

The Kariye Camii: An Introduction

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History

ORIGINALLY THE MAIN CHURCH of the Chora monastery, the building now known as the Kariye Museum, or traditionally as the Kariye Camii (Mosque), represents one of the oldest and most important religious foundations of Byzantine Constantinople. Second in renown only to Justinian's Great Church, the Kariye is an increasingly popular tourist destination, known primarily for its splendid mosaic and fresco decoration. The early history and traditions associated with the Chora monastery have long been known from Byzantine texts, but the archaeological investigations and the careful examination of the fabric of the building carried out by the Byzantine Institute of America in the 1950s clarified many aspects of the building's long and complex development.

The site of the Chora lay outside the fourth-century city of Constantine but was enclosed by the Land Walls built by Theodosius II (r. 408-450) in the early fifth century, located near the Adrianople Gate (Edirne Kepi). The rural character of the site, which seems to have remained sparsely inhabited well into the twentieth century, may account for the name *chora*, which can be translated as "land," "country" or "in the country." The appellation *chora* also has other meanings, and in later Byzantine times the name was reinterpreted in a mystical sense as "dwelling place" or "container": in the decoration of the building Christ is identified as *chora ton zoonton* (land, or dwelling place of the living) and the Virgin as *chora ton achoritou* (container of the uncontainable). Both are wordplays on the name of the monastery: the former derived from Psalm 116, a verse used in the funerary liturgy, and the latter from the Akathistos Hymn honoring the Virgin.

According to Byzantine tradition, the site was Christianized shortly before Constantine's refoundation of the city (324/330), when it was used for the burial of the relics of Saint Babylas and his disciples. The earliest archaeological evidence dates from the sixth century, in the form of vaulted substructures in the foundations of the naos (the main worship space). It is tempting to associate this period of construction with the life of a certain Saint Theodore, claimed to be a relative of the empress Theodora. According to the saint's life, or *vita*, Theodore founded a monastery that was destroyed in an earthquake and rebuilt by the emperor Justinian. Evidence of repair, possibly from the ninth century, is apparent only in the substructures.

The present naos is considerably later, dating from the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries (fig. 1). The positions of its north, west, and south walls seem to have been determined in the eleventh century. This phase of the building is attributed by Byzantine writers to Maria Doukaina, the mother-in-law of Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081-1118) and, accordingly, may be dated circa 1077-81. The present broad apse belongs to the early twelfth-century phase. In the sanctuary excavations of 1957-58, evidence was found of a narrower apse flanked by lateral apses, which seem to belong to the eleventh-century construction, although they may well be earlier. The tripartite sanctuary, in combination with the fixed positions of the other walls, suggests that Maria's church was most likely of a cross-in-square type. This was the most common Byzantine church type of the period, with a small, central dome raised above four columns.

In the rebuilding of the early twelfth century, the plan of the Chora was altered, with sturdy piers added at the corners of the naos. Replacing earlier columns, these piers supported broad arches and

a considerably larger dome. The naos opens eastward into a broad bema, or sanctuary, and apse, which replaced the earlier narrow apse. The cruciform plan allowed for greater stability than the earlier church, while creating a more open and spacious interior. This period of reconstruction in the 1120s may be attributed to the sebastokrator Isaak Komnenos, who is pictured in the Deesis mosaic in the inner narthex. The nephew of Maria and brother of Emperor John II Komnenos (who built the Pantokrator monastery - now the Zeyrek Camii - at about the same time), Isaak had had a tomb prepared for himself at the Chora, although he later requested it to be moved to the Kosmosoteira monastery at Pherrai, in Greek Thrace, where he was interred sometime after 1152.

The Chora monastery was either damaged or allowed to deteriorate during the Latin Occupation of Constantinople (1204-61), and by the end of the thirteenth century, it was in poor condition. The scholar Maximos Planudes lamented the reduced state of the monastic library, which precipitated his departure around 1300. About the same time, Patriarch Athanasios complained that the monastery was muddy and uninhabitable, with buildings so drafty that "if my cell were able to hold a windmill, the monks of the Chora could grind a lot of flour." Some minor repairs may have occurred in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. A daughter of Emperor Michael VIII (r. 1261-82), Maria, who assumed the name Melame when she became a nun (represented in the Deesis mosaic in the inner narthex), is known to have made contributions to the monastery. She may have also sponsored some repairs.

The statesman and scholar Theodore Metochites undertook the restoration and renovation of the Chora around 1316. Appointed ktetor (founder) of the monastery by Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos (r. 1282-1328), he was proud to be the first non-imperial founder of an imperial monastery. His portrait survives above the entrance to the naos, where he is shown offering the church to Christ, and his monograms appear throughout the building. His work was completed by 1321. Probably the greatest scholar of his day, Metochites was the minister of the treasury when he began the project and subsequently was promoted to prime minister. Politically powerful, he was erudite, knowledgeable, and extremely rich -- the ideal patron for the project - and he must have taken a personal interest in the reconstruction and decoration of the building. (1)

Metochites' contribution was extensive. He rebuilt the naos dome, the cornice of which is decorated with his monograms, and provided for the entire space to be redecorated, including the surviving marble revetments and floors as well as the partially surviving mosaics. At the same time, he enveloped the older building with new additions. The pastophoria (the small chapels to either side of the sanctuary) were rebuilt and decorated with frescoes; a twostory annex was added to the north side of the naos; two broad narthices were added to the west, lavishly outfitted with marbles and mosaics, and the inner narthex topped by domes in its terminal bays; and a domed funeral chapel (parekklesion) was added to the south, decorated with frescoes. At the southwest corner, where the minaret now rises, a belfry was constructed, also decorated with Metochites' monograms. Finally, a flying buttress was added to stabilize the twelfth-century apse. In his writings, Metochites tells us that he also provided silver vessels and silk hangings for the church and books for the monastic library. Although the main church was apparently dedicated to Christ, the monastery proper was dedicated to the Virgin Theotokos (GodBearer). In his poetry, Metochites refers to both the Virgin and the monastery as his refuge and protection. Ironically, the monastery became just that. Ousted from power in a palace coup in 1328, Metochites was banished from the capital, spending two miserable years exiled in Thrace. After many pitiful, if eloquent, letters he was allowed to return to the capital, where he was confined in the Chora monastery. In 1332 he died a broken man, having taken monastic vows as the monk Theoleptos. He was buried in the Chora's parekklesion, in a tomb he

had prepared for himself.

During the latter years of the Byzantine Empire, several distinguished aristocrats and minor members of the imperial family were also buried in the Chora, in the tombs in the parekklesion as well as in new tombs added in the narthices. (2) When the Ottoman Turks conquered the city in 1453, the monastery was one of the first Christian sanctuaries to fall. During the final siege, the sacred palladium of the city, the miraculous protective icon of the Virgin said to have been painted by Saint Luke, was stored at the Chora, from which it was paraded along the Land Walls to provide spiritual defense against the enemy. On 29 May, however, having entered the city by the Adrianople Gate, Ottoman soldiers found their way to the Chora and are said to have cut the venerable icon to pieces.

The church was converted to a mosque sometime between 1495 and 1511 by Hadim Ali Pasa. A mihrab was added in the main apse, and the belfry was removed and replaced by a minaret. The new name "Kariye" is, in fact, the Arabic translation of the name Chora, meaning "village" or "countryside." In 1568, the German Stephan Gerlach left a description of the Kariye, which indicated that the monastery's gate and a cistern still survived to the south of the building and that the mosaic and painted decoration inside the building were visible. They were covered with plaster and paint, apparently in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, but never entirely concealed.

During the late nineteenth century, as Istanbul became popular with Western tourists, the building became known as the "Mosaic Mosque." The mosaics in the domes were still visible, but those lower on the walls were covered by wooden doors, which a custodian would open for a little *baksis* (a tip). In this condition, the building was studied in the first years of the twentieth century by Fedor Shmit of the Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople.

In 1945, the building was secularized; it became a museum and was placed under the jurisdiction of the Ayasofya Museum. In 1947, the Byzantine Institute of America, and subsequently the Dumbarton Oaks Field Committee, undertook the cleaning and consolidation of the mosaics and frescoes, as well as limited excavations and the restoration of the building. The work lasted for twelve years, extending throughout the 1950s. The project resulted in a magnificent three-volume study by Professor Paul A. Underwood, published in 1966. A separate volume of studies, edited by Underwood, was published in 1975. This was followed by a study of the sculptural decoration by the Danish scholar Øystein Hjort, which appeared in the Dumbarton Oaks Papers in 1979. A monograph on the architecture by the present author was published by Dumbarton Oaks in 1987, completing the documentation of this important building and its art work.

Mosaics and Frescoes

A WELL-PRESERVED, lavishly decorated Byzantine church like the Chora can be read on several different levels. For the simple monk of Byzantine times or for the uninitiated tourist of today, its decoration presents illustrations from holy books - subjects occasionally familiar, occasionally obscure. On another level, the themes and subjects of the decorative program resonate with movements and verses of the Byzantine liturgy, and the art of the Chora can be understood as a reflection of the rituals that marked the daily life of a monastic church. On yet another level, the art of the Chora reflects the patronage of one of Byzantium's greatest intellectuals; it is as sophisticated and erudite as a work of contemporary Byzantine literature, structured like a vast epic poem.

The fourteenth-century artists responsible for the decoration of Theodore Metochites' church began

with the mosaics of the naos, then continued with the mosaic narrative programs and icons in the narthices, and concluded with the frescoes of the parekklesion. A trained eye can detect a stylistic progression in the paintings: they become more exuberant and mannered. The patron seems to have provided "hothouse conditions" for the painters to develop their personal styles, which mark a critical point in the history of Byzantine art.

The style of the painting has been eloquently described by Otto Demus, who noted that, at first glance, the art seems to have no acknowledged canons, as if the artists preferred the abnormal to the normal, the distorted to the regular, the chaotic to the harmonious. On closer scrutiny, however, it reveals a canon of taste no less well defined than sixteenth-century Italian mannerism. Decorative motifs are used to join otherwise disparate elements, with much adjustment to fit irregular spaces. The architectural backdrops are like stage sets, replete with draperies, shrubbery, and incidental details. The tendency is toward the disintegration of the composition; equilibrium is unimportant and is replaced by asymmetry, instability, and unrest. Figures have oddly contorted postures and sometimes seem to fly through the air instead of being firmly attached to the ground; their draperies flutter in lively arabesques.

In part, the mannered artistic style came as a response to the architectural framework. The process of fitting the narrative scenes onto irregular surfaces - lunettes, domical vaults, and pendentives - encouraged the distortion of the composition, perhaps most evident in the scenes from the Life of the Virgin in the inner narthex. At the same time, the artists were experimenting with compositions and figures. The compositions are based on an accumulation of details, understood on a small scale, and the whole is held together by a decorative veneer. Individual figures are seen in many unusual postures and from many different points of view, perhaps copied from sketchbooks, but each derived from a variety of sources.

In short, the Kariye Camii represents Byzantine art at its most experimental. In many ways, it offers a Byzantine version of postmodernism, in which the style is based both on quoting details from the past and on breaking the established rules in an attempt to create a new mode of expression. Its intellectualizing aesthetic would have appealed to connoisseurs like Theodore Metochites and his elite coterie. With the richness of the themes and imagery at the Kariye, one may easily overlook the style of the painting. But this was a critical element in the artistic expression, a part of the intellectual underpinnings that unify the building and its art.

Metochites explained the main purpose of the decoration of the church as relating "in mosaics and painting, how the Lord Himself . . . became a mortal man on our behalf." Accordingly, the elaborate program focuses on interconnected themes of incarnation and Salvation. The surviving scenes include the Old Testament ancestors of Christ and Old Testament prefigurations of the Virgin foretelling the virgin birth - as well as cycles of the lives of Christ and of the Virgin, and the Last Judgment.

The naos preserves its fourteenth-century marble revetments almost in their entirety but very little of its mosaics. The vaults and upper walls of the church were probably decorated with the most important scenes from the lives of Christ and the Virgin, the so-called Dodekaorton, or Twelve-Feast Cycle, as was standard in a Byzantine church, along with a bust of Christ in the dome and the Virgin enthroned in the apse. Of these, only the Koimesis, or Dormition of the Virgin, survives, along with standing figures of Christ and the Virgin on the piers to either side of the entrance to the bema. Because of the dual dedication of the church to the Virgin and Christ, the figures almost always

appear as pendant images. The "gender symmetry" emphasized the role of the Virgin in the process of salvation. Moreover, the positioning of images within the architectural setting encourages a visual interplay that enhances their meaning. For example, the pose of the Virgin holding the infant Christ is mirrored in that of Christ, who holds the swaddled soul of the Virgin in the Koimesis: in one the Virgin appears as the vehicle by which Christ is brought to earth; in the other Christ appears as the vehicle by which the Virgin is carried to heaven. The two themes suggested by these images, incarnation and salvation, dominate the narrative programs of the church.

There are also numerous iconic images in the narthices as well. Many of these also reflect the dual dedication of the church and monastery. A bust-length image of Christ, labeled *chora ton zoonton* (dwelling place of the living), appears above the doorway leading from the outer narthex to the inner narthex. The facing image of the Virgin, labeled *chora ton archoretou* (container of the uncontamable), is depicted "containing" the Christ child in her womb. An oversized dedicatory image usually called the Deesis (prayer) appears in the enlarged southern bay of the inner narthex; it depicts Christ and the Virgin with the former founders Isaak Komnenos and the nun Melanie kneeling at their feet. Other framed images of standing saints decorate the pilasters of the narthices, and additional standing and bust-length images of saints decorate the arches. This "choir of saints" would also have provided points of focus for private devotion within the church. The terminal bays of the inner narthex are covered by domes crowned with bust images of Christ and the Virgin, surrounded by their Old Testament ancestors.

The lunettes and vaults of the narthices are decorated with cycles of the lives of the Virgin and of Christ. All begin at the northern end of their respective spaces, with thematic and visual references linking them. Three bays of the inner narthex are devoted to the story of the Virgin, from her miraculous birth to the elderly Joachim and Anna, to her childhood in the temple, her marriage to the elderly Joseph, and her miraculous pregnancy. The story is based on the Protoevangelium (or Apocryphal Gospel of Saint James), which was widely accepted during the Middle Ages. Unfortunately, the beginning of the cycle is broken by a structural crack in the north bay. Except for this damage, the inner narthex is one of the most satisfying spaces in the building, preserving its lavish original coverings on the floor, walls, and vaults.

The cycle of the Infancy of Christ is represented in the lunettes of the outer narthex, while its domical vaults are decorated with scenes of the ministry and miracles of Christ. Both cycles are based on the accounts in the Gospels and begin in the north bay. The Infancy Cycle commences with the Dream of Joseph, in which an angel assures him of the Virgin's miraculous conception. This is followed by the Journey to Bethlehem and the exceptional episode of the Enrollment for Taxation, probably included because Theodore Metochites was the minister of the treasury and responsible for tax collection. The Nativity of Christ is set to parallel the Birth of the Virgin in the inner narthex. The stories of the Journey of the Magi, the Flight into Egypt, and the Massacre of the Innocents are then represented in multiple scenes. The cycle concludes with the Return of the Holy Family from Egypt and the youthful Christ being taken to Jerusalem.

The cycle of the Ministry and Miracles begins in the domical vault of the first bay of the outer narthex and concludes in the south bay of the inner narthex. The story proceeds directly from the conclusion of the previous narrative, with Christ in the Temple of Jerusalem, now almost entirely lost. As with scenes in the inner narthex, the narratives are sometimes stretched and contorted to fit into the domical vaults. Usually, two different episodes appear in each vault. Several areas of mosaic are missing in this cycle, but almost all of the scenes can be identified, including John the Baptist

proclaiming Christ and the Temptation of Christ. The other vaults are filled with numerous scenes of Christ's preaching and healing miracles.

The Wedding at Cana and the Multiplication of Loaves are taken out of their proper chronological sequence to be placed on the central axis of the outer narthex, with images of vessels of wine and baskets of bread dominating the scenes. Containers with the Eucharist are set before the image of the Virgin as "container of the uncontainable" and thus mark the beginning of a liturgical axis that led to the altar, where the communion was administered. Similarly, in the inner narthex, the scenes associated with the temple (represented as the sanctuary of a Byzantine church) are clustered on the main axis leading to the sanctuary.

Like the program of the narthices, the program of the parekklesion is divided between the Virgin and Christ. Here, however, the overriding theme is salvation, as befits a funeral chapel. Arched tombs, or *arcosolia*, line the walls of the chapel, which is decorated with fresco, rather than mosaic and marble revetments. The lower walls are painted to resemble marble paneling, forming a *dado*, and the walls are filled with standing figures of saints. The western domed bay is devoted to the Virgin; the upper walls in this area represent Old Testament prefigurations of the Virgin, emphasizing her role in salvation. The scenes and inscribed verses are drawn from the special readings for the feast days of the Virgin. She appears in the dome, surrounded by a heavenly host of angels. In contrast, the eastern bay is devoted to the Last Judgment, flanked by the punishments of the damned and the entry of the elect into paradise. The complex program of the chapel culminates in the conch of the apse, where the Anastasis (Harrowing of Hell) is represented: Christ, clad magnificently in white, having broken down the gates of hell, raises Adam and Eve from their sarcophagi, with Satan bound and gagged at his feet. To either side are scenes in which Christ raises a man and a woman from the dead.

The program of the parekklesion establishes evocative links between past (Old and New Testament scenes), present (the deceased in their tombs), and future (the end of time represented by the Last Judgment), offering assurances of salvation for those interred here. For example, the tomb of Theodore Metochites is set beneath the main dome, in which the Virgin is represented as Queen of Heaven. On the wall immediately above his tomb is the scene of Jacob's Ladder, while in the pendentive above it the hymnographer Theophanes is shown composing a funeral ode on the subject of Jacob's Ladder as a guarantee of access to heaven. Theophanes pauses, pointing his pen toward the tomb of Metochites. Similarly, in the Last Judgment, Christ gestures toward an image of a soul (usually interpreted as that of Theodore Metochites) presented for judgment by Saint Michael, and toward the tomb of Metochites himself.

In a like manner, the diagonal angles of the sarcophagi of Adam and Eve in the Anastasis lead the eye toward the tomb *arcosolia* along the lateral walls, just as the unique domical composition of the Last Judgment envelops them - as if the tombs have become part of the composition. Artistically, the parekklesion may be best understood not so much as a fresco program set into an architectural space as an architectural space that has become an integral part of its decoration.

Throughout the building, Old Testament and New Testament themes are related: the prefigurations of the Virgin in the parekklesion - as the Ark of the Covenant, the Burning Bush, or a walled city - hark back to the images of containers and to the theme of the Virgin as the "container of the uncontainable" in the outer narthex. Similarly, a visual mimesis associates various images and themes. For example, the positions of Adam and Eve raised by Christ in the Anastasis fresco recall

the proskynesis of the angels flanking the Virgin in the dedicatory image above the main entrance in the outer narthex: the ultimate image of salvation recalls the premiere image of the Incarnation. In a like manner, the flowing red robe of Eve in the Anastasis mimics the form of the fiery stream of hell in the Last Judgment, subtly calling to mind simultaneously the fall of man and his ultimate salvation - and adding nuance to the gender symmetry of the program.

Minor details also encourage more complex readings: for example, David of Thessaloniki, a dendrite (that is, a hermit who sat in a tree) shown at the entrance to the parekklesion, is positioned equidistant between Christ Calling Zaccheus (who had climbed a tree in order to see Christ as he passed through Jericho) and Moses before the Burning Bush. In each, we witness an encounter with the divine - Old Testament, New Testament, Byzantine. Even the inscriptions enhance the visual expression of the images: for example, the drama and violence in the Soldier Pursuing Elisabeth with the Infant John the Baptist (the last scene in the cycle of the Massacre of the Innocents) is emphasized by the soldier's sword severing Elisabeth's name in the inscription: ELI//SABETH. In sum, both in style and iconography, the Kariye Camn is a masterwork, its mosaics and frescoes creatively coordinated within a complex architectural setting.

Architecture

THE EARLY FOURTEENTH-CENTURY rebuilding of the Chora included the reconstruction of the naos dome and the pastophoria, as well as the addition of a twostory annex to the north side, inner and outer narthices to the west, and the parekklesion to the south. The additions have proved to be the result of a single building campaign, but the irregularities of the plan are distinctive and have long confused scholars. Albert Lenoir, for example, who drew the building in the midnineteenth century, simply refused to admit that it was irregular (pl. 29, cat. III6). Indeed, the Kariye seems to lack an overall logic and appears as an incongruous juxtaposition of components. Both the complex design and scholarly confusion resulted from a number of factors. The utilization of the Middle Byzantine core of the building, the sloping site, and the varying functions of the ancillary chambers dictated special planning considerations and resulted in numerous compromises in the final construction. Moreover, repairs of the Ottoman period have altered many important aspects of the building, and an attempt at restoration is necessary to visualize the fourteenthcentury building.

The most conspicuous changes are fairly recent. In the restoration of 187576, the undulating Byzantine roofline was leveled. The visual effect of this "improvement" was to make stagnant and lifeless what was once a dynamic silhouette and to accentuate the irregularities of the plan. Illustrations from the nineteenth century, however, including drawings by Alexandros Paspates (pl. 3 1, cat. III8) and Domenico Pulgher (pl. 16, cat. III9) and a unique photograph, show that the scalloped roofline was edged by a dogtooth cornice with bricks laid on a diagonal, which were partially or totally removed when the roofline was raised. The minor domes were similarly topped by scalloped dogtooth cornices, but when recovered, their cornices were leveled, giving the domes a "helmeted" appearance. The main dome, similar in form, had been replaced at an earlier date, perhaps following the earthquake of 1766.

The church also had a bell tower, constructed in the southwest corner of the building but replaced by the present minaret. Most Byzantine belfries disappeared with the Turkish restrictions on the use of bells and the conversion of churches into mosques. Although there is no documentation of the belfry, it was probably of considerable size, covering the entire corner bay of the building. The original

arches of this bay were given a double thickness in construction, but this evidently proved ineffective under the weight of the structure; probably within a few decades of the initial construction, the arches required reinforcement of columns supporting masonry arches.

The extra thickness in the south wall, decorated on the exterior by ogival arches containing the monograms of Metochites, housed the spiral staircase leading to the upper levels of the belfry. Like the surviving belfries at Mistra or in Macedonia, the tower was probably three stories tall and domed, with stairs leading only to the second level. The external features of the belfry surely complemented the lively detailing of the building.

The form of the west façade has also been radically changed. Beginning in the middle of the fourteenth century, the arches were blocked, and three were transformed into arcosolia for tombs. The excavations of the 1950s demonstrated that the lower portion of each arched opening was filled by a closure slab topped by a balustrade. Above the balustrade, the arcades were left open so that the outer narthex formed a portico. The main portal of the central opening is composed of reused, poorly fitted marble pieces that must have been added when the other bays were closed.

Because of these alterations, the fourteenth-century building must have appeared significantly different than it does today. The presence of a belfry, for example, would dramatically alter the visual composition. It would appear that symmetry was not a major concern in the overall design. The irregularities of the building vanish amid the wealth of detail, the dynamic silhouette, and the exuberant outward appearance. Refinements are localized and small scale; parts are related to each other but not to the whole; variety is more important than symmetry. The north narthex dome, for example, is adjusted to its position in relation to the north annex, hiding its irregular roofline. But no attempt has been made to relate it to the south half of the facade; the two narthex domes are of different sizes and asymmetrically positioned. As if to emphasize the love of variety, the external articulation of the parekklesion dome differs from both of these.

The articulation of the wall displays the coloristic effects of light and shade. There were strong contrasts in the west façade between the dark recesses and the pastel tones of the piers, the latter broken by the alternating bands of brick and stone and by the consistent use of twosteped responds and engaged columns. All this was topped by the subtle contrasts and undulating rhythm of the dogtooth cornices. The wall was never left as a plain surface. To be sure, the love of decoration led to some illogical solutions. For example, on the south facade, the system of half columns and responds does not fit with the structural system of the building or with the interior articulation, and we find half columns illogically supporting windows.

Special functional requirements may have also played a role in the unusual design. For example, in addition to an annexed funeral chapel for privileged burials, many aristocratic churches were provided with a private room for the founder on the gallery level, usually positioned above the narthex. While other considerations did not allow a narthex gallery at the Chora, the twostory annex on the north side of the building included a room on the upper level that may have served as the library of Theodore Metochites. It includes a window overlooking the naos, from which the founder could "hear the sweet singing of the monks" as he devoted himself to his scholarship. In a like manner, the south bay of the inner narthex - out of scale and asymmetrically positioned - seems to have had a special function in the monastery. Dominated by the huge Deesis mosaic on its east wall, the space may have functioned as a sort of founder's chapel, honoring the memories of the previous imperial benefactors, two of whom are represented in the dedicatory mosaic.

If we take into consideration such special functional requirements as these, as well as a decorative aesthetic oriented toward lavish surface ornamentation and principles of planning that broke the building into individually articulated components, we arrive at an approach toward architecture that not only allowed but perhaps encouraged irregularities. The guiding principles of Palaiologan architecture must be recognized as quite different from the rational, structural principles of the Middle Byzantine period. The treatment of architectural forms in evidence at the Kariye has much in common with the contemporary, so-called mannerist phase in the twodimensional arts.

Like the mosaics and frescoes, the architecture of the Kariye is similarly artfully distorted, chaotic, asymmetrical, and decorative. If we isolate a single figure, for example, Joseph, from Joseph Taking the Virgin to His House, compositional attitudes similar to those seen in the architecture are evident. Students of life drawing would cringe at this figure - we are not sure if he is coming or going. Yet, if each specific feature is analyzed independently, it is more than satisfactory in itself. The artist is composing on a small scale, of individual bits and pieces, without attempting to relate the pieces to the whole.

Theodore Metochites and the Chora

COMPLEXITY APPEARS more important than monumentality in the architecture of the Kariye, and in the hierarchy of function each unit is clearly defined visually. The architecture parallels the elegantly mannered style of the art it houses, full of figures with strange postures and different views connected by a decorative veneer, the extended evocative narratives, and the obscure allusions - all part of the artful breaking of established rules. Even the marble revetments betray a restless mannerism. In the inner narthex, the repeated patterns consciously avoid the architectural divisions: the framing bands never occur at the pilasters but instead provide a visual counter point to the architectural framework. Similarly, along the south facade, the rhythm of pilasters is quickened, with pilasters and halfcolumns illogically positioned to "support" the windows. Details such as these are odd, to say the least.

These stylistic traits may be associated with the patronage of Theodore Metochites, who as an author was selfconscious about his own originality. Significant parallels to the art of the Chora can be found in his mannered and obsessive literary style. Like his writings, the complex style of the Chora can be understood as an expression of the personality of Metochites the intellectual. The intricacies and subtleties would have been missed by the average visitor, but they would have been appreciated by Metochites' coterie of aristocratic intellectuals. In fact, they may have been intended to distinguish the true intellectual from the common rabble. Like postmodernism, the style of the Chora had snob appeal.

Theodore Metochites was fortunate to find a master mason and painter who were, in artistic terms at least, his equal. The clever artist responsible for the decorative program responded to the restless intellect and the ego of the patron. Through the careful manipulation of the architectural space and the painted program, he subtly draws attention to the benefactor: from certain vantage points, the viewer is positioned to pay homage to Theodore Metochites. In the parekklesion, for example, the viewer who pauses to admire the panoramic sweep of the decoration stops directly in front of the founder's tomb. The gestures and lines within the fresco compositions also lead ultimately to the tomb of Metochites.

Yet, in spite of his ambition and his many accomplishments, Theodore Metochites proved to be all too mortal. He was selfcentered, anxious, and sensitive. He was proud of his hardwon culture and status, which in his mind were inextricably connected. Metochites' life was unhappy, in many ways a failure. He was rich, but at the expense of the poor. He achieved great stature only to fall dramatically from power in the palace coup of 1328. Despised by his contemporaries, ousted from office, and stripped of his worldly wealth, he died a simple monk. As the noted Byzantinist Ihor Ševcenko insists, Metochites nevertheless deserves our admiration: "To have given us the Chora he had to be a man of wealth, taste, and intelligence. He did not have to be a perfect gentleman."

Much of the above essay is derived from the author's *Art of the Kariye Camii* (London/Istanbul, 2002).

1] See the essay by Dimiter Angelov in this volume (*Essays and Catalog for Restoring Byzantium*), pp. 1522.

2] See the essay by Sarah T. Brooks in this volume (*Essays and Catalog for Restoring Byzantium*), pp. 2331.