Συγγραφή : *Toivanen Hanna-Riitta*
Για παραπομπή : *Toivanen Hanna-Riitta , "Bithynia (Byzantium), Kurşunlu, Elegmoi Monastery and the church of St. Abercius", Εγκυκλοπαίδεια Μείζονος Ελληνισμού, Μ. Ασία*
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Περίληψη :

The monastic church of St. Abercius is situated on the seaside of the Gulf of Gemlik, to the east of the village of Kurşunlu. It is dated to the Comnenian period, in the 11th or 12th centuries. Its architectural type is very rare, consisting of a single nave with a broadened sanctuary and a narthex. The central dome has collapsed. The semicircular tympana are still preserved, showing analogies with the Middle Byzantine churches of Constantinople. The church of St.Abercius is one of those churches in Asia Minor, which have never been converted to a mosque.

Χρονολόγηση

11th or 12th century

Γεωγραφικός εντοπισμός

Kurşunlu

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1. Location

The village of Kurşunlu is situated on the southern shore of the Sea of Marmara, of the Gulf of Gemlik. The monastic church of St. Abercius is located on the seashore, a short distance east of the village of Kurşunlu. The Greek names of Kurşunlu were Λιγμούς (Ligmous) or Λιγουμούς (Ligoumous), a corruption of its Byzantine name Ελεγμούς (Elegmi).[1]

2. History

The Church of St. Abercius dates to the Komnenian period, that is, to the 11th or 12th centuries.[2] The church was erected on the remains of an older church, which was probably a small 5th- or 6th-century basilica.[3] Recent excavations have revealed ruins of the older church on the north side of the present edifice.

All the main architectural features of the Komnenian church point to that date: the articulation of the west facade, the tympana, the scalloped bemaand the apses, themain one protruding more than the side ones. Also there is some litteral evidence on the chronology of this church. The Church of St. Abercius has been plausibly identified with the monastery of the Theotokos of Heliou Bomoi or Elegmi, («της υπεραγίας Θεοτόκου των Ηλίου Βωμών ήτοι των Ελεγμών).[4] It is known that a monastery by this dedication was reorganized by Nikephoros Mystikos, under Manuel I. Nikephoros also provided the monastery with a typikon, dated to 1162 and preserved in the Monastery of St. John the Theologian in Patmos, under no. 265.[5] Also a broken marble slab, which was bearing an epitaph, was found underneath the bema arch and was dated to 1196; while two intact glazed bowls, dated to the late Komnenian period, have been found in the prothesis.[6]

The Monastery of Elegmi is frst mentioned in the early 9th century, in the *Vita* of St. Ioannikios, where the *hegoumenos* (abbot) of the monastery Antonios and the oikonomos Basil are mentioned with regard to some events around 826.[7] However, the Acta of the Seventh Ecumenical Council in Nicaea (787) were signed by a certain *hegoumenos* by the name of Philip of Beomon, which may be a corruption of the word «Bomon». If this view holds any truth, then there is evidence that the monastery existed, in fact, already in the 8th century. Patriarch Methodios was exiled to this monastery in 842.[8] Also the monastery gave refuge to the deposed emperor Michael V Kalaphates, in April, 1042.[9]

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There are many open questions on the history of the Church of St. Abercius. In the typikon of Nikephoros, the monastery was dedicated to the Mother of God, and there is no mention on the new monastic church that he allegedly built. Still, the existing ruined church was known as St. Abercius in the 19th century. One explanation might be, that the monastery was abandoned for some time, and then revived under a new dedication.[10]

3. Architectural description and archaeological evidence

The remains of the Church of St. Abercius do not show any traces of it being used as a mosque. It was never been converted to a mosque by the sultan, and it is possible that it served as a church until 1922 or 1923.[11] When Cyril Mango examined the monument in the 1960's, it was in a ruined condition and partly covered by vegetation, but lately, recent excavations have been carried out, and their results have been published in 1996 and 1998.[12]

The monastic church of St. Abercius is a single-nave building, consisting of the narthex, the nave and the tripartite sanctuary, which is slightly broader than the nave (see ground-plan).This plan can be also a variant of the cross-in-square type, or even of the cross-domed basilica. Whatever its origin, this plan with a single nave and a scalloped bema is extremely rare.

The central part of the nave was covered by a dome, carried on pendentives, but the dome has not been preserved. The diameter of the dome was 5 m.[13] Above the parabemata, that is the prothesis and the diakonikon, there were small cupolas.

The north and south tympana are semicircular in form, as were the tympana in the Middle Byzantine churches of Constantinople. Besides, the western facade consists of a semicircular tympanum. The sets of three windows, which pierce the tympana, as well as the three-light window of the main apse, are also common features of the religious architecture in the Byzantine capital. Different lights of the main apse window were separated by twomullions, crowned by very broad impost blocks which were simply adorned with crosses. Those blocks must have been re-used, because they seem to be earlier than the material of church in general.

Because the prothesis and the diakonikon are small chambers, there is only one window on their eastern side, but in their lateral walls, there are other openings. The main apse is five-sided externally, while the flanking apses are three-sided. The inner walls of the bema are slightly scalloped, forming what resembles shallow niches and therefore imitating a triconch-type arrangement.

The cupolas above the prothesis and diakonikon were elliptical pumpkin-domes with eight segment each. Sometimes this shaping is also visible from the exterior of the dome.[14] Pumpkin-domes were often constructed in the Middle Byzantine churches of Constantinople, as was the case in the Monastery of Myrelaion, in the church of Pammakaristos, in some parts of the Pantocrator-complex, and in the Late Byzantine narthex of the so-called Vefa Kilise Camii, as well as in the later phase of the Chora church.

The narthex has irregular shape and is covered by a groin-vault. The ruins of the church reveal that the semidome of the bema-apse was constructed of brick, laid in a very peculiar way, both in horizontal and pitched courses.[15]

The church is mostly constructed of alternate courses of stone and brick. Mostly the masonry of this church consists of single brick bands, which are visible on the surface of the wall, and which are set between the stone layers. At intervals

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there are three or more successive courses of brick. This kind of masonry is found e.g. in the Church of St. Saviour Pantocrator in Constantinople, now known as Zeyrek Camii. A proof of the dating of the Church of St. Abercius within the chronological framework of the 11th or 12th centuries is therecessed brick technique, which was used then. In St. Abercius, the mortar joints are broad, about 11 cm thick.[16] Some marble slabs have been inserted into the brickwork. Part of the original pavement was opus sectile, which has been partly replaced by large marble slabs.[17]

One proof of that the Church of St. Abercius was in Christian use also in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, are the post-Byzantine frecoes inside, dated around this period. Earlier paintings have not been preserved. Already by the 1960's, the frescoes had suffered serious damages.

On the northwest pier, two figures of unidentified male saints were depicted standing. Above them we find the scene of the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, with thw latter been judged lower then the tax-collector. St.George was depicted on the north wall, and a medallion portrait of St. Thomas is preserved in the passage leading from the main apse to the diakonikon.[18]

Some remnants of sculpture were still preserved in 1960's, dating to the 6th century, such as two impost capitals, the one with relief crosses, the other being Ionic and adorned by eagles; also a part of the decorative cornice survives.[19]

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5. Ramazanoglu M., “ Eine kleine Kirche in Bithynien “, *Actes du IXe Congrès International d´Études Byzantines, Salonique, 1953, I* (Athènes, 1955), p. 441; Mango, C., “The Monastery of St. Abercius at Kurşunlu (Elegmi), Bithynia,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers 22, Notes* (1968), p. 172.

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13. Mango, C., “The Monastery of St. Abercius at Kurşunlu (Elegmi), Bithynia,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers 22, Notes* (1968), p. 170.

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18. Mango, C., “The Monastery of St. Abercius at Kurşunlu (Elegmi), Bithynia,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers 22, Notes* (1968), p. 172; figs. 14, 15.

19. Mango, C., “The Monastery of St. Abercius at Kurşunlu (Elegmi), Bithynia,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers 22, Notes* (1968), p. 170; figs. 10-13.

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Γλωσσάριο :

apse

An arched srtucture or a semi-circular end of a wall. In byzantine architecture it means the semicircular, usually barrel-vaulted, niche at the east end of a basilica. The side aisles of a basilica may also end in an apse, but it is always in the central apse where the altar is placed. It was separated from the main church by a barrier, the templon, or the iconostasis. Its ground plan on the external side could be semicircular, rectangular or polygonal.

basilica

In ancient Roman architecture a large oblong type building used as hall of justice and public meeting place. The roman basilica served as a model for early Christian churches.

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.

cornice

1. (Antiq. and Byz.) Member of the entablature or the architrave that projects in the elevation of a secular or religious building. As a horizontal member it may run along a wall. The cornice may also be the projecting part of the roof, protecting the building from rain.
2. (Byz. archit.) Decorative architectural element used to articulate the walls of a church, both on the inside and on the outside, by marking the division between the vertical wall and the spring of the vaults. It usually bears painted or sculptural decoration of vegetal or geometric motifs.

cross- (groin-) vault

A vault formed over square or rectangular spaces by the interpenetration of two barrel-vaults of equal hight and diameter. The lines of the intersection form a diagonal cross.

cross-domed basilica

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

cross-in-square church

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

diakonikon

An auxiliary chamber of the church, also known in early years as *skeuophylakion*, which could be a separate building attached to the church. There were kept the sacred vessels but sometimes also the offerings of the faithful, the archive or library. In Byzantine churches the diakonikon becomes the sacristy to the south of the Bema, corresponding to the prothesis to the north, and forming along with them the triple sanctuary. It usually has an apse projecting to the east.

dome

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

Glazed Pottery

Glaze: vitreous material applied to vessel or tile prior to firing in a kiln, in order to give a glossy surface after firing.

light

(of a window) The arched opening or window in Byzantine churches. Depending on the number of lights, there are single-light, double-light and three-light windows.

mullion

The tiny column in a two- or three-lightwindow, separating the different window-lights from each other.

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.

oikonomos

1. Antiquity: The oikonomos (treasurer) was responsible for the payments for inscriptions, sacrifices, xenia and construction of statues.
2. Medieval/Byzantine: Ecclesiastic official, the trustee for the property of a religious foundation. The post is attested already in 340 (Council of

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Gangra), but the term «oikonomos» is current from the early 5th C. *Oikonomos* was usually a cleric, appointed by the bishop or, after the 11th C., by the metropolitan; however, between the 9th C. and 1057, the *(megas) oikonomos* of the Great Church was appointed by the emperor, though this practice departed from the ecclesiastic rule.

opus sectile, the

Technique of floor or wall decoration. Thin pieces of polychrome marble are carved or joined so that a decorative motif could be depicted.

pastophoria (parabemata)

Rooms or places that as a rule surrounded the apse, next to to the Holy Bema, of the Paleochristian or Byzantine churches, namely the diakonikon and the prothesis.

pendentive

Triangular surface used for the transition from the square base of the church to the hemispheric dome.

prothesis

In ecclesiastical architecture, the sacristy to the north of the sanctuary. Usually it has an apse projecting to the east. It is the chamber where the eucharistic elements were prepared (*Proskomide*) before the Communion.

pumpkin-dome

A dome separated to small arched segments, usually visible only on its inside, but sometimes also projecting on the outside.

recessed brick technique

A masonry technique in which bands of wider and smaller bricks are alternated. The smaller bricks rows are slightly recessed and covered with mortar, thus creating an alternation of red (brick) and light-colored (mortar) surfaces.

tympanum (lunette)

(Rom., Byz.) The arched panel (lunette) inside an arch or an arcosolium.

typikon

Foundation document of a monastery compiling the rules regarding its administrative organization and liturgic rituals, as well as the comportment inside a cenobitic monastery.
The monastic typika could also include the biography (vita) of the monastery founder along with a catalogue of the movable or immovable property of the monastery. They constitute an important source for the study of the monastic life, while at the same time they shed light on many aspects of the Byzantine society.
The liturgical typika were calendars with instructions for each day’s services, liturgical books with rules arranging the celebration rituals.