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A Byzantine Architrave with a Deesis from the Monastery of St Nicholas Glemes at Pikerni, Arcadia (Greece)[*]

With four illustrations

Abstract: In the forecourt of the monastery of St Nicholas Glemes, near the Arcadian village of Pikerni in Greece, two fragments of a white marble architrave can be seen. The dimensions of the fragments at their widest points are 40×14×14 cm and 47×14×14 cm, respectively. They originally belonged to the central part of a longer architrave. They are decorated in a two-tier technique, with the Deesis (Christ, the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist), two peacocks and floral motifs. The theme of the decoration supports the view that this architrave belonged to a Byzantine sanctuary screen. The decorative elements and the style of execution indicate a date between the end of the 12th or the beginning of the 13th century. It appears to be the only known example in Greece dating from this period that is decorated with a Deesis. This finding can be added to the catalogue of extant examples of Byzantine architraves decorated with holy figures.

The small church of Saint Nicholas Glemes, or Klemes, which served as the main church (katholikon) of a monastery, is located at a distance of approximately three kilometres from the Arcadian village of Pikerni in the Peloponnese. The monastery took its name from the monk Klemes Gonopoulos, who maintained it from 1822 to 1849.[1] There is no historical evidence for the original founding of the church, but we know that it dates, in its present condition, from the period of Ottoman rule, although extensive renovation was undertaken during the nineteenth century and even later. Documentary evidence records that by 1822 all that remained of the monastery was a small church in ruins.[2] The early Christian and Byzantine architectural members that were at one time evident in the forecourt of the monastery may be evidence of an earlier foundation.[3] According to Pausanias, it is also possible that an ancient temple of Poseidon Hippios stood on the site,[4] which was probably replaced later by a Christian church.

In the forecourt of the monastery two fragments of a white marble architrave can be seen (Figs.1–2).[5] While reasonably well preserved, they are broken at both ends. The dimensions of the fragments at their widest points are, 40×14×14 cm and 47×14×14 cm, respectively. The decoration of the architrave, executed in a two-tier technique, is very interesting.

In the middle, under a triumphal arch, the figure of Jesus Christ as Pantokrator is depicted frontally and in high relief. He is wearing a tunic and a himation. He holds the Gospel with his left hand and his right hand is shown in front of his chest in a gesture of blessing. His oval-shaped face

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[1] There are two spellings of the name: Γκλήμης and Κλήμης Γκονόπουλος. D. ANTONAKATOU – T. MAVROS, Ἑλληνικά Μοναστήρια. Β΄, Μονές Ἀρκαδίας. Athens 1979, 51.

[2] The relevant phrase is ἐρήπιον ἐρημοκκλήσιον, see GAK (General Archives of Greece [Athens]), Μοναστηριακά-Σύμμικτα, fil. 32. ANTONAKATOU – MAVROS, Ἑλληνικά Μοναστήρια 52. Klemes Gonopoulos rebuilt the church and other small buildings in 1822 and 1828.

[3] ANTONAKATOU – MAVROS, Ἑλληνικά Μοναστήρια 52.

[4] Pausanias, IX (Ἀρκαδικά) 10, 2–4. The temple that Pausanias saw had been built by the emperor Hadrian at the site where there were the ruins of the ancient temple. See ANTONAKATOU – MAVROS, Ἑλληνικά Μοναστήρια 52–53.

[5] They were first mentioned by ANTONAKATOU – MAVROS, Ἑλληνικά Μοναστήρια 52.

has large eyes, a broad nose, a small mouth and a short beard. Short hair frames the face. His head is encircled by a halo. On the right is preserved a small disc with the Greek letters XC, the first and last letters of the word Christ. Paired knotted colonettes support the arch. A floral element decorates the outer surface of the arch. In the background, on either side of Christ, two other figures are depicted in lower relief: on the left is the Virgin Mary, while on the right is Saint John the Baptist. These two figures are not accompanied by inscriptions, but their features bear out their identification as John and Mary. Both are in a three quarters position with their hands extended in a gesture of supplication. The Virgin Mary wears a maphorion. None of her facial features are preserved. John the Baptist turns his head towards Christ. He has long hair and a beard.

It is obvious that what we have before us in the middle of a decorated frieze is the Deesis[6] (Fig. 3). On either side of the Deesis there are also depicted, in high relief, two peacocks, turned towards Christ. They gracefully bend to peck their chest, but their heads touch the ground. It is noteworthy that they are much larger in size than the figures of Christ, John and Mary. In the background the spaces between the birds and the figures are filled with floral motifs: vertical shoots or trees from which branches with small leaves and fruit sprout, and which end with a large leaf that resembles a pine cone. Wandering shoots also fill the space behind the birds. Above all these elements a continuous bead-and-reel motif borders the frieze. An interlaced pattern decorates the underside of the architrave.

These two fragments from Arcadia originally belonged to the central part of a longer architrave, although we do not know the length of the original. Their dimensions and decoration suggest that they probably were part of an architrave of a chancel screen in a Byzantine sanctuary. It is true that its height is unusual for a screen architrave. Most of the known architraves in Greece measure 0.20 to 0.40 m.[7] However, there are architraves which are as high as this.[8] Above all, the theme of the decoration supports the view that this architrave belonged to a Byzantine screen.

In terms of decoration, it belongs to the group of Byzantine architraves depicting holy figures, in which several techniques were used. This form of decoration was known before Iconoclasm,[9] and it was continued, and employed more frequently, throughout the Middle-Byzantine period, as shown by examples from Constantinople, Asia Minor, Chios, Thebes, Athens, Chalkis, Arta and else-

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[6] For the iconographic theme of the Deesis in the Byzantine art see: T. WHITTEMORE, The mosaics of Hagia Sophia at Istanbul. Fourth Preliminary Report: The Deesis panel of the South Gallery. Oxford 1952, fol. 23; M. CHATZIDAKIS, Εἰκόνες ἐπιστυλίου ἀπό τό Ἅγιον Ὄρος. DChAE 4 (1964–1965) 380; S. DER NERSSSIAN, Two images of the Virgin. DOP 14 (1960) 71–86; V. LAZAREFF, Trois fragments d' épistyles peintes et le templon byzantin. DChAE 4 (1964–1965) 117–143; D. MOURIKI, A Deësis icon in the Art Museum. *Record of the Art Museum* (Princeton University) XXVII 1(1968) 13–28; C. WALTER, Two notes on the Deësis. REB 26 (1968) 311–337; IDEM, Further notes on the Deësis. REB 28 (1970) 161–187; IDEM, The Origins of the iconostasis. *Eastern Churches Review* III, 3 (1971) 262; IDEM, Bulletin on the Deësis and the Paraclesis. REB 38 (1980) 261–269; IDEM, A new look at the Byzantine sanctuary barrier. REB 51 (1993) 203–228; M. ANDALORO, Note sui temi iconografici della Deësis e della Haghiosoritissa. *Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale di Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte* 17 (1970) 85–153; T. VELMANS, L' image de la Déisis dans les églises de Georgie et dans celles d'autres regions du monde byzantin. 1ère partie: La Déisis dans l'abside. *CahArch* 29 (1981) 47–102; A. CUTLER, Under the sign of the Deësis: on the question of representativeness in medieval Art and Literature. DOP 41 (1987) 145–154; M. KAZAMIA-TSERNOU, Ἰστορώντας τη "Δέηση" στις βυζαντινές εκκλησίες της Ελλάδος. Thessaloniki 2003.

[7] For example, M. SKLAVOU-MAVROEIDI, Γλυπτά του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου Αθηνών, Κατάλογος. Athens 1999, 119, no.158, 120, no. 160, 121, nos. 161 and 162, 180, no. 250, 184, nos. 256 and 257.

[8] SKLAVOU-MAVROEIDI, Γλυπτά, p.120. no. 159, 140, no.187, 161, no.220, 182, no.254, 183, no. 255, 186, no. 260.

[9] Paulos Silentiarios, Ἔκφρασις τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς Ἁγίας Σοφίας, 693–719 (246–247 FRIEDLÄNDER). St. XYDIS, The Chancel Barrier, Solea and Ambo of Hagia Sophia. *The Art Bulletin* 29/1 (1947) 10–11; C. MANGO, On the History of the Templon and the Martyrium of St Artemios at Constantinople. *Zograf* 10 (1979) 40–43; M. CHATZIDAKIS, L' évolution de l'icône aux 11e–13e siècles et la transformation du templon, in: Actes XVe congr. int. ét. byz. Rapports et Co-Rapports, III. Art et Archéologie. Athens 1976, 160–161; J. M. SPIESER, Le développement du templon et les images des Douze Fêtes. *Bulletin de l' institut historique Belge de Rome* LXIX (1999) 131–132; and I. STOUFI-POULIMENOU, Τό φράγμα τοῦ Ἱεροῦ βήματος στά παλαιοχριστιανικά μνημεῖα τῆς Ἑλλάδος. Athens 1999, 95–96.

where, as we shall see below. In the majority of these architraves, the Deesis remains the principal theme and idea of the ornament, although the figures and their number vary. So, apart from the "Trimorphon" (Christ, the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist), there are often angels, apostles and saints (a Great Deesis).

According to Antonakatou and Mavros, a vertical rectangle marble fragment depicting the figure of St Nicholas in a full-body position could once be found in the forecourt of the monastery. An interlaced pattern, similar to that on the two fragments of the architrave, decorated the remaining part of the fragment. We do not know the dimensions of this fragment, and no photograph is available (we have only a rough sketch).[10] If it belonged to a post, this was probably a chancel screen post, and so the theme of the Deesis was enriched by the presence of saints (St. Nicholas in this instance).

We think it would be useful if a typological classification of the theme of the Deesis or other holy persons in marble relief screens was attempted, according to the figures and how they are usually placed:

  a. The first, and simplest, type is the "Trimorphon" Deesis (depicting Christ, the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist). The more well-known examples of this type date from the 10th and 11th centuries. One of the earliest examples is probably the fragment of an architrave to be found in the Izmir Museum, published by A. Orlandos (dating between the 10th and 11th centuries).[11] Another very interesting example has been attributed to the same period. This is the architrave of the Byzantine Basilica E in Xanthos in Lycia (Asia Minor), the sanctuary barrier of which has been published by Sodini.[12] The same theme is also found on the architrave from Susuz, which, as has already been noted, seems to be very close to the Xanthos architrave in both decoration and style.[13] A further example may be a fragment from Hoçalar (ancient Diocleia), where the figure of John the Baptist has been preserved on one side of Christ.[14] The fragment from the church of the Taxiarchis in Philadelpheia (Alaşehir), known from an earlier publication by G. Lampakis,[15] as Sodini has noted, cannot possibly belong to an architrave because of its dimensions.[16] The relief is difficult to date, but M. Chatzidakis has suggested the 9th and 10th centuries.[17]

  b. The second type is the Great Deesis. The Great Deesis includes the three figures of Christ, Mary and John (the "Trimorphon" of the first type), and additionally apostles, evangelists, angels and, in some cases, saints. For example, a Great Deesis decorated the architrave of the sanctuary screen of the tenth-century Byzantine church at Sebasteia in Phrygia.[18] Recently, another fragment of a Middle-Byzantine sanctuary screen architrave has come to light, in which the bust of Saint Damianus is represented within a medallion.[19] The Great Deesis was also probably depicted on an architrave from Afyon Karahisar (938), containing the figures of St Philip, Luke, Mac-

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[10] This fragment is no longer in the monastery area and its fate is unknown.

[11] A. Orlandos, Χριστιανικά γλυπτά τοῦ Μουσείου Σμύρνης. *ABME* 3/1 (1937) 142–145, figs. 17 and 18.

[12] J.-P. Sodini, Une Iconostase byzantine à Xanthos, in: Actes du Colloque sur la Lycie antique (*Bibliothèque de l' institut français d' études Anatoliennes d' Istanbul* XXVII). Paris 1980, 120–148.

[13] N. Firatli, *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi* 19 (1970) 154–155, figs. 75–76; Sodini, Iconostase 132.

[14] Sodini, Iconostase 132.

[15] G. Lampakis, Οἱ ἑπτά ἀστέρες τῆς Ἀποκαλύψεως. Athens 1909, 398, fig. 214.

[16] Sodini, Iconostase 133; Idem, La sculpture médio-byzantine: le marbre en ersatz et tel qu'en lui- même, in: Constantinople and its Hinterland, eds. C. Mango – G. Dagron (*Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies. Publications* 3). Aldershot – Brookfield 1995, 295.

[17] M. Chatzidakis, Ikonostas. *RbK* III (1973) 334.

[18] N. Firatli, Découverte d' une église Byzantine à Sébaste de Phrygie. *CahArch* 19 (1969) 151–166.

[19] J. P. Sodini, La sculpture byzantine (VIIe – XIIe siècles): Acquis, problèmes et perspectives, in: La sculpture byzantine. VIIe – XIIe siècles. Actes du colloque international organisé par la 2e Éphorie des antiquités byzantines et l'École française d'Athènes (6–8 Septembre 2000), eds. Ch. Pennnas – C. Vanderheyde (*BCH Supplement* 49). Athènes 2008, 14, 32, fig. 9.

arius and Panteleimon.[20] In Greece three examples can be mentioned here. The first, a fragment with the figures of Christ, the Virgin and three apostles,[21] is in the Museum of Thebes. The second is a fragment depicting Saint Isidoros (Fig. 4)[22] on an architrave from the island of Chios. Both of these fragments have been dated to the 9th‑10th centuries. A third architrave, from Thessalonica, dating from the 10th century, which is now in the Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens, and which depicts full-body apostles (James, Philip and Luke), also probably belongs to this type.[23] Later examples, dating from the 12th or 13th centuries, are more rarely found.[24]

c. The third type depicts the image of the Virgin Mary in prayer, usually flanked by angels. An example of this type, in which the Virgin Mary is juxtaposed between two angels, is to be seen on the architrave from the Blachernes Monastery in Arta, and which dates from the 12th or the 13th century.[25] Another fragment – that perhaps belongs to an architrave and dates from the 12th or early 13th century – from the Church of St Paraskevi in Chalkis, likewise depicts the Virgin Mary in prayer.[26]

d. An architrave from the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, dating from the 12th century, probably presents a fourth type. On this fragment we see two angels, the first in a frontal position within a circular frame in the centre of the architrave, and the second in a running position, at the left end of the architrave. It has been suggested that, in all probability, a third angel, resembling the latter, was depicted symmetrically at the right end.[27]

In most of the Middle-Byzantine architraves mentioned above, the figures are depicted within medallions, such us the examples from Afyon Karahisar, Xanthos, Hoçalar, Sebasteia, Chios, Thebes and elsewhere. In the fragment of the architrave which is found in the Izmir Museum only the enthroned Christ is presented within a medallion, although the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist are enclosed within rectangular frames. This practice seems to continue into the Late-Byzantine period. A fragment of an architrave from the Pammakaristos church (Fethiye Camii) in Constantinople is decorated with a medallion of an apostle (dating from about 1300).[28]

The examples in which the half-figures are not depicted within medallions are fewer, and mainly date from the 12th and 13th centuries, such as the architraves from Rhaidestos, the Blachernes Monastery in Arta and the Church of St. Paraskevi in Chalkis. Sometimes both kinds of representation are used side by side. So on the fragment from the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens,

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[20] SODINI, Iconostase 132

[21] A. ORLANDOS, Γλυπτά τοῦ Μουσείου Θηβῶν. *ABME* 5 (1939–1940) 126–128, figs. 7 and 8.

[22] A. ORLANDOS, Monuments byzantins de Chios. Athens 1930, pl. 7.

[23] Ο Κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου. Athens 2004, 52. For the date and technique of the fragment, see CHATZIDAKIS, L'évolution de l'icône 161.

[24] Two fragments from Naipköy (ancient Rhaidestos) are known on which the figures of the Virgin, John the Baptist and an angel have been preserved. However, these fragments probably belong to a lintel, rather than a sanctuary screen. SODINI, Iconostase 133.

[25] A. ORLANDOS, Βυζαντινά μνημεῖα Ἄρτας. *ABME* 2 (1936) 21–29, figs. 19, 20, 21; A. GRABAR, Sculptures Byzantines du Moyen Âge, II. Paris 1976, 14; SODINI, La sculpture médio-byzantine 299; C. VANDERHEYDE, La sculpture architecturale du katholikon d' Hosios Mélètios et l' émergence d' un style nouveau au début du XIIe siècle. *Byz* 64 (1994) 399; EADEM, La sculpture architecturale byzantine dans le thème de Nikopolis du Xe au début du XIIIe siècle (Épire, Étolie-Acarnanie et Sud de l'Albanie) (*BCH* Supplement 45). Athenes 2005, pl. XLIV, figs. 104–105; P. VOCOTOPOULOS, Art under the Despotate of Epirus, in: Epirus, ed. M. SAKELLARIOU. Athens 1997, 235; CH. BOURAS – L. BOURA, Ἡ Ἑλλαδική ναοδομία κατά τόν 12ο αἰώνα. Athens 2002, 88–90, fig.77; N. MOUTSOPOULOS, Οι βυζαντινές εκκλησίες της Άρτας. Thessalonica 2002, 75–76; B. PAPADOPOULOU, Άρτα. Το βυζαντινό τέμπλο της Βλαχέρνας, in: 26 Συμπόσιο Βυζαντινής και Μεταβυζαντινής Αρχαιολογίας και Τέχνης. Πρόγραμμα και Περιλήψεις Ανακοινώσεων. Athens 2006, 68.

[26] A. XYNGOPOULOS, Τό τέμπλον τῆς Ἁγίας Παρασκευῆς ἐν Χαλκίδι. *DChAE* II 4 (1928) 67–74, fig.1; CHATZIDAKIS, Εἰκόνες ἐπιστυλίου 382; and IDEM, Ikonostas 337–338; SODINI, Iconostase 133; BOURAS – BOURA, Ἡ Ἑλλαδική ναοδομία 448 and 567.

[27] BOURAS – BOURA, Ἡ Ἑλλαδική ναοδομία 43, fig. 22στ, p. 567; Ο Κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου 72–73.

[28] SODINI, Iconostase 134.

one angel is in a frontal position within a circular frame in the centre of the architrave, while the other is shown in a running position. Finally, in the architrave from Thessalonica, which is now in the Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens, the full figures of the apostles are to be seen.

It is perhaps worth detailing the types of Christ depicted on these architraves. These include the half-figure of Christ within a medallion (such as in the architrave from Sebasteia), the full figure of Christ enthroned in medallion (such as in the architrave from the Izmir Museum), and the half-figure of Christ under an arch (the architrave from St Nicholas in Arcadia).

It is obvious that the central theme of the architrave from Arcadia belongs to the simplest Deesis type (the "Trimorphon") and, in addition, to the group of architraves containing half-figures that are not within medallions. However, we do not know whether there were other images on both sides of the birds, since this architrave has been preserved in fragments. It is notable that no other architrave with exactly the same constitutional organization of the theme, such as the one in Arcadia, has been discovered.

In the architrave from Arcadia the iconographic types of Christ, the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist are similar to the examples of the first type, together with others from the second type, such as the architrave of the sanctuary screen from Sebasteia.[29] In the case of Sebasteia the "Trimorphon" is the central theme of a developed Deesis (a Great Deesis). We also note a fragment from the Archaeological Museum of Constantinople – dating between the 10th and 11th centuries[30] – and another in the Museum of Thebes dating from the 12th or 13th century, where the dimensions do not allow us to consider it as a fragment of an architrave.[31]

The architrave from Arcadia can be compared in decoration to other architraves or, in general, to architectural sculptures from Greece. These have been dated to the second half of the twelfth or the early thirteenth century, mainly because of the whole synthesis of the theme and the form of the decorative elements. The theme, which consists of a central arch, with a cross decorated with leaves below it, and usually birds on each side, is well-known from architectural sculptures in Greece. Examples are a lintel from the exonarthex of the katholikon of Hosios Loukas Monastery,[32] two architraves from the Transfiguration of Christ Monastery near Alepospita in Phthiotis[33] and the Byzantine Museum of Athens,[34] respectively, and a plaque from the Varnakova Monastery near Naupactus.[35] But, as far it is known, there is no other example that has exactly the same decoration as the architrave from Arcadia.

The form of the birds can be compared with a group of fragments from the Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens, one dating from the 12th century, and another dating from the 12th to 13th centuries, and yet another, dated to 1205, from St John the Kynegos Monastery on Mount Hymettus.[36] Further examples are a fragment of an epistyle from the Byzantine Museum of Ioannina (thought to be 11th century in date),[37] a fragment of a doorframe from the Transfiguration of Christ

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[29] See also footnote 18.

[30] N. Firatli, La sculpture byzantine figurée au Musée Archéologique d'Istanbul, ed. C. Metzger – A. Pralong – J.-P. Sodini (*Bibliothèque de l' institut français d' études Anatoliennes d'Istanbul* XXX). Paris 1990, fig. 129.

[31] Sodini, La sculpture médio-byzantine 303; Bouras – Boura, Ἡ Ἑλλαδική ναοδομία 537, fig. 538, p. 567.

[32] L. Philippidou–Boura, The Exonarthex of the katholikon of St Luke in Phokis. *DChAE* 6 (1970–1972) 20, fig.4.

[33] Bouras – Boura, Ἡ Ἑλλαδική ναοδομία 58–59, fig. 37 ε, ι; S. Voyadjis, Ο γλυπτός διάκοσμος του ναού Μεταμορφώσεως Σωτήρος στα Αλεπόσπιτα Λαμίας. *DChAE* 27 (2006) 102, fig. 1a, pp. 107–108.

[34] Sklavou-Mavroeidi, Γλυπτά 181, no. 252, 183, no. 255, 184, nos. 256 and 257.

[35] A. Orlandos, Η Μονή Βαρνάκοβας. Athens 1922, 31, fig. 24, Vanderheyde, La sculpture architecturale byzantine 73, pl. XLII, fig. 97.

[36] Sklavou-Mavroeidi, Γλυπτά 184, fig. 257.

[37] Vanderheyde, La sculpture architecturale byzantine 30, pl. XIV, fig. 27a.

Monastery near Alepospita (from the last quarter of the 12th century),[38] and a fragment of an architrave from the Transfiguration of Christ church in Oropos (12th century).[39]

The vertical shoot or tree with the small leaves and fruit resembles the decoration on a fragment of the architrave of the chancel screen from the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Platsa in Mani.[40] The bead-and-reel decoration is characteristic of architectural sculptures of the 12th and 13th centuries, such as those from the Church of the Holy Apostles in the Agora in Athens,[41] the Monastery of St Meletius on Mount Kitheron,[42] Alepospita Monastery,[43] the Church of the Zoodochos Pege in Samari (Messenia),[44] Sagmata Monastery,[45] the Church of St Demetrius in Mystra,[46] and elsewhere.

In terms of style, the relief has been executed in a two-tier technique. This technique, known before 1100, mainly characterizes 12th century sculptures, although it is found in examples from the 13th and 14th centuries.[47] In our fragments from Arcadia, the evolution of the two-tier technique leads to a gentle plasticity of form and a clarity of the outline. A linear and decorative execution can be observed in the birds, while the human figures are more roughly hewn. Some looseness of design that can be observed in our fragments, for example in the execution of the knots on the columns of the arch, and the sketchy execution of the figures probably points to the work of a local workshop. All these elements indicate a date for our architrave between the end of the 12th or the beginning of the 13th century, perhaps before the Frankish occupation.

It is not easy to know to which Byzantine church of the district this architrave belonged.[48] The decorative theme and the relatively good quality of this sculpture point, on the one hand, to the growing technical skill of the marble carvers, and on the other to the knowledge and use of a traditional theme, such as the Deesis, in Southern Greece during the second half of the twelfth or the early thirteenth century. It appears to be the only known example in Greece dating from this period that is decorated with a Deesis. Importantly also, this finding can be added to the catalogue of extant examples of Byzantine architraves decorated with holy figures.

The architrave from Arcadia indicates that the depiction of holy persons (Christ, the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, angels, apostles, saints) on the architrave of the sanctuary barrier was used, probably without interruption, from Early Christian times and throughout the whole Byzantine period. This practice, of course, is related to the iconographic programme of the sanctuary already in

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[38] VOYADJIS, Ο γλυπτός διάκοσμος του ναού Μεταμορφώσεως 102, fig. 1 α, pp. 107–108 and 112.

[39] BOURAS – BOURA, Ἡ Ἑλλαδική ναοδομία 328, fig. 384.

[40] BOURAS – BOURA, Ἡ Ἑλλαδική ναοδομία 271, fig. 312.

[41] GRABAR, Sculptures pl. LXXIXb; T. PAZARAS, Ἀνάγλυφες σαρκοφάγοι καί ἐπιτάφιες πλάκες τῆς μέσης καί ὕστερης βυζαντινῆς περιόδου στήν Ἑλλάδα. Athens 1988, no. 60, pp. 46–47, pl. 49; BOURAS – BOURA, Ἡ Ἑλλαδική ναοδομία 38, fig. 16.

[42] GRABAR, Sculptures pl. LXXIII; L. BOURAS, Architectural sculptures of the twelfth and the early thirteenth centuries in Greece. *DChAE* 9 (1977–1979) pl. 31, fig. 27.

[43] VOYADJIS, Ο γλυπτός διάκοσμος του ναού Μεταμορφώσεως 102, fig. 1 ζ, η, 107, fig. 6.

[44] L. BOURAS, Architectural sculptures pl. 26, fig.14; pl. 27, figs. 16–18.

[45] S. VOYADJIS, Ο γλυπτός διάκοσμος της μονής Σαγματά στη Βοιωτία. *AD* 51–52 (1996–1997) Α΄ 325, sketch 2, pl. 131.

[46] BOURAS – BOURA, Ἡ Ἑλλαδική ναοδομία 251, figs. 284 and 285; G. MARINOU, Άγιος Δημήτριος. Η μητρόπολη του Μυστρά. Athens 2002, pl. 61a and 62a.

[47] The term "διπλεπίπεδο" was introduced by D. PALLAS, Ἀνάγλυφος στήλη τοῦ Βυζαντινοῦ Μουσείου Ἀθηνῶν. *Archaiologike Ephemeris* 92–93 (1953/1954) 278. See also A. ORLANDOS in *ABME* 5 (1939–1940) 71–72; GRABAR, Sculptures 24; PHILIPPIDOU-BOURA, Exonarthex 21–22; BOURAS, Architectural sculptures 63.

[48] We know of Byzantine churches at several sites in Arcadia during this period, see I. STOUFI-POULIMENOU, Βυζαντινά ἀρχιτεκτονικά μέλη στή μονή Ἁγίου Νικολάου Βαρσῶν Ἀρκαδίας. *Epistemonike Epeteris Theologikes Scholes Panepistemiou Athenon* 37 (2002) 738–739.

place from the Early Christian period.[49] However, as has been noted,[50] although the Deesis was never the main theme of the iconography of the sanctuary, it was the usual theme for the ornamentation of the Byzantine sanctuary barrier architrave. Scholars often distinguish between the marble architrave above the supports of the Byzantine barrier and the beam or epistyle, usually made of wood, which surmounted it. In both cases the Deesis, more or less extensively, was the usual theme.[51] In addition, from the 10th century the images of Christ, the Virgin and, occasionally, John the Baptist are represented on the east piers or pilasters (the proskynetaria of the templon), on masonry templa, and on the lateral walls adjacent to the sanctuary.[52] When icons were placed between the columns of the screen – perhaps for the first time in the 11th century and with certainty from the 12th century[53] – the icons of Christ, the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist remained the constant images of the templon.

Why did the Deesis remain the constant theme in the decoration of the sanctuary screen? The relief depictions on the architrave were not intended for adoration, due to their position and dimensions.[54] The Deesis is an artistic expression of the act of intercession on the part of John and Mary, which has been subject to varying interpretations.

The liturgical character of the Deesis has been emphasized: it has been acknowledged as an artistic expression of the prayer of the Offertory[55] or, in an abstract and universal manner, of all prayers for intercession throughout the Liturgy.[56]

An eschatological character has also been suggested (Deesis as a part of the Last Judgment)[57] or even more widely a depiction of the supplication of the faithful to Christ, the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist and other holy persons. Moreover, though the presence of John the Baptist in the Byzantine dome, known from the 11th century,[58] has been interpreted as an intercession to the Great Judge (Christ) at the Last Judgment, this idea has been questioned. Here, the gesture of John the Baptist towards Christ has been interpreted as witnessing to Christ and emphasizing His Divine Incarnation.[59] The Virgin Mary and John the Baptist are the main witnesses to the Incarnation of the Logos.[60] The presence of John the Baptist therefore has been suggested as an iconographic expression

[49] A. MANTAS, Τό εἰκονογραφικό πρόγραμμα τοῦ ἱεροῦ βήματος τῶν μεσοβυζαντινῶν ναῶν τῆς Ἑλλάδας (843–1204). Athens 2001, 96–112. See also, in general, S. GERSTEL, Beholding the Sacred Mysteries. Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary, College Art Association. Seattle – London 1999.

[50] WALTER, Further notes, 179–181, MANTAS, Τό εἰκονογραφικό πρόγραμμα 104.

[51] CHATZIDAKIS, L'évolution de l'icône 164–165; WALTER, A new look 210–212.

[52] S. KALOPISSI-VERTI, The Proskynetaria of the Templon and Narthex: Form, Imagery, Spatial Connections, and Reception, in: Thresholds of the Sacred: architectural, art historical, liturgical, and theological Perspectives on religious Screens, East and West, ed. S. GERSTEL. Washington, D.C. 2006, 118–122.

[53] CHATZIDAKIS, L'évolution de l'icône 165; WALTER, Bulletin 263.

[54] WALTER, Bulletin 212. However, we know that there were icons for adoration on the chancel screen and in the space in front of the sanctuary. Nikephoros of Constantinople, Antirrheticus III adversus Constantinum Copronymum. *PG* 100, 465D: ἐν ταῖς ἱεραῖς κιγκλίσι καὶ ταῖς καλουμέναις σωλέαις ... ἐν τοῖς κίοσι καί πυλῶσιν αὐτοῖς ... πρὸ τοῦ θείου θυσιαστηρίου ... εἰδότες ὅτι οἱ τόποι οὗτοι προσκυνήσεως εἰσὶ τόποι, καί τοῦ προσκυνεῖσθαι ἕνεκεν τούτοις ἐνετυπώσαντο.

[55] MOURIKI, A Deësis icon 14; C. JOLIVET-LEVY, Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce: Le programme iconographique de l'apside et ses abords. Paris 1991, 335; MANTAS, Τό εἰκονογραφικό πρόγραμμα 99. This interpretation has been questioned because the order of the holy persons, mentioned in the prayer of the Offertory, is not exactly the same as the order of the persons illustrated. See KAZAMIA-TSERNOU, Ἱστορώντας τη "Δέηση" 41–46.

[56] KALOPISSI-VERTI, Proskynetaria 123.

[57] M. CHATZIDAKIS, Ὁ ζωγράφος Εὐφρόσυνος. *Kretika Chronika* 10 (1956) 276–277; J. LAFONTAINE, Sarica Kilise en Cappadocie. *CahArch* 12(1962) 276–281; T. VON BOGYAY, Deesis und Eschatologie, in: Polychordia. Festschrift Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag, ed. P. WIRTH (= *BF* 2). Amsterdam 1967, 59–72; WALTER, Bulletin 268–269; KAZAMIA-TSERNOU, Ἱστορώντας τη "Δέηση" 25–26.

[58] N. GIOLES, Ὁ βυζαντινός τροῦλλος καί τό εἰκονογραφικό του πρόγραμμα (Μέσα 6ου–1204). Athens 1990, 109.

[59] GIOLES, Ὁ βυζαντινός τροῦλλος 117–119.

[60] WALTER, Origins 262.

of the doctrine of the Incarnation, which is mainly depicted in the space of the sanctuary (for example, the Virgin Mary with the Child in the apse).

By extension, the witnessing by the most important persons in Christ's life (the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist) is a verification of the Divine Incarnation and the salvation of mankind. At the Last Judgment, the same persons will intercede to the Great Judge (Christ) for salvation, as the witnesses, then, of the Divinity and the Second Glorious Coming of Christ.

So, it is difficult and perhaps not necessary to distinguish all these meanings of the Deesis,[61] especially when it is depicted on the sanctuary screen. The Deesis sums up and reveals all the teaching of the Church about God's plan for the salvation of humanity in the past, present and future. That is why it is the most appropriate theme for the screen, which divides and simultaneously links the sanctuary with the nave, the noetic and the visible worlds. Even during the early-Christian period the purpose of the chancel barrier was not exclusively to conceal the mysteries during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, but to reveal them to the faithful. Later, the Byzantine iconostasis also served the same purpose, when the icons of Christ and other figures and themes became permanent features of it.[62]

We suggest that a synthetic version, a generally soteriological approach to the theme of the Deesis, could contain all the interpretations mentioned above. Everything in the Church, the mystery of the Eucharist, the prayers, hymns and art, which encompass the mystery, serve the salvation of the faithful. Salvation begins from the present and moves towards the future, to the Eschaton. The faithful approach the sanctuary to take Holy Communion in the faith that salvation is possible due to the Incarnation of Logos and His Sacrifice and Resurrection.

If one views the depiction of Deesis in the context of the theology of icons, where worship and doctrine are inseparable, it could be suggested that the above-mentioned different interpretations are all present in this one subject. The Deesis both refers to the history of salvation and to its manifestation in concrete persons. It is this soteriological approach, which encompasses the continuous Revelation, as experienced in the liturgical time of the worship of the Church, that gives, it could be argued, a fuller understanding of our subject.

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[61] CUTLER, Under the sign of the Deësis 146; KAZAMIA-TSERNOU, Ιστορώντας τη "Δέηση" 28.

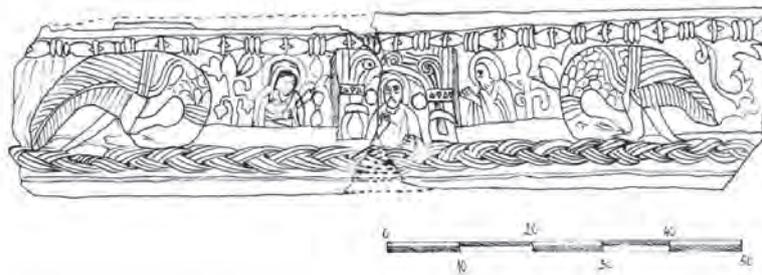[62] STOUFI-POULIMENOU, Τό φράγμα 128, 136–142; N. CONSTAS, Symeon of Thessalonike and the Theology of the Icon Screen, in: Thresholds of the Sacred 180–183.

1 Arcadia, Saint Nicholas Glemes,
Byzantine architrave, detail
(left part)

2 Arcadia, Saint Nicholas Glemes,
Byzantine architrave, detail
(right part)

3 Arcadia, Saint Nicholas Glemes, Byzantine architrave, the sketch of the architrave

4 Chios, Fragment of a Byzantine architrave
(image of Saint Isidoros)