The so-called “Athonite” type of church and two shrines of the Theotokos in Constantinople*

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The textual descriptions of alterations carried in the two most important Theotokos’ churches in Constantinople, the Blachernae and the Theotokos in Chalkoprateia, focus on the addition of lateral apses to the buildings. This type is very likely the source of influence and also the basis for the transference of the concept of lateral apses in Athonite katholika.

Keywords: Byzantine architecture, Mt. Athos, katholikon, Constantinople, Chalkoprateia, Blachernae

Typology is a major instrument for the classification and understanding of Byzantine church architecture. It is virtually impossible to talk of Byzantium’s churches without any reference to the established types of ecclesiastical buildings. To describe briefly a church, one usually refers to the known architectural types or the ways it differs from them.1 However, this kind of classification poses certain problems, especially when trying to examine questions of origin of a specific type. In such cases the usual iconographic approach, of comparing forms of plans, leads into inquiries between buildings that usually have no historic relation.2 Following a specific type is a characteristic of Byzantine churches. The repeated construction of buildings with plans of similar layout, suggests that the application of types was a basic trend of Byzantine ecclesiastic architecture, evident both to us and more importantly to the people of the time.3 The recurrence of specific building types is mainly due to the symbolic content of their layout, even if this is not clearly evident in their geometry. The so-called “cross-in-square” type is a form whose symbolic layout is apparent in the articulation of its volumes rather than its plan.4 Whether inscribed in the plan or formed in the gabled roofs projecting from the central dome, the type’s basic feature is the forming of the main Christian symbol, the cross: hence the name. On the other hand though, the ever-popular type of the basilica seems to have retained its validity as a church-type throughout the period, due more to its cultural associations than to the symbolic content of its form. It is a type applied to church buildings and remained in use because of its name and the fact that it was connected to some of the most popular and venerated ecclesiastical institutions of the era.5 Thus another mode of standardizing and perpetuating a certain type is not due to its symbolic content but because of an association: a linguistic one, as in the case of the term “basilica” or a formal one, created by copying a known prototype, making thus the new church look like an older one.6

The study of the so-called “Athonite” type of church offers a telling example of the problems that occur when analyzing typology, even in cases where matters seem at first “simple” (fig. 1). A major difficulty has to do with the very definition of the type. Some scholars tend to think of it as a complex structure, including all features and details usually found in an Athonite katholikon: the main church, as a cross-in-square domed structure expanded with two lateral apses-choroi, an extended narthex (“lite”) and one or more pureceles.7 Yet

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2. As commented by C. Mango (op. cit., 96).

3. Infra.


6. For the special value of the term “basilica” even before Christian-


7. The historiography of the “Athonite” type is too extensive to be re-


8. The problem as it appears in scholarship has been summarised in: Παντοκράτωρ, op. cit., 140–144.

9. Στη Μικρά Ασία, op. cit., esp. 140–142; Krautheimer, Early Christ-


11. For the special value of the term “basilica” even before Christian-


13. For the special value of the term “basilica” even before Christian-


15. For the special value of the term “basilica” even before Christian-


17. The historiography of the “Athonite” type is too extensive to be re-


18. The problem as it appears in scholarship has been summarised in: Παντοκράτωρ, op. cit., 140–144.

19. Στη Μικρά Ασία, op. cit., esp. 140–142; Krautheimer, Early Christ-


other scholars have noted that the Athonite katholikon cannot be discussed as a group of several buildings. It would be more helpful, when investigating its origin, to accept a description based only on the main church building—its core.

But even this is not an easy type to define as it has been viewed, in modern scholarship, either as a cross-in-square enlarged with lateral apses-choroi or as a triconch. The “triconch” approach stretches its complete difference from the accepted norm of the cross-in-square and the fact that its main characteristic is its core with three great conches.

What is of interest is that by following one of these approaches scholars seem to predefine the different train of thought, regarding the origin of the type, they adopt or propose. Thus adherents of the complex definition of the type (extended cross-in-square with lite and parecclesia) tend to stretch its connection with Athonite monasticism regardless of the specific trends or details that led to its inception or the fact that it was probably formulated in successive building phases. Followers of the theory that it is a cross-in-square expanded with lateral apses-choroi, seem to accept its evolution as a solution specific for Athonite monasticism within the trends of ecclesiastic architecture of the time. Yet they do not offer an explanation for the origin of the influences responsible for the alterations in the type. Lastly, supporters of the “triconch” definition seem to be more occupied with defining the specific current of influences that led into the creation of the “Athonite” type and more than usually this approach leads into an expansion of the time and space that the theory covers, when inquiring the origin of the type’s prototype.

The second approach appears to be better balanced, yet seems to overemphasize certain aspects of the problem while oversimplifying others. Its main difficulty is the fact that all its followers are ready to accept one answer as to why this type came to be: the lateral apses were added to the

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10 For example cf. Георгий, Βυζαντινή Ναοδομία, 101–103; Χ. Μπούρα, Ιστορία της αρχιτεκτονικής, 2: Αρχιτεκτονική στο Βιζαντιού, το Ισλάμ και την Δυτική Ευρώπη κατά τον μεσαίωνα, Αθήνα 1994, 211–212.
11 Most notably: Steppan, Βυζαντινή Ναοδομία, 103–104; Μυμολόκος, Στο καθολικό της Μονής Βατοπαιδίου, 142–143.
12 Георгий, Βυζαντινή Ναοδομία, 103–104; Μυμολόκος, Στο καθολικό της Μονής Βατοπαιδίου, 142–143.

cross-in-square core in order to accommodate the group of chanters or choroi—hence the name, 14 an arrangement attested for Athonite katholika from the Middle Ages up to this day. Even suggestions of the lateral apses as places for distinguished church-goers retain a similar approach that of form-follows-function. 15 Moreover this theory is not irrelevant to the details of the construction history of the first Athonite katholika, the ones responsible for establishing the type: those of Great Lavra, Iveron (fig. 2) 16 and Vatopedi (fig. 3). 17 The theory would be better validated if a reference could be found for defining the influences responsible for the inception of the type’s main characteristic, the lateral apses or the triconch layout, whatever the name. 18 There is indeed some truth in all the theories proposed up to now, although probably there is room for a reevaluation of the data available and the approach followed.

There is no reason to doubt that the first Athonite katholikon configured with lateral apses is that of the Great Lavra. Mylonas’ theory of an “enlargement”, carried out by Athanasios, mentioned in his Vitae and connected by the same scholar to the addition of lateral apses-choroi to a cross-in-square church, has been questioned and its proof presupposes extended archaeological investigation in the building itself. 19 Until further evidence though, we can accept that the Great Lavra katholikon was constructed with lateral apses in its main cross-in-square domed core by Athanasios around 963 and that the “enlargement” mentioned in the texts has to do with expanding some other part of the katholikon complex. 20 Moreover Mylonas’ argument that the basic layout of the Protaton church in Karyes (fig. 4) shows a similar approach with the triconch plan of the ‘Athonite’ churches remains valid, despite the fact that it has been proved that it was built like this from the start. 21 Thus we can retain that the layout of the Protaton could well be the first church in the Athos peninsula to incorporate lateral spaces in a concentric plan and that the Great Lavra katholikon was

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14 The most exhaustive presentation of the argument can be found in both Mylonas’ articles regarding the Great Lavra katholikon. It is based on the use of the word “choroi”, meaning group of chanters that can be found in a text earlier or about the time of the katholikon, yet that doesn’t mean that the lateral apses were called thus from that period. In any case even if called like this it doesn’t mean their inception included the terminology. Cf. Mylonas, Le plan initial du catholicon, 98.

15 I. Papasgêlos, Ο αρχιτεκτονικός όρος “χοροί” και ο Όσιος Αθανάσιος ο Αθωνίτης, Πέμπτο Συμπόσιο Βυζαντινής και Μεταβολιστικής Αρχαιολογίας και Τέχνης (Θεσσαλονίκη, 7, 8 και 9 Ιουνίου 1985), Αθήνα 1985, 73–74.


17 Μυλωνάς, Το καθολικό της Μονής Βετοπεδίου, 89–112 (virtually reproduced from the Greek: Μυλωνάς, Αρχιτεκτονική του Καθολικού, 52–63). For a current critique v. Μυλωνάς, Το καθολικό της Μονής Βετοπεδίου, 138–152. Unfortunately Mylonas’ theory as the only available in a non Greek literature has been reproduced without criticism virtually everywhere. Cf., for example, Ousterhout, Master Builders of Byzantium, 29, 92.

18 For all purposes of this paper suffices to say that at some point in late tenth century in Athos we find this type of building. Great Lavra is a more favourable candidate due to its position in the administrative hierarchy and its association with Athanasios, the founder of Athosian monasticism.

most probably the first cross-in-square with lateral apses-choroi.22

Mylonas insisted on the development of the “athlonite” type first in the Protaton and more clearly in the Great Lavra katholikon, his main argument based on the notion that the whole process was an answer to a specific functional problem of the monastic office, the accommodation of the chanters.23 Although this cannot actually be proved for any of the churches, it doesn’t mean that their design wasn’t born out of a similar train of thought.24

The actual problem of this theory is the notion that such a process of development in Byzantine church architecture presupposes supremacy of functionality over considerations of form. Yet this approach defies the very notion of Byzantine architecture, whose strict formality is clearly evident in the recurrent application of well defined building types.25 Easy classification into certain types provides serious evidence that in church architecture of the Byzantine world form was in fact the major concern. The more so since we can discern a double symbolic content in any given type: in the layout of the plan and the way that the volumes are articulated, forms of special meaning are apparent: the cross, both in plan and in the roofs’ layout, the tripartite chancel, the five-domed arrangement etc. Moreover, the hierarchical arrangement of the main features stretches the form’s symbolic meaning, as in the case of the dome in the center and the highest point of the inscribed cross, the narthex as the symmetrical antithesis of the chancel and also with the way that these spaces are decorated according to their place in the spatial hierarchy.

All these considered, typological classification of Byzantine churches seems to be a useful tool for analyzing and understanding them, yet the strict application of certain types can only mean that these concepts (symbolism and artistic value of building types) were understood by the Byzantines as well. Thus the basic concept of typification was perceived then the same way as it is now: Byzantine churches followed identifiable types in order to be easily recognised and appreciated by their users.26

Moreover it can be argued that the continued application of certain types was a way to spread architectural ideas between places and eras in the form of prototypes and copies, while allowing for innovations and alterations. Most building types can be summarized into a basic geometric form whose layout can be described easily using words. These words could be transferred as orders or concepts from a patron to the team of construction workers and be comprehensible. It is clear though that verbal description is more selective than architectural plans. Thus descriptions using words can focus into specific details of importance ignoring the overall scheme. This means that the verbal description of a church is possible to contain only selected characteristics, those most recognisable. Nevertheless, they could be transferred into virtually any type of building as references to a prototype.

Scholars have stretched the fact that there has not been any found example of a building or group of buildings to clearly act as a prototype for the “Athlonite” type in its complex or simpler definition.27 The only reference cited are the triconch buildings in their simple form: a single space with three apses stemming from it comprising integral components of the design, often called a “trefoil”.28 On the contrary in the case of the “Athlonite” type the three apses are in reality the chancel’s main apse and the other two are lateral extensions of an otherwise typical cross-in-square layout. In the case of the Protaton the ends of a transverse arm of a cross-basilica seem to be able to function as choroi too. Some churches from far away Georgia that only bear a passing resemblance with their polycoon plans and strict formalism29 have been regarded as suitable for comparison and references of inspiration for the inception of the “Athlonite” type of church.30 This theory has been backed by the historic information regarding Saint Athanasios’ birthplace or that of the people responsible for founding of Iveron monastery, another candidate for being the prototype in the Athonite katholika tradition.

Yet this inquiry is haunted by the way scholars perceive architectural types and their characteristics, mainly identified in the geometry of plans and other drawings. It might be easier and more fruitful if we start searching for a prototype as a cultural reference and not as a source of geometric analogies.

The idea came from information gathered from texts regarding the history of the two most popular Theotokos’ churches in Constantinople, namely the Virgin’s most important shrine, the Blachernae complex31 and the church known as “Theotokos at the Chalkoprateia”.32 The importance of both institutions for the religious history of Constantinople can hardly be overestimated. Yet it is a pity that the archaeological record for both of them is either very scanty or completely lacking.

The origin of both complexes is set back to the fifth century at the time of the sacralization of urban space in the New Capital and the establishing of the Theotokos as one of the main persons in the spiritual life of the City.33 The question of their founder is still open to suggestions with main candidates being the famous Pulcheria, sister of Theodosios II, the infamous Verina, wife of Leo I and the industrious Justinian. Both shrines where major proskynemata because they

22 Mango, Byzantine architecture, 118 (regarding the Protaton he notes “It is a fairly large, almost square building of the inscribed-cross type”).
23 Mylonas, Le plan initial du catholicon, 96–98. No writer seems to question the motive behind the addition of choroi offered by Mylonas, except perhaps partially I. Papangelos (Παπανγέλου, Ο αρχιτεκτονικός όρος, 73–74). 
24 Unless a (lost) text is found stating specifically Athanasios’ intention as such.
25 Liturgy, although typified in itself seems to have little effect in the specific layout of buildings since it could be accommodated to any of the known types and their variations.
26 Very useful remarks regarding these theories can be found in: Ousterhout, Master Builders of Byzantium, 25–38.
27 Mylonas, Le plan initial du catholicon, 99; Συμεωνίδου, Το καθολικό της Μονής Βερονάδειον, 150-151.
28 Mango, Byzantine Architecture, 120.
29 For a short introduction into Armenian and Georgian church architecture of the Middle Ages v. Mango, Byzantine Architecture, 98–107.
30 This theory as well as that of the Iveron connection is summarized by N. Giedes (Γιέδες, Βυζαντινή Ναύσα, 101–105).
housed important relics: several of the Virgin’s garments. Both complexes besides the main church comprised also of structures housing these relics. These annexes were called in either case “Soros”, a reference apparently to the fact that since there was no case of acquiring the Virgin’s physical remains, her garments were the next best souvenir from her earthly presence. Although the question of the founder of these complexes has not been solved, there is ample evidence to suggest that both were formulated over a period of time, comprising more of churches with major annexes and certainly not solitary buildings, a fact that could be the source of the confusion in the sources regarding the identity of the patron.34 It seems probable that some parts of each were constructed by one of the candidates while others were either constructed anew or renovated under another.

The main church at the Chalkoprateia was a basilica with three aisles, a narthex and galleries over the sides and narthex, resembling in size and layout the basilica of Stoudios and the Acheiropoleitou in Thessaloniki. It was also in the vicinity of the Great Church, so it seems that the identification of a major basilica, whose remains have been found in Hagia Sophia’s neighborhood, with the much venerated Chalkoprateia is quite sound.35 Most of the details about the church though can be gathered from information in texts.

The Blachernae complex is less easy to describe since no actual remains have been discovered yet. The main or “Great Church” was gravely restored or built anew under Justinian, who was greatly involved with Marian churches all over the empire, if we are to believe what Procopius delivers regarding the emperor’s building activity. According to Procopius’ description it was a three aisled basilica with a transverse element, possibly a crossing aisle. It was built with fittings of Parian marble and had naves as well as narthex galleries.36 The structure housing the main relih was a concentric building of double floor plan and there was also a separate yet connected structure related to a source of holy water and used as a ritual bath, known as “Lou(s)ma”. Mango, who dealt extensively with unraveling the patron question of the complex, suggested also a possible plan that more or less schematizes the scattered pieces of evidence already mentioned (fig. 5), yet seems improbable.37 It appears quite possible that we can get a better notion, regarding the Blachernae complex’s layout, from a building still standing, namely the group of buildings known as the Virgin Katapoliani in Paros (fig. 6).38 They comprise a complex consisting of places.

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34 This is the way that things are stated in the mostly discrepant Pastia. For the Blachernae church: “Τὸν δὲ ναὸν τὸν μέγατα τῶν Βλαχερνῶν Μαρτυρικοῦ καὶ Πολυψάλμου ἀνήγαρεν καὶ μεγάλα μαρτυρίαν ποιησάντας...Τὴν δὲ ἀγάνην σφον ἀνήγαρεν Λέων Ματθίλλης, διότι ἐν τοῖς χρόνοις αὐτοῦ τῆς θεοτοκίας ἔφτασαν ἡμῖν πολλά καὶ θαυμάστα γεγονόντα εἰς πλήθος. Οὐκ οὖσα ἐκτενεῖς καὶ τὸ λοιμὸς καὶ ἐπεκέρδους κτήματα πολλὰ καὶ σκηνές καὶ κεφαλήν χρυσά ἐν τοιαύτη σειατρία καὶ ἀργυρίων”, cf. Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum, ed. Th. Preger, fs. 2, Leipzig 1907 (repr. 1975), 3. 41.

35 Kleiss, Neue Befunde zur Chalkoprateinkirche, 587-594.


37 mango, The origins of the Blachernae shrine, 61–76.

three structures, the main cross-domed basilica with three ailed arms and galleries running the whole length of the cruciform nave, a concentric smaller domed church of double floor plan and lastly a baptistery, a building strongly associated with water ritual. The main church dates from the time of Justinian or later, while the two smaller structures might be slightly earlier.

Be that as it may, what makes both Marian churches in the Capital relevant to our inquiry is the fact that at some point in their history they were altered and expanded to incorporate lateral apses in the main churches. The fact has been recorded by several records in various texts.

Regarding the church of the Theotokos in Blachernae, Theophanes in his chronography states: “In this year (Justin II)... added to the church of the Holy Theotokos of the Blachernae the two apses, the one to the north and the one to the south, in the Great Church and he turned it into a cross-like shape.” 39 Years later Zonaras recounts the modifications carried by Justin II: “…and he added anew the apses in both sides of the Blachernae church so that it becomes a cross-like form”.40 At roughly the same time Kedrenos summarizes the work carried out as follows: “(Justin II) added also in the church of the Blachernae the two apses and made it into a cross-shape”.41 The work described in these passages is recorded also in the so-called “Palatine Anthology” in verses which apparently were inscribed inside the church, commemorating Justin II’s offering.42 The epigram only refers to the apses through its placing there, despite the chronographers’ comment on them as the most evident part of the work. This could mean a number of things and justified variously. What seems important for the question in hand is the fact that Justin II’s involvement in the work done in the Blachernae church complex is commemoated into historiography in a different way (recorded by the chronographers) from what were the intentions of the ktetor proper (recorded in the Palatine Anthology). The epigram inscribed on the building speaks of “enlargement and solidification and of beautifying it more than ever”, whereas the chronographers repeat specifically the addition of the lateral apses and speak of them as something that is commonly observed. Of importance also is the fact that the description of the work executed is summarised precisely into the addition simply of the lateral apses. The words of the chronographers seem to act simply as an explanation of this special feature which probably was a striking one, characterising the church building and the fact that the intention mentioned behind the addition of the apses is the creation of the cross like shape. It is more than evident that in this case all three writers stretch a notion that relates to the alteration with a motive that has to do with the form of the building and especially its symbolic content resembling a cross. This is in contrast with the epigram’s verses that speak of motives quite different. It is safe to deduce that the most important Marian church of the Capital, early in its history, acquired a shape that was easily comprehensible and acknowledged, so that if one spoke of “the apses added” and that “thus it became like a cross”, he would certainly be understood.

When some time later Basil I sponsored construction work done in the other famous Marian shrine, the church of the Theotokos at the Chalkoprateia, the description of the work carried out projects a striking resemblance to the one related for Justin II and the Blachernae. The chronographer George the Monk writes: “…and the other (church) of the mostly venerated Theotokos, the holy shrine that is close to the Chalkoprateia, of the ever-blessed and saintly Soros, he (Basil I) saw as humble and darkly, (so he) constructed light-bearing apses and he raised the roof higher so to bring more light appropriately and made (it) beautiful with rays of light”.43 In this reference the motives for the building’s alteration are closer to what was said about the Blachernae in the Palatine Anthology. Whatever the motives or their expression might be, one finds it irresistible not to relate the addition of apses to the church at the Chalkoprateia44 to the similar work carried some two hundred years before in the most venerated of the Theotokos’ shrines in the Capital, the Blachernae. Therefore even if not stated by George the Monk, one might easily summon that what was apparent in the case of the final form of the Blachernae was apparent in that of the Chalkoprateia as well, after Basil’s alterations: the two buildings had lateral apses and thus resembled a cross.45

As we have already seen the creation of the so-called “Athönite” type of church has been variously described as a cross-in-square church with lateral apses — the choriot. It seems that the inception of this layout in the plan could be understood as a process of incorporating into the established type of the cross-in-square church,46 selected for the katholikon of the Great Lavra, two lateral apses as a specific reference to the two holiest of the Theotokos’ shrines in the Capital. As we have already noted both churches were perceived by contemporary and later writers as characterised exactly by this feature: the lateral apses added to them.

It is exactly this repetition of the description in the various chronographies that seems to have already turned this architectural feature, the addition of two lateral apses to make a church look like a cross, into a verbal type, a typical phrase of words frequently repeated and easily understood. This could have played an instrumental part into transferring the architectur...
It relates more to the inception of adding a specific feature into an established type of building that could be decided upon its construction as a reference to a prototype, even if the prototype was a totally different type of building. And indeed one might visualise the same process behind the plan of the prototype was a totally different type of building. The association between this church and the Theotokoupolis that the Capital had become produce a prototype of Marian connection especially eloquent in describing the alterations carried out for both of them. These descriptions appear to carry the form of the two churches into a verbal type and it seems that any layout that could be described similarly was able to be associated with the two churches in Constantinople with a reference to the same prototype. Since this verbal description incorporates also the symbolic content adherent to the layout, it is easy to understand the process of creating a new prototype. Thus we can see the creation of a series of buildings which do not conform totally to a form down to its details but to a type that shares only the features found in the verbal description: literally the lateral apses and the cross-like shape.

It is precisely this element of verbal descriptions of buildings that needs to be stretched as setting the limits within which the specific features are found. They are the ones responsible for conveying the basic elements of the prototype and its character. They also allow us to evaluate the variety of forms that could possibly satisfy the same description retaining the reference to the same prototype even when that is not clear when comparing plans or other drawings. It seems possible thus that even churches that appear to us, who compare the geometry of the plans or the articulation of volumes, irrelevant could turn out to have only a number of shared features that connect to the layout of a prototype without reproducing it down to its details. Therefore it appears that the comprehension of the way typology worked in the transference of prototypes in the church architecture of Byzantium is far more complicated than what is usually anticipated.

For example the church known as Hagios Titos in Gortyna (fig. 7) in Crete seems to have acquired a form of a transverse aisle with lateral apses at its ends.\(^\text{50}\) The layout of

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\(^{47}\) As already noted by C. Mango (cf. n. 23 supra).

\(^{48}\) Mylonas, *Le plan initial du catholicon*, 96–98.

\(^{49}\) Mylonas (op. cit., 97) calls them so.

the plan seems to have initiated from a basilical form and could be dated roughly at the time of Justin II, thus it is quite probable that it might carry a reference to the alterations made in the Blachernae church as described in the texts mentioned. Yet even a seemingly irrelevant church like the Virgin in Skripoul 1 (fig. 8) is a building with a decidedly cross-shaped plan, whose transverse arms can be viewed as lateral "enlargements", a layout that could well refer to the description of the works carried out under Basil I in the Chalkoprateia church.

It is easy to see that we have to come a long way still in order to understand how typology worked for the Byzantines, despite of how we perceive it. Even though the history of both the Propheton church and the Great Lavra katholikon might be quite different from what Mylonas has argued, one thing seems to remain valid: What begun as minor modifications into two existing buildings in the Capital resulted in the creation of a new church type in the middle Byzantine period and beyond. 2

1 The connection of the Virgin in Skripoul with the Propheton church is stretched by C. Mango (Byzantine Architecture, 118–119).

2 To paraphrase one of the concluding remarks of R. Ousterhout regarding buildings that changed in Byzantine Architecture. Cf. Ousterhout, Master Builders of Byzantium, 92.

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Такозвани айонски тип цркве
и два светилишта Богородице у Цариграду

Анастасиос Танцис

Начин на који је тзв. „атонски“ тип цркве дефинисан у современој науци причињавао је одређене тешкоће у истраживању његовог порекла. У овом тексту аутор заступа гledище по коме је поменути тип грађевине најбоље посматрати као цркву уписаног крста увећану двема бочним апсидама.

Више историографских извора описује градитељске измене које су претрпела два најважнија светилишта Богородице у Цариграду, Влахернско и Халкопратијско. У време цара Јустинија III главна базилика у Влахернама била је увећана двема бочним апсидама. О томе говори неколико извора. На сличан начин је и у Халкопратијском комплексу, у доба цара Василија I, једна грађевина (католикон или параклис Хагиа Сорос) била увећана двема бочним апсидама.

Чини се да су те бочне апсиде представљале најупадљивију архитектонску особеност две најважније цариградске цркве Богородице. Често помињане у усменој и писаној традицији, управо су оне могле послужити као извор инспирације за укључење бочних апсид (choroi) у најстарије атонске католиконе, Велику Лавру, Ватопед или Ивирон, а такође и за градњу два бочна анекса (такођеchoroi?) уз цркву Протатона. Реч је о особеном начину стварања и преношења архитектонских образаца унутар Византије.