium* (Ashgate 2005), p. 212.

32. Μιχαήλ Ατταλειάτης, *Ιστορία*, ed. I. Bekker (CSHB, Bonn 1853), p. 153.

33. Patterson-Ševčenko, N., «Vigin Blachernitissa», in Kazhdan, A. (editor-in-chief), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* 3 (Oxford-New York 1991), pp. 2170-1.

34. Angelidi, C.- Papamastorakis T., «Picturing the spiritual protector: from Blachernitissa to Hodegetria», in Vassilaki M. (ed.), *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium* (Ashgate 2005), pp. 212-3.

35. Patterson-Ševčenko, N., «Vigin Hodegetria», in Kazhdan, A. (editor-in-chief), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* 3 (Oxford-New York 1991), pp. 2172-3.

36. For the succession of Blachernitissa by Hodegetria on the role of capital’s palladium see Angelidi, C.- Papamastorakis T., «Picturing the spiritual protector: from Blachernitissa to Hodegetria», in Vassilaki M. (ed.), *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium* (Ashgate 2005), pp. 212-7.

37. For this theme see Мутафов, Е. «МНТНР ΘΕΟΥ Η ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑ – поява, разпространение, варианти и хипотези. ПРОЛЕГОМЕНА», *Mediaevalia Christiana 2.C*. (2008) (forthcoming).

38. On coins dated to the years of Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259/1261-1282) and of Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282-1328), as well as on illuminated manuscripts from the 14th c., behind Virgin's figure are depicted on the ground the walls and the towers of Constantinople. See Грозданов, Ц., *Студии за Охридския живопис* (Скопје 1990), pp. 128-129, fig. 50 and p. 51 with previous bibliography.

39. Those writers that record the miracles are Theodore Synkellos, "Theodore Syncellus, In depositionem pretiosae vestis", in: Combefis, F. (ed.), *Novum auctarium*, vol. II. *Historia haeresis monotheliarum santaque in eam sextae Synodi actorum vindiciae* (Paris 1648), pp. 751-786, as well as George Pisides in the Palatine Anthology, Beckby, H., (ed.), *Anthologia Greca 1* (Munich^2 1965), 121, col. 6-9: «ἐ νταῦ θα κρουνοὶ σαρκικῶ ν καθαρσίων καὶ ψυχικῶ ν λύτρωσις ἀ γνοημάτων· ὅ σαι γάρ εἰ σι τῶ ν παθῶ ν περιστάσεις, βλύζει τοσαύτας δωρεὰ ς τῶ ν θαυμάτων.».

40. In medieval Thessalonica as well we observe such a contrast. The church of the Virgin Mary Acheiropoietos of the 5th c. is called «μέγας ναός» by the bishop of Thessalonica Eustathios in his «Ιστορία άλωσης της Θεσσαλονίκης από τους Νορμανδούς» a work of the year 1185, underestimating in a way all the other notable churches of the city, namely Hagia Sophia and Saint Demetrios. In the 15th c. Saint Symeon of Thessalonica also calls the Acheiropoietos «Μέγα ναό της Θεοτόκου» eventually in contrast to the Nea Panagia, built upon the foundations of a 12th-century Virgin's monastery.

41. Геров, Г., Б. Пенкова, *Р. Божинов, Стенописите на Роженския манастир* (София. 1993), p. 137 with previous bibliography about the theme of the divine service in question and its celebration at the Balkan monasteries.

42. In the 14th c. Byzantium experienced a period of decay, during which the empire's neighbors tried to acquire some precious objects and valuable symbols. Even the Bulgarian chronographers of Tsar John Alexander's court (1331-1371) made an attempt to name Veliko Tŭrnovo "New Reigning City" and "Third Rome". See accordingly Тъпкова-Заимова, В., *Търново между Ерусалим, Рим и Цариград, Търновска книжовна школа, 4, Културно развитие на българската държава XII ь-XIVь* (София 1985), pp. 249-261. By the Nomokanon of Stefan Dušan in 1334 the Archbishopric of Ohrid became autonomous and the archbishop Nikolaos in 1347 called himself "Archbishop of Bulgaria". Because of its religious significance Ohrid was named the "Zion of the Bulgarians" or the "Jerusalem of the Bulgarians".

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Glossary :

acheiropoietos

Icon, usually of Christ, which-according to the legend-was non-hand made. Several legends concerning *acheiropoietes* icons appeared in Byzantium since the 6th c. and refer to objects which miraculously preserved the imprint of the face or the body of Christ, after having come in contact with Him. The most famous is the Holy Mandylion of Eddesa. During the middle byzantine period most of those *acheiropoietes* icons of Christ are forgotten, though many legends emerged concerning *acheiropoietes* icons of saints.

ambo

The elevated pulpit used for preaching in the church nave.

bema

The area at east end of the naos in Byzantine churches, containing the altar, also referred to as the presbetery or hierateion (sanctuary). In these area take place the Holy Eucharist.

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.

galea

galea (from γαλαίος, "swordfish",) – a term introduced first by Leo VI to denote light, rapid dromones powered probably by one bank of oars. They were commonly used as messenger ships or for reconnaissance in enemy waters.

Authoring : *Moutafov Emmanuel*
Translation : *Λουμάκης Σπυρίδων*
For citation : *Moutafov Emmanuel , "Blachernai, Basilica of the Virgin Mary", Encyclopaedia of the Hellenic World, Constantinople*
URL: <http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=11778>

	Hodegetria
Iconographic type of the Virgin Mary. The Virgin is depicted standing, slightly turning to the right of the viewer, holding in her arms the infant Jesus. The type was named so after an allegedly thaumaturgic icon of the Virgin Mary kept in the monastery of Hodegoi in Constantinople.	
	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.	
	maphorion
A women's garment covering the head and shoulders and sometimes reaching down to the feet. In Byzantium maphorion was the name of the Virgin's outer veil. According to the christian tradition it was preserved by apostle Thomas after the Dormition and 4-5 centuries afterwards it was transfered to Constantinople and deposited at the church of Blachernai. It was one of the most important relics gathered in Constantinople.	
	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.	
	skeuophylakion
(‘Treasure house’ or sacristy) A particular area or room in the churches for keeping vestments and the church furnishings, sacred vessel. Usually take place in the diakonikon, south (at right) from the central apse with the altar.	
	solea
A wide and oblong elevated passageway in front of the central opening of the chancel screen that reached until the ambo; there stood the deacons and the lectors during the Service.	
	three-aisled basilica
An oblong type of church internally divided into three aisles: the middle and the two side aisles. The middle aisle is often lighted by an elevated clerestory. In the Early Byzantine years this type of church had huge dimensions.	

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Quotations

1. The remodeling of the basilica of Blachernai by Justin II

(2.) Ἐν ταῖς ἁψῖσι τῶν Βλαχερνῶν

Θεῖος Ἰουστῖνος, Σοφίης πόσις, ᾧ πόρε Χριστὸς (1)
πάντα διορθοῦσθαι καὶ κλέος ἐν πολέμοις,
μητρὸς ἀπειρογάμοιο δόμον σκάζοντα νοήσας,
σαθρὸν ἀποσκεδάσας τεῦξέ μιν ἀσφαλέως.

(3.) Εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ ἐν ταῖς αὐταῖς

Ὁ πρὶν Ἰουστῖνος περικαλλέα δείματο νηὸν (1)
τοῦτον μητρὶ Θεοῦ κάλλεϊ λαμπόμενον·
ὁπλότερος δὲ μετ' αὐτὸν Ἰουστῖνος βασιλεύων
κρείσσονα τῆς προτέρης ὤπασεν ἀγλαΐην.

Anthologia Palatina 2 and 3, H. Beckby (ed.), *Anthologia Graeca* I (Munich ^{2}1965).

2. Epigramms by George Pisides for Virgin Mary of Blachernai

(120.) Ἐν Βλαχέρναις ἴαμβοι

οἱ βάρβαροι δὲ προσβαλόντες τῇ πόλει,
αὐτὴν στρατηγήσασαν ὡς εἶδον μόνην, (10)
ἔκαμψαν εὐθὺς τοὺς ἀκαμπεῖς αὐχένας.

(121.) Εἰς τὸν αὐτὸν ναόν

ἐνταῦθα κρουνοὶ σαρκικῶν καθαρσίων
καὶ ψυχικῶν λύτρωσις ἀγνοημάτων·
ὅσαι γάρ εἰσι τῶν παθῶν περιστάσεις,
βλύζει τοσαύτας δωρεὰς τῶν θαυμάτων.
ἐνταῦθα νικήσασα τοὺς ἐναντίους (10)
ἀνεῖλεν αὐτοὺς ἀντὶ λόγχης εἶσ' ὕδωρ·
τροπῆς γὰρ ἀλλοίωσιν οὐκ ἔχει μόνην,
Χριστὸν τεκοῦσα καὶ κλονοῦσα βαρβάρους.

Anthologia Palatina, 120.9-11 and 121.8-13, H. Beckby (ed.), *Anthologia Graeca* 1 (Munich ^{2}1965).

3. The icon of Blachernitissa in the campaigns of the Byzantine emperors

... τὴν πάνσεπτον εἰκόνα τῆς πανυμνήτου δεσποίνης θεοτόκου τῆς, Βλαχερνιτίσσης, ἥτις εἰώθει τοῖς πιστοῖς βασιλεῦσιν ἐν ἐν στρατείαις ὡς ἀπροσμάχητον ὅπλον συνεκστρατεύεσθαι...

Bekker, I. (ed.), *Michaelis Attaliotae Historia* (CSHB, Bonn 1853), p. 153.

4. The wall mosaic of Leo I and Verina in the Soros

After the demise of [Galbius and Candidus], the said emperor Leo and his most-pious spouse Veronica honored in a fitting fashion the holy garment of Our Lady the Mother of God by dedicating to her a church with all glory and veneration...

The same emperors beloved of God and Christ set up in the ciborium of the [bema] an image, all of gold and precious stones, in which image [are represented] Our Lady the immaculate Mother of God seated on a throne and on either side of her Leo and Veronica, the latter holding her own [grand]son, the young emperor Leo, as she falls before Our Lady the Mother of God, and also their daughter Ariadne. This image has stood from that time onward above the bema of the holy Soros.

Cod. Paris gr. 1447, fol. 257-8, English trans. Mango, C., *The art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453. Sources and documents* (London ^{2}1986), p. 34-5.