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THE BUILDING HISTORY OF THE ACHEIROPOIETOS BASILICA RECONSIDERED

Dedicated to the loving memory of my wife, Maria Kakagia

In its present state, the Acheiropoietos basilica¹ (fig. 1-3) —or, as referred to mid-byzantine texts, the Great Church of Theotokos or Great Panagia— constitutes a, phenomenally preserved, typical example of the three-aisled timber-roofed *Hellenistic-type* basilica with narthex and galleries², thus fitting more than any other of the still-standing monuments of Thessaloniki the standardized Early Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture. Due to the symmetry of its architectural form and the presumable homogeneity of its original sculptural decoration Acheiropoietos is usually considered as the last maintained architectural composition of the city that still echoes the aesthetics of the Late Antiquity.

The study of both the monument and the remains of the preexisting edifice, which have been found underneath the pavements of the basilica as well as in rescue excavations in the surrounding area³, has indicated that the Early

¹ A detailed analysis of the architecture and the architectural sculptures of the Early Byzantine basilica is offered in: K. T. Raptis, *Αχειροποίητος Θεσσαλονίκης. Αρχιτεκτονική και γλυπτός διάκοσμος*, PhD dissertation, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki 2016: <https://ikee.lib.auth.gr/record/286747>. See also: K. T. Raptis, “Αχειροποίητος Θεσσαλονίκης: επανεξετάζοντας την αρχιτεκτονική και την οικοδομική ιστορία της πρωτοβυζαντινής βασιλικής”, in *Abstracts of the 37th Symposium of Byzantine and Post Byzantine Archaeology and Art of the Christian Archaeological Society*, Athens 2017, 112-114, 112-114.

² R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, Middlesex 1965, 74-75. *Sl. Ćurčić, Architecture in the Balkans from Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent*, New Haven-London 2010, 107-109.

³ About the excavations conducted in the interior of the basilica, see: A. Xyngopoulos, “Περὶ τὴν Ἀχειροποίητον Θεσσαλονίκης”, *Μακεδονικά* 2 (1941-1952), 472-475, and Ch. Bakirtzis, “Ρωμαϊκός λουτρών και η Αχειροποίητος της Θεσσαλονίκης”, in *Αφιέρωμα στη μνήμη Στυλιανού Πελεκανίδη*, Thessaloniki 1983, 310-329. About the excavations in the surrounding area, see: *Archaeologikon Deltion* 17 (1961-62), B', 252; 22 (1967), B'2, 393-396; 34 (1979), B'2, 286; 35 (1980), B'2, 384; 36 (1981), B'2, 313; 42 (1987), B'2, 391; 49 (1994), B'2, 511-514. D. Makroulou et al. “Πολεοδομικές και χωροταξικές παρατηρήσεις για την παλαιοχριστιανική και βυζαντινή Θεσσαλονίκη με αφορμή τα ευρήματα των ανασκαφών του ΜΕΤΡΟ κατά το έτος 2011”, in *Το Αρχαιολογικό Έργο στη Μακεδονία και τη*



Fig. 1 Acheiropoieitos basilica. View from SE.

Сл. 1 Ахиропитос, базилика, изглед са североистока

Byzantine basilica was erected on the site of a large secular building of the mid-fourth century, the public nature of which can only be assumed due to its spatial succession by an also public—though ecclesiastical—building. The previously stated theory concerning the identification of the preexisting building with the architectural complex of Late Roman public baths⁴, has been revised based on both recent archaeological data and the different interpretation of earlier findings: the caldarium of a bathhouse that was unearthed at the northeast corner of the basilica's modern era enclosure and was—until now—attributed to the preexisting Roman edifice, is part of a—probably private—secular edifice that occupied the next northward Late Antique insula⁵.

Regarding its integration in the urban fabric of the city during the Late Antiquity, the basilica was erected in the northern part of a large insula with typical for the Late Roman Thessaloniki dimensions—58.5-59X101-102m⁶—which was developed at the north of the decumanus maximus, east of the primary cardo along the axis of the modern S. Sophia str, west of a secondary

Θράκη 25 (2011), 317-325.

⁴ Bakirtzis, *op. cit.* f/note 3.

⁵ Raptis, *Αχειροποίητος*, *op. cit.* f/note 1, 261-265.

⁶ M. Vitti, *Η πολεοδομική εξέλιξη της Θεσσαλονίκης από την ίδρυσή της έως τον Γαλέριο*, Athens 1996, 67-86.



Fig. 2 Acheiropoieitos basilica. Interior view of the nave.

Сл. 2 Ахиропитос базилика, изглед наоса из ентеријера.

cardo passing close to the sanctuary apse of the basilica and south of a narrower road that passed outside the north wall of the church, to which the doors of the north aisle led to.

It seems that, because of the important preexisting cardo, the basilica did not have a quadrilateral atrium—as earlier stated⁷. Instead an open exonarthex was forming the basilica's western façade. It seems that the basilica occupied the northern part of the aforementioned insula in order to provide sufficient space to its south, where monumental annexes were probably arranged, forming the access to the basilica from the decumanus maximus, either in the form of a large rectangular atrium or forum along the south side of the church, or—possibly—through a monumental arcaded street, similar to the one that connected during the same period the southern portico of the Rotunda with Galerius's triumphal arch⁸.

Based on the Early Byzantine masonries of the ground floor level, which are attributed to the foundation phase of the building, it seems that the plan of this palimpsestic building (fig. 3), which is 58.50 m (190 byzantine feet) long, along with the apse and the missing exonarthex, and 30.80 m wide (100 byz. feet), has diachronically maintained its original proportions.

The narthex—tripartite only at its upper-structure—communicates with the nave (fig. 2) through a large tribelon with two columns of green Thessalian marble. Traces on the bases and the columns of the tribelon indicate that these

⁷ St. Pelekanidis, *Παλαιοχριστιανικά μνημεῖα Θεσσαλονίκης: Ἀχειροποίητος, Μονὴ Λατόμου*, Thessaloniki 1949, 15-16.

⁸ Raptis, *Ἀχειροποίητος*, op. cit. f/note 1, 268, 754.

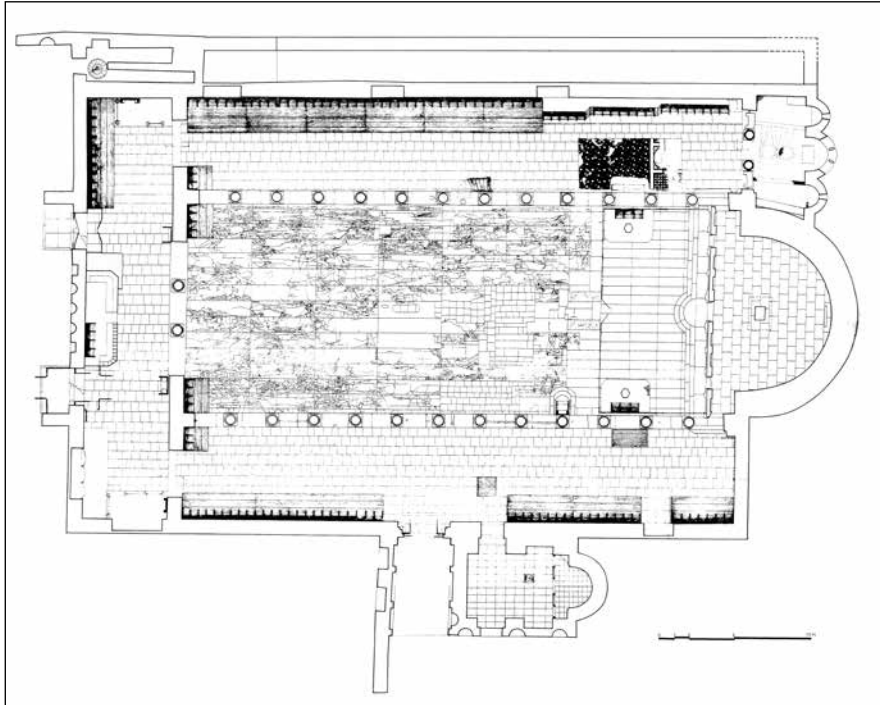


Fig. 3 Acheiropoieitos basilica. Plan.

Сл. 3 Ахиропитос базилика, основа

openings likely contained marble doorframes, which are no longer preserved. Since the stylobate bears no indications of thresholds, these doorframes were likely closed by *vela* (curtains). The corner compartments of the narthex were connected with the lateral aisles through large arched openings. Thus, on the three sides of the central aisle, a continuous ambulatory (fig. 3), which communicated with the outside through numerous doorways, is formed.

The rectangular in plan nave, 36.40 m long (118 byz. feet) on the E-W axis and 28.40 m wide (92 byz. feet) on the N-S axis—with ratio 1:1.28, length to width—is distinguished in three aisles by double colonnades, of twelve columns each, crowned with Composite capitals with fine-toothed acanthus of the so-called Theodosian type and impostes carved in Proconnesian marble. The—14.20m wide (46 byz. feet)—central aisle occupies half of the total width of the basilica, and presents a ratio 1:2,3 to the—6.20m wide (20 byz. feet)—side aisles (fig. 3). The nave ends at the east in the large segmented apse of the sanctuary, that even though is 10.40m (33.5 byz. feet) wide on the N-S axis, it presents longer radius on the E-W axis that equals the width of the side aisles. Originally, the center of the semi-cylindrical part of the sanctuary apse had a five-lobed window with marble mullions and a larger semidome⁹, comparing with the maintained one (fig. 4).

⁹ K. T. Raptis, A. Zombou-Asimi, “Αχειροποίητος Θεσσαλονίκης: παρατηρήσεις

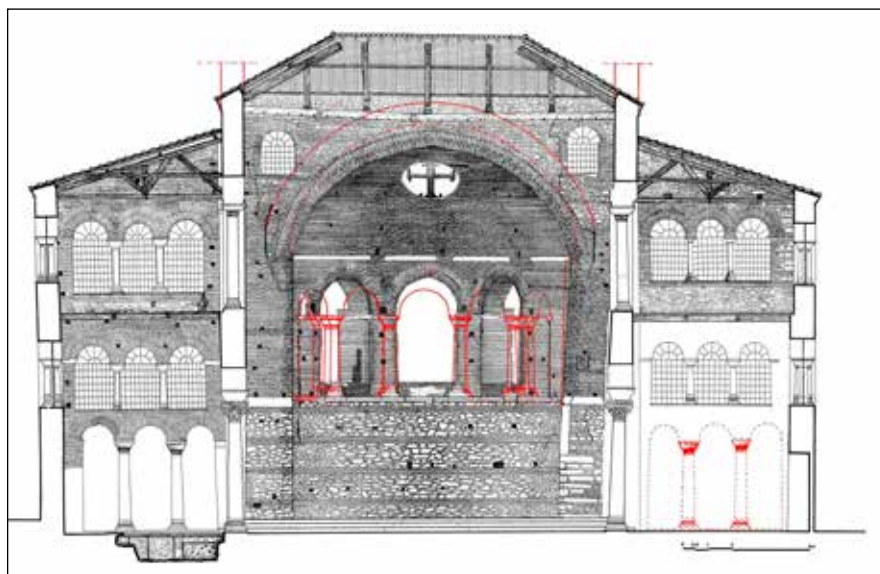


Fig. 4 Acheiropoietos basilica. Cross section towards east.

Сл. 4 Ахиropитос базилика, попречни пресек према источној страни

The luxurious pavement of the central aisle is formed with large slabs of Proconnesian also marble. The intercolumniations of both the ground-floor and the gallery collonades were originally closed with marble closure slabs. In each one of the nave colonnades, only the sixth intercolumniation that coincides with the axis of the south monumental entrance remained open—without marble parapets—in order to facilitate the communication between the nave and the side aisles.

The sanctuary barrier, which reached the third column of each colonnade, has not been maintained; a solea¹⁰ was extended to the west towards a large Constantinopolitan marble ambo with two staircases that once stood in the center of the church between the sixth and eighth columns of the nave arcade, the position of which is clearly documented in early twentieth century photographs¹¹. The synthronon of the Early Byzantine basilica was of the U-shaped type with separate rectangular clergy benches, which were located on both sides of the large ciborium of the altar table¹².

Based on the general proportions of the main nave and its arched colonnades, it seems that the Acheiropoietos basilica differs from the, less elongated,

και σκέψεις σχετικά με την οικοδομική ιστορία και την αποκατάσταση της παλαιοχριστιανικής βασιλικής”, in A. Stefanidou ed., *En χώρα τεχνησσα, Τιμητικός τόμος για την καθηγήτρια κ. Ε. Σκαρπιά-Χόιπελ*, Thessaloniki 2011, 455-456, wherein the preceding bibliography.

¹⁰ Χυngopoulos, *op. cit.* f/note 3, 477-478.

¹¹ Sh. E. J. Gerstel, Ch. Kyriakakis, K. T. Raptis, Sp. Antonopoulos, J. Donahue, “Soundscapes of Byzantium: The Acheiropoietos Basilica and the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Thessaloniki”, *Hesperia* 87.1 (2018), 186, fig. 10.

¹² Χυngopoulos, *op. cit.*, f/note 3, 475-477.



Fig. 5 Acheiropoieitos basilica. Structural Phases: elevations.

Сл. 5 Ахиропитос базилика, структуралне фазе: елевација

timber-roofed basilicas of Constantinople, such as the Studius basilica¹³, and presents architectural affinities—as far as its ground plan is concerned—with large three-aisled basilicas of the Illyricum with semicircular apse, such as the basilica A of Amphipolis with colonnades of ten columns¹⁴, and the episcopal basilica of the Phthiotic Thebes with colonnades of nine columns¹⁵, as well as with three-aisled basilicas of the Latin West, as the basilica of Santa Sabina in Rome¹⁶ and the two basilicas of St. Appolinaris in Ravenna and the neighboring Classe, which, although more elongated, are characterized by colonnades of twelve columns¹⁷.

As far as the upper structure of the basilica is concerned, the fact that the part of the building, which is structurally unified with the foundation and therefore is attributed to the first structural phase, is limited to the ground floor level (fig. 5-6), calls into question the original existence of the galleries, which seem to be later additions. Therefore, the Acheiropoietos basilica was prob-

¹³ Th. F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy*, University Park and London 1977, 19-27. Ćurčić, op. cit. f/note 2, 98-99.

¹⁴ K. Hattersley-Smith, *Byzantine Public Architecture between the Fourth and the Early Eleventh Centuries AD with Special Reference to the Towns of Byzantine Macedonia, Thessaloniki* 1996, 109, wherein the preceding bibliography.

¹⁵ G. Soteriou, “Αἱ χριστιανικαὶ Θῆβαι τῆς Θεσσαλίας”, *Archaeologiki Ephemeris* 1929, 19 f.f. Ćurčić, op. cit. f/note 2, 132.

¹⁶ Krautheimer, op. cit. f/note 2, 122-123, 213-214.

¹⁷ D. Maukopf-Deliyiannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge–New York 2010, 146-151, 259-264.



Fig. 6 Acheiropoietos basilica. Structural phases: sections.

Сл. 6 Ахиропитос базилика, структуралне фазе, пресеци

ably erected as a western *Roman-type* basilica without galleries (fig. 7)—in the style of the Early Byzantine basilicas erected in areas under the influence of the Church of Rome¹⁸.

Since recently, the erection of the Early Byzantine basilica has been dated from the first half to the end of the fifth century, with most scholars converging to a date within the third quarter of the century¹⁹. However, based on the

¹⁸ Raptis, *Αχειροποίητος*, op. cit. f/note 1, 754-758.

¹⁹ In the middle of the 5th c.: Ch. Diehl, M. Le Tourneau, H. Salladin, *Les monuments chrétiens de Salonique*, Paris 1918 58. Pelekanidis, op. cit. f/note 7, 11. In the 3rd quarter of the 5th c.: M. Vickers, "Fifth-Century Brickstamps from Thessaloniki", *BSA* 68 (1973), 294. D. De Bernardi Ferrero, "La Panagia Acheiropoietos di Salonicco", *CorsiRav* 22 (1975), 168-69. Ch. Bakirtzis, "Sur le donateur et la date des mosaïques d' Acheiropoietos à Thessalonique", in *Actes du IX Congrès International d'Archeologie Chrétienne*, II, Roma-Città del Vaticano 1978, 43-44. W. E. Kleinbauer, "Remarks on the Building History of the Acheiropoietos Church at Thessaloniki", in *Actes du X Congrès International d'Archeologie Chrétienne*, II, Thessaloniki-Città del Vaticano 1984, 247. E. Kourkoutidou-Nikolaidou, *Αχειροποίητος. Ο μεγάλος ναός της Θεοτόκου*, Thessaloniki 1989, 12. Ćurčić, op. cit. f/note 2, 107-109. In the last quarter of the 5th c.: J-M. Spieser, *Thessalonique et ses monuments du IV^e au VI^e siècle. Contribution à l'étude d'une ville paléochrétienne*, Athènes-Paris 1984, 201-202. J.-P. Sodini, "L'ambon de la Rotonde Saint-Georges: remarques sur la typologie et la décor", *BCH* 100 (1976), 510. In the last decade of the 5th or the early 6th c.: R. Cormack, "The Mosaic Decoration of S. Demetrius, Thessaloniki. A Re-examination in the Light of the Drawings of W. S. George", *BSA* 64 (1969), 51. B. Furlas, *Die Mosaiken der Acheiropoietos-Basilika in Thessaloniki. Eine vergleichende Analyse dekorativer Mosaiken des 5. Und 6. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 2012, 228-229. K. T. Raptis, "The Mural Decoration of Acheiropoietos Basilica Revisited", in *Niš and Byzantium* 12, Niš 2014, 103; idem, "Αχειροποίητος Θεσσαλονίκης: μια επανεξέταση των αφιερωματικών επιγραφών στα εντοιχία ψηφιδωτά του

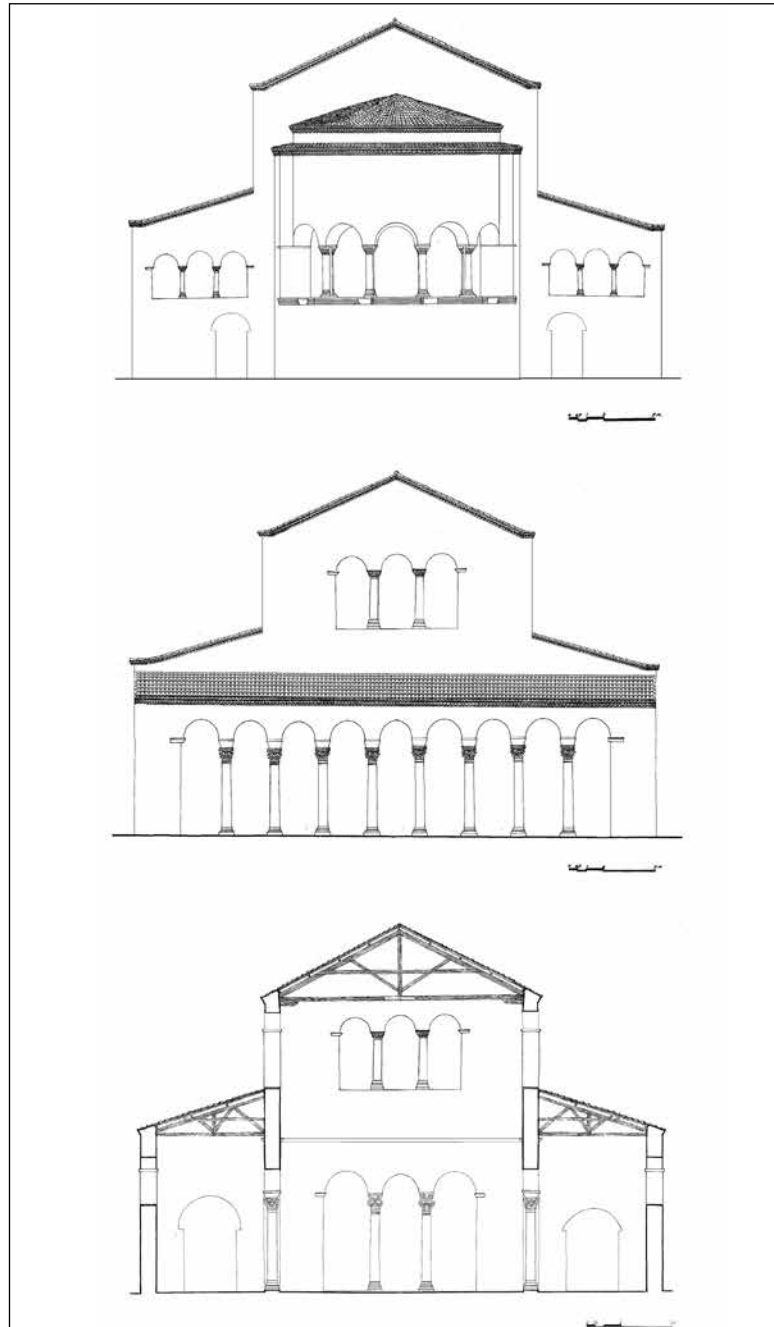


Fig. 7 Acheiropoiteos basilica. Hypothetical reconstruction of the first phase without galleries: (a) eastern and (b) western elevation; (c) cross section.

Сл. 7 Ахиропитос базилика, хипотетичка реконструкција прве фазе без галерија

thorough study of its sculptural decoration and taking into account the mason marks inscribed on bases, column shafts and imposts of the nave colonnades, which testify the construction of large part of the original architectural sculptures in the first decades of the sixth century or at the earliest at the end of the fifth century by the imperial Constantinopolitan workshop that produced architectural sculptures for the church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus and the Justinianic St. Sophia in Constantinople²⁰, it seems that the Acheiropoietos basilica was originally founded and erected either in the last decade of the fifth or the first decade of the sixth century (ca. 500)²¹, during the reign of Anastasius I (491-518) and the bishopric of Andreas (ca 490-513), being probably the first oeuvre of a presumable extensive imperial architectural project of Anastasius I in Thessaloniki²².

The basilica, throughout the fifteen centuries upon its foundation, has suffered several devastations, caused mainly by the intense seismic activity of Thessaloniki. Every time the more or less severe damages caused by the historical earthquakes of the city were rehabilitated in the framework of restoration projects, characterized by the architectural trends of the corresponding—Byzantine, Ottoman or Modern—period.

Thus, even though the ground-plan of the church remained unaltered through the ages, its upper-structure was later remodeled. The galleries, a not surviving clerestory and extended auxiliary annexes along its northern aisle, were added during the first—among many—structural restoration of the building that took place during the seventh century, as a result of the 620-630 series of earthquakes that devastated large part of the city along with its main urban infrastructure²³. The maintenance of the preexisting timber-roofed type, instead of its conversion into a vaulted building, as was the case of churches which were restored or remodeled at the same period in the capital of the Empire, was probably imposed by the pre-existing static system of the building, which at the ground floor level remained unaltered. The colonnades of the lateral galleries

τριβήλου”, *Deltion of the Christian Archaeological Society* 39 (2018), 53-66.

²⁰ K. T. Raptis, “The Sculptural Decoration of Acheiropoietos Basilica (Thessaloniki) Re-evaluated under the Light of a Recent Architectural Analysis of the Monument”, in *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies. Thematic sessions of Free Communications*, Belgrade 2016, 487-488.

²¹ Raptis, *Αχειροποίητος*, op. cit. f/note 1, 760-765.

²² K. T. Raptis, “Αρχιτεκτονικά έργα του Αναστασίου Α΄ στη Θεσσαλονίκη”, in *Abstracts of the International Symposium in Honour of Professor Emeritus George Velenis*, Thessaloniki 2017, 46.

²³ Raptis, *Αχειροποίητος*, op. cit. f/note 1, 766-777; idem, “Η δομική αποκατάσταση της Αχειροποιήτου κατά τον 7^ο αιώνα και η σημασία της για την αστική συνέχεια της Θεσσαλονίκης κατά τους «σκοτεινούς αιώνες””, in I. D. Varalis, Fl. Karagianni eds, *Κτίτωρ. Αφιέρωμα στον δάσκαλο Γεώργιο Βελένη*, Thessaloniki 2017), 289-306; idem, “The Seventh Century Restoration of Acheiropoietos Basilica and its Significance for the Urban Continuity of Thessalonikē during the Dark Age”, in A. Dunn ed., *Proceedings of the 46th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies* (Birmingham 23-25 March 2013), forthcoming.

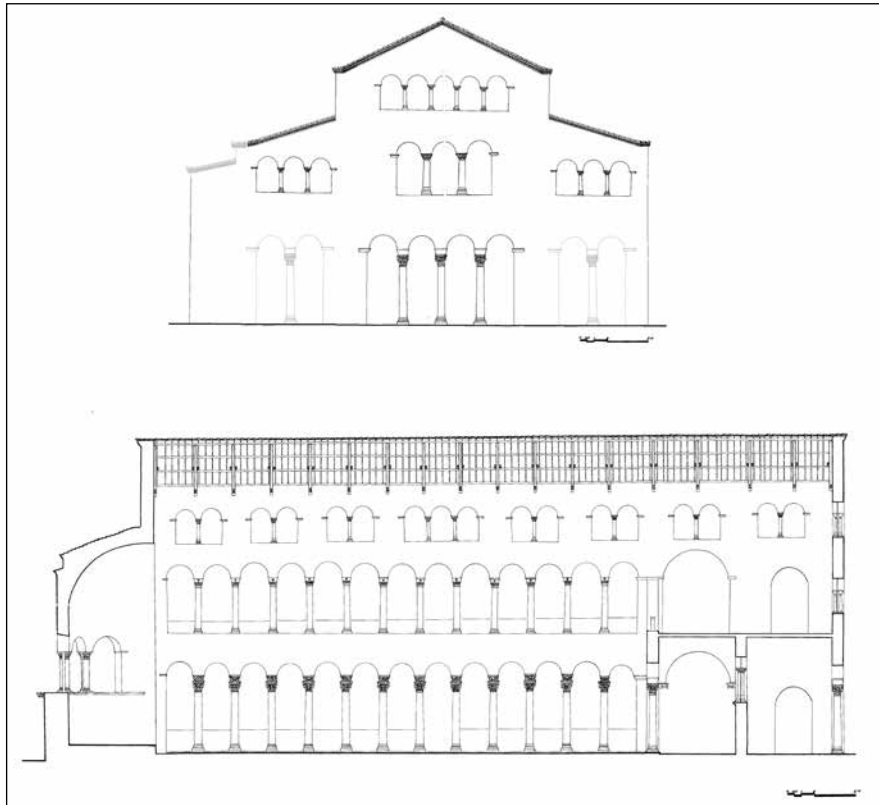


Fig. 8 Acheiropoieitos basilica. Hypothetical reconstruction of the second phase with galleries.

Сл. 8 Ахиропитос базилика, хипотетичка реконструкција са галеријама

which, although with lower proportions, copy the longitudinal arched colonnades of the ground floor, are consisted of architectural sculptures that although of the same type are morphologically different²⁴.

As far as the western gallery is concerned, based on the mosaic found on the north front of the south arcade towards the central aisle, the western—non surviving—gallery is reconstructed as an open wide hall, looking towards the nave (fig. 8). Based on various architectural indications, it seems that the western gallery was extended up to the western façade, occupying the upper floor over both the narthex and the exonarthex. A not surviving clerestory was constructed above the gallery arcades, which was extended over the wider western gallery of the basilica to its western wall. On the basis of architectural data, the clerestory was articulated with two-light windows which were rhythmically repeated on either side of a central three-light window, opened on the axis of the south entrance (fig. 6)²⁵.

²⁴ K. T. Raptis, “The Sculptural Decoration”, op. cit. f/note 20, 487-488.

²⁵ Raptis, “Η δομική αποκατάσταση”, op. cit. f/note 23, 294-296.

At the ground floor level of the basilica, the most significant changes in the architectural design of the basilica were made on the eastern walls of the lateral aisles: each one of the preexisting eastern arched doorways was substituted by a more monumental tiburion (fig. 4) leading to quadrilateral compartments, constructed on either side of the apse (fig. 9)²⁶.

A longitudinal two-storey annex, 36 m long and 2 m wide, was synchronously attached along the north side of the basilica. Its exterior north wall was probably articulated with a row of brick-built piers with inserted marble colonettes. Based on evidences left on the north wall of the basilica, the ground level of this portico was covered with a barrel vault, while its upper storey with a lean-to timber roof. This portico that communicated with multiple doors with the north aisle and the northeast auxiliary chamber, gave also access to the basilica from a large preexisting building at the north, which at the same period sustained extensive repairs. A brick-built barrel-vaulted ramp-way was erected at the same period at the northwest corner of the basilica, giving access to the galleries through an intermediate vestibule, from both the north aisle and the newly built north portico²⁷ (fig. 9).

At the same period the south monumental propylon of the basilica, leading to Acheiropoietos from the main decumanus of the city, was remodeled (fig. 9). The second phase propylon, constructed after the devastation of its predecessor in the space that occurred between two preexisting walls, is formed by four pairs of marble pilasters which by means of a blind arcade on each side bear a barrel-vault²⁸.

It is suggested that after the disastrous series of earthquakes that shook Thessaloniki during the third probably decade of the seventh century, and mainly due to the severe ruination of the neighboring Early Byzantine Episcopal five-aisled basilica—excavated underneath the Hagia Sophia Byzantine cathedral—Acheiropoietos gained the role of the cathedral and hosted the offices of the episcopate. That probably demanded both the architectural conformance of the Early Byzantine basilica to late sixth and early seventh century liturgical innovations, introduced from 574, and extended annexes to host the administrative services of the significant Thessalonican Episcopal See. Thus apart of the rehabilitation of the main building with the addition of extended galleries, pastoforia flanked the presbytery apse (fig. 9). The addition of a barrel-vaulted ramp-way at the northwestern corner of the building facilitated the access to the galleries, and the longitudinal north portico assisted the direct communication of the interior of the basilica with the offices and the administrative services of the episcopate that were hosted in the northern annexes. Therewithal, the rebuilding of the monumental south propylon into a barrel vaulted corridor continued to facilitate the immediate access of the basilica from the *Leoforos*, while the use of the adjacent apsidal annex, was probably altered from diaconicon to a small, though convenient after the infant baptism proclamation, baptistery, the existence of which is probably alluded in the homily that archbishop Leo the

²⁶ Op. cit., 298-299.

²⁷ Op. cit., 301.

²⁸ Op. cit. 299-300.

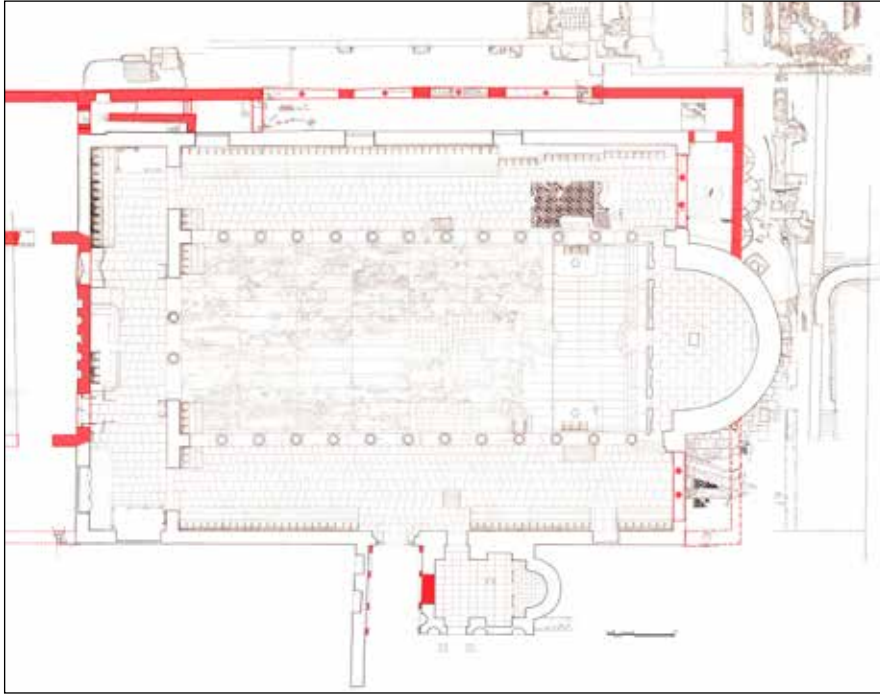


Fig. 9 Acheiropoietos basilica. Plan—the additions and the alterations of the second phase are highlighted with red color.

Сл. 9 Ахиропитос базилика, план – додаци и друга фаза означени су црвеном бојом

Mathematician delivered in the church in 843. Acheiropoietos probably hosted the services of the episcopate till the middle or the third quarter of the eighth century, when, after the erection of Hagia Sophia, the cathedral returned in its original grounds²⁹.

It seems that the earthquakes that occurred during the reign of Leo V that caused severe damages on most of the main ecclesiastical monuments of the city, devastated once more the great church of Theotokos, and motivated the second restoration of the building. During this —third— structural phase (fig. 5-6) the upper structure of the apse was rebuilt and at the same time its former five-lobed window was altered, under the influence of the architecture of the new Cathedral—Hagia Sophia—into three single-arched windows separated by brick-built piers (fig. 4). At the same time based on the masonry that characterizes this early mid-Byzantine restoration of the building, it seems that the eastern corners of the galleries were rebuilt, along with large part of the western wall of the narthex, the entire exonarthex and the western gallery as well.³⁰

²⁹ Raptis, “Η δομική αποκατάσταση”, op. cit. f/note 23, 304-305; idem, “The Seventh Century Restoration”, op. cit. f/note 23, wherein the preceding bibliography.

³⁰ Raptis, *Αχειροποίητος*, op. cit. f/note 1, 778-783; idem, “Αχειροποίητος Θεσσαλονίκης”, op. cit. f/note 1, 113.

As far as the annexes are concerned, both the northern longitudinal annex and the northwestern ramp-way to the galleries were largely restored³¹, while the northern *pastoforio* was altered into a three-partite bema, which probably showcases the separate dedication of the northern aisle during the Middle Byzantine period³².

During the Late Byzantine period the church elapsed a long period without severe structural alteration. The only changes that seem to have occurred until the Ottoman occupation are the renewal of some of its marble liturgical furniture and its painting decoration as well.

Acheiropoietos was turned into a mosque in the year of the fall of Thessaloniki (833 A.H.– 1430 A.D.) by Murad II³³. During the first period after the islamization of the building, apart from the inscription on the fifth column of the northern colonnade, that refers to the fact of the Ottoman conquest, the interventions in the building were probably limited in the addition to the southeastern corner of the building of a tall minaret with a quadrangular base and polyhedral body and in the interior to the absolutely necessary arrangements in order to adapt the nave to the new religion, such as the addition of a mihrab inside the apse in order to demonstrate the axis of Mecca, as well as a minber and a mahfil³⁴.

The subsequent—fourth—structural phase of the building (fig. 5-6), traced on the semidome of the apse and the upper parts of the gallery arcades—which is probably responsible for the deconstruction of the clerestory of the nave—is dated after 1487 and witnessed by an Ottoman written source that refers to the renovation of the roof of the mosque during the time of Ceseri *Kasim Paşa* on the expenses of a large donation of the Muradiye mosque in Edirne (Adrianople)³⁵.

However the most severe devastation of the building is probably due to the series of earthquakes that occurred during the summer and the fall of 1759. The alterations that took place in the following period, so as to rehabilitate the building were so radical that the western visitors to the city during the last decades of the eighteenth and most of the nineteenth century were not able to recognize its Christian past. Most of the openings including the tribelon were

³¹ Op. cit.

³² G. Velenis, *Μεσοβυζαντινή ναοδομία στη Θεσσαλονίκη*, Athens 2003, 41-44. Raptis, *Αχειροποίητος*, op. cit. f/note 1, 778-783.

³³ M. Kiel, “Notes on the History of Some Turkish Monuments in Thessaloniki and their Founders”, *Balkan Studies* 11.1 (1970), 143. A. Taddei, “The Conversion of Byzantine Buildings in Early Ottoman Thessaloniki: The Prodromos Monastery and the Acheiropoietos Church”, in M. Bernardini and A. Taddei eds, *Études en l’honneur de J.-L. Bacqué-Grammont*, *Eurasian Studies* VIII (2010), 213.

³⁴ Raptis, *Αχειροποίητος*, op. cit. f/note 1, 784-786; idem, “Η Αχειροποίητος Θεσσαλονίκης ως Εσκή Τζουμά Τζαμί: Η μετατροπή της χριστιανικής βασιλικής σε ισλαμικό τέμενος και οι μεταμορφώσεις του μνημείου από την Οθωμανική κατάκτηση έως την ενσωμάτωση της πόλης στο ελληνικό κράτος”, paper presented at the *2nd Annual Conference of Byzantine and Medieval Studies* (Nicosia, 12-14 January 2018).

³⁵ Ch. Bakirtzis, “The Urban Continuity and Size of Late Byzantine Thessalonike”, *DOP* 57 (2003), 50. Raptis, *Αχειροποίητος*, op. cit. f/note 1, 784-786.

closed with masonry, the colonnades of the lateral upper galleries were altered into brick-built rows of piers—that in the case of the southern part enclosed the marble columns—while the few remains of the totally ruined western gallery were demolished. Thus the narthex and the restored ottoman exonarthex were covered by a low lean-to timber roof.³⁶

The early twentieth century restoration of the building, during which the late ottoman interventions were removed and the monument gained its present form is identified as the last—sixth—structural phase of the basilica (fig. 5-6). However, the general output of the building after the early twentieth century restorations seems to mirror not its Late Antique or Byzantine output, but the theoretical idea that M. Le Tourneau and A. Zachos—both responsible for the two subsequent phases of this restoration, the former with expenses of the local Ottoman administration during the last years of the Ottoman occupation (1909-1912), and the latter during the first two years after the city's liberation (1913-1914)—had for the Early Byzantine basilica. After the liberation of Thessaloniki, Acheiropoietos was designated to become the first Byzantine Museum in Greece. However, after being a refugee camp from 1915 until 1926—initially for displaced Balkan inhabitants during WW I, later for homeless victims of the 1917 great fire, and finally for refugees from Asia Minor—was finally re-consecrated in 1929³⁷.

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РАЗМАТРАЊЕ ГРАДИТЕЉСКЕ ИСТОРИЈЕ БАЗИЛИКЕ АХИРОПИТОС

У садашњем стању, базилика Ахиропитос представља изузетно добро очуван и типичан пример тробродне базилике са нартексом и галеријама чиме се издваја у односу на рановизантијске цркве у Солуну. Имајући у виду симетрију архитектонских форми и скулпторске декорације, Ахиропитос базилика се сматра такође архитектонским делом које је обележило период позне антике. Архитектонске анализе које су недавно спроведене унутар базилике показале су да је грађевина претрпела велики број оштећења углавном изазваних сеизмичким активностима у солунском региону. Грађевина је стога претрпела више измена које кореспондирају одређеним историјским токовима града (било да је реч о позновизантијским, отоманским или чак модерним адаптацијама).

Базирано на аргументима у вези са структуралним фазама базилике који су сакупљени и класификовани током недавних истраживачких пројеката, рекло би се да се рановизантијски слој очувао углавном у приземљу док су остали делови уствари из пет других адаптација. Стога у овом раду се указује на све детектоване градитељске фазе базилике Ахиропитос, као и градитељске интервенције од 5. до краја 20. века.

³⁶ Raptis, *Αχειροποίητος*, op. cit. f/note 1, 787-790.

³⁷ Op. cit., 791-793.