



## ETERNAL VICTORY: BYZANTINE TERRITORIAL EXPANSION AND CONSTANTINOPOLITAN LITURGICAL SPLENDOUR AT HOSIOS LOUKAS (STEIRIS, GREECE)

BISSERA V. PENTCHEVA

Stanford University

[bissera@stanford.edu](mailto:bissera@stanford.edu)

This article explores the art and architecture of Hosios Loukas through liturgical music, revealing how chants amplify the messages of the mosaics, poetry, and public ceremonies. The katholikon's large marble-revetted space modeled after Hagia Sophia transmits a vision of Byzantium's greatness and triumphalism. Music makes clear the way the sacred and ideological aspects are bound together at Hosios Loukas. The mosaic programme has never been recognized as connected to the late tenth-century imperial triumphalism, a time of Byzantium's great military successes in the Eastern Mediterranean, which ensured the economic stability of the empire and financed buildings full of splendour. An aggressive military overtone colors the mosaics and the music designed for this space, but it has not been recognized heretofore. To produce the sound of triumph, one must have domed spaces and gold mosaics, and having them, in turn, infuses even a pacific, healer saint like Hosios Loukas with triumphalism.

Hagia Sophia with its mesmerizing Justinianic interior uplifted the Constantinopolitan liturgy to a *metaxu* (a space between heaven and earth), offering a luminous interior unsurpassed in its immense volume, marble and mosaic décor, and towering dome (**Fig. 1**). The reverberant acoustics of the space coupled with the cathedral chant that uses intercalations of non-semantic vocables and melismas further transformed the singing human voice



Figure 1. Hagia Sophia, 532-37 and 562, interior (© Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)

into emanation, giving prominence to prosody sometimes at the expense of semantics. The riches of the empire funded the celebration of the liturgy in the Great Church, sustaining a staff of five hundred people among whom were choirs of twenty-five elite singers and one hundred and sixty readers.<sup>1</sup> For all its impressive decor, the opulent display in the Justinianic interior lacked a monumental figural programme.<sup>2</sup> It was not until after Iconoclasm (843) that mosaic images of the Virgin and Child were placed in the apse,

1 Bissera V. Pentcheva, *Hagia Sophia: Sound, Space and Spirit in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017).

2 Pentcheva, *Hagia Sophia*, 76–98; Natalia Teteriatnikov, *Justinianic Mosaics of Hagia Sophia and Their Aftermath* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2017); Natalia Teteriatnikov, *Mosaics of Hagia Sophia, Istanbul: The Fossati Restoration and the Work of the Byzantine Institute* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1998); Cyril A. Mango, *Materials for the Study of the Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1962).

Christ in the dome, and a series of narrative scenes in the vaults of the galleries.<sup>3</sup> Yet these anthropomorphic representations appear dwarfed by the great distance from the floor, on account of to the unprecedented height of the superstructure.

In the course of time, Hagia Sophia's architectural model of a domed central-plan building gave rise to smaller-scale interiors with cupolae, which became more conducive to figural decoration.<sup>4</sup> Yet the current poor state of preservation of the mosaic programmes of Middle Byzantine churches in Constantinople necessitates a turn to the study of buildings outside the capital such as Hosios Loukas in Steiris (Greece), inaugurated in 1011.<sup>5</sup> It has one of the most prominent extant figural mosaics. The construction and décor at Hosios Loukas, likely sponsored by a series of *strategoï* (generals) and a *katepano* (military commander and civic administrator) of Italy embodies the spirit of the Byzantine territorial expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean in the tenth and early eleventh centuries.<sup>6</sup> Elements in the décor such as the pseudo-Kufic inscriptions and imagery that draws on Constantinopolitan models makes the case for the cosmopolitanism of this site and the empire.<sup>7</sup> This is a period of great mobility and upheaval, when generals and emperors of Georgian and Armenian descent led the Byzantine armies against the Arabs in the East and secured great triumphs, reconquering Crete and Antioch, and revitalizing trade in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>8</sup> Hosios Loukas thrived as a station on the now secure commercial and pilgrimage routes connecting Rome to Corinth and from there to the ships sailing to the capital, to Antioch, or Jerusalem. The architectural form and the figural mosaics reflect the splendour of the Constantinopolitan liturgy and also voice pride in the Byzantine victories over the Arabs in the East.

3 Teteriatnikov, *Mosaics of Hagia Sophia*; Mango, *Materials for the Study of the Mosaics of St. Sophia*.

4 Jelena Bogdanović, "Framing Glorious Spaces in the Monastery of Hosios Loukas" in *Perceptions of the Body and Sacred Space in Late Antiquity and Byzantium*, ed. Jelena Bogdanović (New York: Routledge, 2018), 166–89; Vasileios Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual in the Churches of Constantinople, Ninth to the Fifteenth Centuries* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Robert Ousterhout, "The Architecture of Iconoclasm: Buildings," in *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca. 680-859): The Sources*, eds. Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 3–20.

5 Manolis Chatzidakis, "A propos de la date et du fondateur de Saint Luc," *Cahiers Archéologiques* 19 (1969): 127-50; Carolyn L. Connor, *Saints and Spectacle: Byzantine Mosaics in Their Cultural Setting* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Otto Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration* (Boston: Boston & Art Shop, 1955).

6 Eric McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth: Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995); *History of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century*, trans. Alice-Mary Talbot, Dennis Sullivan, Stamatina McGrath (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2005); John Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811-1057*, trans. John Wortley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

7 On the pseudo-Kufic inscriptions, see Alicia Walker, "Pseudo-Arabic Inscriptions and the Pilgrim's Path at Hosios Loukas" in *Viewing Inscriptions in the Late Antique and Medieval World*, ed. Anthony Eastmond (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 99–123; Alicia Walker, "Globalism," *Studies in Iconography* 33 (2012): 183–96.

8 Alan Harvey, "Economy," in *Palgrave Advances in Byzantine History*, ed. Jonathan Harris (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 83–99; Alan Harvey, *Economic Expansion of the Byzantine Empire, 900-1200* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Koray Durak, "Commerce and Networks of Exchange between the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic Near East from the Early Ninth Century to the Arrival of the Crusaders," Ph.D., Harvard University 2008.

This essay argues two main points: that the choice of images in Hosios Loukas is determined by the liturgy composed for the feast of the saint (7 February) and that the programme draws on the liturgical and imperial ceremonies and processions in Constantinople, which extoll the Virgin Mary as the protectress of the city and as the victorious general of the empire.



*Figure 2. Hagia Sophia, 532–37 and 562, interior, view of the dome and semi-domes (Photo: Author)*

## **HAGIA SOPHIA AND THE EVOLUTION OF IMPERIAL VICTORY IN CHANTS AND IMAGES AFTER ICONOCLASM**

Music opens the path to the ritual enactment of imperial power and triumph. The ceremonies are continuously evolving, pulling together the sonic and visual. This section draws on the chants composed for the Great Church when the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross was inaugurated in Constantinople in 628. The triumphalism in these chants unfolds as an acoustic phenomenon in Hagia Sophia: a sonic “golden rain” pouring down from the dome. In the period after Iconoclasm, chants continued to function as a medium articulating the empire’s confidence in its military power and in its possibility to reclaim its territories in the Eastern Mediterranean. But together with the chants, certain visual expressions develop that express directly the empire’s ambitions for conquest. The analysis reveals how this consonance between chant and images sharpens the message of both.

Hagia Sophia overpowers its audience with its unprecedented and inimitable scale of a dome raised over fifty-six metres above the floor and with a diameter over thirty metres and an interior volume of over two hundred

and fifty-five thousand cubic metres (Figs. 1, 2).<sup>9</sup> The Great Church could gather up to sixteen thousand people inside. It mesmerizes all with its gold mosaics, marble revetments, and the flood of natural light pouring in from its glass-filled walls. The architecture skilfully stages the movement of the sun. The orientation coincides with the solstice, which makes for a spectacular sunrise in the winter season on the day of inauguration on 23 December followed by the Christmas feasts.<sup>10</sup> During the winter solstice (marked with a red contour on the image) the first rays of the sun penetrate the central windows of the apse and perfectly align with the E-W axis of the building.<sup>11</sup> As the morning progresses, the beams of light gradually descend from the dome and semi-dome and slide across the floor (Fig. 3). In the afternoon they continue to illuminate the floor and then rise and glide up the north wall, until they disappear on the northeast corner at sunset.<sup>12</sup>

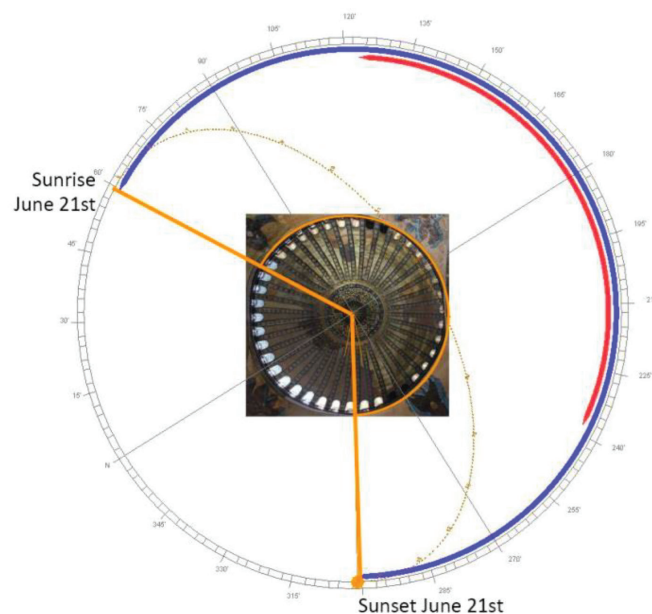


Figure 3. The rise and diurnal movement of the sun at the winter (red) and summer (blue) solstice in Hagia Sophia after Melika Inanici, "Lighting Analysis of Hagia Sophia," *Ayasofya Müzesi Yillığı* 14 (2014): 166–202, fig. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Pentcheva, *Hagia Sophia*; Nadine Schibille, *Hagia Sophia and the Byzantine Aesthetic Experience* (Farham: Ashgate, 2014); Rowland Mainstone, *Hagia Sophia* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985).

<sup>10</sup> Nadine Schibille, "Astronomical and Optical Principles in the Architecture of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople," *Science in Context* 22 (2009): 27–46; Iakovos Potamianos and Wassim Jabi, "Geometry, Light, and Cosmology in the Church of Hagia Sophia," *International Journal of Architectural Computing* 5/2 (2007): 305–19.

<sup>11</sup> Ever since the conversion of the church into a mosque in 1453, the experience of the interior is compromised. The mihrab, which must face Mecca, stands to the south of the main E-W axis of the Byzantine building. The shift is further emphasized by the two platforms built on the East to raise the floor and to accommodate the approach to the mihrab and minbar. They cross the main axis on a diagonal, thus, disrupting the original rectilinear logic. As a result, any viewer entering the nave would perceive the new focal point (the mihrab) as bending off to the main axis of the building, giving the impression that the interior is askew. Only in moments like sunrise on the solstice, the early sun beams piercing directly through the central windows of the sanctuary coincide perfectly with the E-W axis of the building and restore the original alignment and harmony.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Whittemore, "Study of Light, 1945" unpublished notes, Dumbarton Oaks Photography and Image Archive, MS BZ 004; Melika Inanici, "Lighting Analysis of Hagia Sophia," *Ayasofya Müzesi Yillığı* 14 (2014): 166–202.

Light touching the marble floors and walls produces a liquescent effect, where the solidity of stone perceptually transmutes into the appearance of quivering water. Gold further enhances this aesthetic of liquidity as light transforms metal and glass tesserae and polished Proconnesian marble into incandescence of molten metal or the opalescence of mother of pearl.<sup>13</sup> The acoustics of the space amplify this sense of water; the large interior volume and polished reflective surfaces of stone produce a reverberation of over ten seconds for frequencies in the range of the human voice.<sup>14</sup> The dome contributes to an extraordinary aural experience: an acoustic waterfall as high frequency sound reflects from the curved surfaces and rains down on the nave.<sup>15</sup>

The “wet” acoustics of the space liquify sound.<sup>16</sup> The music composed for Hagia Sophia amplifies these aural effects with the use of melismas (singing many notes to a syllable) and intercalations of non-semantic vocables; both devices stretch the semantic chains, making meaning dissolve into prosody. And while ornament can push the chant beyond the register of human language, the same melismas and intercalation combined with the highest pitches in the composition trigger the phenomenon of “golden” aural “waterfall” raining from dome.<sup>17</sup> The signature chants for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, such as the troparion *Sōson Kyrie* and the kontakion *Ho hypsōtheis en tō Staurō*, produce these aural effects with particular words such as *eulogēson* (“bless!”) or *echoien* (“may we have”) that draw attention to the invisible divine, which acquires an acousmètre (bodiless voice) aural manifestation in the space.<sup>18</sup>

Both chants were written when in 628 the emperor Herakleios brought the relics of the True Cross to the Byzantine capital and inaugurated the Constantinopolitan phase of this feast.<sup>19</sup> Herakleios was remembered for his wars against the Persian Empire and as the last emperor to extend Christian power over Jerusalem. The Arab conquest in 638 eliminated Byzantine authority in the Holy Land. The rise of the Macedonian dynasty (867-1056) articulated an aggressive foreign policy and charted the possibility of reconquest.<sup>20</sup> Significant advances were accomplished with the accession of the usurper emperor-generals Phokas (963-969) and Tzimiskes (969-976) to the throne. 961 marked the reconquest of Crete, which freed the Aegean

13 Bissera V. Pentcheva, “Hagia Sophia and Multisensory Aesthetics,” *Gesta* 50/2 (2011): 93–111; Pentcheva, *Hagia Sophia*, 121–49.

14 Pentcheva, “Hagia Sophia and Multisensory Aesthetics,” 101–116; Pentcheva, *Hagia Sophia*, 99–120.

15 Bissera V. Pentcheva, “The Glittering Sound of Hagia Sophia and the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross in Constantinople” in *Icons of Sound: Voice, Architecture, and Imagination in Medieval Art*, ed. Bissera V. Pentcheva (New York: Routledge, 2020), 52–100.

16 Pentcheva, *Hagia Sophia*, 65–75, 93–98, 104, 119, 122, 148–49; Alexander Lingas, “From Earth to Heaven: The Changing Musical Soundscape of Byzantine Liturgy,” in *Experiencing Byzantium*, eds. C. Nesbitt and M. Jackson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 311–58, esp. 319–34;

17 Pentcheva, “The Glittering Sound of Hagia Sophia,” 60–70.

18 Pentcheva, “The Glittering Sound of Hagia Sophia,” 52–100.

19 Pentcheva, “The Glittering Sound of Hagia Sophia,” 52, 60.

20 Eric McGeer, “Two Military Orations of Constantine VII,” in *Byzantine Authors: Literary Activities and Preoccupations*, ed. John W. Nesbitt (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003), 111–35.

and the Eastern Mediterranean from Arab pirates and opened the seas for trade. Antioch was recaptured in 969. And in 972-975 the Byzantine army led by emperor John Tzimiskes pushed into Syria and Palestine holding Homs, Sidon and Byblos.<sup>21</sup>

The return of territories in Syria and Holy Land is anticipated in chants, ceremonies, and the visual arts. A unique work expresses this Byzantine imperial agenda in the figural arts: the Joshua roll (Vatican City, BAV, MS Pal. Gr. 431); it visualizes the Byzantines as the new Israelites, divinely commissioned to reconquer the promised land. The manuscript resurrects an antiquated format: the scroll.<sup>22</sup> The form and content come together to render powerfully the idea of triumph. Like the historiated column, the scroll offers a continuously extending strip for narrative images; its rolling tracks the successful march of the army and its ever-expanding conquest of land. The Joshua Roll echoes the Late Antique imperial honorific columns in Constantinople decorated with figural reliefs, which captured the successes of the emperor in military campaigns. The imperial city, modelled after Old Rome, had five fora decorated with honorific columns, one of which had a continuous narrative relief: the column of Arcadius, 401.<sup>23</sup> The Joshua Roll engages with this tradition of urban monuments marking the stage of imperial triumph, but it also gives a strong Christian message as its narrative depicts the story of Joshua conquering Holy Land.

The exact identity of the patron is still a subject of debate ranging from the emperor Constantine VII and Basil the *parakoimomenos* (illegitimate son of Romanos Lekapenos) to the soldier-emperors Phokas and Tzimiskes.<sup>24</sup> The intention behind bringing up the Joshua Roll here does not stem from a desire to resolve the identity of the patron, but to recognize how its images communicate a current and mainstream imperial message that the Byzantines are the chosen people who are given the divine directive to reclaim the promised land. The scroll shows the revitalization of the Byzantine reconquest of Syria and Palestine in the second half of the tenth century. Just like the Israelites, the Byzantines saw themselves as exiles coming back to reclaim their possessions from the Arabs in the

21 Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 250–97.

22 Vasiliki Tsamakda, "The Joshua Roll," in *A Companion to Byzantine Illustrated Manuscripts*, ed. Vasiliki Tsamakda, (Brill, 2017), 207–13; Steven Wander, *The Joshua Roll* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2012), 93–138. Wander attributes the scroll to Basil the Parakoimomenos and his victory at Samosata 958; Meyer Shapiro, "The Place of the Joshua Roll in Byzantine History," *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 35/6 (1949): 161–76; Kurt Weitzmann, *The Joshua Roll* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), 100–14.

23 Pelin Arslan, "Towards a New Honorific Column: The Column of Constantine in the Early Byzantine Urban Landscape," *METU JFA* 33/1 (2016): 121–45; Jonathan Bardill, *Constantine, Divine Emperor of the Christian Golden Age* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Franz Alto Bauer, "Urban Space and Ritual: Constantinople in Late Antiquity," in *Imperial Art as Christian Art, Christian Art as Imperial Art: Expression and Meaning in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Justinian Bardi*, ed. Johannes Brandt (Rome: Erasmus, 2001), 27–62; Sarah Bassett, *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Bente Kiilerich, *Late Fourth-Century Classicism in Plastic Arts: Studies in the So-Called Theodosian Renaissance* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1993); Christoph Konrad, "Beobachtungen zur Architektur und Stellung des Säulenmonumentes in Istanbul-Cerrapasa-Arkadiossäule," *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 51 (2001): 319–401; Cornelius Gurlitt, *Antike Denkmalsäulen in Konstantinopel* (Munich: Callwey, 1909).

24 Wander, *The Joshua Roll*, 93–138; Shapiro, "The Place of the Joshua Roll in Byzantine History," 161–76; Weitzmann, *The Joshua Roll*, 100–14.



Figure 4. The Archangel Michael appearing before Joshua, Joshua Roll, Vatican City, BAV, MS Pal. Gr. 431, fol. IVr, mid-tenth century. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. (Photo © 2022 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana)

East. And they saw their mission as divinely sanctioned. This message is communicated by the image of the Archangel Michael appearing before Joshua giving him a mandate to conquer Holy Land (Fig. 4). In Joshua 5:13-15, the general sees standing in front of him a military commander holding a naked sword. He asks him: “Are you one of us or one of the enemies?” The Archangel responds that he is the leader of the celestial armies. Then Joshua falls to the ground in deep *proskynesis*, asking what his orders are and receives the response to do obeisance. Joshua is shown to the right; he appears twice in this continuous narrative, first standing and then, a moment later, on his knees in prayer. The power and shock of being in the presence of the metaphysical is rendered in the abrupt change in the dominant reading direction of the scroll from left to right to right to left at this scene. The reversal captures the dramatic moment of turning to recognize the divine and accept the order of the Lord. The narrative images also capture how ambiguous a theophany can be. Joshua is confused at the beginning and seeing the general in a provocative gesture of attack with a raised sword, he feels impelled to ask him to reveal himself.

Two imperial speeches by Constantine VII recited before the Byzantine armies repeat the motif of the Lord sending his archangel to the Christian troops:



May He [Christ] prepare your route before you; He Himself will send His angel and He will guide your journey and may He help to surround you with host of angels to keep you safe from harm in the hands of the enemy, so that through His power and might you may have upon your return to us in victory and triumph praise everlasting in memory of men.<sup>25</sup>

The emperor hopes for victory and assures his troops that they will be protected by the archangel.

The vision of the celestial guard from the Joshua story holds a special place in imperial imagery. It is represented in the Çavuşin church in Göreme valley in Cappadocia, the home base of the Phokas family and a region deeply loyal to the clan.<sup>26</sup> The imperial family portrait is depicted in a niche left of the apse (**Fig. 5a-b**). The emperor is flanked on the right by his father, the Caesar Bardas, and by his brother, the curopalates Leo. His wife Theophano and his sister-in-law are on his left. This group portrait appears right underneath the scene of Joshua and the Archangel. The vertical alignment of the two frescoes show how the divine mandate once given to Joshua is now offered to the Byzantine emperor Phokas. The dream of reclaiming the Holy Land began to be fulfilled with the victories of Phokas. If Constantine VII evoked the archangel to lead the armies, he himself never joined the campaigns. By contrast, as general and later emperor, Phokas truly embodied the Old Testament Joshua; he led the Christian armies in battle and triumphs. And it is this pride that is expressed in the frescoes, reclaiming the Joshua narrative for the glory of the Phokas.

A majestic victory is celebrated at the end of the Joshua Roll and it too channels elements of triumphal ceremonies celebrated by the emperor in Constantinople. The scene stretches to a panoramic length. And just like the encounter with the Archangel which stops the progression of the narrative from left to right and reverses, so too here Joshua's great triumph turns the direction from right to left (**Fig. 6**). He has fulfilled the divine order and now he has taken the position of the Archangel. Seated on a throne, he receives the captured enemies. The five kings of Judea are brought for a ritual trampling (*calcatio*). The *calcatio* represented here recalls an extraordinary imperial triumph performed in 956, when Constantine VII Porphyrogennētos had the captive Abu'l 'Ašā'ir (cousin of Sayf al-Dawla, the Amir of Aleppo and major threat to Byzantium) ritually trampled and a spear brought to his neck.<sup>27</sup>

25 Κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδὸν ὑμῶν ἔμπροσθεν ὑμῶν· αὐτὸς ἐξαποστελεῖ τὸν ἄγγελον αὐτοῦ καὶ κατευθυνεῖ τὴν ὁδὸν ὑμῶν, αὐτὸς ἀγγελικαῖς παρεμβολαῖς περικυκλῶσαι ὑμᾶς καὶ ἀντιλάβοιτο καὶ ἀναλωτοὺς τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν ἐχθρῶν βλάβης διατηρῆσαι ὡς ἂν ἐν τῇ δυνάμει αὐτοῦ καὶ κράτει μετὰ νίκης καὶ τροπαιῶν ἐπανακάμπτοντες πρὸς ἡμᾶς, σχοίητε μὲν τὸν ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἔπαινον ἀειμνηστον, R. Vári, "Zum historischen Exzerptenwerke des Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 17/1 (1908): 75–85, esp. 83–84; English trans. McGeer, "Two Military Orations of Constantine VII," 134.

26 Lyn Rodley, "The Pigeon House Church, Çavuşin," *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 33 (1983): 301–39. For images, see <http://monuments.hist.auth.gr/index.php/en/2019/02/07/ekklisia-nikiforou-foka-cavusin-en/>. Accessed December 21, 2021.

27 De Cer. II.19, for a discussion, see Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 160–62, 166.



Figure 5a-b. Church of Nikephoros II Phokas (963-969), Çavuşin kilise, Göreme valley, Kappadokia, Turkey (Photo: Elie Nicolas Akiki)



Figure 6. Joshua celebrating the final triumph over the five kings of Judea, Joshua Roll, Vatican City, BAV, MS Pal. Gr. 431, fols. XIVr, XVr, mid-tenth century. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. (Photo © 2022 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana)

The Joshua Roll and the Çavuşin frescoes reveal how war and victory are understood in specifically Christian terms: the angel of Christ leads the armies of the faithful to triumph. Similarly, the imperial speeches of Constantine VII present the Byzantine wars as waged specifically against the infidel. In the emperor’s orations, the Christian armies carry the Cross as weapon and protection:

[Christ] will stretch His hand to those girded in battle against His foes [...] And so let us put all our hope in Him, and instead of our whole panoply, let us arm ourselves with His Cross, equipped with which you have lately made the fierce soldiers of the Hamdanid (Sayf al-Dawla) the victims of your swords.<sup>28</sup>

Constantine calls to arms the Christians, asks them to take the Cross as weapon and use it to inflict defeat on the infidel. In a second speech, he even distributes a *hagiasma* (oil aspersion produced by contact with the relics of the True Cross and other Passion relics of Christ): “[after drawing *hagiasma* (in this context, myron or holy oil)], we have sent this *hagiasma* to be sprinkled upon you, for you to be anointed by it and garb yourselves with the divine power from on high.”<sup>29</sup> Relics of the True Cross and the Passion become the shield of the Christian armies.

Constantine VII’s vision of the Cross as weapon is embodied in an important imperial heirloom: the Limburg Staurothēkē. Constantine VII and his son Romanos II likely commissioned the precious frame for these seven pieces of the True Cross and inscribed the imperial triumphalist message at the back (**Fig. 7**). The relics are encased in gold and decorated on the front and centre with rubies and emeralds and gold beads, while sapphires frame the edges. The imperial epigram unfolds in embossed letters in the gold on the reverse. Here the words descend from the top; there are two horizontal crossbars following the shape of the patriarchal cross, but the rest of the text drips down forming the edge of a spear that is ready to pierce the enemy:

God stretched out his hands upon the wood of the Cross  
gushing forth through it the energies of life.  
Constantine and Romanos the emperors  
with a frame (synthesis) of radiant stones and pearls  
have displayed it full of wonder.  
Upon it Christ formerly smashed the gates of Hell,  
giving new life to the dead.  
and the crowned ones who have now adorned it,  
crush with it the temerities of the barbarians.<sup>30</sup>

28 McGeer, “Two Military Orations of Constantine VII,” 118;

29 ἀπομυρίσαντες ἔξαπεστείλαμεν ὑμῖν ἀγάσμα τοῦ ῥαντισθῆναι ἐφ’ ὑμῖν καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ περιχρισθῆναι καὶ θεῖαν ἐξ ὕψους ἐπενδύσασθαι δύναμιν, Vári, “Zum historischen Exzerptenwerke des Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos,” 83. English trans. Geer, “Two Military Orations of Constantine VII,” 133.

30 + Θεὸς μὲν ἐξέτεινε χεῖρας ἐν ξύλῳ

ζωῆς δι’ αὐτοῦ τὰς ἐνεργείας βρῦων·

Κωνσταντῖνος δὲ καὶ Ῥωμανὸς δεσπότηται

λίθων διαυγῶν συνθέσει καὶ μαργάρων

ἔδειξαν αὐτὸ θαύματος πεπλησμένον.

Καὶ πρὶν μὲν Αἰῶδος Χριστὸς ἐν τούτῳ πύλας

θραύσας ἀνεζώωσε τοὺς τεθνηκότας

κοσμήτορες τούτου δὲ νῦν στεφηφόροι

θράση δι’ αὐτοῦ συντριβουσι βαρβάρων,

Bissera V. Pentcheva, “Containers of Power: Eunuchs and Reliquaries in Byzantium,” *Res. Journal of Anthropology and Aesthetics* 51 (2007): 109–20.



*Figure 7a.* Relics of the True Cross, Limburg Staurothekē, 958-963, wood, gems, gold.  
Reproduced with Permission of the Domschatz und Diözesanmuseum Limburg  
(Photo: Michael Benecke)



Figure 7b. Relics of the True Cross, Limburg Staurothēkē, 958-963, wood, gems, gold.  
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(Photo: Michael Benecke)

+ Θεός  
 μὲν  
 ἐξέτεινε  
 χεῖρας ἐν ξύλῳ ζωῆς  
 δι' αὐτοῦ τὰς ἐνεργείας  
 βρύων·  
 Κων-  
 σταν-  
 τῖνος  
 δὲ καὶ  
 Ρω-  
 μα-  
 νός  
 δεσ-  
 πό-  
 ται  
 λίθων διαγῶν συνθέσει καὶ μαργάρων ἔδειξαν αὐτὸ θαύματος πε-  
 πλησμένον καὶ πρὶν μὲν Αἴδου Χριστὸς ἐν τούτῳ πύλας θραύσας ἀνεζώωσε  
 τοὺς  
 τε-  
 θνη-  
 κό-  
 τας  
 κο-  
 σμή-  
 το-  
 ρες  
 τού-  
 του  
 δὲ  
 νῦν  
 στε-  
 φη-  
 φό-  
 ροι  
 θρά-  
 ση  
 δι' αὐ-  
 τοῦ  
 συν-  
 τρί-  
 βου-  
 σι-  
 βαρ-  
 βά-  
 ρων.

Figure 7c. The imperial epigram on the reverse of the relics of the True Cross, Limburg Staurothēkē, 958-963.

The epigram both acknowledges the beautiful new gold and gem-frame encasing the relics of the True Cross, but it also transforms the object into a weapon with which to kill the barbarians. It directly brings up the Anastasis (Resurrection) and reveals how Christ's victory over Death defines the imperial triumph. The Limburg Cross clearly sees the conflict as that between Christianity and Islam, transforming the Cross into a spear, raised to pierce the infidel. The power of the cross as weapon is a hallmark of the Macedonian dynasty. We see the same message in the processional cross given by the emperor Phokas to Mount Athos. It quotes a verse from

Ps 43(44):5. The inscription runs first down the vertical axis and then across the horizontal bar: “In Thee we will gore our enemies and in thy name/ we will bring to naught those who rise against us.”<sup>31</sup> Phokas’s Cross uses the psalm verse to equate the Cross with the spear/horn. The Limburg draws on the Descent of Christ in Hades and the descent of the words in the epigram to shape the Stauros as weapon and imagine how it plunges into the enemy’s side.

The epigram on the Limburg Staurothēkē also equates the triumph of Christ’s victory over Death at the Anastasis with imperial victory. What has not been recognized heretofore is that the iconography of the Anastasis undergoes a significant change in this exact period (second half of the tenth century); it introduces the Cross as an instrument and weapon wielded by Christ. The Cross does not appear in scenes of the Anastasis immediately after Iconoclasm. The Khludov psalter (Moscow, State Historical Museum, MS Gr. 129d, fols. 63rv, dated to the mid-ninth century) just shows Christ pulling up Adam by the hand, illustrating Ps. 67(68):1, 6 (**Fig. 8**).<sup>32</sup>

By contrast, the mosaic in the narthex of Hosios Loukas attests to a dramatic change in iconography (**Fig. 9**). Christ, triumphant, strides over the abyss of death, the broken gates of Hades, and strewn locks. His vigour manifests itself in the fluttering white cloth of his chiton, caught flying in the air like a wing. The large victorious Cross that Christ holds in his right hand counterbalances the fluttering drapery wing, anchoring the triumph over Death. Salvation has been planted in the middle of the Earth. The victory is final and channelled through the Cross.

The visual evidence as gleaned from the Joshua Roll, the Çavuşin frescoes, the Limburg Staurothēkē, and the Anastasis mosaics at Hosios Loukas reveal a consistent evolution of Christian imagery of triumph, which developed in the course of the tenth century, embedded in the Cross as weapon. And it is these same ideas that are amplified in the chants written by the elite, even by the emperor himself.

A tenth-century piece composed (text and music) by the emperor Leo VI (886-912) extolls the Cross in exactly these terms.<sup>33</sup> It is a *stichēron*, sung at

31 ἐν σοὶ τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ἡμῶν κερατιοῦμεν καὶ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ἐξουθενώσομεν τοὺς ἐπανισταμένους ἡμῖν, Ps 43(44):5, for the cross, see Robert Nelson, “And So With the Help of God: The Byzantine Art of War in the Tenth Century,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 65/66 (2011-2012): 169–92.

32 Maria Evangelatrou, “Liturgy and the Illustration of the Ninth-Century Marginal Psalters,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 63 (2009): 59–116. There is one more miniature of the Anastasis, fol. 82 Ps 81:7.

33 Enrica Follieri, *Initia hymnorum ecclesiae graecae*, vol. 1 in the series *Studi e testi*, 211–15 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1960), 293. On the hymnography of Emperor Leo VI, see Antōnios Alygizakēs, “He basilikē hymnografia (6.–11. aiōna)” [Imperial Hymnography (6th–10th Centuries)], in *Christianike Thessalonike: apo tes Ioustinianeiou epoches heos kai tes Makedonikes Dynasteias* [Christian Thessaloniki from the Era of Justinian to the Macedonian Dynasty, Thessaloniki History Centre, Municipality of Thessaloniki, complete edition no. 6, 24th Demetria, 3rd Academic Symposium] (Thessaloniki: Kentro Historias Thessalonikes tou Demou Thessalonikes, 1991), 187–261, esp. 216–20, I thank Alexander Lingas for this reference; H. J. M. Tillyard, “Ἐώθινα Ἀναστάσιμα: The Morning Hymns of the Emperor Leo,” *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 30 (January 1928): 86–108; and 31 (January 1930): 115–47; Casimir Emereau, “Hymnographi byzantini: Quorum nomina in litteras digessit notulisque adornavit (Continuatur),” *Échos d’Orient* 23, no. 135 (1924): 275–85, esp. 285; Theocharis Detorakis, “Agnōstoi hymnoi Leontos VI tou Sophou” [Unknown hymns of Leo VI the Wise], in *Myriobiblos. Essay on Byzantine Literature and Culture*, in the series *Byzantinisches Archiv* 29, ed. Theodora Antonopoulou, Sofia Kotzabassi, and Marina Loukaki (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), 131–41.





Figure 8. Christ pulling up Adam by the hand, Ps. 67(68):1, Khudov Psalter, Moscow, State Historical Museum, MS Gr. 129d, fols. 63r, mid-ninth century. Photo after Marfa V. Shchepkina, *Miniatiury Khludovskoi Psaltyri: Grecheskii Illiustrirovannyi Kodeks IX Veka* (Moscow: Isskustvo, 1977), fig. 63r.



Figure 9. Anastasis with Christ holding the victorious Cross, mosaic in the narthex of Hosios Loukas, 1011 (Photo: Boris Missirkov)

orthros (*lauds*) intercalated in the canticles for the Feast Day of 14 September, the Exaltation of the Cross (Vienna, Austrian National Library, Theol. MS Gr. 181, fols. 209rv).<sup>34</sup> The poetry drips with triumphalist language:

Come, believers, let us worship the life-giving Wood of the Cross on which Christ, the King of Glory willingly stretching his arms raised us up to our ancient blessedness,  
out of which the enemy of old had defrauded us through pleasure, making us exiles from God!

Come, believers, let us worship the wood of the Cross through which we became worthy to crush the skulls of invisible foes  
Come, all families of nations, let us honour in hymns the Cross of the Lord!

Hail, O Cross, the complete redemption of Fallen Adam,  
In you our faithful Emperors boast for through your power they mightily subdue the people of Ismael [the Arabs]!

We, Christians, now kiss you with fear and glorify the God who was nailed on you, saying:  
“Lord, you who have been nailed to it [the Cross] have mercy on us because you are good and a lover of mankind!”<sup>35</sup>

The first stanza states how the Wood of the Cross has saved humanity, but then the devil defrauded mankind, who is now exiled from paradise. The next stanza celebrates the Cross as a weapon wielded against the enemies, crushing their skulls. And these victories are celebrated with liturgical chants. The Cross is then directly addressed and it is praised because thanks to it the Byzantine emperors receive great glory, winning victories over the Arabs. The last stanza turns back to the faithful who kiss the Cross and adore Christ, asking Him to have mercy on account of his love, shown in his willing sacrifice.

The music sharpens the meaning of the poem. It signals a parallel between the great glory of Christ, the *Basileus tēs doxēs* and that of the victories which the pious Byzantine emperors achieve through the Cross (*hoi pistotatoi basileis hymōn kauchōntai*) (**Fig. 10**). The shared melody sung at these two phrases draws a parallel between Christ and the emperors: the former winning victory over death [Christ], the latter—over the Arabs. War is defined by religion: Christianity versus Islam. In this Holy War,

34 Alexander Lingas has transcribed the music from the MS. Cappella Romana recorded this chant in their album *The Lost Voices of Hagia Sophia*, CD, 2019 made in collaboration with “Icons of Sound.”

35 Δεῦτε πιστοὶ τὸ ζωοποιὸν Ἔυλον προσκυνήσωμεν ἐν ᾧ Χριστὸς ὁ Βασιλεὺς τῆς Δόξης ἔκουσίως χεῖρας ἀπλώσας ὑψώσεν ἡμᾶς εἰς τὴν ἀρχαίαν μακαριότητα οὓς πρὶν ὁ ἐχθρὸς, δι’ ἠδονῆς συλήσας ἐξορίστους Θεοῦ πεποίηκε.

Δεῦτε πιστοὶ Ἔυλον προσκυνήσωμεν δι’ οὗ ἠξιώθημεν τῶν ἀοράτων ἐχθρῶν συντριβεῖν τὰς κάρας. Δεῦτε πᾶσαι αἱ πατριαὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν τὸν Σταυρὸν τοῦ Κυρίου ὑμνοῖς τιμήσωμεν.

Χαίροις Σταυρὸ ἐ τοῦ πεσόντος Ἀδάμ ἡ τελεία λύτρωσις, ἐν σοὶ οἱ πιστότατοι Βασιλεῖς ἡμῶν καυχῶνται ὡς τῇ σῆ δυνάμει Ἰσμηλίτην λαὸν κραταιῶς ὑποτάττοντες.

Σὲ νῦν μετὰ φόβου Χριστιανοὶ ἀσπαζόμενοι καὶ ἐν σοὶ προσπαγέντι Θεῷ δοξάζομεν λέγοντες· Κύριε ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ σταυρωθεὶς ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς ὡς ἀγαθὸς καὶ φιλόανθρωπος.

English translation by Alexander Lingas.

the Romans [Byzantines] are the exiles, who now seek to return to their homeland, recapturing it from the usurper Hagarenes [Arabs].<sup>36</sup> Once again this idea is expressed through the melodic structure of the *stichēron*. The same melody of *Basileus tēs doxēs* and *hoi pistitatoi basileis hymōn kauchōntai* (marked in purple) is also used earlier to contrast paradise and expulsion. The glory of Christ had originally given humanity bliss in the gardens of delight. But then the same melodic motif on which the “King of Glory” had been sung is now used for the opposite, the defrauding humanity of their inheritance— *di’hēdonēs sylēsas*—perpetrated by Satan. The cadence, marked in grey, repeats the melodic motif previously sung about paradise, but now it signals the opposite — humanity’s status as exiles from God. This notion of exiles is important for it also sets the political rhetoric of the Macedonian dynasty of return to Holy Land and of the recapture of former Byzantine territories, which gained momentum in the second half of the tenth century.<sup>37</sup> One other prominent melodic motif is sung on “you raised us” *hypsōsen hymas* (marked in green). And then again at the very end with the phrase “have mercy on us,” *eleēson hymas*.

This *stichēron* is but a small sample of how imperial ideology of victory continuously re-invents itself in Constantinopolitan ceremonies. Here an emperor of the Macedonian dynasty uses words and music to magnify the legitimacy of imperial power secured through victories in battle. Unlike the troparion and kontakion for the same liturgical feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, Leo VI’s creation strives to express the meaning of the poetry through the melodic form (“word-painting,” is a term describing the practice when the melody of a song reflects the meaning of the words), concatenating ideas by setting them to the shared musical phrases. It is likely that this liturgical poetry stems from the music sung at the imperial chapels, but Hagia Sophia was its most glorious stage for performance.<sup>38</sup> The optical brightness and liquescent sound of the Great Church amplified the idea of divinely-sanctioned imperial might.

36 An akolouthia (memorial) service for soldiers fallen in battle or captivity composed in the tenth century attests to the rise of the idea of Holy War, promoted by the general-emperors Phokas and Tzimiskes, see Theocharis Détorakis and Justin Mossay, “Un office byzantin inédit pour ceux qui sont morts à la guerre, dans le cod. sin. gr. 734-735,” *Le Muséon* 101/1-2 (1988): 183-211. See also Meredith Riedel, “Nikephoros II Phokas and the Orthodox Military Martyrs,” *Journal of Medieval Religious Culture* 41/2 (2015): 121-47; Nelson, “And So With the Help of God”; Bissera V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 60-103; Nicholas Oikonomides, “The Concept of Holy War and Two Tenth-Century Byzantine Ivories,” in *Peace and War in Byzantium: Essays in Honor of George T. Dennis, S.J.*, eds. Timothy Miller and John Nesbitt (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 62-86; George Dennis, “Religious Services in the Byzantine Army,” in *Eulogema. Studies in Honor of Robert Taft, S. J.*, eds. E. Carr, Stefano Parenti, A. Thiermeyer, Elena Velkova (Studia Anselmiana, 110, Analecta liturgica 17) (Rome: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1993), 107-17.

37 *History of Leo the Deacon*, bk. I.2-9; bk. II.1.

38 Leo VI’s poetry and music is representative of the Jerusalem liturgy and its strive to create a closer semantic bond between the poetry sung and the east celebrated. The development of poetry and music for the Kanon exemplifies this development and the ecclesiastical and court elite in Constantinople was invested in this process, see Stig Frøyshov, “Early History of the Hagiopolitan Daily Office in Constantinople,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 74 (2020): 351-82, esp. 362-65; Bissera V. Pentcheva, “Transcendent Visions: Voice and Icon in the Byzantine Imperial Chapels” in *Icons of Sound: Voice, Architecture, and Imagination in Medieval Art*, ed. Bissera V. Pentcheva (New York: Routledge, 2020), 101-115.

Emperor Leo VI the Wise (c.886-912) *Sticheron for the Veneration of the Precious Cross* MS Vienna Theol. gr. 181  
 'Come Believers, Let US Worship the Life-Giving Cross' f 209r-209v

Mode 2: Δεῦτε Πιστοὶ

1 Δεῦ-τε πι-στοὶ τὸ ζω-ο-ποι-ὸν Ξύ-λον προσ-κυ-νή-σω-μεν,  
 Deu-te pi-stoi to zo-o-pi-on Xy-lon pros-ky-ni-so-men,

2 ἐν ᾧ Χρι-στὸς, ὁ βα-σι-λεὺς τῆς δό-ξης ἔ-κου-σί-ως  
 en o Chri-stos o Va-si-lefs tis do-xis e-ku-si-os

3 χεῖ-ρας ἀ-πλώ-σας ὑ-ψω-σεν ἡ μᾶς  
 chi-ras a-plō-sas y-psyo-sen i-mas  
 [ἔ-κει-νας] [e-kti-nas]

4 (as) εἰς τὴν ἀρ-χαί-αν μα-κα-ρι-ό-τη-τα,  
 (as) is tin ar-che-an ma-ka-ri-o-ti-ta

5 οὐς πρὶν ὁ ἔ-χθρός, δι' ἡ-δο-νῆς συ-λή-σας,  
 us prin e e-chthros, di' i-do-nis sy-li-sas,

Performing Edition by Alexander Lingas 2016

Figure 10. Sticheron Δεῦτε πιστοὶ τὸ ζωοποιὸν Ξύλον προσκυνήσομεν of emperor Leo VI (886-912), music transcribed by Alexander Lingas for the “Icons of Sound” concert, Bing Hall, Stanford University, 2016; color coding of melodic motifs by author

6

ἔ-ξο-ρί-σους Θε-οῦ πε-πί-η-κε. <sup>ue 2a.2w</sup>  
 e-xo-ri-stus The-u pe-pi-i-ke

7

Δεῦ-τε πί-στοί- μου ἔ-λθ-τε ἕ-ξ-ου-σθε ἡ-μᾶς, <sup>ue 2a.2w</sup>  
 Def-te pi-sti-mou e-lthe-tes he-xo-uste he-mas,  
Mob.

8

δι' οὗ-ν ἡ-ξί-ώ-θη-μεν, τῶν ἀ-ο-ρά-των ἐ-χθρῶν,  
 di' u-n he-xi-o-the-men, ton a-o-ra-ton e-chthron

9

οὐκ ἐ-πί-βειν τὰς κά-ρας. <sup>ue 2a.2w</sup> Δεῦ-τε πα-σαι αἱ  
 syn-tri-vin tas ka-ras. Def-te pa-sai ai

10

πα-τρι-ᾶν τῶν ἐ-θνῶν τῶν Σταυ-ρῶν τοῦ Κυ-ρί-ου ἡ-μῶν.  
 pa-tri-e-ton e-thnon ton Stav-ron tu Ky-ri-u y-mnis

11

τι-μί-σω-μεν. Χαί-ροις Σταυ-ρέ  
 ti-mi-so-men. Che-ris, Stav-re'

12  
 του Πε-σόρ = τος Ἁ-δάμ-ῆ τε-λεί-α λύ-τρο-σις  
 tu pe-son - tos A-dám- i te- lí-a ly-tro-sis

13  
 ἐν σοὶ ὁ πί-στό-τα-τοι βα-σι-λεὺς ἡ - μῶν καὶ -  
 en si i pi-stó-ta-ti va-si-lís (u e u w) ἡ - mon kaf -

14  
 χῶν - ται ὡς τῆ σῆ δυ-νά-μι, Ἰ-σμα-ῆ - λῆ - τιν  
 chón - te os ti si dy-ná-mi, I-sma-i - li - tin

15  
 λα-οί, κρα-ταί-ως ὑ-πο-τατ-τῶν-τες. u e a w  
 la-oi, kra-te - os y-po-tat-ton-tes.

16  
 Σὲ νῦν με-τὰ φό-βου, Χρι-στὸ-α-νοὶ ἀ-σπα-ζό-με-νοι  
 Se nyn me-tá fó-vu, Chri-stí-a-ní a-spa-zo-me-ni,  
 ἀ-σπα-ζό-με-θα  
 a-spa-zo-me-tha

17  
 τῷ ἐν σοὶ προ-σπα-γέν-τι Θε-οῦ  
 to en si pro-spa-gen-ti The - o

18  
 δο-ξά-ζο-μεν λέ-γον-τες· Κύ-ρι-ε ὁ ἐν αὐ-τῷ σταυ-ρω-θεὶς,  
 do-xa-zo-men lé-gon-tes: Ký-ri-e o en af-tó stav-ro-thís,  
 προ-σπα-γέν-τι  
 pro-spa-gen-ti

19  
 ἕ-ξέ-η-σον ἡ - μᾶς ὡς ἀ-γά-θος  
 e lé-i-son i - mas os a-ga-thos

20  
 καὶ φι-λάν-θρω-πος.  
 ke fi-lán-thro-pos.

## THE VIRGIN MARY AND IMPERIAL VICTORY IN THE CONSTANTINOPOLITAN LITURGY

Triumph manifested in images and chant is also channelled through the figure of the Theotokos, and here too the ideas evolve during the course of the tenth century. The emperor-generals Phokas and Tzimiskes promoted specifically the Theometer because of her role as general of the Christian armies and protectress of the city. Her glory was anchored in the memory of the Avar (621) and Arab (717-718) sieges of Constantinople. By the Middle Byzantine period special liturgical ceremonies gradually developed mobilizing the urban topography through processions and liturgies celebrated at the most important sanctuaries of Mary in Constantinople.<sup>39</sup> Eventually one icon synthesized this legacy: the Hodegetria and it appears to have been promoted by the emperor Phokas. It is this image-type that features in Hosios Loukas.

A special hymn, the Akathistos ('not-seated,' because when it is performed all participants remain standing) offers the foundation for the public ritual celebrating Mary as general and protector. The hymn was written in the fifth or sixth centuries and performed on the feast of the Annunciation, 25 March (a practice attested in the tenth century). The kontakion consists of a prologue and twenty-four oikoi (stanzas). It acquires a second prooimion (prologue) sometime after the Avar or the Arab sieges. A new commemorative service—Ἀκολουθία τοῦ Ἀκαθίστου—was established for the Fifth Saturday of Lent, and its main motivation was to express thanksgiving to Mary for her role in protecting the city.<sup>40</sup> This theme derives from the second *prooimion*, which reads as follows:<sup>41</sup>

To you invincible general, I dedicate hymns of victory,  
I, your city, saved from disasters,  
offer thanksgiving to you, Theotoke  
But since you possess unassailable might,  
deliver me now from all kinds of dangers,  
So that I may cry out to you, 'Hail, Bride unwedded!<sup>42</sup>

39 Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 36–59.

40 The typikon of Hagia Sophia from the second half of the eleventh century (Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, MS Gr. A 104) gives more detail for the celebration of this feast at the Blachernai than the tenth-century typikon (Jerusalem, Church of the Holy Cross, MS Gr. 40), see K. K. Акентьев, *Типикон Великой Церкви, Cod. Dresden A 104. Реконструкция текста по материалам архива А. А. Дмитриевского* [Reconstruction of the Text based on the Archives of A. A. Dmitrievsky] (St. Petersburg: Vizantinorossika, 2009), sect. 35, pp. 74–75, see also Wellesz, *The Akathistos Hymn* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1957), xiii–xvi. By the eleventh-century the typikon (Athens, MS GR. 788, 12th century) of the Evergetis monastery in Constantinople (founded 1054) attests also to the singing of the Akathistos at orthros after the sixth ode, *The Synaxarion of the Monastery of the Theotokos Evergetis. March-August. The Moveable Cycle*, text and trans. Robert Jordan (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 2005), 438–441.

41 Leena Mari Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Vasiliki Limberis, *Divine Heiress. The Virgin Mary and the Creation of Christian Constantinople* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994); Egon Wellesz, *The Akathistos Hymn*.

42 Τῇ ὑπερμάχῳ στρατηγῷ τὰ υικητήρια,  
ὡς λυτρωθεῖσα τῶν δεινῶν, εὐχαριστήρια,  
ἀναγράφω σοι ἡ Πόλις σου, Θεοτόκε,  
ἀλλ' ὡς ἔχουσα τὸ κράτος ἀπροσμάχητον,  
ἐκ παντοίων με κινδύνων ἐλευθέρωσον,  
ἵνα κράζω σοι, Χαῖρε, Νύμφη ἀνύμφευτε,

The words that mark the military might of Mary are *stratēgos* and then the complex adjectives all generated from *machē* battle: *hypermachos* (invincible in battle), unassailable *aprosmachētos*, and she is praised in victory and thanksgiving chants: *nikētēria* (victory) and *eucharistēria*. The Middle Byzantine melody is written in mode four plagal (G plagal), and two versions survive. The first is an elaborate melismatic melody (which was likely the one sung at the Akolouthia at the Blachernai). It is recorded in the Psaltikon (MS with music for the soloist) Florence, Bibl. Laurenziana, MS Gr. Ashburnhamensis 64, fols. 108-112, originally from the monastery of Grottaferrata, dated to 1289.<sup>43</sup> The second Middle Byzantine melody is a syllabic version (St Petersburg, MS Gr. 674, fol. 15v, ca. 1270).<sup>44</sup> My analysis focuses on the syllabic melody because it was used later on as a model for the new kontakion composed for Hosios Loukas.<sup>45</sup> The chant uses a repeated melodic motif that focuses attention on Mary's military power: the words "victory", "thanksgiving," "you, Theotokos", "invincible", "free us" are all sung to the same melodic phrase (**Fig. 11**).<sup>46</sup>

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from *Fourteen Early Byzantine Cantica*, ed. Constantine Trypanis (Vienna: Becvar, 1968), 17–39.

43 The melismatic music of the Akathistos is recorded in a MS from the monastery of Grottaferrata dated to 1289, today in Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, MS Ashburnhamensis 64, fols. 1–44, published in the facsimile *Contacarium Ashburnhamense. Codex Bibl. Laurentianae Ashburnhamensis 64. Phototypice Depictus*, ed. Carsten Høeg (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1956). The two prooimia and the first stanza are missing at the beginning of this MS, but this music appears again for the feast of St. Symeon the Stylite, Sept. 1, fols. 108–12, see Wellesz, *The Akathistos Hymn*, xiii–xiv, 3–87. I hope to return to it in a future study.

44 Jørgen Raasted, "Zur Melodie des Kontakions 'Ἡ παρθένος σήμερον'," *Cahiers de L'Institut du Moyen-âge Grec et Latin* 59 (1989): 233–46; Jørgen Raasted, "An Old Melody for Tē hypermachō stratēgō'," in *Studi di musica bizantina in onore de Giovanni Marzi*, ed. Alberto Doda (Cremona: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1995), 3–14.

45 On *proshomoia* (*contrafacta*) melodies derived from model examples (*idiomela* or *automela*), see Christian Troelsgård, "The Repertories of Model Melodies (Automela) in Byzantine Musical Manuscripts," *Cahiers de L'Institut du Moyen-âge Grec et Latin* 71 (2000): 3–27.

46 I thank Alexander Lingas for sharing his transcription from St. Petersburg MS Gr. 647, fol. 15v.



Τῆ ὄ - περ - μά - χῆ - στρα - τῆ - γῆ - τῆ - ρι - α,  
 ὡς λυτ - ρω - θεῖ - σα τῶν δε ι νῶν εὐ χα - ρι - στή - ρι - α,  
 ἄ - να - γρά - φω σοι ἡ Πό - λις σου Θε - ο - τό - κε,  
 ἀλλ' ὡς ἔ - χου - σα τὸ κρᾶ - τος ἄ - προσ - μά - χη - τον  
 ἐκ παν - τοί - ων με - κιν - δύ - νων ἐ - λευ - θέ - ρω - σον,  
 ἵ - να κρᾶ - ζω σοι, Χαῖ - ρε, Νύ - μφη ἄ - νύ - φευ τε  
 ε α - γι - ε

Figure 11. Music of the Akathistos, based on Alexander Lingas's transcription, St. Petersburg, MS Gr. 674, fol. 15v. (Image: Laura Steenberge)

A leap of a fourth (G to c) marks the beginning of the phrase, it continues climbing to d and even higher, reaching e as a grace note (e is the upper limit of mode four plagal). The refrain “bride unwedded” is an amplification of the same melodic motif with further melismas. The leap at the beginning (G to c) creates a sonic attack, which can bring out the brilliance of sound in a marble-revetted domed interior. The effect was further amplified because the soloist, recognized for this ceremony as the *archōn tōn kontakīōn*, sang from the ambo of the Blachernai, thus lifting his bright voice over the heads of the gathered multitude.<sup>47</sup>



Figure 12. Map of Constantinople developed by C. Plakidas after R. Janin, Constantinople Byzantine. Développement urbain et repertoire topographique (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1964). (Image: Cplakidas, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons)

The Akolouthia of the Akathistos starts after the completion of the evening liturgy at Hagia Sophia with a procession that first stops at the Forum of Constantine and then proceeds up the right colonnaded thoroughfare to arrive at the church of the Blachernai in the northwest (Fig. 12). The

47 Акентьев, Титикон Великой Церкви, 75.

patriarch burns incense around the ambo, then the *archōn tōn kontakiōn* ascends the platform, makes three prostrations and begins singing the kontakion. After the *prooimion* and the first three stanzas, the rest of the choir and the congregation take over and sing the remaining twenty-one stanzas.<sup>48</sup> The Blachernai carries the memory of past sieges, specifically the one in 626 and celebrates Mary's unfaltering protection. Singing in thanksgiving to her lodges this memory even deeper in its roots, tying the location with sensorial experience. And as the text of the kontakion unfolds, the Theotokos's invincible power is recognized to flow from her supernatural virginal motherhood. The Akathistos is anchored in the Blachernai, making this monastery synonymous with the unbreachable land walls of Constantinople.<sup>49</sup>

A separate feast celebrated on August 16 is set for the commemoration of the Arab siege of 717-718 of Constantinople.<sup>50</sup> The ritual unfolds in the southwestern corner of the land walls at the Golden Gate: the magnificent and imposing starting point for triumphal processions.<sup>51</sup> Thus this second ritual becomes firmly attached to the memory of imperial triumphal processions and victory ideology.<sup>52</sup> The Typikon of the Great Church prescribes a procession that starts at Hagia Sophia. The psaltai sing from the ambo the troparion "Blessed are you, Christ our God, for your mercy caused amazement to all in the city of your unblemished Mother; for through her prayers, you have with your arm redeemed your people from the expectation of the enemies, giving might to our emperors, as you are the lover of mankind!"<sup>53</sup> This troparion celebrates Constantinople as the city of Mary, protected by her intercession and kept safe in the embrace of Christ. The chant also solicits might for the emperors. Sung in Hagia Sophia, this troparion would have brought all the splendour into the space, showing how divine favour rains on the emperors and people of Constantinople. A procession then unfolds; it first stops at the Forum of Constantine and then wends its way to the Golden Gate. Here chants such as the Magnificat (Lk1:46-48) Μεγαλύνει ἡ ψυχὴ μου τὸν Κύριον and troparia of thanksgiving for protection and victory are sung. The chant "Invincible wall," performed on that occasion appropriately matches the content of the song with the site where it is sung: the walls of Constantinople and the majestic, triumphal gate. The poem states: "You are the invincible wall of Christians, Virgin Theotokos, for when we turn to you we remain unharmed, and when we

48 Акентьев, *Типикон Великой Церкви*, 74–75.

49 Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 37–59. For the Late and Post-Byzantine memory of the Akathistos, see, Ioannis Spatharakis, *The Pictorial Cycles of the Akathistos Hymn for the Virgin* (Leiden: Alexandros Press, 2005); Alice Sullivan, "Visions of Byzantium: The Siege of Constantinople in Sixteenth-Century Moldavia," *Art Bulletin* 99/4 (2017): 31–68.

50 Le *Typicon de la Grande Église*. Ms. Saint-Croix n. 40, Xe siècle. *Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes*, ed. Juan Mateos, 2 vols. (Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1963), I, 372–77.

51 Cyril Mango, "The Triumphal Way of Constantinople and the Golden Gate," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 54 (2000): 173–88, esp. 175–76.

52 McCormick, *Eternal Victory*.

53 Εὐλογητὸς εἶ, Χριστὲ ὁ Θεὸς ὑμῶν, ὅτι ἐθανμάστωσας τὸ ἔλεός ἐν τῇ πόλει τῆς ἀχράντου σου Μητρὸς· ταῖς γὰρ αὐτῆς ἱκεσίαις, ἐλυτρώσω ἐν βραχίονί σου τὸν λαόν σου τῆς προσδοκίας τῶν ἐχθρῶν, διδοὺς ἰσχύν τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν ὑμῶν, ὡς φιλόνητος, *Typikon CP*, I, 372.

fall into sin, we have you as intercessor. So, in thanksgiving we now cry out to you, 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you'.<sup>54</sup> The supernatural virginal motherhood is the unassailable wall against all enemies. The listener will subconsciously link Mary's power in war with the impregnable land walls of Constantinople. In addition to her invincibility in battle, the Virgin generously pours out her love for humanity in her unfaltering intercession. The troparion sung at the Golden Gate in commemoration of the Arab siege of 717-718 strengthens the belief in Mary as the *victrix* and protectress of the city: the *poliouchos*.



Figure 13. Nomisma histamenon of emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (963-969). The Theotokos is on the reverse, holding the scepter together with the emperor. Dumbarton Oaks Coin and Seal Collection, BZC.1957.4.82. (Image: Dumbarton Oaks Collection)

Not by chance, Nikephoros Phokas selected this day—16 August 963—for his coronation.<sup>55</sup> He was the *domestikos of the Scholai* of the East (supreme commander of the imperial armies);<sup>56</sup> he was renowned for his conquest of Crete (961) and numerous victories against the Arabs, and a recent success at Aleppo.<sup>57</sup> His achievements against the Arabs legitimized his usurpation of imperial power. By entering Constantinople on 16 August, he presented the Virgin Mary as the invisible and invincible force guiding his successes at the battlefield. He entwined his victories over the Arabs with Mary's power as *poliouchos*, showing the citizens of Constantinople that he was rightfully the chosen one, who deserved the imperial crown. His gold coins soon gave a visual expression of this politico-religious idea; for the first time, the emperor shares the obverse with the Virgin and together they hold the imperial sceptre (Fig. 13). The multitude met Phokas, who

54 Τείχος ἀκαταμάχητον ἡμῶν τῶν Χριστιανῶν ὑπάρχεις, Θεοτόκε Παρθένε, προς σε γὰρ καταφεύγοντες ἄτρωτοι διαμένομεν, καὶ πάλιν ἁμαρτάνοντες ἔχομεν σε πρεσβεύουσαν. Διὸ εὐχαριστοῦντες βοᾶμέν σοι Χαῖρε κεχαριτωμένη, ὁ Κύριος μετὰ σοῦ, *Typikon CP*, I, 374–75.

55 De Cer. Bk. I, ch. 96, Constantine Prophyrogenetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, trans. by Ann Moffatt and Maxeme Toll (Canberra: Austrian Association for Byzantine Studies, 2012), I, 433–40.

56 On the power vested in this office, see McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*, 199.

57 On Phokas's victories in the East, see the summary in the *PmbZ*, no. 25535.

had just disembarked at the Golden Gate and proceeded to acclaim him as the victor against the Arabs and the force through which the sceptres of the emperors were strengthened.<sup>58</sup> And while the Book of Ceremonies does not mention Mary, it is the chosen date of 16 August that shows the complete reversal in Byzantine history, from the terror of the Arab siege of Constantinople of 717-718 to the return of the Christian empire's offensive, triumphantly reclaiming its territories in Cilicia. Phokas was the force that changed the tide, transforming Byzantine policy from defensive to offensive war and crowning this turn with victory.<sup>59</sup> In celebrating his coronation on the day commemorating the Arab siege, he proclaimed himself as the bringer of victory (*Nikē-phoros*) supported by the Theotokos. Mary became synonymous with imperial victory and by extension—with political legitimacy.

The Hodegetria icon of Mary eventually becomes inserted in the same context of 16 August and then it is also implanted in the memory of the Avar siege as celebrated by the Akathistos. Through indirect evidence, it appears that Phokas had a hand in this development. The *lectio Triodii* (BHG 1063), an edifying text summarizing the divine intervention during the Avar 626 and Arab 717-718 sieges of Constantinople, likely read in the liturgy, specifically credits this icon with the breaking of the attacks against the Arabs: "And the holy people of the city carrying the sacred wood of the precious and life-giving Cross and the venerable icon of the Theometor Hodegetria, circled the walls [of the city], imploring God with tears."<sup>60</sup> The *lectio Triodii* names the Hodegetria and the Cross as the two palladia carried in procession on the walls of Constantinople that brought about the miraculous rescue of the city from the Arabs. The text is not dated precisely; it was written sometime in the late tenth century.<sup>61</sup>

But the emergence of this text coincides with the appearance and spread of the Hodegetria iconographic type.<sup>62</sup> While the monastery of the Hodegoi is first mentioned in the early ninth century, it is not until the late eleventh century that texts attest to the miraculous icon of the Hodegetria and its Tuesday processions.<sup>63</sup> Yet, evidence from outside Constantinople suggests that the icon type of the Hodegetria was already linked to supernatural protection and Mary's invincible virginal motherhood in battle. Several processional crosses from Georgia commissioned by the Bagratid prince, David III of Tao (930-1000) attest to the political prestige

58 De Cer. I, 96.

59 McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*, 201-2.

60 ὁ δὲ τῆς πόλεως ἱερός λαός τὸ σεπτὸν ξύλον τοῦ τιμίου καὶ ζωοποιοῦ σταυροῦ καὶ τὴν σεβάσμιαν εἰκόνα τῆς Θεομήτορος ὁδηγητρίας ἐπαγόμενοι τὸ τεῖχος περιεκύκλουν σὺν δάκρυσιν τὸν Θεὸν ἰλεούμενοι, PG 92, col. 1352D; Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 50-52, 58.

61 Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 50-52, 58.

62 Mostly ivories, see Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 90-91.

63 Among the earliest witnesses of the Hodegetria icon and the Hodegōn monastery is a Latin pilgrim's account of Constantinople dated to the late eleventh century before the First Crusade, see Krijnie Ciggaar, "Une description de Constantinople dans le Tarragonensis 55," *Revue des Études Byzantines* 53 (1995): 117-40, esp. 127-28. See also the account of the English pilgrim of the late eleventh century, Krijnie Ciggaar, "Une description de Constantinople traduite par un pèlerin anglais," *Revue des Études Byzantines* 24 (1976): 211-67, esp. 249.

and spiritual appeal of the Hodegetria.<sup>64</sup> Tao or Tayk (Tao-Klarjeti) was a march land between Georgia and Armenia and from the early ninth century an ally of Byzantium; its rulers often carried the high Byzantine courtly title of *curopalates*.<sup>65</sup> David, the prince of Tao, was close to Bardas Phokas the Younger, a nephew of emperor Nikephoros Phokas. David at first supported the prophyrogennētoi Basil II and Constantine against the rebellion of Bardas Skleros in 976-979.<sup>66</sup> And because of his loyalty to the emperors, David of Tao was given the title of *curopalates* in 979.<sup>67</sup> Yet David later sided against Basil II in a new revolt of Bardas Phokas the Younger in 988-989.<sup>68</sup> David's allegiance betrays the close bond between the Phokas family and rulers of Tao; most likely developed earlier on when Bardas the Younger was the duke of Chaldia, in charge of with the elite Byzantine frontier army stationed at the border with Tao Klarjeti.<sup>69</sup> When Basil II quenched the revolt in 979, he made David bequeath his territories to the Byzantine empire after his death as a punishment. When David passed away in the year 1000, Basil II marched in and annexed his lands.<sup>70</sup>

Both the *curopalates* title that opened connections with the imperial capital and the allegiance with the Phokas family explain how new Constantinopolitan iconographic formulae of the late tenth century flowed into Tao. And it is this link that reveals the prominence of the Hodegetria-type on liturgical objects commissioned by David of Tao. Two crosses—the Brillī one and the large processional one from Lahil—feature two versions of the Hodegetria-type: a standing and a bust versions.<sup>71</sup> The Tsilkani icon offers another prominent example from the late tenth century (with additions in the twelfth).<sup>72</sup> What this concentration of Hodegetria-type images suggests is that under the inspiration of the Phokas family, the Hodegetria icon and image-type came to be identified as the *poliouchos* of Constantinople, the victorious standard against the Arabs, and an imperial palladium. The prestige of this icon fostered the spread of its iconographic formula in the court of David of Tao. The Georgian evidence attests to how the Hodegetria became synonymous with political power and invincible strength in battle. And it is this image-type that appears in Hosios Loukas in two key locations of the mosaic programme.

64 On David of Tao, see *PmbZ* no. 21432.

65 Sandro Nikolaishvili, *Byzantium and the Georgian World c. 900-1210. Ideology of Kingship and Rhetoric in the Byzantine Periphery* (Ph.D. dissertation, Central European University, Budapest, 2019), 49–92. I thank Eka Gedevanishvili for sharing this reference with me.

66 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ch. 16, sections. 1–11. On Bardas Phokas the Younger, see *PmbZ*, no. 20784.

67 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ch. 16, sect. 9; Nikolaishvili, *Byzantium and the Georgian World c. 900-1210*, 60–67.

68 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ch. 16, sections 16–20.

69 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ch. 15, sect. 1; ch. 16, sect. 9.

70 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ch. 16, sect. 20; Nikolaishvili, *Byzantium and the Georgian World c. 900-1210*, 60–67.

71 Nikolaishvili, *Byzantium and the Georgian World c. 900-1210*, 20–21 (establishment of Iviron monastery at Mt. Athos with the spoils of the revolt suppression of 979), 32–91; Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 70–74. On David III of Tao's patronage, see also Zaza Shirladze, "The Oldest Murals at Oshki Church: Byzantine Church Decoration and Georgian Art," *Eastern Christian Art* 7 (2010): 97–134; Zaza Shirladze, *The Frescoes of Otkhta Eklesia* (Tbilisi: 2009), 348–52. On the establishment of Iviron monastery at Athos with the spoils of 979, see Giorgi Tcheishvili, "Georgian Perceptions of Byzantium in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," in *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium*, edited by Anthony Eastmond (Aldershot: Ashagte, 2001), 199–210.

72 L. Khuskivadze, "Un monument géorgienne de peinture encaustique," in *Atti del primo simposio internazionale sull'arte georgiana* (Milan: 1977), 149–58.

## HOSIOS LOUKAS

So far, the analysis of Constantinopolitan music, liturgy, and art reveals how Byzantine imperial ideology developed the rhetoric of victory against the Arabs and by the middle of the tenth-century, it put words into action. The *stichēron* of Leo VI for the Feast of the Exaltation offers an early example of this trend in foreign policy. But starting with Constantine VII (Leo VI's son) (944-959 as sole ruler) who placed members of the Phokas family in leading positions to operate the military theatre in the East, the empire saw a new turn of fortune. As a result, during the second half of the tenth century defensive wars became offensive, victories followed, and large swaths of land and cities in Cilicia were reclaimed by Byzantium. Nikephoros Phokas's conquest of Crete in 961 is especially meaningful in this respect, as it secured the Byzantine maritime control of the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Phokas benefited from changes in the organization of the military. The elite cavalry formerly residing in Constantinople could now be stationed at the borders of the empire (especially in the Cilician frontier) and held ready for attack. Border regions, called *kleisourai* (or marches) or *ta akritika thēmata* or *ta armeniaka*, because the Armenians formed the largest contingent of these soldiers-colonizers, had their armies held at the ready for attacks. The new position of *katepano* (dux, duke) was created especially for the leaders of these border armies and more authority and resources concentrated in their hands. As a result, these commanders were in position at moments of political insecurity of the throne to lay claims to imperial power (Phokas and Tzimiskes being two successful examples).<sup>73</sup> But they were also in possession of enormous resources to sponsor art.

The construction and decoration of Hosios Loukas shows the power of one such *katepano* and several *stratēgoi*. The katholikon church of Hosios Loukas and its mosaic decoration also attest to the great significance of the conquest of Crete and the pride in the Byzantine victories over the Arabs.<sup>74</sup> While this monument is situated in the Byzantine West (as Greece is part of the sphere of control of the *domestikos* of the West), the monumental mosaic program cherishes and celebrates the great conquests of the East: Crete and Cilicia. Its saint, Hosios Loukas, led a peaceful life, dying in 953. Yet the mosaics in the second church, completed in 1011 demonstrate a triumphalist message aligned with imperial ideology. It is precisely in the interval between Hosios Loukas's death and the building of the mosaic-decorated katholikon that these changes in the perception of the saint occur and he becomes infused with the victorious rhetoric of the resurgent empire.

<sup>73</sup> McGeer, *Sowing the Dragons Teeth*, 199–22.

<sup>74</sup> Carolyn L. Connor, "Hosios Loukas as a Victory Church," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 33/3 (1992): 293–308.

## SITE, SAINT, PATRONS

Hosios Loukas (b. before 900–d. Feb. 7, 953) was a native of the village of Kastorion in Phocis, Greece.<sup>75</sup> He excelled in ascesis; from early childhood he abstained from cheese and even fruit and subsisted mostly on water, vegetables and some bread. He acquired fame with his prayer, by means of which he brought about healings and prophecies (for instance, he predicted the conquest of Crete). During his charismatic prayer, he appeared uplifted and levitating inches from the ground.<sup>76</sup> His feast day is 7 February. He was almost immediately included in the Metaphrastian synaxarion of Constantinople, which speaks to the saint's and his followers' good connections in the imperial capital.<sup>77</sup>

Who are the patrons of Hosios Loukas? The *Vita* of the saint (BHG 994) gives evidence only for the first church at the site and the oratory.<sup>78</sup> Hosios Loukas kept contacts with several influential people, connected with the court of Constantinople. Pothos Argyros, the *stratēgos* of Hellas, for instance sought the prophetic powers of the saint.<sup>79</sup> Another general of Hellas, Krinitēs, sponsored the construction of the first church at the site in 946, dedicated to St. Barbara.<sup>80</sup> Six months after the saint's death in 953, a eunuch-monk from Constantinople arrived at the site. He embellished the oratory (cell/tomb), which was now a site of veneration.<sup>81</sup> Two years later in 955, the church of St Barbara was completed by the efforts of the monks; it enclosed the cell and oratory of Hosios Loukas in a tower at the SW corner (Fig. 14).<sup>82</sup>

It is this church that was graced with a fresco depicting Joshua addressing the Archangel Michael (Fig. 15). The scene communicates the growing religious fervour in the Byzantine wars against the Arabs: pitching Christians versus Muslims. The fresco confronts the complexity of otherness. The headcloth and helmet of Joshua carry Kufic inscription.<sup>83</sup> This detail purposely destabilizes Joshua's own identity. Yet, his Christianity is reconfirmed by the question he poses to the Archangel both by his raised

75 PmbZ no. 24762.

76 *The Life and Miracles of Saint Luke of Steiris. Text, Translation and Commentary*, by Carolyn Connor and W. Robert Connor (Brookline: Hellenic College Press, 1994), chs. 3 (food), 7, 20, 23 (prayer), 45 (healing through prayer), 60 (prediction about the Byzantine conquest of Crete) 68–85 (posthumous miracles).

77 *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae e codice Sirmondiano nunc Berolinensi*, ed. Hypolite Delehaye et al. (*Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum*, 63) (Brussels: Apud socios Bollandianos, 1902), 450.

78 Ὅσιος Λουκάς, ὁ βίος τοῦ ὁσίου Λουκᾶ τοῦ Στειριώτη, ed. Dimitris Sofianos (Athens: Akritas, 1986); English trans. *The Life and Miracles of Saint Luke of Steiris*.

79 *The Life and Miracles of Saint Luke of Steiris*, ch. 58.

80 *The Life and Miracles of Saint Luke of Steiris*, ch. 59; Connor, "Hosios Loukas as a Victory Church," 295; Carolyn L. Connor, *Art and Miracles in Medieval Byzantium: The Crypt at Hosios Loukas and Its Frescoes* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 108.

81 *The Life and Miracles of Saint Luke of Steiris*, ch. 64 (Hosios Loukas gives instructions to the priest Grigorios how to set up the tomb), ch. 66 (the posthumous embellishment); Dimitra Koutoula, "The Tomb of the Founder-Saint," in *Founders and Refounders of Byzantine Monasteries*, ed. Margaret Mullett (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 2007), 210–33, esp. 220–34.

82 *The Life and Miracles of Saint Luke of Steiris*, ch. 67; Bogdanović, "Framing Glorious Spaces in the Monastery of Hosios Loukas," 168–70; Eustatios Stikas, *Τὸ οἰκοδομικὸν χρονικὸν τῆς Μονῆς Ὁσίου Λουκᾶ Φωκίδου* (Athens: Athēnais Archaialogikēs Hetaireias, 1970), 114–27; Slobodan Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans: From Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 297–300.

83 So far, the scholarship on the Kufic inscriptions have argued that they do not form actual words, Walker, "Pseudo-Arabic Inscriptions and the Pilgrim's Path at Hosios Loukas," 99–123.



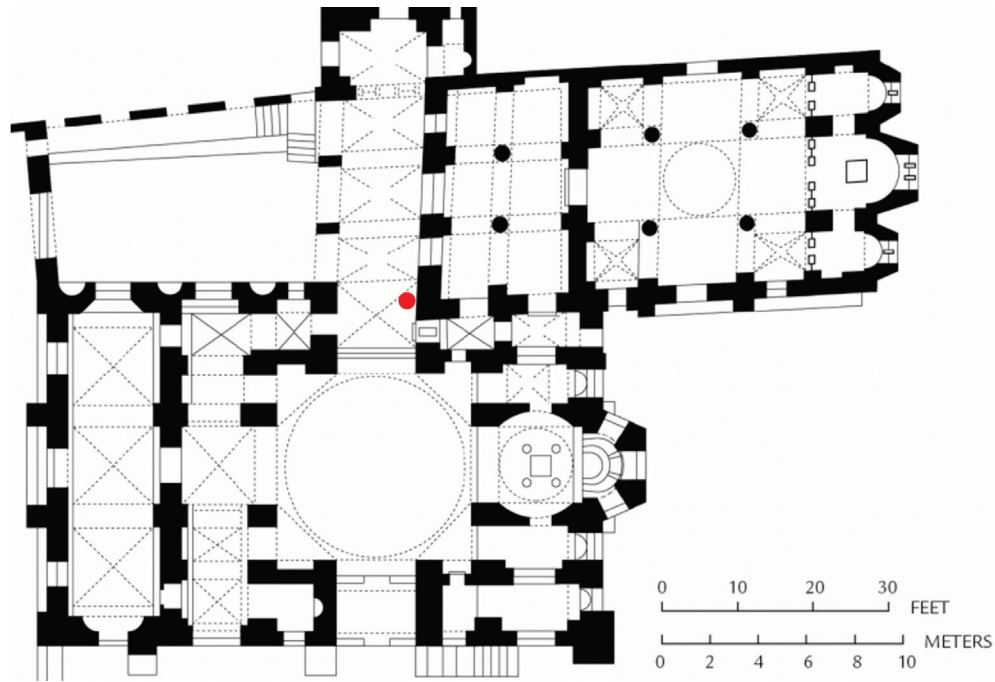


Figure 14. Plan of Hosios Loukas, drawn by Fred C. Kleiner and Christin J. Mamiya in *Gardner's Art Through the Ages: The Western Perspective* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2005), ch. 9, fig. 0919

hand in a gesture of speech and the actual words written above: ἡμετέρος εἶ ἢ τῶν ὑπεναντίων; “Are you one of us or of the enemies? (Joshua 5:13-15). The ambiguity of Joshua’s headgear is resolved in the clarity of his interpellation of the unknown commander. This image of Joshua at the church of St Barbara attests to how the Joshua story epitomizes the Byzantine offensive against the Arabs. The war is defined as the Christians’ return to their homeland: the exiles reclaiming their possessions. Already this message is invested in the poetry and melodic structure of the *stichēron* of the emperor Leo VI (Fig. 10), and then repeated visually in the Joshua roll (a scroll whose format of unrolling symbolized the victorious march of the Byzantine forces in the East) and in the frescoes of the emperor Phokas in Cappadocia (964-965) (Figs. 4, 5). The choice of Joshua for the fresco along with the dedication of this first church to St Barbara—the protectress of soldiers and weapons—reveals the pride of the Byzantine *stratēgos* of Hellas, Krinites. He was a scion of the Armenian aristocracy of Taron and held leading positions in the Byzantine army.<sup>84</sup>

But even more powerful was the third patron—Theodore/Theodosios—who initiated the construction of the *katholikon*, and as argued here, decorated it with mosaics. The surviving evidence includes the liturgy of the *anakomidē* (transference of the relics of the saint to the *katholikon*) for 3 May and a funerary stele. The celebration of the *anakomidē* coincided that year with the Feast of the Ascension. In the eleventh century such occurrence happened only three times, in 1011, 1022 and 1095. Since the same text

84 *PmbZ* no. 24202 other possibilities include nos. 24194, or 2401. On the Krinites, see also N. Adontz, “Le Taronites en Arménie et a Byzance,” *Byzantion* 10/2 (1935): 531–51, esp., 535–40.



Figure 15. Fragment of the scene of Joshua speaking to the Archangel Michael, SW corner of the First Church of St. Barbara, fresco, late tenth century. (Photos: Boris Missirkov, author)

also mentions incursions of the “Scythians” (Bulgarians), and Byzantium managed to subdue the Bulgarian state only in 1018, these two facts make the earliest date—1011—the most plausible.<sup>85</sup>

The next piece of evidence is the funerary stele of a certain Theodore/Theodosios (Fig. 16). It reads as follows:

God endowed me with many honours,  
 those coming from ancestry as well as those coming from the emperors,  
 but as I strive to attain salvation, the names changed as follows:  
 Theodore became Theodosios.  
 the untouchable *anthypatos* himself became a monk;  
 the *patrikos* shrank to a [spiritual] father;  
 the *katepano* submitted to the haughty;  
 the *vestes* became a mystic in hairy garb.  
 He did not take with him any part of his fortune,  
 except for this coffin that covers the dead;  
 this is the only earthly gain.<sup>86</sup>

85 Chatzidakis, “A propos de la date et du fondateur de Saint Luc,” 127–50. Chatzidakis’s 1011 is accepted by the architectural historians, Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 383–87 and Jelena Bogdanović, *The Framing of Sacred Space: The Canopy and the Byzantine Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 195–206, esp. 197–98.

86 † τὰς κλήσεις πᾶσας φερωνοίμως πλουτήσας  
 τὰς τε γενηκᾶς καὶ τὰς ἐκ βασιλέων  
 ἐν τῷ ἔράν με τεύξασθαι σωτηρίας  
 αἱ κλήσεις πάλιν μετημείφθησαν οὕτως  
 Θεόδωρος πρὶν Θεοδοσίος αὐθης  
 ἀνθύπατος δ’ ἄψαυτος, αὐτὸς μονάζων

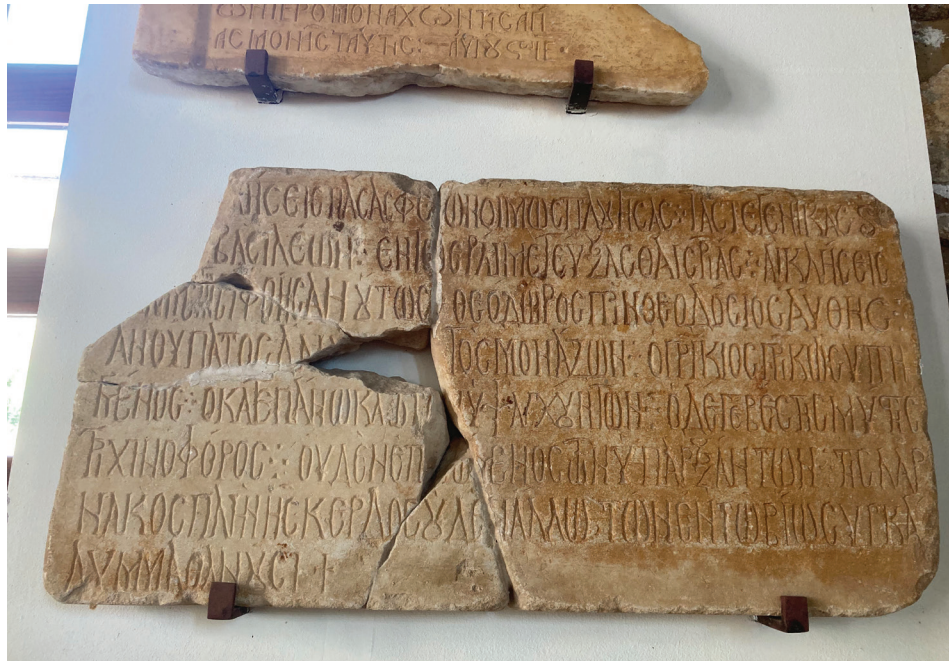


Figure 16. Funerary stele of Theodore/Theodosios, katepano and later hegoumenos of Hosios Loukas, late tenth/early eleventh century. (Photo: author)

Already in the first line Theodore/Theodosios states that he has aristocratic ancestry (*kleos* or illustrious reputation coming from birth and enriched by titles and offices bestowed on him by the emperors. The plural for the rulers suggests the time of Basil II and Constantine VIII (976-1025). Theodore/Theodosios then proceeds to enumerate the honours received from the emperors: *anthypathos*, *patrikios*, *katepano*, and *vestēs* and how he cast all of them off for the monastic habit.<sup>87</sup> He became a *hegoumenos*: “the *patrikios* shrank to a [spiritual] father.” He renounced all his honours and riches, his only passion being the tomb. The inscription clearly states the high status of Theodore and his possession of enormous means as a *katepano*. A seal of a hitherto unknown *katepano* of Italy possibly identifies the same person (Fig. 17). It dates from the late tenth and early eleventh century.<sup>88</sup> The seal helps us abandon the earlier hypothesis of

ὁ πατρίκιος πατρικῶς ὑπηγμένος  
ὁ κατεπάνω κάτω τῶν ὑψαυχούντων  
ὁ δε γε βέστη μύστης τριχηνοφόρος  
οὐδὲν ἐπαγόμενος τῶν ὑπαρξάντων  
τῆς λάρνακος πλήν ἧς κέρδος οὐδὲν ἄλλω  
τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ συγκάλυμμα θανοῦσι †

Greek and English trans. by Nicholas Oikonomides, “The First Century of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992): 245–255, esp. 246.

<sup>87</sup> *Anthypatos* and *vestes* clearly mark the high social status; *anthypatos* is the sixth dignity in the hierarchical order and *vestes* is right next to it, and both are in the highest category of superior dignitaries, see Nicolas Oikonomides, *Les listes des préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles* (Paris: CNRS, 1972), 49, 137, 245, 287, 292, esp. 294. *Katepano* or duke is ninth on the list, Oikonomides, *Les listes des préséance byzantines*, 263, 303, 344, 354.

<sup>88</sup> ΑΙΘΕΙΟΔΙΟΙΘ: Ὁ ἅγιος Θεόδωρος  
[Θ]εόδ[ω]ρος (?) πατρίκι(ος) [(καί)] [κ]ατεπάν(ω) [Τ]αλίας

from *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art*, vol. I. *Italy, North of the Balkans, North of the Black Sea*, eds. N. Oikonomides and J. Nesbitt (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1991), I, no. 2.6 (BZS.1955.1.2715), <https://www.doaks.org/resources/seals/byzantine-seals/>



Figure 17. Seal of Theodore, katepano of Italy, second half of the tenth century, Dumbarton Oaks Coin and Seal Collection, BZS.1955.1.2715 (Image: Dumbarton Oaks Collection)

Oikonomides, who claimed that while 1011 was the date of the completion of the architecture, the mosaics were only done in the early 1040s and their patron was Theodore Leobachos.<sup>89</sup>

Oikonomides identified the Theodore/Theodosios of the stele with the late abbot Theodosios Leobachos mentioned in the list of the religious confraternity of the icon of the Virgin Naupaktissa at Thebes from 1048 (surviving in a copy from the 1090s).<sup>90</sup> The Leobachoi were an important landowning family in Thebes, but despite the honours they carried, none of their members seems to have been a military leader (a *stratēgos* or a *katepano*).<sup>91</sup> The seal, by contrast, suggests that the Theodore/Theodosios of the inscription is a different individual, whose life likely did not stretch to the 1040s and who clearly held a commanding position in the Byzantine army prior to becoming a monk and then hegoumenos of Hosios Loukas. This would also explain the wealth he could offer for the construction and decoration of the katholikon. In splendour and beauty, this interior matches what elite Constantinopolitan foundations would have displayed.

The crypt was also completed in 1011 and has frescoes dated between 1011 and 1028.<sup>92</sup> It has images that reveal the early leadership of the

BZS.1955.1.2715.

<sup>89</sup> Oikonomides, "The First Century of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas," 245–55. Theodore Leobachos does not have an entry in *PmbZ*. This dating hypothesis was recycled most recently by Robin Cormack, "Viewing the Mosaics of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas, Daphni, and the Church of Santa Maria Assunta, Torcello," in *New Light on Old Glass: Recent Research on Byzantine Mosaics and Glass*, eds. Christ Entwistle and Liz James (London: British Museum, 2013), 242–53.

<sup>90</sup> John Nesbitt and John Wita, "A Confraternity of the Comnenian Era," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 68 (1975): 360–84.

<sup>91</sup> Nikolas Svoronos, "Recherches sur le cadastre byzantin et la fiscalité aux XIe et XIIe siècles: le cadastre de Thèbes," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 83/1 (1959): 1–145, esp. 40–43, 46, 48, 50–53, 73–75; Oikonomides, "The First Century of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas," 249. *PmbZ* has no entry for the Leobachoi.

<sup>92</sup> Chatzidakis proposes that frescoes in the chapels in the katholikon date to 1011, while the frescoes in the crypt between 1011–1030s, Chatzidakis, "A propos de la date et du fondateur de Saint Luc," 150. Connor suggests a date before 1028, see Connor, *Art and Miracles in Medieval Byzantium*, 65. By contrast, Theano Chatzidakis-Barchas has proposed a much later date between 1035–1055, see Chatzidakis-Barchas, *Les peintures murales de Hosios Loukas. Les chapelles occidentales* (Athens: Christianikē archaiologikē hetaireia,

monastic community. The abbot Theodosios appears here twice: first on the left wall of the entrance, leading the row of three *hegoumenoi* (likely Theodosios, Athanasios, Philotheos) (Fig. 18) and a second time in the southeastern domical vault. At the entrance, the figures of the fathers raise their hands in prayer before Christ and also communicating across the physical space with the fresco of Hosios Loukas, who also beseeches the Pantokrator on the behalf of his monastery. The composition has an eschatological meaning, visualizing the scenario of the Last Judgment and hope for Salvation. The same three *hegoumenoi* together with Hosios Loukas appear again in medallions in the southeastern domical vault (Fig. 19).<sup>93</sup>

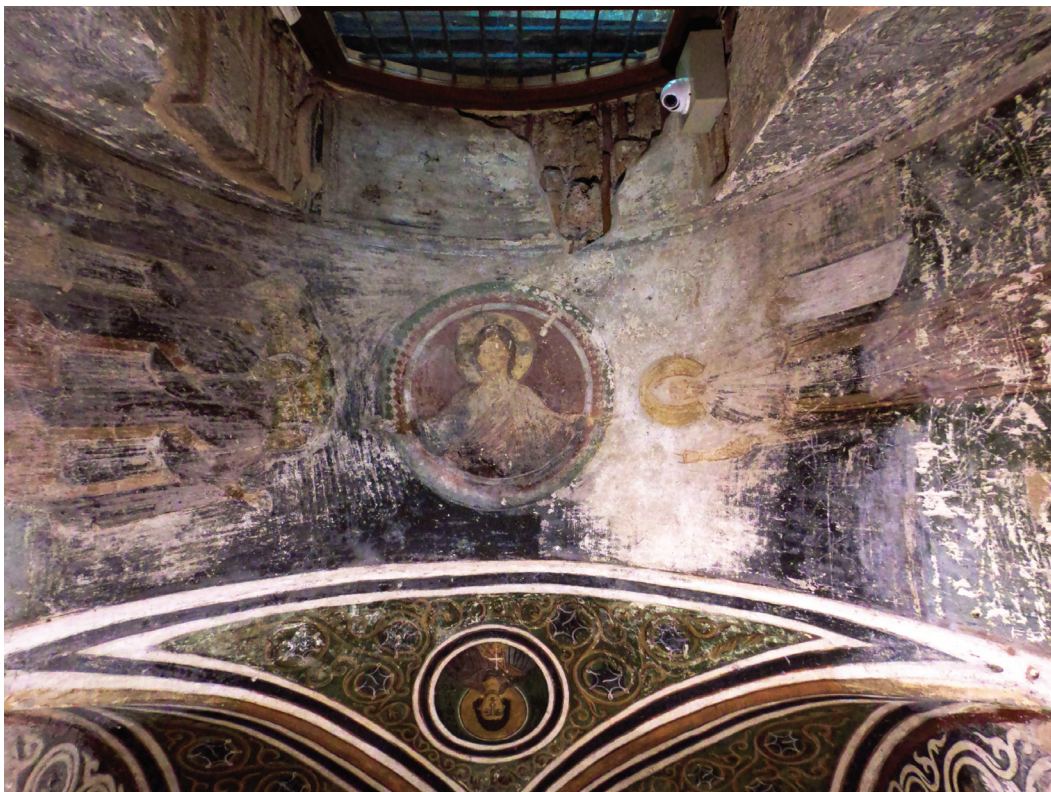


Figure 18. Fresco of the Hosios Loukas Monastic community led by the hegoumenoi Theodosios, Athanasios, and Philotheos praying before Christ; Hosios Loukas holding a scroll and interceding is shown on the wall across from the monks.  
(Photo: Boris Missirkov)

1982), 183–88.

93 Chatzidakis, "A propos de la date et du fondateur de Saint Luc," 140–44; Connor, *Art and Miracles in Medieval Byzantium*, 30–32, 40–42. I do not agree with Carolyn Connor's identifications of the *hegoumenoi* Athanasios and Loukas in the medallions as outsiders. Given the resemblance between these portraits and the figures at the entrance fresco, it clear that these are the same individuals and local leaders of the monastic community at Hosios Loukas. A second image of the abbot Philotheos appears in the NE chapel right before the diakonikon, see Nano Chatzidakis, "The Abbot Philotheos, Founder of the Katholikon of Hosios Loukas. Old and New Observations," in *New Light on Old Glass: Recent Research on Byzantine Mosaics and Glass*, 254–59.



Figure 19. Portraits of the hegoumenoi Loukas, Theodosios, Athanasios, and Philotheos in the SE domical vault of the crypt at Hosios Loukas, 1011-1028 (Photo: Boris Missirkov)

In addition to the frescoes, the *anakomidē* office firmly attests that both the architecture and the mosaics were completed at the same time and that the *hegoumenos* Philotheos (the same individual represented in the frescoes) presided over the ceremony. Ode six for the Kanon written for orthros for the Feast on 3 May 1011 states:

You made yourself the holy church of the Trinity and the Panaghia, o Loukas, all blessed; Philotheos [the current abbot] transferred you augustly to the new katholikon, which he raised piously in your honour.

Now you amaze those who translated your relics in this [naos], overwhelming in its large scale, as you appear shiftingly vibrant [*poikilos*] and resplendent in gold and silver, like a flower/colour and light. You emerge as the one channelling [the divine/Holy Spirit].<sup>94</sup>

The two stanzas not only credit the abbot Philotheos with the construction, but they clearly state how amazing the new interior was with its glass, silver, and gold mosaics. It produced *poikilia* or glittering spectacle of light and colour.

The mosaics of the katholikon offer additional evidence that the images channel the triumphalist language of the later tenth century. The use of Arabic script define the enemy as the infidel. The shields of Sts

94 Ναόν σε γεγονότα, τριάδος ἱερόν, τῆς παναγίας, Λουκᾶ παμμακάριστε, μετέθετο ὁ Φιλόθεος ναῶν σεπτῶς ἐν καινῷ, ὄν ἠγειραν εἰς σὸν ὄνομα πιστῶς. Μεγίστῳ τερασίῳ ἐξέπληξας, τοὺς σὲ μετατιθέντας ποικίλος φαινόμενος, ὡς ἄργυρος, ὡς χρυσὸς διαυγῆς, ὡς ἄνθος, ὡς φῶς· ἐφαίνου γὰρ ὦν τοῖς πᾶσιν ὁ αὐτός, Kremos, Προσκνητάριον τῆς ἐν τῇ Φοκίδι Μονῆς τοῦ Ὁσίου Λουκᾶ τοῦπύκλην Στειριώτου (Athens: Ephēmeridos tōn syzētēseōn, 1874), I, 100.

Prokopios and Demetrios and the ciborium of the Hypapantē carry the same Arabic letters (Figs. 20-22). In the past these written characters have been viewed as Pseudo-Kufic, not forming actual words.<sup>95</sup> Yet, the inscriptions on the shields and the ciborium form the same combination of letters, which can be read as a very stylized version of the Arabic word **الله** or “God.” The Arabic script seals the victory; it takes the language of the other, of the enemy, to write out the name of God. And now the soldiers of Christ and his Temple carry this word. It is significant that these Kufic inscriptions are concentrated on and around the scene of the Hypapantē (Fig. 23). The Kufic script continues a trend manifested earlier in the fresco of Joshua in the tenth-century church of St Barbara, which was likely built by a stratēgos (Fig. 15). In a similar way, the Arabic letters on the Old Testament warrior form the word “victor” **غالب** written on the rim of his helmet and headcloth. The Kufic again takes the language of the enemy to proclaim victory over the infidel. The prominence of military saints in the mosaic programme of the katholikon, placed in the grand arches and the use of Kufic script in their shields suggests a specific war theatre set between Christians and Muslims (Fig. 23). The mosaic even has elements that recall the decisive Byzantine conquest of Crete in 961, which freed the Eastern Mediterranean from Arab raids and brought prosperity directly to this part of Greece. The portrait of St Nikon *Metanoeitai* in the nave (West wall of naos) bears evidence (Fig. 24). This local saint went to Crete immediately after the conquest and spent seven years proselytizing the Cretan population and converting it back to Christianity.<sup>96</sup> The power and resources poured into the hands of military commanders in the second half of the tenth century, especially those of high rank such as a katepano and generals, could explain how this magnificent architecture and mosaic decoration appeared at Steiris and how they celebrate the great victories over the Arabs.

### ICONOGRAPHIC PROGRAMME AND THE LITURGY FOR 7 FEBRUARY

Despite being one of the most displayed churches of Byzantium, no significant study has been published on the programme of the mosaics with the aim of explaining the specific iconographic choices.<sup>97</sup> It is this lacuna I address and at the same time I offer a methodology that tightly interconnects the images with the liturgy, its poetry and music. Georgios Kremos published in 1874 the liturgical texts performed for the feast of Hosios Loukas, gathering this information from the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century sources.<sup>98</sup>

95 Walker, “Pseudo-Arabic Inscriptions and the Pilgrim’s Path at Hosios Loukas” 99–123.

96 *The Life of Saint Nikon*, ed. and trans. by Denis Sullivan (Brookline: Hellenic Press, 1987), ch. 20–21; Connor, “Hosios Loukas as a Victory Church,” 306–8.

97 While Liz James has raised this issue, she has not offered a solution, Liz James, “Monks, Monastic Art, the Sanctoral Cycle and the Middle Byzantine Church,” in *The Theotokos Evergetis and Eleventh-Century Monasticism*, eds. Margaret Mullett and Andrew Kirby (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 1994), 162–75. The scholarly focus has remained on the general principles rather than the specificities, see Connor, *Saints and Spectacle*, 51–72; Ernst Kitzinger, “Reflections on the Feast Cycle in Byzantine Art,” *Cahiers archéologiques* 36 (1988): 51–73; Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration*; Ernst Diez and Otto Demus, *Byzantine Mosaics in Greece Hosios Loukas and Daphni* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1931).

98 Kremos, *Προσκυνητάριον τῆς ἐν τῇ Φοκίδι Μονῆς τοῦ Ὁσίου*, viii–xii.



Figure 20. Sts. Christophoros, Merkourios and Prokopios. St. Merkourios has Arabic letters on his shin-guards, while St. Prokopios—on his shield, mosaic, Hosios Loukas, 1011. (Photo: Boris Missirkov)





Figure 21. St. Demetrios with Arabic letters on his shield, mosaic, Hosios Loukas, 1011. (Photo: Boris Missirkov)



Figure 22. Hypapantē, mosaic, Hosios Loukas, 1011. (Photo: Boris Missirkov)



Figure 23. View of the squinches, dome, and apse in Hosios Loukas, marble revetments and mosaics, Hosios Loukas, 1011. (Photo: Boris Missirkov)



Figure 24. St. Nikōn Metanoeitai, S tympanum, W wall of naos. (Photo: CC-PD-Mark: Wikipedia user Shakko)

Perhaps because of this late date, many of these sources have not been tapped into by art historians (beyond resolving questions about dating) in order to explore the relationship between the liturgy and mosaic programme. I have been able to find good correspondences between the material gathered by Kremos and the liturgy for 7 February recorded in Middle and Late Byzantine *mēnaia*. I have also traced the excerpts quoted in the feast for Hosios Loukas that stem from the services for 2 and 3 February (Hypapantē and the Prophet Symeon). These texts feature prominently in the Middle Byzantine typika of the Great Church and the Evergetis. The overlap between the medieval and modern liturgies confirms the relevance of Kremos's collection for this on-going study exploring the synergies between image and liturgy.

The narrative programme in the naos of Hosios Loukas has only four scenes: Annunciation (now lost), Nativity, Hypapantē, and Baptism (Fig. 23). A Pentecost is set in domical vault of the bema, while the enthroned Virgin and Child appear in the apse. None of the scenes relating to the Passion cycle make an appearance in the naos but are instead relegated to the narthex. If we look at the other two roughly contemporary programmes at Nea Moni and Daphni, we can see that each one of them is idiosyncratic. So, what determines the choice at Hosios Loukas?

The monastery has two main feasts: the *koimēsis* (falling asleep of the saint) on 7 February and the translation of the relics or *anakomidē* commemorating the inauguration of the new *katholikon* and its mosaics on 3 May 1011, which in that particular year coincided with the feast of the Ascension. The 7 February feast is very close to the *Hypapantē* (2 February) and relatively close to the Christmas season. Furthermore, 3 February is the feast of the Prophet Symeon. 8 February commemorates the military saint Theodore Stratelates, while 17 February is Theodore Tyron. These coincidences are significant because they relate both to the Theotokos in her role as the *hypermachos stratēgos* (a nuance given sharper relief by the military saints) and to her motherhood as a receptacle of Christ. Her act of receiving and carrying the Child are emulated by two other figures: the Prophet Symeon and Hosios Loukas, both defined as containers (*docheia*).

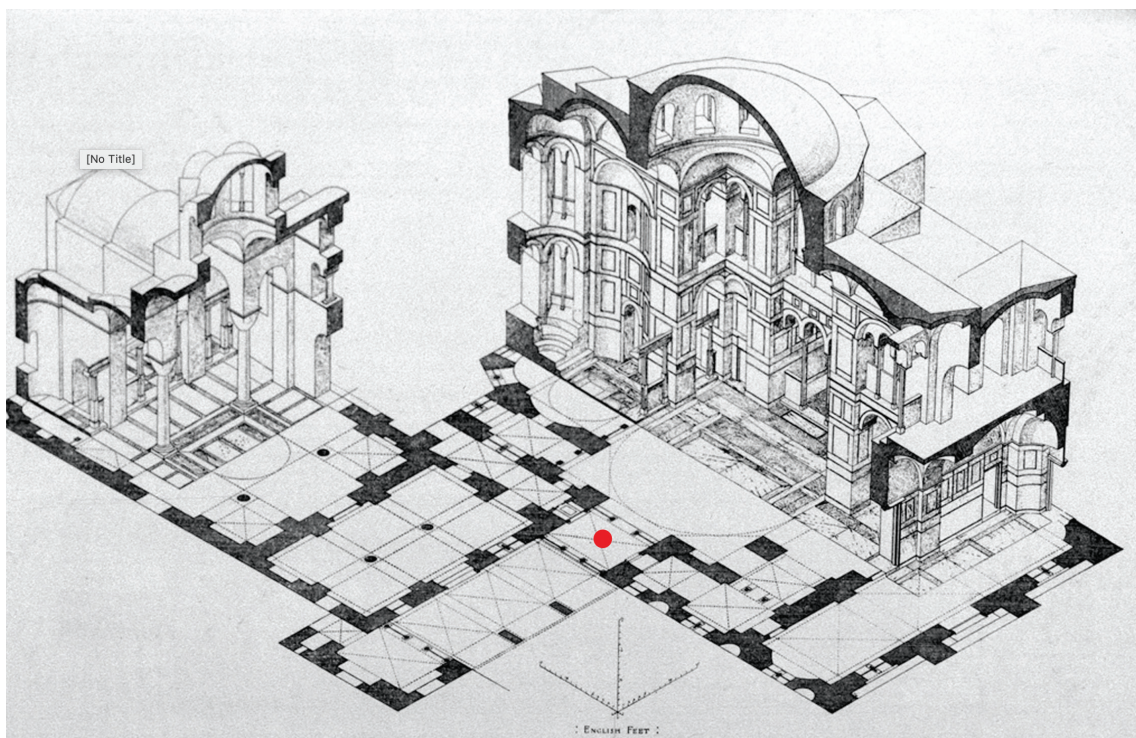


Figure 25. Axonometric drawing of the complex of the two churches at Hosios Loukas: St. Barbara (Theotokos) and the *katholikon*, after Robert Weir Schultz and Sidney Howard Barnsley, *Monastery of Saint Luke of Stiris, in Phocis and the Dependent Monastery of St. Nicolas in the Fields, Near Skripou, in Boeotia* (London: McMillan for the British School at Athens, 1901), plate 4

But this parallel between Hosios Loukas and Mary emerges most powerfully in the oratory of the saint, set on the ground level of the Northern cross arm (Figs. 25–27). The *soros* with the body of the saint is displayed for veneration in the eastern wall; a ciborium marks this hallowed ground.<sup>99</sup>

99 Bogdanović, *The Framing of Sacred Space*, 195–206; Paul Mylonas, “Nouvelles remarques sur le complexe de Saint-Luc en Phocide,” *Cahiers archéologiques* 40 (1992): 115–22; Paul Mylonas, “Gavits arméniens et Litae byzantines. Observations Nouvelles sur le complexe de Saint-Luc en Phocide,” *Cahiers archéologiques* 38 (1990): 99–122.



Figure 26. View of the N wall with the chapel of Hosios Loukas at the ground level, Hosios Loukas 1011. (Photo: Boris Missirkov)



Figure 27. Mosaics in the groin vault of the chapel of Hosios Loukas, 1011.  
(Photo: Boris Missirkov)

The tympanum above the ciborium shows a Hodegetria type Virgin (Figs. 15, 28). Hosios Loukas stands opposite her in the tympanum of the West wall; his arms lifted in prayer (Fig. 27, 29). As the Hodegetria was gaining ground in Constantinople in the second half of the tenth century and being absorbed in the memory of the Akathistos and the breaking of the Avar and Arab siege of Constantinople, the copying of the iconography of the miraculous icon at Hosios Loukas evokes the military power of Mary, her invincible virginal motherhood. At the same time, the local saint, set in a mirroring position across the East-West axis of the Northern chapel, becomes subsumed in this Marian vision of triumph (Fig. 27). The linkage becomes clearer in the liturgy. A kontakion for Hosios Loukas, composed sometime in the Middle Byzantine period, uses the Akathistos as a model for both the text and the melody (Fig. 30).<sup>100</sup> In a way similar to the Marian hymn, it employs a series of *chairetismoi* to define the powers of the saint. And the poetry is sung to the melody of the Akathistos as the title clearly records: mode 4, plagal (final G) according to the *Hypermachō*.<sup>101</sup>

100 The earliest extant example of the kontakion to Hosios Loukas is Bucharest, National Library, MS Gr. 257, 14th -15th cent., fols. 62r-v.

101 Title in red: κοντάκιον τοῦ ὁσίου Λουκά ἠχος πλ. δ' τῆ ὑπερμάχῳ. On the use of model melodies, see Troelsgård, "The Repertories of Model Melodies," 3-27. Kontakia continued to be written well into the tenth century even after the kontakarion content was established in the ninth, see Derek Krueger, "The Ninth-Century Kontakarion as Evidence for Festive Practice and Liturgical Calendar in Sixth- and Seventh-Century Constantinople," In *Towards the Prehistory of the Byzantine Liturgical Year: Festal Homilies and Festal Liturgies in Late Antique Constantinople*, eds. Stefanos Alexopoulos and Harald Buchinger (Louvain: Peeters, 2022) in press.



Figure 28. Theotokos and Child represented according to the Hodegetria iconographic type, E tympanum of the chapel of Hosios Loukas, mosaics, Hosios Loukas, 1011. (Photo: Boris Missirkov)



Figure 29. Hosios Loukas, W tympanum in the chapel of the eponymous saint, mosaic, Hosios Loukas, 1011. (Photo: Boris Missirkov)

Hosios Loukas's kontakion reads as follows:

God, who had chosen you before you were moulded as he was pleased, by judgments known to himself, having received you from the womb, sanctifies and acknowledges you as his own personal servant, directing your steps, Loukas, [He] the lover of mankind, by whom you now stand rejoicing.

O most beautiful and reverend among Fathers, the adornment of all ascetics, having fulfilled the commandments of Christ, how am I to praise your earthly life, o glorious one, as I do not have the gift of eloquence; yet taking courage I will cry out to you:

Hail, bright glory of the monks; hail, leader of the faithful and lamp.

Hail delightful green shoot of the desert; hail most brilliant lantern of the oikoumenē.

Hail, for you looked down upon the flowing and perishable; hail, for you dwell heaven together with the angels.

Hail, swift intercessor of the despondent; hail desirable supporter of those in danger.

Hail, sacred receptacle of the Spirit; hail, renowned abode of Christ.

Hail you, through whom every gift shone forth; hail you, through whom God was glorified,

The lover of mankind, by whom you now stand rejoicing.<sup>102</sup>

The *prooimion* shows Hosios Loukas as the one Christ selected while still in the womb as his faithful servant. The *chairetismoi* celebrate him through a series of metaphors as the lamp and light of monks, the green shoot in the desert, the dweller of heaven, who has joined the ranks of angels, and the unfailing intercessor on behalf of the faithful. When we compare the *chairetismoi* of Hosios Loukas to those of the Theotokos, we see that both start with light. Later the Saint is called a *docheion*, receptacle of the Spirit, which mirrors Mary's incarnating the Logos. The shared content and music emphasize Hosios Loukas as the *thēkē* of the holy, modelled after Mary as the container of the uncontainable. And this emphasis on vessels emerging from the kontakion and the mosaics further shapes the meaning of the space: it contains the *soros* of the saint and thus is the material *docheion* of the Spirit, through whom healing comes. Both the Vita of the saint and the liturgy feature the same metaphor of the receptacle, thus amplifying the message and promoting the miraculous powers of the saint.<sup>103</sup> As Hosios Loukas himself stated, healing is a grace flowing from God, working through his

102 Ὁ ἐκλεξάμενος Θεὸς πρὸ τοῦ πλασθῆναί σε, εἰς εὐαρέστησιν αὐτοῦ, οἷς οἶδε κρίμασι, προσλαβόμενος ἐκ μήτρας καθαγιαζέει, καὶ οἰκείον ἑαυτοῦ δούλον δεικνύει σε, κατευθύνων σου Λουκᾶ τὰ διαβήματα, ὁ φιλόανθρωπος, ᾧ νῦν χαίρων παρίστασαι.

Ὁ Οἶκος

Ἦ πατέρων ἀρίστη καλλονὴ καὶ σεμνότης, ᾧ πάντων ἀσκητῶν κοσμιότης· Χριστοῦ τὰς ἐντολάς γὰρ πληρώσαντος, πῶς ὑμνήσω τὴν σὴν βιοτήν ἔνδοξε, μὴ ἔχων λόγων δύναμιν; ἀλλ' ὅμως σοὶ θαρρῶν βοήσω.

Χαῖρε, λαμπρὸν μοναζόντων κλέος, χαῖρε, πιστῶν ὁδηγὲ καὶ λύχνε.

Χαῖρε, τῆς ἐρήμου τεργνότατον βλάστημα· χαῖρε, οἰκουμένης λαμπτήρ φαεινότετε.

Χαῖρε, ὅτι κατεφρόνησας τῶν ῥεόντων καὶ φθαρτῶν· χαῖρε, ὅτι τὰ οὐράνια σὺν ἀγγέλοις κατοικεῖς.

Χαῖρε, τῶν ἀθυμούντων ταχινὲ παρακλητοῦ· χαῖρε, τῶν ἐν κινδύνοις ποθεινὲ παραστάτα.

Χαῖρε, σεπτὸν δοχεῖον τοῦ Πνεύματος· χαῖρε, κλεινὸν Χριστοῦ οἰκητήριον.

Χαῖρε, δι' οὗ δόσις πᾶσα ἠγύασθη; χαῖρε, δι' οὗ ὁ Θεὸς ἔδοξασθη.

ᾧ νῦν χαίρων παρίστασαι,

from Kremos, *Προσκυνητᾶριον τῆς ἐν τῇ Φοκίδι Μονῆς τοῦ Ὁσίου*, 24; the anakomidē also has its own kontakion similarly set to the melody of the *hypermachō stratēgō*, 101–2.

103 This is not an exhaustive list, *The Life and Miracles of Saint Luke of Steiris*, chs. 4, 21, 30 and Kremos, *Προσκυνητᾶριον τῆς ἐν τῇ Φοκίδι Μονῆς τοῦ Ὁσίου*, 18, 87, 93 (*theophoros*), 88 (*oikētērion*), 105.



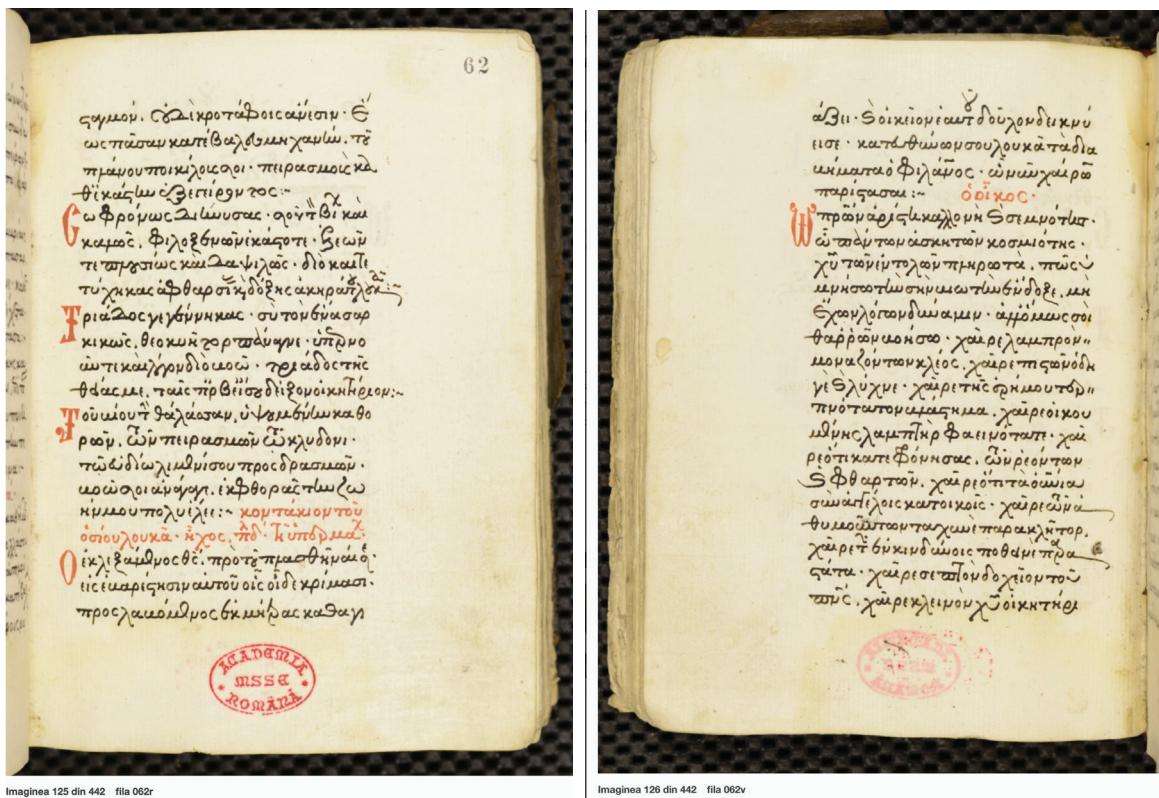


Figure 30. Kontakion of Hosios Loukas, Bucharest, National Library, MS Gr. 257, 14th -15th cent., fols. 62rv. (Photo: Bucharest National Library)

loyal servants channelling the Holy Spirit.<sup>104</sup> Hosios Loukas's prayer activates the flow of grace and thus his arms are lifted to the divine (Figs. 27–29). The efficacy of his intercession is given sharper relief in comparison with the S oratory, dedicated to the healer-saint Panteleimon, who holds medical instruments, featuring his skill and knowledge (set in the same position, tympanum of West wall) (Fig. 25).<sup>105</sup> The empty hands of Hosios Loukas speak to the power of his voice raised in prayer which supersedes medical knowledge. He also becomes a model for intercession shown to the faithful, who come to seek his help. As the Vita ascertains, the saint's prayer, abundant tears, and strenuous fasting resulted in the great divine gift of healing and prophecy.<sup>106</sup>

Divine grace reifies in the effusion of holy oil from the *soros* and marks triumph, which can be understood both as healing and as victory. The use of the Akathistos melodic form for the kontakion of Hosios Loukas and the Hodegetria type Virgin further draw into focus the concept of triumph (Figs. 15, 28). The Vita bears witness to this perception of prayer as battle and victory: "And struggling for three days by prayer and by

104 "Curing the sick is the privilege of God alone and of those who are worthy of His grace and who have enough reason and intelligence to console the dispirited," και τὸ ἰᾶσθαι, φησί, τοὺς νοσοῦντας Θεοῦ μόνου και τῶν ἀξίων τῆς αὐτοῦ χάριτος ἴδιον και τὸ τοὺς ἀθυμοῦντας παρακαλεῖν τῶν λόγου και φρονήσεως ἱκανῶς ἐχόντων, *The Life and Miracles of Saint Luke of Steiris*, ch. 30.

105 On this contrast between St. Panteleimon and Hosios Loukas, see Alexander Kazhdan and Henry Maguire, "Byzantine Hagiographical Texts as Sources on Art," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 45 (1991): 1–22, esp. 15–17.

106 *The Life and Miracles of Saint Luke of Steiris*, ch. 23.

storm clouds of tears, he extinguished the fire of desire and was rescued unharmed from the war."<sup>107</sup> Hosios Loukas who unlike the military saint does not enter actual battles, but his piety is styled as a victory in war with verbs of boxing and fighting. And this larger concept of victory resonates with the time and the patrons: Byzantine territorial expansion and the financial endowment of the site by *stratēgoi* and a *katepano*.



Figure 31. Mosaics in the groin vault of the chapel of St. Pantaleimon. The saint is in the W tympanum, holding a box with his medical instruments, Hosios Loukas, 1011. (Photo: Author)

107 Καὶ οὕτως ἐπὶ τρισὶν ἡμέραις πυκτεύσας εὐχή καὶ δακρῶν ὄμβροισι τὸ πῦρ σβέννυσι τῆς ἐπιθυμίας καὶ πολέμου καθαρῶς ὄυεται, *The Life and Miracles of Saint Luke of Steiris*, ch. 29.



Figure 32. A cross section revealing the E walls of chapels of Hosios Loukas and St. Pantaleimon after Robert Weir Schultz and Sidney Howard Barnsley, *Monastery of Saint Luke of Stiris, in Phocis and the Dependent Monastery of St. Nicolas in the Fields, Near Skripou, in Boeotia* (London: McMillan for the British School at Athens, 1901), plate 39.

### Ps 92 (93): HOLINESS BECOMETH YOUR HOUSE: POURING STREAMS OF WATER AND LIGHT

The North-South axis of healing (**Fig. 32**) intersects with East-West one featuring the Virgin and Child in the apse and Pentecost in the *bēma* vault (**Fig. 33**). The enthroned Mother is flanked by the Annunciation (mosaic now lost in the North-East squinch) and Nativity (South-East squinch), communicating the emptying of the Logos in finite and mortal form (**Fig. 23**). The image of the Virgin holding the Christ Child on her lap in the apse gives the faithful a vision of what the Magi intuited in their encounter with Christ, recognizing his divine powers. Moreover, by pairing the Theotokos with the Pentecost, a unique choice at Hosios Loukas, the  $\Lambda$  and  $\Omega$  are inscribed: Christ's *kenōsis* in the Incarnation and Birth and the release of the Holy Spirit after his Death and Resurrection to bridge the time between the Ascension and the Second Coming of Christ.

Moreover, the inscription surrounding the Mother and Child in the apse comes from Ps. 92:5 "holiness becometh your house, O Lord, for ever," τῷ οἴκῳ σου πρόπει ἀγίασμα, Κύριε, εἰς μακρότητα ἡμερῶν directly evokes the church consecration ceremony where this passage is chanted at the vesting of the altar in the consecration ceremony.<sup>108</sup> The *kathierōsis* is a ritual that is in its core an inspiriting—the Descent of the Holy Spirit over the new altar—a process similar to Pentecost and the Eucharist.<sup>109</sup> But it is also used in the commemoration of the inauguration of Hagia Sophia on 23 December.<sup>110</sup> Then it is chanted again at vespers on 24 and 25 December,

108 Vitalij Permjakovs, "Make This Place Where Your Glory Dwells:" *Origins and Evolution of the Byzantine Rite for the Consecration of a Church* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2012), 186–200 (CP *enkainia* rite), 8, 194, 201, 626 (specific reference to Ps 92 in CP rite).

109 Pentcheva, *Hagia Sophia*, 45–75.

110 Akentiev, *TypikonCP*, 112–13; Mateos, *TypikonCP*, I, 147.



Figure 33. The Theotokos and Child in the apse and the Pentecost in domical vault, mosaics, Hosios Loukas, 1011. (Photo: Boris Missirkov)



Figure 34. Nativity in the SE squinch, mosaic, Hosios Loukas, 1011. (Photo: Boris Missirkov)



Figure 35. Baptism in the NW squinch, mosaic, Hosios Loukas, 1011. (Photo: Boris Missirkov)



Figure 36. Psalm 92(93):5 illustrated with the miracle at Chonai in the Theodore Psalter, London, BL, Add. 19352, Feb. 1066, fol. 125r

intercalated with *stichēra*.<sup>111</sup> The same Ps. 92 is also recited at vespers for 6 January (Baptism).<sup>112</sup> The two feasts—Nativity and Baptism—set on the diagonal axis in the squinches share the visual depiction of a ray of light (Fig. 23). While the beam of the star identifies the *kenōsis* of the Logos in a mortal body in the Nativity (Fig. 34), at the Baptism, it does the opposite, recognizing the divinity of Christ as a stream of light channelling the resonant voice of the Father identifying his Son (Fig. 35).

The flow of light is related to the flow of water and both capture the brilliant and powerful voice of the divine.<sup>113</sup> Ps. 92:3-4 is visualized in the Theodore Psalter with the miracle at Chonai of the rising river (Fig. 36): “The rivers have lifted up, O Lord, the rivers have lifted up their voices, at the voices of many waters: the billows of the sea are wonderful: the Lord is wonderful in high places.”<sup>114</sup> Not only do these lines connect the divine

111 Mateos, *TypikonCP*, I, 150–51. For Dec. 25, Evergetis *Typikon*, I, 331.

112 Evergetis *Typikon*, I, 413.

113 Pentcheva, *Hagia Sophia*, 30–35, 73–74, 141–49.

114 ἐπήραν οἱ ποταμοί, Κύριε, ἐπήραν οἱ ποταμοί φωνὰς αὐτῶν· ἀρουσὶν οἱ ποταμοὶ ἐπιτρέψεις αὐτῶν. 4 ἀπὸ φωνῶν ὑδάτων πολλῶν θαυμαστοὶ οἱ μετεωρισμοὶ τῆς θαλάσσης, θαυμαστός ἐν

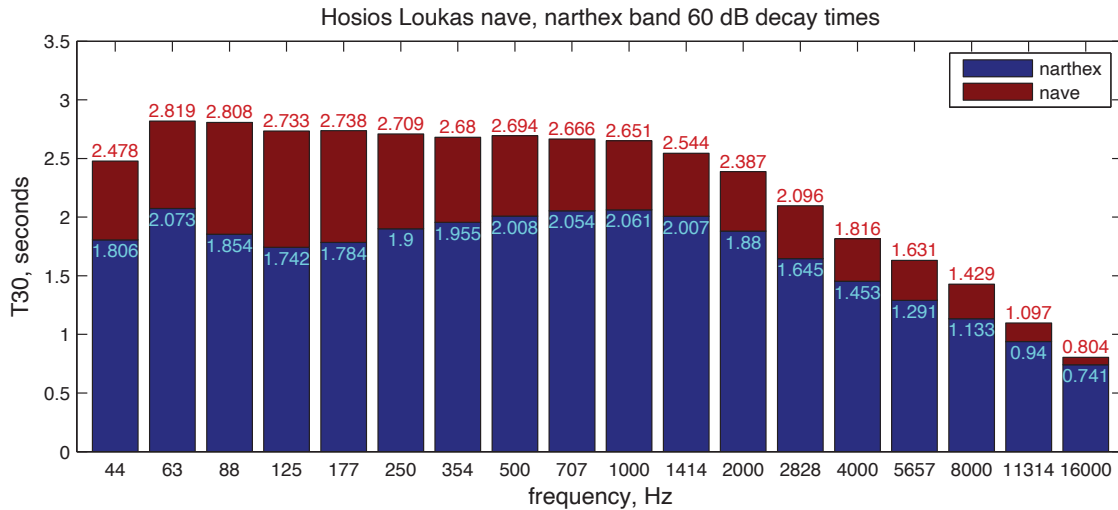


Figure 37. RT30 measured in the nave and narthex of Hosios Loukas by popping balloons. (Drawing: Jonathan Abel)

energy as torrential waters, but they insist on the power of the metaphysical in the resonant voice like the thundering of vast masses of uncontrollable waters. This energy produces miracles. The domed interior of Hosios Loukas with its reflective surfaces and substantial interior volume can produce acoustics that amplify the human voice. But in comparison with Hagia Sophia, Hosios Loukas has  $RT_{60}$  in the range of the singing voice of a little under 3 seconds (Fig. 37). It can give fullness to the voice, but it is mostly the visual—the marble and alabaster—that convey the “voice of many waters.”

Moreover, Ps. 92:5 also features the word *hagiasma*, meaning both “holiness” and “holy spring;” the latter alluding to the flow of water (Fig. 33). The conjured streaming water elicited in the imagination is paired with the rays of light depicted in the mosaics: Nativity, Baptism, but also Pentecost (Figs. 23, 33). And water turns the attention back to the vision of Mary and the Incarnation. Already the marginal psalters of the mid-ninth century envision the Conception as the flow of light and water, dew drops on a fleece (Ps. 71(72): 6): “He shall come down as rain upon a fleece; and as drops falling upon the earth here.”<sup>115</sup> The phrase communicates the Incarnation as the descent, pouring down of water and light (Fig. 38). The miniature picks up the same idea as blue shafts of light/water frame the descent of the Holy Spirit. The incarnation is further specified with precision in the little phrases identifying Mary and the scene: ἐν τῇ γαστρὶ παρθένου and Θεοτόκος.

ὕψηλοῖς ὁ Κύριος, Ps 92 (93): 3-4. Sirarpie Der Nersessian, *L'illustration des psautiers grecs du moyen âge*, II. Londres Add. 19.352 (Bibliothèque des cahiers archéologiques, 5) (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1970); Charles Barber, *The Theodore Psalter: Electronic Facsimile* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press in association with the British Library, 2000).

115 καταβήσεται ὡς ὑέτος ἐπὶ πόκον καὶ ὡσεὶ σταγῶν ἢ στάζουσα ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν, Ps 71(72):6. For the Khudov, see Maria Evangelatrou, “Liturgy and the Illustration of the Ninth-Century Marginal Psalters,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 63 (2009): 59–116, esp. 65–70, 97–98; K. Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 104–34.



Figure 38. Psalm 71(72):6 showing the Incarnation as a flow of light and water, Athos, Pantokrator MS gr. 61, fol. 93v (Reproduced with the kind permission of the Pantokratoros Monastery on Mount Athos)

Outpouring of water, divine might flowing, the thundering voice of many waters all these metaphors of liquescence of the divine become a powerful mirror for the *soros* of Hosios Loukas in the Northern oratory. Just like the descent of the life-giving energy of the Spirit in Pentecost, or the radiant rays of the Incarnation, or the divine voice in Baptism, the *thēkē* of the saint produces a similar flow. It is the lamp over the tomb that overflows with oil (*elaion*) and heals. *Elaion* (pronounced as *eleon*) is homophonic with “mercy” (*eleos*), thus connecting the flow of oil/light to the pouring of divine mercy unleashed by the faithful’s tears of repentance.<sup>116</sup> The *soros* is described as drenched in seeping moisture, expressive of the flow of divine grace, now made accessible to the faithful.<sup>117</sup>

116 Bissera V. Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 21, 38.

117 *The Life and Miracles of Saint Luke of Steiris*, chs. 68–69, 71–73, 75–77.



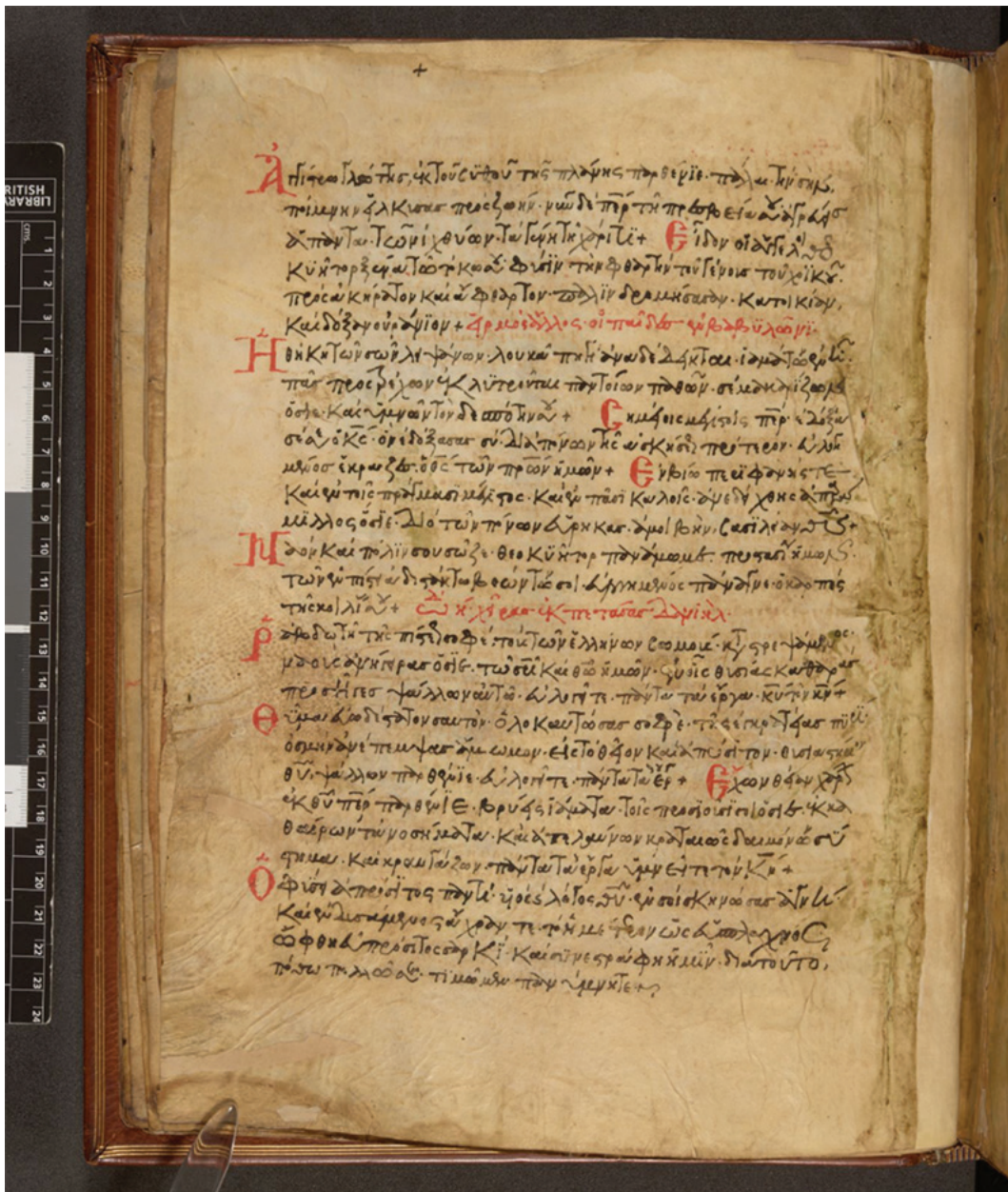


Figure 39. Liturgy for Feb. 7, Hosios Loukas and St. Parthenios, bishop of Lampsakos, Menaion, BL, Add 31919, fol. 28v, 1431.

Liquidity of grace flowing from the *soros* is also featured in the liturgy for the feast of Hosios Loukas as recorded in the Byzantine *mēnaion* (London, BL MS Gr. Add. 31919, fol. 28v, 15<sup>th</sup> cent.) (Fig. 22, 30).<sup>118</sup> The seventh Ode of the Kanon for orthros for 7 February states: “The *thēkē* of your *leipsana*, Loukas, becomes manifest as a spring of healings, in which all those who hasten to come are redeemed from all kinds of suffering, offering their gratitude to you, holy one, and to our Lord Christ.”<sup>119</sup> The flow of oil from the *soros*

118 [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\\_MS\\_31919](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_31919). I have done an extensive study of Byzantine *mēnaia* and encountered the service of Hosios Loukas in only two MSS: London, BL MS Gr. Add. 31919 and Paris, BnF MS Gr. 255 of the 15th cent. For the database of MSS I searched, <https://library.princeton.edu/byzantine/subject-theme/menaion?page=1>, last visited December 31, 2021.

119 Η θήκη τῶν σῶν λειψάνων, Λουκά πηγὴ ἀναδέδεικται, ἰαμάτων ἐν ἣ πᾶς προστρέχων, ἐκλυτροῦται παντοίων παθῶν, σὲ μακαρίζων, ὅσιε, καὶ ἡμῶν τὸν Δεσπότην Χριστόν, Κρεμος, Προσκυνητάριον τῆς ἐν τῇ Φοκίδι Μονῆς τοῦ Ὁσίου, 64; other reference to the same concept, 4; 72, 79, 99

(the lamp in the ciborium) allows humanity to come closer, to touch divine grace as opposed to the great distance between the pious and the *hagiasma* shown in the apse and domical vault (Fig. 33). The *thēkē* like a magnet pulls down what is high and distant and makes it close and approachable.

### ASCENSION AND IMPERIAL VICTORY

The *hagiasma* as flow of water and light brings about healing, but it also raises to prominence and sanctifies. The dome of Hosios Loukas originally had a programme that evoked the Ascension, and this feast played an important role both in the Constantinopolitan imperial liturgy and in the establishment of the *katholikon* of Hosios Loukas, as the inauguration was celebrated on that feast back in 1011.<sup>120</sup> In the Byzantine capital, the Ascension gave occasion to celebrate the Theotokos as the commander of the armies and bestow acclaim on the Byzantine emperors. The emperor disembarked from the imperial ship at the Golden Gate, where he received the crown, then proceeded to the Selymbria gate (Silivri) where he was greeted by the people and the *strategoī*, and then together they entered the Church of the Theotokos Pēgē nearby (Fig. 12). This entire area functioned as the Byzantine military camp-grounds, thus the concepts of imperial power, victory, and troops were brought together. The acclamations recognize the flow of divine grace as water and light over the emperor:

Having found in you [Theotokos] alone a *holy spring*, an *ever-living stream*, all-holy Mother of God, we Christians entreat you as Theotokos and appeal to you with unceasing voice: protect N. and N. with the wings of your intercession until the end.

We, the people, fittingly praise you, the bridal-chamber of Christ, through whom Christ *shone forth* in the flesh for mortals. Theotokos, save the rulers as *stars* for the exaltation of the world and of the Blues who always have you as their strength and help.

Virgin, Mother of God the Word, the *spring of life* for the Romans, *fight alone* alongside the rulers in the purple, who received their crown from you, since those in the purple have in you an invincible *shield* against all.

We, Christians, having you, the all-holy, as our hope of *refuge* and *salvation* and *promise of support*, appeal to you as our shelter: favour [the rulers] with the *wings* of your intercession; for they have in you the strength that brings victory against enemies.<sup>121</sup>

(from *anakomidē*); 116, 120 (from the *paraklētikē kanones*); 131 (*agrypnia*).

120 De Cer. I, chs 8, 18, pp. 54–58, 108–14, English trans. Moffatt.

121 ὡς ἀειζῶον ῥεῖθρον, πηγὴν ἁγίαν Χριστιανοὶ εὐρηκότες μόνην σὲ, τὴν πανάγιον τοῦ Θεοῦ μητέρα, δυσωποῦμεν ὡς Θεοτόκον, καὶ ἐξαιτοῦμεν στόματι ἀσιγήτῳ· πτέρυξι τῆς σῆς πρεσβείας ὁ δεῖνα καὶ ὁ δεῖνα περιφύλαττε μέχρι τέλος.

Σὲ, παστάδα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, δι' ἧς ἔλαμψε Χριστὸς κατὰ σάρκα τοῖς βροτοῖς, αἰνοῦμεν λαοὶ ἐπάξιως· Θεοτόκε, τοὺς δεσπότας ὡς φωστῆρας περίσωζε εἰς ἀνέγερσιν τοῦ κόσμου, καὶ Βενέτων αἰεὶ σε κекτημένων κραταίωμα βοήθειας.

Ἡ πηγὴ τῆς ζωῆς Ῥωμαίων, παρθένε, μήτηρ Θεοῦ τοῦ λόγου, συστρατήγησαν μόνη τοῖς δεσπότης ἐν τῇ πορφύρᾳ, τοῖς λαβοῦσιν ἐκ σοῦ τὸ στέφος, ὅτι αὐτοὶ σε κέκτηνται κατὰ πάντα θυρεὸν ἀπροσμάχητον ἐν τῇ πορφύρᾳ.



Figure 40. Enkolpion cross of the late eighth or early ninth centuries from Pliska (Bulgaria). Silver, gold, niello. (Photo: Krassimir Georgiev)

The acclamations of the imperial ceremony of the Ascension celebrated at the church of the Virgin at Pēgē address Mary as the stream of light and the flow of living waters. She is asked to spread her wings. The mosaics in the dome of Hosios Loukas were lost in an earthquake in the seventeenth century, but the restored frescoes reproduce faithfully the Middle Byzantine original (**Fig. 23**). The composition –Christ in the apex, the orant Mary in the E, surrounded by archangels– elicits three different scenes: Deesis, Ascension, and Assumption.<sup>122</sup> The programme bears an uncanny resemblance to an enkolpion cross of the late eighth or early ninth-centuries

Καταφυγῆς ἐλπίδα καὶ σωτηρίας καὶ ἀντιλήψεως κλέος σὲ τὴν πάναγνον Χριστιανοὶ κεκτημένοι, ἐξαιτοῦμεν ὡς σκέπην, πρεσβευτικαῖς περιέπε πτέρυξι· σὲ γὰρ κέκτηνται ἰσχύν κατ' ἐχθρῶν τροπαιοφόρον, from *De Cer.* I, ch. 8, p. 55, English trans. Moffatt. Italics, emphasized added.

122 The orant Virgin read as an Assumption scene is present in art already in the late sixth to seventh centuries (Merovingian silk, treasury, cathedral of Sens) and is prominently displayed in papal commissions of the eighth and ninth centuries (oratories of pope John VII and of Paschal I), see Francesca dell'Acqua, *Iconophilia. Politics, Religion, Preaching and the Use of Images in Rome, c. 680-880* (London: Routledge, 2020), 241–68, 289–304.

from Pliska (Bulgaria) (**Fig. 40**).<sup>123</sup> Not only does the Pliska cross show the Deesis at the centre (on the reverse of the main container, on the photo this side appears upside down), flanked by four narrative scenes that exactly reproduce the scenes in the squinches of Hosios Loukas, but the obverse of the cross further places the Ascension at the core, again evocative of the composition at Hosios Loukas. It is this connection to Ascension and Deesis that conjures the Constantinopolitan imperial ceremony, celebrating victory as divine grace flowing from heaven. The frescoes at Hosios Loukas (which restore the Middle Byzantine mosaic composition) play with and amplify these ideas (**Fig. 23**). The physical light streaming from the drum of the dome enacts the flow of luminescence in the chanted acclamations. At the same time, the raised arms of Mary and the open wings of the archangels surrounding her perform the desired divine protection. The *kallichoros* (nave) transforms into the divine bridal chamber, filled with light. The enfleshed logos reifies both in the Child on the lap of Mary in the apse and the baby in the crib at Bethlehem (**Figs. 23, 33, 34**). And the stars (*phōstēres*) to which the emperors are compared find their visual expression in the star of the Genesis. Water, in the acclamation, evocative both of the Church of the Theotokos at the Pēgē and the miraculous life-giving spring is then entwined with victory; Mary is lauded as the commander who leads the fight, battling along the side of the emperor. She crowns the rulers and doubles as their invincible shield. The fourth chant repeats many of the same ideas of Mary's intercession as refuge and wings.

After the reception and acclamations and the liturgy at the Pēgē, the imperial procession re-enters Constantinople and progresses along the Northern colonnaded street, celebrating stations with acclamations along the way until it reaches the Great Palace near Hagia Sophia. Here, at the Chalke Gate a new set of acclamations is performed. The first and last read as follows:

Divinely crowned benefactors, having the Virgin as unassailable protection and shelter, and glorying in her immaculate intercession, you are invincible to opposing nations. On the day of battle, she shields your heads and shows you crowned with victories, for the good fortune and glory of the Romans.

A wondrous sight, like *rain on a woollen fleece*, the Word of the Father. Now, behold, *he who took on flesh is ascending into heaven*, since he has fulfilled the will of the Father, having invited all the nations to serve the truth, and from there, having fulfilled the dispensation as regards us, he sat on the right hand of the Lord of might. May he guard you, benefactors, for the good fortune of the Romans.<sup>124</sup>

123 Although Kitzinger never made this connection, he used the Pliska cross to define the canonical twelve feasts, Kitzinger, "Reflections on the Feast Cycle in Byzantine Art," 62–65. On the Pliska cross, see Liliana Dontcheva-Petkova, "Une croix pectorale en or récemment trouvée à Pliska," *Cahiers archéologiques* 25 (1976): 59–66 and Dell'Acqua, *Iconophilia*, 141–43, 206–10, 237–39.

124 Προστασίν ἀκαθαίρετον καὶ σκέπην τὴν ἀνύμφευτον λαβόντες, θεόσπεπτο εὐεργέται, καὶ ταῖς αὐτῆς ἐγκραυχόμενοι παναχράντοις πρεσβείας ἀκαταμάχητοι ὄντες ἔθνεσιν ὑπεναντίοις. Αὐτὴ γὰρ ἐπισκιάζει ἐν ἡμέρᾳ πολέμου ταῖς κορυφαῖς ὑμῶν, καὶ ταῖς νίκαις ὑμᾶς δεικνύει στεφανίτας εἰς εὐτυχίαν καὶ δόξαν τῶν Ῥωμαίων, from De Cer. I, ch. 8, p. 57, English trans. Moffatt.

The words *anympheuton* (unwedded) and *akatamachētoi* (invincible, this time referring to the emperors) are evocative of the *hypermachō* proomion of the Akathistos and thus bring to bear the powerful memory of Mary's unflinching protection of Constantinople. She is the shield and crown of the emperors, pouring out victories. The last acclamation starts with the flow of light and water, metaphors for the incarnation of the Logos. It finishes with the triumphant sight of Christ seated on the Lord's right side and receiving the respect and obeisance of all nations. The Ascension transforms into the culmination of the triumphal ceremony at the feet of the emperor. If the terrestrial ceremony unfolds on a horizontal axis towards the emperor, Christ in the dome of Hosios Loukas switches and raises the horizontal into a vertical axis, where humanity looks up towards the Ruler of All. Divine grace flows as light from the dome, and when the space becomes filled with chant, the dome also reflects sound, raining a glittering aural energy.

### CONTAINING THE DIVINE: MARY, SYMEON AND HOSIOS LOUKAS

Paradoxically the outflow of grace is possible through the opposite: the capacity to reside in Christ as a vessel. Hosios Loukas does it kenotically by opening his arms in prayer (**Fig. 29**). Mary, by contrast, has her arms full, carrying the Child, but both Hosios Loukas and the Theotokos are *docheia* of the Spirit (**Figs. 27–29**). The residing of the divine in a vessel is a major concept celebrated during Hypapantē and the Feast of the Prophet Symeon. The feast of Hosios Loukas on 7 February falls close to Hypapantē, 2 February, and the feast of the Prophet Symeon is 3 February; it also borrows troparia and *stichēra* from these two earlier and more prominent feasts. And this embeddedness of the poetry of Hypapantē in the feast of Hosios Loukas explains the choice to include the Hypapantē in the very limited narrative mosaic programme of the nave, giving it prominence in the SW squinch (**Figs. 22–23**).

The troparion for the feasts of 2 and 3 February (Hypapantē and Prophet Symeon) announces: "Hail, full of grace, Virgin Theotokos, from you the Sun of justice arises, Christ our God, irradiating those in darkness. Rejoice also you, old man, having received in your arms the one who would save our souls, bestowing his Anastasis as blessing for us."<sup>125</sup> The troparion is the identifying chant of the Feast and it ingathers Annunciation with Hypapantē with its call Χαῖρε κεχαριτωμένη. But then as the Sun

Ξένον θαῦμα! ὡς γὰρ ὑετὸς ἐπὶ πόκον, λόγος τοῦ Πατρὸς· καὶ νῦν ὄρατε, εἰς οὐρανούς ἀνιῶν σαρκοφόρος, ὅτι ἐπλήρωσε τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Πατρὸς, συγκαλέσας τὰ ἔθνη πάντα τῇ ἀληθείᾳ λατρεῦειν, ὅθεν καὶ πληρώσας τὴν καθ' ἡμᾶς οἰκονομίαν, ἐκ δεξιῶν ἐκάθισε τῆς δυνάμεως Κυρίου. Αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς φυλάξει, εὐεργέται, εἰς εὐτυχίαν Ῥωμαίων from De Cer. I, ch. 8, p. 58, English trans. Moffatt. Italics, emphasized added.

125 Χαῖρε κεχαριτωμένη Θεοτόκε Παρθένη· ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ ἀνέτειλεν ὁ Ἥλιος τῆς δικαιοσύνης, Χριστὸς ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν, φωτίζων τοὺς ἐν σκότει. Εὐφραίνου καὶ σὺ Πρεσβύτα δίκαιε, δεξάμενος ἐν ἀγκάλαις τὸν ἐλευθερωτὴν τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν, χαριζόμενον ἡμῖν καὶ τὴν Ἀνάστασιν, TypikonCP, 222–23; Evergetis Typikon, 504–5, 508–9. This chant is sung on orthros in the modern office of Hosios Loukas, <https://glt.goarch.org/texts/Feb/Feb07.html>

that illuminates those in darkness, it introduces notes of the Passion by proleptically envisioning Christ’s sacrifice. Only through his outpouring of blood is human salvation purchased.

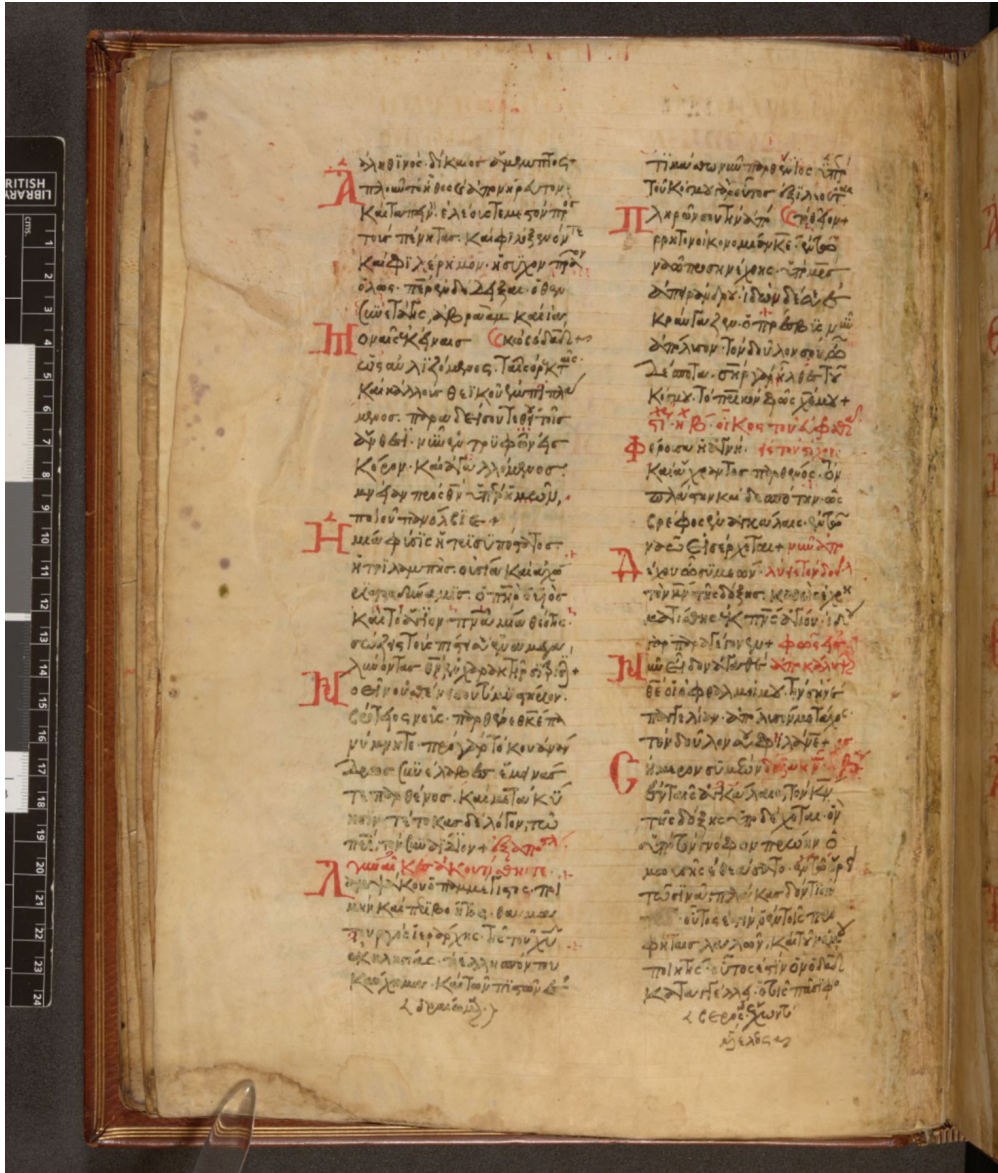


Figure 41. Stichera from Hypapantē used for Feb. 7, Menaion, British Library, Add.31919, fol. 29v, 1431.

Mary’s and Symeon’s model of containing the divine as in a vessel (sung on 2 and 3 February) is picked up in the chants for the feast of Hosios Loukas as recorded in London, BL MS Gr. Add 31919 (Fig. 41):

The pure and immaculate Virgin, carrying the Creator and Lord as a Child in her arms enters into the Temple.<sup>126</sup>

Receive o Symeon, the Lord of Glory [already with this epithet Christ’s Passion is elicited], you are given a sign from the Holy Spirit, you are in his [Christ] presence.<sup>127</sup>

126 Φέρουσα ἡ Ἀγνή, καὶ ἄχραντος Παρθένος, τὸν Πλάστην καὶ Δεσπότην, ὡς βρέφος ἐν ἀγκάλας, ἐν τῷ ναῷ εἰσέρχεται, Menaion, BL Add 31919, fol. 29v, which is part of the modern office of orthros, <https://glt.goarch.org/texts/Feb/Feb07.html>

127 Δέχου ὦ Συμεῶν, τὸν Κύριον τῆς δόξης, καθὼς ἐχηματίσθης, ἐκ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου· ἰδοὺ γὰρ παραγέγον, BL Add 31919, fol. 29v and <https://glt.goarch.org/texts/Feb/Feb07.html>

Now my eyes having seen your good announcement, you the Good One, release from [life] your servant [Symeon], you, lover of humanity.<sup>128</sup>

Mary and Symeon are models for Hosios Loukas, *docheia* filled with the Logos.

But along with the idea of the vessel, the feast of Hypapantē is also tied to imperial victory and thus amplifies triumphalist ideas already channeled by the Ascension in the dome. The clearest evidence for the victorious language of the Presentation comes from the second and third *prooimia* of the kontakion for this feast by Romanos Melodos. It is likely that these two introductory verses were composed in the later period, probably in the tenth century. Hypapantē inaugurates Christ's return to Jerusalem, a vision that resounds with the imperial aspirations for reconquest of Holy land in the second half of the tenth century. The contrast between Romanos's *prooimion* and the latter two is dramatic. The sixth-century poet celebrates the feast, while the tenth-century additions voice current imperial triumphalism:

I.

Angelic choirs, be amazed at the miracle,  
Mortals, let us sing a hymn with our voices  
Seeing the unspeakable condensation of God  
at which the celestial powers tremble.  
Now aged arms are embracing  
the One and only Lover of Humanity.

II.

Having taken flesh from a virgin for our sake  
and been carried as child in the arms of an aged man,  
Lift the horn of glory (*keras*) [i.e., the Cross] of our pious emperors  
Strengthen them through your power, O Logos,  
Gladden their pious empire  
[For You are] the One and only Lover of Humanity

III.

Having sanctified the virginal womb with your birth  
Having blessed the arms of Symeon as it is fitting  
Having already arrived, you have saved us, Christ, our God,  
But give peace to the empire in war,  
And strengthen the emperors, whom you love,  
[For You are] the One and only Lover of Humanity.<sup>129</sup>

128 Nῦν εἶδον ἀγαθέ, Θεεὶ οἱ ὀφθαλμοί μου, τὴν σὴν ἐπαγγελίαν, ἀπόλυσόν με τάχος, τὸν δούλόν σου φιλάνθρωπε, BL Add 31919, fol. 29v and <https://glt.goarch.org/texts/feb/feb07.html>

129 Χορὸς ἀγγελικὸς ἐκπληττέσθω τὸ θαῦμα, (1)

—βροτοὶ δὲ ταῖς φωναῖς ἀνακράξωμεν ὕμνον,  
—ὄρωντες τὴν ἄφατον τοῦ Θεοῦ συγκατάβασιν·  
ὄν γὰρ τρέμουσι τῶν οὐρανῶν αἱ δυνάμεις,  
—νῦν γηράλαι ἐναγκαλίζονται χεῖρες (5)  
—τὸν μόνον φιλάνθρωπον.

While Romanos engages the story of the Presentation, extolling the prophet Symeon, the later second and third *prooimia* speak of victory achieved through the Cross as weapon and beseech Christ to give triumphs to the emperors, strengthen their power, and protect their security. The added poetry of this kontakion colours the feast with imperial ideology of victory. The added poetry of this kontakion colours the feast with imperial ideology of victory. Moreover, the New Testament story also resonates with current tenth-century ideology, which views the conquest of Cilicia and Holy Land as the rightful restoration of territory that belongs to the Byzantines-New Israelites. And just like Christ comes back to Jerusalem, so too the Byzantine exiles return home, conquering through the power of the Cross. We can detect the message of triumphalism in the Hypapantē at Hosios Loukas. The Cross as *keras*/weapon is prominent on the altar cloth; it gleams when the summer afternoon sun shines directly at it. The Arabic letters on the ciborium identify the vanquishing of the infidel.

## CONCLUSION

Hosios Loukas emerged as a site developed by powerful Byzantine generals and a military commander *katapeno* of Italy. And for these patrons, some of whom became the early abbots at the monastery, the idea of military victory and the opulent ceremonies of Constantinople served as a model to be emulated in the new foundation. The glittering gold mosaics at Hosios Loukas with a narrative spanning the early life of Christ focus on the triumphal message of incarnation of the Logos and the divine power as the awesome and deafening bright sound of falling water and effusion of light. Two of the mosaics (the two oratories) feature the Hodegetria-type iconography which emulate the Constantinopolitan feasts of the Akathistos and the memory of the Arab siege (16 August). Mary as general and protector of the city was an idea promoted by the emperor-generals of the second half of the tenth century. The music and poetic form of the Akathistos was mirrored at Hosios Loukas in the new kontakion composed for the saint and set to the melody of the *Hypermachō*. Ideas of victory shaped by the Constantinopolitan imperial ceremonies permeate the images in dome, eliciting both Deesis and Ascension. In this way, the composition evokes the

(pro 2) Προοίμιον Β

Ὁ σάκρα δι' ἡμᾶς ἐκ παρθένου φορέσας (1)  
 \_καὶ βρέφος βασταχθεὶς ἐν ἀγκάλαις πρεσβύτου,  
 \_τὸ κέρας ἀνύψωσον τῶν πιστῶν βασιλέων ἡμῶν·  
 τούτους κράτυνον ἐν τῇ δυνάμει σου, Λόγε,  
 \_τούτων εὐφρανὸν τὴν εὐσεβῆ βασιλείαν, (5)  
 \_ ὁ μόνος φιλόνητος.

(pro 3) Προοίμιον Γ

Ὁ μήτραν παρθενικὴν ἀγίας τῷ τόκῳ σου (1)  
 \_καὶ χεῖρας τοῦ Συμεῶν εὐλόγησας, ὡς ἔπρεπε,  
 \_προφθάσας καὶ νῦν ἔσωσας ἡμᾶς, Χριστὲ ὁ Θεός·  
 ἀλλ' εἰρήνευσον ἐν πολέμοις τὸ πολίτευμα  
 \_καὶ κραταίωσον βασιλείας οὐς ἠγάπησας, (5)  
 \_ ὁ μόνος φιλόνητος, from Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica. Cantica Genuina, ed. Paul Maas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963, rpt. 1997), 26–34, esp. 26–27.



acclamation performed for the emperor at the Church of the Theotokos of the Pēgē and at the Chalke Gate on the feast of the Ascension. These chants celebrate Mary as the invincible general and protector of the empire; she is the shield and the crown, subduing the enemies. Mary's power comes from her virginal motherhood: a container of the uncontainable. The proximity of the Feast of Hosios Loukas (7 February) to that of the Hypapantē (2 February) and of the Prophet Symeon (3 February) offer the model of the saint as a *docheion*, containing the divine and liquifying this grace as a flow of oil oozing from the *soros* in the Northern oratory. But the same feast of the Presentation also channels the late tenth-century Byzantine imperial aspirations to recapture the Holy Land and these ideas are manifested in the two new *prooimia* for the kontakion of Hypapantē. The great victories against the Arabs in the second half of the tenth century resurrected the hope of the Byzantine return to Jerusalem, of the exiles coming back to reclaim the "promised land." Echoes of these ideas are present in the choice to represent the Hypapantē and also in the use of Arabic inscriptions on the ciborium and the shields of Sts. Demetrios and Prokopios flanking the Presentation. The military successes brought enormous wealth to the empire, sites such as Hosios Loukas shared these riches with the people, making the divine grace pour onto the needy and dejected. The enveloping sound of the interior was evocative of the din of "many waters;" vision further amplified by the glitter of the gold mosaics, the gleam of the marble, and the translucency of the alabaster. The church interior thus became an icon of sound and light that embraced the congregation as a *docheion*, making them live ephemerally inside the icon of God.

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