

Middle Byzantine Thessaloniki:
Art, Architecture and History
of the
Ninth through Twelfth Centuries

by

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Greek Transliteration

Most of the names used in this paper, from Thessaloniki onwards, are transliterated from another language (usually Greek); additionally, many had ancient and modern forms (Axios/Vardar), or different forms in different languages (Dyrrachion/Durrazo). I have transliterated as directly as possible, except when ease of comprehension demanded a traditional form. For the names of churches, except Hagia Sophia, I have used St. instead of one of the many transliterations of the Greek *Ἁγία*/os. I have used modern forms of names, as they appear in most maps. The sources, even the secondary ones, often have different forms of the same name, and quotations retain the form used therein.

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I.

Introduction

Few cities possess the rich assortment of monuments or extensive unbroken urban history of Thessaloniki, Greece, the city perched between the Balkans and the Aegean in Macedonia. Indeed, from its founding around 316 B.C.E. by Cassander, the city was successively an urban center under the Hellenistic kingdoms, the Roman Republic and the Empire. She then became the second city of the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires, and, since 1912, the second city of modern Greece.¹ Each of these periods was characterized by different urban institutions and composition, from the Hellenized center of Roman Illyricum to the polyglot, majority Jewish city of the Ottoman Empire.

In 1997, Thessaloniki was Cultural Capital of Europe, an event which was celebrated with the publication of an extensive volume of articles on the city.² Although the Byzantine Emperor ruled over the city for approximately one thousand years, a period filled with danger and declining urban life, especially in the Balkans, this tome devotes a mere three articles to the Byzantine Empire; the Middle Byzantine Period, from the end of Iconoclasm in 843 until the fall of Constantinople in 1204, rates only three pages. This is due partly to the lack of evidence, partly to a lack of scholarship, but in any case it is a shame, for this period was in many ways the heyday of the Empire. More specifically, although Thessaloniki was sacked twice during this period, under siege during several invasions and civil wars, and suffered from Imperial preoccupations in Asia Minor, the city survived. While many of the other Roman cities of the Balkans dissolved into villages or disappeared entirely, Thessaloniki remained a

¹Veliyanni-Terzi, Ch. "Hellenistic Thessaloniki." Thessaloniki: History and Culture, ed. I. K. Hassiotis. Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1997; p. 62-72; p. 62

²Thessaloniki: History and Culture, ed. I. K. Hassiotis. Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1997

flourishing urban center throughout the period, changing with the times but also preserving those qualities which kept her whole.

In Thessaloniki, the passage of time left monuments from every era, while the city continually changed around them. Although written sources do exist, the Middle Byzantine buildings and archaeological remains of the city embody often overlooked but important and unique historical evidence for the ninth through twelfth centuries. More importantly, an independent, continuous artistic tradition is visible in the surviving monuments; these buildings, along with written sources and evidence from earlier and later times, form the heart of this reconstruction of the Middle Byzantine Period. Throughout those years, the city functioned as a political, economic and artistic center, experiencing shifts of fortune, but always retaining urban institutions and an urban identity.

Sources

The sources for this period are meager in comparison with some other eras, but suffice to provide both details and a general picture of political, economic and cultural life in the city.³ The primary written material covers a wide variety of genres, and is supplemented by modern scholarship on textual sources, and on the material evidence collected from archaeology and the observation of art. Within the Empire contemporary histories, from simple Chronicles to detailed accounts like Eustathios' Capture of Thessaloniki, mention the city, as do other works of literature, especially hagiography, epistolography,

³On sources for Byzantine History: Whittow, M. The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600-1025. London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1996; ch. 1

travel literature and even the satire Timarion.⁴ Laws of the empire, *typika* of the monasteries, and other official documents mention Thessaloniki or apply to the city in this period; these have been consulted as available. Some Arab, Jewish and Western sources also mention the city, albeit briefly, and are available in translation.⁵

Inevitably, sources which do not specifically apply to the city must also be consulted, and generalizations and characterizations made. The limits and context of historical texts will be noted briefly, when relevant, but other controversies will be cited and not engaged. Unfortunately, these sources survive in a highly fragmented state, and even the modern historian writing on the period has access to only a small pool of surviving documents from the original sea. There is some secondary material on the city as well, although much of it is colored by outdated assumptions, nationalist agendas, or focuses mainly on literary or artistic trends.

The history of the Empire must be supplemented by the study of material remains, and in the case of Thessaloniki these remains are informative, tantalizing and confusing after a further eight hundred years of occupation on the same site. However, they form the most important body of evidence for the Middle Byzantine Period within the city. Substantially more survives than in Constantinople, but the fire and rebuilding of 1917 destroyed most of the upper layers of archaeological stratigraphy; most excavations in the city have never

⁴Eustathios of Thessaloniki: The Capture of Thessaloniki, ed. and tr. J. R. Melville Jones. Canberra: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1987; Timarion, tr. B. Baldwin. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984; p. 141 for Greek editions

⁵Unfortunately, most of the Arab sources are untranslated. I have used secondary literature that makes reference to many of them.

been published, or add little on the Middle Byzantine Period.⁶ Archaeological evidence does help, though, to chart economic activity, agriculture, population and other changes in the city over time.

While all of the Byzantine monuments surviving today have undergone repeated renovation, conversion between mosque and church, and periods of neglect, they are still standing, and their art and architecture are available for study. These buildings are significant for the history of the city, and the Empire as a whole: they reflect conditions in the city and connections with the outside world which written sources omit or cannot provide. They also aid in reconstructing the architectural record lacking in Constantinople, where practically the entire period between the construction of the Hagia Sophia in the sixth century, and the rebuilding of the Chora Monastery in the fourteenth, is unrepresented in art or architecture. The monuments of Thessaloniki provide clues not only about developments in the city, but also about construction in the capital and the neighboring areas of the Balkans and Greece.

The Land Walls, the Rotunda of St. George, Hagia Sophia, the Panagia Chalkeon and the Church of Hosios David are all of primary importance for the period, while some other scattered remnants also survive. The decoration of the apse of the Rotunda of St. George, the dome, apse and narthex of Hagia Sophia, the nave of the Church of Hosios David, and the entire Church of the Panagia

⁶The early excavations in the city, unpublished, were by the Swedish Archaeologist Dyggve. Salvage archaeology goes on continuously, however, "rescue excavations in Thessaloniki have added virtually nothing to our knowledge of the Middle-Byzantine city.": Bouras, Ch. "City and Village: Urban Design and Architecture." *IOB* 31/2 (1981) pp. 611-53; p. 630; I have the latest word on some buildings from notes from the visit last semester, but the controversy about the walls is enough to make even 'the latest word' suspect. On the uses of archaeology for the Byzantine historian: Russell, J. "Transformations in Early Byzantine Urban Life: the Contribution and Limitations of Archaeological Evidence." in *Major Papers: The 17th International Byzantine Congress*. New Rochelle: Aristide D. Caratzas, Publisher, 1986; pp. 137-54

Chalkeon all date from the ninth through twelfth centuries; this last is the only new construction of the period. Some older monuments and the walls were renovated or decorated during these centuries, and archaeological and textual evidence about a range of other structures, both secular and religious, also exists. Some buildings, like the Armory, are only known from literary sources, while others, like the Hippodrome, can be reconstructed through archaeology. Assembled together, these structures form a Middle Byzantine city map, and a timeline of artistic development in the city. When art and archaeology are combined with written sources, a hitherto neglected picture of Middle Byzantine Thessaloniki gradually emerges.

Geography and the City

The perils and prosperity in the history of Thessaloniki are largely a function of geography; consequently, it must be the starting point for any discussion of the city's past or future. At many times the very survival of the city was as dependent upon geography as upon anything else. In the Middle Byzantine Period, the city was nestled within natural and man-made features of particular felicity for an urban center of that era.

The city lies on the eastern edge of the fertile plain of the Vardar River, on the northern edge of the Aegean and the southern edge of the Balkan peninsula, at a crossroads of land and sea routes already well established by the early ninth century (See Ill. 2). To the east, the Roman Via Egnatia ran to Constantinople, linking Thessaloniki to the capital's influence and protection, and to its trade

connections with the Black Sea and beyond.⁷ A spur of the road ran southeast from Thessaloniki into the Chalkidiki peninsula, site of farming villages, mines, and, from the ninth century onwards, the monasteries of Mt. Athos.⁸ To the West, the Egnatia linked Thessaloniki to the Adriatic port of Dyrrachion, and the cities of the interior, sources of trade goods when the way was not obstructed by brigands or invading armies, as it often was in this period.⁹

The broad and fertile plain of the Vardar River, just to the west, put Thessaloniki in an enviable position for a Balkan or Greek city; the fruits of that plain could support a city of consumers in most times. A twelfth century Byzantine author wrote: "It has rich soil in which farmers can grow all sorts of crops. It is a good spot for cavalymen to ride in, and an even better one for generals to practise battle manoeuvres in..., thanks to the area being so entirely flat and free of stones and bushes."¹⁰

However, this area was not always under the city's control, as threats also came from the north: Slavic tribes were pushed south into the area by first the Avars and then the Bulgarians, from the late sixth century onwards, in waves which lapped against the walls of Thessaloniki every few years.¹¹ By the Middle Byzantine Period, the city was surrounded by mostly Slavic villages, and while an old Roman road (now the modern railroad) ran north along the Vardar to

⁷Timarion. tr. B. Baldwin.; p. 45

⁸Short history of Chalkidiki: V. Dimitriades. "Ottoman Chalkidiki: An Area in Transition." in Continuity and Change in Late Byzantine and Early Ottoman Society. ed. A. Bryer and H. Lowry. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1986; pp. 39-50; p. 41

⁹For the Via Egnatia: Hoddinott, R.F. Early Byzantine Churches in Macedonia and Southern Serbia. London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1963; p. 51

¹⁰Timarion. tr. B. Baldwin.; p. 43

¹¹Les Plus Anciens Recueils des Miracles de Saint Demetrius. ed. P. Lemerle. Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1979; Vryonis, S. "The Evolution of Slavic Society and the Slavic Invasions in Greece: The First Major Slavic Attack on Thessaloniki, A.D. 597." Hesperia 50

Naissos (modern Nis) and on to Singidunum (Belgrade), it was often also impassable because of weather or bandits.

To the south lay the Aegean, with all of the mixed blessings it brought to ports along its shores: trade, piracy, fishing, mild weather and a connection to the outside even when the roads were blocked. While Thessaloniki's harbor did move out gradually from the tenth century sea walls, the city remained a port throughout its history, and never experienced the fatal silting of the great Hellenistic cities of Asia Minor, which withered away in the fifth and sixth centuries, or became landlocked, substantially different places.¹² From its founding through the Middle Byzantine Period, Thessaloniki remained in the same place, within high walls, by the sea, connected to its hinterland by roads which brought trade and food. This position brought significant perils, but practically ensured eventual recovery and prosperity.

The City after Iconoclasm

At the beginning of the Middle Byzantine Period, Thessaloniki was already a city architecturally and politically marked by more than one thousand years of history (See Ill. 3). The Hellenistic street layout survived in the orientation of churches and the placement of gates, and was renewed by Byzantine law and the expediencies of constant construction.¹³ Two main thoroughfares, the present Odos Egnatia and Odos Agiou Dimitriou, ended at

(1981) pp. 378-90; Bulgarian perspective: Macedonia: Documents and Material, ed. V. Bozhinov and L. Panayotov. Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1978

¹²Russell, J. "Transformations in Early Byzantine Urban Life...."

¹³Vickers, M. "Hellenistic Thessaloniki." Journal of Hellenic Studies 92-3 (1972-3) pp. 156-170; p. 159ff. (p. 160-1 map); This was a plan with a rectilinear street pattern, with east/ west streets

each wall in a gate. The Hellenistic Stadium survived between St. Demetrios and the Agora in the ninth century, and may perhaps be identified with the Odeon discovered in the Agora.¹⁴ Mingling with surviving Hellenistic monuments were Roman ones, mostly from the second century C.E. or the era of Galerius (c. 300).¹⁵ These structures included the large hippodrome in the southeast corner of the city, the Imperial palace to the west of it, and many other public buildings (and ruins of public buildings) throughout the city, especially in the area along the Via Egnatia.¹⁶ Ships docked in the harbor built by Constantine in 322, which had already been renovated many times.¹⁷

Most of the monumental buildings in the city at the end of Iconoclasm were first built in the second half of the fifth century C.E., after the city became the capital of the province of Illyricum in 441/2. The city walls were rebuilt on their Hellenistic foundations, and a new palace was constructed for the Prefect, in the northern part of the city, perhaps near the site of the modern Church of Profitis Elias.¹⁸ This palace remained in use throughout the Middle Byzantine Period; the monumental palace of Galerius was still in use in the ninth century, and the Octagon church as well, but both of these went out of use at some point in the tenth century, perhaps after an earthquake. Most importantly, four

about 100 m. apart and north/south streets about 50 m. apart, beginning 150 m. from the walls on each side.

¹⁴ibid. p. 165; Others assume abandonment in the fifth century: Velenis, G. and P. Adam Veleni. Archaia Agora Thessalonikis. Thessaloniki: University Studio Press A.E., 1997; p. 47

¹⁵ibid. pp. 162-3

¹⁶It is uncertain whether many of these were still in use or not. I do not believe Vickers' assertions about the abandonment of the hippodrome and Galerian palace in the fifth century: Vickers, M. "The Hippodrome at Thessaloniki." Journal of Roman Studies 62 (1972) pp. 25-32; p. 30; The hippodrome was still used as a gathering place in the twelfth century, but probably not for chariot racing.

¹⁷Tafrafi, O. Topographie de Thessalonique. Paris: Libraire Paul Geuthner, 1913; p. 15

monumental churches were dedicated in the later fifth century: the Acheiropoietos Basilica, the Rotunda, the first (probably Episcopal) basilica on the site of Hagia Sophia and the Basilica of St. Demetrios.¹⁹

This last basilica was built in the center of the city, between the Stadium and Public Baths, to house the relics of the new patron saint of the city, St. Demetrios. His cult may have been transferred to the city from the old capital of Sirmium in the fifth century along with the Praetorian Prefect of Illyricum, perhaps on his Feast Day of October twenty-sixth.²⁰ Although it was never the Metropolitan church, this basilica, and the cult of St. Demetrios, remained the focus of religious life in the city throughout the Byzantine era, from the trade fair and festival around the Saint's day, to the many pilgrimages to the city. This cult was a very powerful force both inside and outside the city; in the early seventh century the Archbishop John of Thessaloniki wrote the Miracles of St. Demetrios, praising the Saint for his protection of the city.²¹ Most of the surviving mosaics in the building also date from that century; there are only a few later works.

The Basilica of St. Minas may also date to the fifth century, however, only the current apse belongs to the original building, and the structure today does not contain any art or architecture of the Middle Byzantine Period.²² These fifth-century edifices survived the Slavic invasions of the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries in their original forms, except for the basilica on the site of the Hagia

¹⁸Vickers, M. "A Note on the Byzantine Palace at Thessaloniki." Annual of the British School at Athens 66 (1971) pp. 369-71; p. 370; Papazotos, Th. "The Identification of the Church of 'Profitis Elias' in Thessaloniki." DOP 45 (1991) pp. 121-9

¹⁹Vickers, M. "Fifth-Century Brickstamps from Thessaloniki." Annual of the British School at Athens 68 (1973) pp. 285-294; p. 293

²⁰Vickers, M. "Sirmium or Thessaloniki?: A Critical Examination of the St. Demetrius Legend."; p. 349; Vickers, M. "The Stadium at Thessaloniki." Byzantion 41 (1971) pp. 339-348; pp. 341, 347

²¹Vickers, M. "Sirmium or Thessaloniki?....;" p. 339

Sophia. It collapsed at the beginning of the seventh century, perhaps after an earthquake, and was replaced some time later by the smaller domed Church of Hagia Sophia.²³ There were, of course, many other churches and monasteries in the city that have not survived to the present day, or that were totally rebuilt by later constructs.²⁴ The surviving buildings, though, give some indication of the Early Byzantine appearance of the city.

Although repeated Imperial campaigns against the Slavs meant armies were marching through the city on a regular basis, and tribes were plundering the countryside and disrupting trade, agriculture, and communications, the city itself never fell.²⁵ Instead, the Slavs gradually settled down in the surrounding areas, and became villagers more and more like their neighbors every year.

Although at the beginning of the Middle Byzantine period many of them were still pagans, by the end of that time they were all converted to Christianity with their own monuments and texts, largely as a result of missionaries and trade originating in the city.²⁶ The Slavs mingled with Arab settlers, refugees from other areas and native villagers; together these groups made Thessaloniki's ninth-century hinterland a patchwork of independent villages and soldier's

²²Tafrafi, O. Topographie de Thessalonique; p. 176

²³Greek opinion favors 690/1 as the date of the original dome mosaic. Others prefer to place construction in the late eighth century: Theoharidou, K. The Architecture of Hagia Sophia, Thessaloniki. Oxford: B.A.R. International Series 399, 1988; Cormack, R. "The Arts During the Age of Iconoclasm." in Iconoclasm: Papers Given at the 9th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, ed. A. Bryer and J. Herrin. Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine Studies, 1977; pp. 35-44; reprinted in The Byzantine Eye: Studies in Art and Patronage. London: Variorum Reprints, 1989; p. 35

²⁴Tafrafi, O. Topographie de Thessalonique; pp. 186-92; Janin, R. Les Eglises et Les Monasteres des Grands Centres Byzantins (Bithynie, Hellespont..., Thessalonique). Paris: Institut Francais D'Etudes Byzantines, 1975; p. 347ff.

²⁵The Chronicle of Theophanes, ed. and tr. H. Turtledove. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982; Campaign in 688/9, p. 62; 782/3, p. 142

²⁶Browning, R. Byzantium and Bulgaria. London: Maurice Temple Smith Ltd., 1975; p. 53

holdings.²⁷ Most of these villagers probably came to market in the city, which was the center of religious, economic and political administration. Otherwise, in the era just before the Middle Byzantine Period the city mainly appears in Imperial sources as a source of tax revenue and a convenient place of exile for political and ecclesiastical opponents.²⁸

The end of Iconoclasm in 843 meant more in Thessaloniki than the return of exiles to Constantinople, or the resumption of representational art, although these were both important changes. It also came at a time when the Byzantine Empire as a whole, and the Balkans in particular, began to experience a political, economic and cultural reawakening. This reawakening motivated developments in the Balkans, which stretched over the next three hundred and fifty years. Political and economic developments were closely linked to one another, and the political situation in the city was constantly changing due to both internal and external forces. The economy and character of the city also changed, as the population grew and diversified, and communities like Mt. Athos and Ochrid developed around it.

New monuments arose alongside or above the ruins of the past, and new works of art decorated the ancient buildings that remained in use. This was an era of great prosperity for the city, but the evidence of that prosperity needs to be assembled, and combined with a careful comparison and analysis of Middle Byzantine art in the city, to even begin to understand either the history or the art of the period. While the historical evidence provides a partial reconstruction of

²⁷Browning, R. *Byzantium and Bulgaria*; p. 83

²⁸*The Chronicle of Theophanes*, ed. and tr. H. Turtledove.; p. 153; Tafrali. *Topographie de Thessalonique*; p. 126; The most famous exile was St. Theodore Studites, who wrote many letters from the city.

the history of the city, it is more significant for what it brings to the study of the art of the period. The political, economic and social history described below is not only reflected in the art, but also clarified and expanded by the art. More importantly, bringing historical evidence to bear on the art, and bringing the works of art together, is the only way to lend meaning to the works today, and restore them to their place in history, where they are much more significant than as solitary monuments. In Thessaloniki, the existing art and architecture of the Middle Byzantine period permit an unique, and hitherto almost unexplored, opportunity to reconstruct four hundred years of history in the city.

II.

Middle Byzantine Political History

The political history of the Middle Byzantine Period is a truly Byzantine story: Emperors constantly skirmishing with invaders or pretenders, or neglecting the city, leading to two devastating sacks. Throughout the period, however, the city displayed remarkable flexibility and independence, while always remaining an intrinsic part of the Empire.

The Ninth Century

In the Balkans and Greece, the end of Iconoclasm meant a decrease in (but not a total end to) warfare, administrative changes and the rebirth and recovery of many urban centers. Thessaloniki, one of the few that had remained a city, benefited the most from these developments, and the new opportunities for trade and communication.¹ Although the Bulgarians and other Slavic tribes continued to raid in the area, and the fall of Crete to the Arabs in 826 helped perpetuate piracy in the Aegean, the city was more secure for several reasons. In the mid-ninth century Thessaloniki became the capital of the new theme of Macedonia, the seat of a *Strategos* (General), who oversaw both the military and political administration of the region, at the head of a local theme army and civil bureaucracy.² With the exception of sporadic campaigns of the previous centuries, mainly limited to the Aegean seaboard and the city itself, this represented the first return to Thessaloniki of Imperial forces since they were

¹Charanis, P. "Town and Country in the Byzantine Possessions of the Balkan Peninsula during the Later Period of the Empire." in Aspects of the Balkans: Continuity and Change. ed. H. Birnbaum and S. Vryonis. The Hague: 1961; pp. 117-137; reprinted in Social, Economic and Political Life in the Byzantine Empire. London: Variorum, 1973; p. 131

²Probably during the reign of Theophilos (829-42); the first reference to the Strategos of Thessaloniki is 836.

withdrawn to Asia Minor in the seventh century. Although the availability of troops remained unpredictable throughout the period, the situation in the ninth century was never nearly as desperate as in the preceding centuries. The Bulgarians menaced the city at the beginning of the ninth century, from 811 to 816, and at the end, 894-6, but were otherwise usually constrained by treaties or their conflict with the Franks to the north.³

The ninth century was characterized by general peace and prosperity, and by a growth in missionary and monastic activity. This was a century of great artistic production, after the lean years of Iconoclasm. The Hagia Sophia received a dome mosaic of the Ascension, the Rotunda of St. George was decorated with apse frescoes of the same subject and style, and a mosaic panel of the Virgin and St. Theodore was dedicated in St. Demetrios. By the end of the ninth century, then, Thessaloniki had a newly decorated Cathedral, while two of the other large churches in the city had received new decorations to mark the renewal not only of art, but also of trade, business, peace and prosperity in the city. These monuments would continue to inspire artisans in the city, as well as receive further adornments.

However, the Arab raiders were getting progressively closer to the city; they began appearing around Mt. Athos in the middle of the century, and in 866 they established a base on an island off of the Chalkidiki peninsula.⁴ The tenth century opened with an event which disrupted Thessaloniki's stability, and made that century a second era of recovery for the city. However, the political, economic and artistic achievements of the ninth century did not disappear.

³Whittow, M. The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600-1025.; pp. 277, 287

The Tenth Century

At the opening of the tenth century, Thessaloniki was the flourishing metropolis described above; her newly decorated Metropolitan church, active trading network and expanding population made her second only to Constantinople. However, the Byzantine Empire of the early tenth century was unable to protect her riches; around 904 the city was sacked by an Arab pirate fleet led by Leo of Tripolis (See Ill. 4). The event is indisputable; it is recorded in both Byzantine and Arab sources.⁵ However, the reliability of the main Byzantine source, the account of the cleric and kouboukleisios John Kameniates, has been justly called into question.⁶ While some of its details may be incorrect, the broad outlines of his story are probably fairly accurate. Due to both the absence of sea walls, the bad repair of the other walls, and the incompetence of the first strategos, the city fell quickly. The pirates were interested only in booty and slaves, however, and after they had collected both, they departed.⁷ Kameniates, one of those taken, describes the sea journey to Crete, where some spoils and slaves were sold, then to Tripolis and eventually back to Thessaloniki, after his ransoming in Cilician Tarsos. In Alexandria, the Patriarch Eutybios

⁴Miles, G.C. "Byzantium and the Arabs: Relations in Crete and the Aegean Area." DOP 18 (1964) pp. 1-32; p. 9

⁵Ioannis Caminiatae De Expugnatione Thessalonicae. ed. G. Bohlig. Berlin: Apud Walter de Gruyter et Socios, 1973; "Ioannes Cameniata De Excidio Thessalonicensi." in Theophanes Continuatus. ed. B.G. Niebuhrii. Bonn: Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae, 1838; pp. 487-600; English summary: Vacalopoulos, A.E. A History of Thessaloniki. tr. T.F. Carney. Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963; pp. 34-7; Arab sources: Gregoire, H. "Le Communique Arabe sur la Prise de Thessalonique (904)." Byzantion 22 (1952) pp. 373-8

⁶Kazhdan, A.P. "Some Questions Addressed to the Scholars who Believe in the Authenticity of Kameniates' 'Capture of Thessalonica.'" BZ 71 (1978) pp. 301-14; Christides, V. "Once Again Cameniates' 'Capture of Thessalonica.'" BZ 74 (1981) pp. 7-10

⁷Kameniates gives a figure of 22,000 taken, probably an exaggeration.

recorded the arrival of some prisoners from the sack; other Arab historians and observers also recorded the event.⁸

While the city must have been devastated by the loss of wealth and humanity, there was no occupation, and evidence suggests that the city began to recover almost immediately. A nearly contemporary source concerns the Holy man Symeon, a resident of Thessaloniki,

...who, when the town of Salonica was about to be rased to the ground, by that impious Ismaelite who, by God's consent and for the multitude of our sins, had taken it (the Tripolite he was called), accomplished this extrordinary feat of seeing in person the cursed villain, and by his shrewdness and good sense persuading him to save the town and forego most of the captives, by making over to the Arabs the friendly gift destined to the Bulgars, along with the load of specie."⁹

The truth probably lies somewhere in between: the city was taken, with loss of life and property certainly, but it was not destroyed.

Unfortunately, the rest of the tenth century witnessed almost constant warfare between the Byzantine armies and the Bulgarians, and the Bulgarians were usually on the winning side. Their victories around the turn of the century brought the border with the Bulgarians to just twenty-two km. north of the city. Raids and troop movements doubtless affected both the immediate countryside around the city and her ninth century trade routes. Many of the troops belonged to the local theme army, and if they were fighting, it was probably difficult to bring a harvest in on their land.¹⁰ Additionally, many of the invading Slavs and Bulgarians settled down on the land they seized; by the end of the century they

⁸Gregoire, H. "Le Communique Arabe sur la Prise de Thessalonique (904)."; pp. 373-8

⁹"Vita S. Euthymii." ed. and tr. P. Karlin-Hayter. *Byzantion* 25-7 (1955-7) pp. 1-172, 747-78; p. 107; Probably Imperial tax and tribute money, as well as some from the church.

¹⁰Whittow, M. *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600-1025*; p. 360

were farming in villages owned by Mt. Athos, yet their initial arrival was certainly disruptive.¹¹

A short period of peace occurred around the middle of the century, when the Bulgarians were occupied with the Magyars in the north, but fighting quickly broke out again around Thessaloniki. In 971, the Emperor John Tzimiskes finally annexed Eastern Bulgaria, but in 976, a civil war started as well, between the young Emperor Basil II and the Anatolian General Bardas Skleros, which lasted until Basil won in 989, when he turned his full attention back to war with the Western Bulgarians for the rest of the century.

Not everything was disturbed by the Bulgarian wars, although they dominate in Chronicles of the period. Several Imperial expeditions were launched to reclaim Crete, in an effort to prevent the sack of any more cities, and curtail piracy in the Aegean. In 961, the Emperor Nikephoros Phokas finally reconquered the island, and in 965 he secured Cyprus; together these victories restored some measure of security for trade, travel and life in the Aegean.¹² Archaeological evidence also indicates the economic and social recovery of many Classical cities around the Aegean basin during the tenth century, especially Corinth and Thebes, through a growth in population, building activity, industry and trade.¹³ In view of the sack and turmoil of war, though, it is not surprising that there are no surviving monuments of the tenth century in Thessaloniki.

The Eleventh Century

¹¹Soulis, G. "On the Slavic Settlement in Hierissos in the Tenth Century." *Byzantion* 23 (1953) pp. 67-72

¹²Whittow, M. *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600-1025*; p. 192

¹³ibid. p. 351; Bouras, Ch. "City and Village: Urban Design and Architecture."; p. 637

The eleventh century opened with the same war as the tenth, but the Byzantine armies were finally on the offensive. From 990 onwards, Basil II slowly retook the cities west of Thessaloniki, from Verroia to Dyrrachion. The countryside around Thessaloniki, the only city always in Byzantine hands, was the scene of constant battles. The Byzantine army was mainly based in the city, emerging to fight, free prisoners or gather supplies, and retreating there after losses. This pattern of combat and gradual Byzantine victory lasted until the death of the Bulgar King Samuel in 1014; Western Bulgaria was incorporated into the empire in 1018, although its residents were permitted to remit tax in kind.¹⁴ The peace was disturbed by a brief Bulgarian revolt in 1040-1, when the Emperor tried to collect taxes in gold and not kind, when the economy of Bulgaria was unready for the change.¹⁵ However, with the help of St. Demetrios and a Bulgarian traitor, the rebel Peter Delyan was brought to the city as a captive.¹⁶

The remainder of the eleventh century witnessed many further political changes in the empire, but these were slow to affect Thessaloniki. While politicians schemed in the capital, and the eastern border collapsed, Thessaloniki enjoyed almost a century of prosperity. Merchants and bureaucrats, grown wealthy from opportunities in the newly reconquered parts of the Empire, increasingly converted their profits into land and art. The Church of the Panagia Chalkeon was erected in the center of the city, and decorated with frescoes; Hagia Sophia was further adorned with mosaics and frescoes; even St.

¹⁴Whittow, M. The Making of Orthodox....; pp. 376-87; Macedonia: Documents....; p. 39

¹⁵Angold, M. The Byzantine Empire: 1025-1204. New York: Longman, Inc., 1984; p. 9

Demetrios received more frescoes. Political stability allowed art to flourish as it had not since the ninth century.

Unfortunately, the second half of the century brought the end of Basil's Macedonian dynasty, and a civil war which wracked the whole Empire. As in the past, the Empire suffered from the lack of a clear process for succession. In 1043, Strategos of Dyrrachion George Maniakes, the first of many Imperial hopefuls, was defeated outside Thessaloniki, as he was marching to Constantinople to seize the throne.¹⁷ In 1054, the Strategos of Bulgaria, Nikephoros, was intercepted within the city on his way to Constantinople, and sent back to Bulgaria.¹⁸ However, it was not until 1078 that the war really involved Thessaloniki.

In that year Nikephoros Bryennios, Strategos of Dyrrachion and head of a powerful family, pursued his claim to the throne in a battle along the Vardar against the Imperial Strategos Nikephoros Basilakios. Basilakios held the city, while Bryennios won the battle, and passed on to Constantinople, where he turned down the new Emperor's offer of Thessaloniki, as a consolation prize. He was defeated subsequently by Alexios Komnenos, then the Domestic of the Scholai (Head of the Army). In Thessaloniki, Basilakios decided to make his own bid for the throne, but Alexios quickly moved west, and fought Basilakios on the plain of the Vardar. Basilakios retreated into Thessaloniki, and the citizens barred the Litea Gate against Alexios. Alexios threatened a siege and a sack, and

¹⁶The Chronographia of Michael Psellos, tr. E.R.A. Sewter. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1953; p. 79; Obolensky, D. "The Cult of St. Demetrios of Thessaloniki in the History of Byzantine-Slav Relations." Balkan Studies 15 (1974) pp. 3-20; p. 17

¹⁷Angold, M. The Byzantine Empire: 1025-1204; p. 37

they let him in; Basilakios fled to the akropolis, where the residents turned him over to Alexios, who returned to Constantinople.¹⁹

Three years later, just before his own accession, Alexios I Komnenos bought off his last challenger (and brother-in-law) Nikephoros Melissenos with the *pronoia* of the tax revenues of Thessaloniki.²⁰ From this time onwards the city was under the control of a member of the Imperial family, a change of questionable value to the city. However, Alexios himself was also destined to spend a lot of time in Thessaloniki during his reign.

The coronation of Alexios I Komnenos in 1081 brought an end to civil war, but not to war around Thessaloniki. Just after the coronation, King Robert Guiscard of Sicily besieged Dyrrachion, with the blessing of the Pope and the excuse of representing a rival claimant to the throne. The new Emperor mustered an army and passed through Thessaloniki on his way west; he was defeated, the Normans took the city, and Alexios called for reinforcements to assemble in Thessaloniki over the winter of 1081/2.

In the spring, he was defeated again at Ioannina by Robert's son Bohemond, and retreated to Constantinople for more troops and funds, in what proved to be a troublesome pattern.²¹ Bohemond proceeded to take most of the cities west of Thessaloniki, and the Emperor returned to the city in 1083. There, he saw a vision of the icon of St. Demetrios speaking to him, and was inspired

¹⁸The Chronographia of Michael Psellos, tr. E.R.A. Sewter.; p. 302, n. 152; The Great Schism between the Eastern and Western churches also occurred in 1054, giving the Normans an excuse to menace the city.

¹⁹The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena, tr. E.A.S. Dawes. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd., 1928; pp. 21-5; Tafrafi, O. Topographie de Thessalonique; pp. 106-8

²⁰The Alexiad.... tr. E.A.S. Dawes.; p. 62; Angold, M. The Byzantine Empire: 1025-1204.; pp. 105, 126; Alexios I began the practice of distributing *pronoia*: the allocation of Imperial positions, lands and revenues to family members.

enough to fight to a draw the next day on the plains of the Vardar. He returned to the city, but then began to incite rebellion among Bohemond's officers, many of whom had not been paid in their two years of campaigning in the Balkans. The diplomatic ploy worked; Bohemond retreated from the city and returned to Sicily, where he faced a civil war after the death of his father Robert in 1085.²²

The Normans, however, were soon followed by the army of the First Crusade passing through the Empire. Forces began landing at Dyrrachion in 1096, traveling down Via Egnatia and passing by the city on their way to the Holy Land; the harbor of Thessaloniki was doubtless full of their ships as well. One Crusader described his journey after docking in Dyrrachion:

We proceeded over the land of the Bulgars, over mountain precipices and rather desert places.... In the early morning at daybreak,..., we began to climb the mountains which they call the Bagulatus [Bagora]. After passing the mountainous cities of Lucretia, Botella, Bonfinat, and Stella, we reached a river which was called Bardarius [Vardar].... Having crossed it, we pitched our tents on the following day before Thessalonica, a city abounding in all goods.²³

While his journey was fairly pleasant, other Crusaders described fights with Bulgarians and nomads, and the cold reception of the towns along the road. This reception is hardly surprising, considering that many of the Crusaders were the same men who had been besieging Thessaloniki a mere twelve years before, and some of them wanted to do so again.²⁴ The Crusaders' loyalty to their

²¹The *Alexiad*.... tr. E.A.S. Dawes.; pp. 97-122

²²ibid. pp. 126-32

²³The *First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fuller of Chartres and Other Source Material*. ed. E. Peters. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998; p. 61

²⁴ibid. p. 155

agreements with the Emperor was tenuous, and the citizens of Thessaloniki felt justifiably threatened by their presence.

Some residents had more reason to feel threatened than others. Spurred on by the appearance of these armies, a Jewish letter from Thessaloniki found in Alexandria records miracles happening in the city in 1096, which prefigured the coming of the Messiah: the appearance of the Prophet Elijah, the healing of Christians and Jews and other wonders. The Jews had taken to sitting in the squares in prayer shawls, and the Strategos and Archbishop were urging them to sell their property and go to Jerusalem. There was a long tradition of Jewish Messianism connected with the city, yet this time, as in the past, things settled down again without further incident.²⁵ The Crusaders passed through, and on to the Holy Land, without any other recorded problems to the city.

The Twelfth Century

After the First Crusade, the Emperor Alexios and Bohemond were not finished with each other or Thessaloniki. Concerned about the possible return of Bohemond, Alexios traveled to the city with the Empress around 1101; he instructed the local troops in modern military techniques while she distributed money to the poor. They stayed about a year, attended the Festival of St. Demetrios, and returned to Constantinople. This was a politically motivated visit in more ways than one; Anna Komnena also recorded that Thessaloniki was a safe retreat from plots in the capital.²⁶ As many of those plots were hatched by

²⁵Sharf, A. Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium. Jerusalem: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1995; p. 119, 136ff.

²⁶The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena. tr. E.A.S. Dawes; pp. 304-9

the Empress, perhaps it was safer to take her to Thessaloniki, away from her powerful relatives in the city.

In any case, when Bohemond did return again to Dyrrachion in 1105, Alexios and his wife came back to Thessaloniki, where he assembled an army, sent some of them to guard the passes west of the city, and settled down to wait. He wintered in the city for most of the next decade, resting, guarding the road, and gathering funds and forces between campaigns; in 1108 the Treaty of Diabolis was finally signed, and Bohemond's death the next year ended the immediate Norman threat.²⁷

After this rocky beginning, most of the remainder of the twelfth century was a golden age of prosperity for the city. An Arab geographer noted: "A pleasant town, well-known and possessing a large population."²⁸ When the Crusaders did return, at least one came as a suppliant. In 1148, on his way home, the German Emperor Conrad spent Christmas in Thessaloniki with the Emperor Manuel Komnenos. Conrad was bedraggled and disappointed after his defeats in the Holy Land, and Manuel offered him land and a marriage pact in exchange for an alliance against King Roger of Sicily. The Treaty of Thessaloniki kept the Normans out of the Empire until Manuel's death, but had some unforeseen consequences after the Fourth Crusade.²⁹ Free of the Norman threat, the city became ever more prosperous after mid-century; these changes are reflected in the last work of monumental art of the Middle Byzantine Period, the decoration of Hosios David (Latomou Monastery).

²⁷ibid. pp. 321-57

²⁸1154, Quoted in Angold, M. The Byzantine Empire...; p. 250; The population at this point was around 100,000: Charanis, P. "Town and Country in the Byzantine Possessions..."; p. 131

²⁹Angold, M. The Byzantine Empire: 1025-1204.; p. 167

Unfortunately, this era lulled many in the city and Empire into a false sense of security. In the end, as in the early tenth century, Thessaloniki's prosperity was not enough to repel military force, and the twelfth century ended badly for the city. In 1185 the second city of the Empire once again became entangled in perennial Byzantine problems of succession. Her archbishop, Eustathios, wrote an eyewitness account of the second sack of the city in 1185, and the events leading up to it, in bitter detail.³⁰ His account emphasizes both the bucolic former state of the city, and the political problems which led to its sack. These rose out of succession disputes in Constantinople, as various individuals and families fought over the throne after the death of Manuel Komnenos in 1180. Just before his death, he had arranged a marriage between his daughter and Rainier of Montferrat, who also received Thessaloniki as a pronoia. Rainier chose, however, to interpret it as his kingdom, and although he was killed shortly afterwards by the new Emperor Andronikos, his family continued to lay claim to Thessaloniki.³¹

Some Byzantine claimants to the throne of the Empire rashly sought the help of King William II of Sicily, who saw a golden opportunity to seize parts of the Empire in the name of the 'rightful' Emperor. In June of 1185 William set out with a fleet of two hundred ships from Sicily; by the end of the month he had taken Dyrrachion. Then he sent his troops east along the Via Egnatia, and his

³⁰Eustathios of Thessaloniki.... ed. and tr. J. R. Melville Jones.; *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates*. tr. H.J. Magoulias. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984; pp. 164-99

³¹Nicol, D.M. *Byzantium and Venice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988; p. 129; "The Chronicle of Robert of Torigni." ed. R. Howlett. *The Chronicle and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland During the Middle Ages, n. 82 v. 4*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1889; p. 285

fleet south around the Peloponnesos; by mid-August Thessaloniki was surrounded.³²

Unfortunately, the same political crisis which had brought William to the doorstep of the city also stifled her defense. According to Eustathios' account, the strategos, David Komnenos, was paralyzed by fear of the Emperor Andronikos Komnenos, and lacked any military skills at all. The office of strategos by this point was mainly ceremonial, and David, as well as most of the strategoi, owed his appointment to his birth and not his training. The forces Andronikos sent to relieve the city were similarly either afraid of failure, scheming against him or simply incompetent, and only the Cartoularios Choumnos, who had family in the city, actually arrived to engage the Normans. He was defeated, however, and William deployed siege engines, catapults and soldiers around the city, focused on the east wall. Eustathios implies that the Strategos of Thessaloniki had let her defenses crumble; cisterns were not in use, and an attempt to repair the one in the upper city failed.³³

Finally, the Alan, Serbian, Georgian and German mercenaries, with the townspeople and clerics, were left alone, without leadership, to face the attacking Normans.³⁴ They tunneled under the eastern wall, and forced the collapse of a tower, probably either the modern White or Trigonion tower. The Normans poured in through the gap as David Komnenos fled, and the remaining residents of the city were all either killed or taken prisoner as the Normans occupied the city. Eustathios ransomed himself for four-thousand gold pieces, and spent the

³²Eustathios of Thessaloniki: The Capture of Thessaloniki, ed. and tr. J. R. Melville Jones.; pp. 65-7

³³ibid. p. 71ff.

³⁴ibid. pp. 89-91

ensuing occupation living in his own bath house, arranging food, clothing and shelter for the now destitute inhabitants of the city. He also numbered the many barbaric deeds of the Normans, from using church lamps as chamber pots to cutting Greek men's beards in the street.³⁵

In the capital, the fall of the second city of the Empire sparked political upheaval; Andronikos was overthrown, and the Normans were driven out violently by November. Archbishop Eustathios composed his account, and thankfully returned to ministering to his flock, who had set to work rebuilding the city. The sack was ominous, though, and even after the overthrow of Andronikos the political turmoil in Constantinople continued. In Bulgaria, the sack inspired the brothers Peter and Asen to erect a church to St. Demetrios, and rally a rebellion under the assumption that he had abandoned Thessaloniki to support them.³⁶

In 1194, the new King of Sicily, Henry VI, claimed Thessaloniki from afar, but the Emperor bought him off, and he died before he had a chance to invade.³⁷ Thessaloniki slowly recovered, as citizens returned, but the sack was devastating for the material wealth and population of the city. Then, in 1204 the events of the sack recurred, this time in Constantinople.³⁸ Thessaloniki was handed over to Boniface of Montferrat as a spoil of war, and an era came to an end. The city continued to rebuild, but was constantly disturbed over the next century by the

³⁵ibid. pp. 117, 131

³⁶Obolensky, D. "The Cult of St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki..."; p. 18

³⁷Nicol, D.M. Byzantium and Venice; p. 118; O City of Byzantium.... tr. H.J. Magoulias.; p. 261

³⁸Queller, D.E. and T.F. Madden. The Fourth Crusade. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997

reconstruction of the Empire and the disruption of her former trade routes.³⁹

However, the monuments remained, evidence of an extraordinary period in the history of the city.

³⁹Bredenkamp, F. The Byzantine Empire of Thessaloniki (1224-1242). Thessaloniki: Thessaloniki History Center, 1996

III.

The Middle Byzantine Economy

The economy of Thessaloniki in the Middle Byzantine Period depended partly upon the political situation, but in many ways also experienced independent growth, aided by the economic development of the surrounding area and the Empire, changes in coinage and Imperial policy, and the growth of Mt. Athos. Peace meant periods of economic expansion, while the two sacks drained wealth from the city. In all periods, the amount of physical specie within the city was directly linked to the amount of art created there. Land was the primary means of investment, but patronage of art could provide spiritual and social returns even after death.¹

The Archbishop and the monasteries were the primary lenders of money in the city, and also acted as banks; the twelfth century Archbishop Eustathios referred obliquely to a scandal involving church embezzlement.² While Eustathios called the monasteries of Thessaloniki places of "ignorance and greed," only interested in acquiring money and land, it was probably because they were his main competition for the free cash of the city.³ Indeed, in the twelfth century they were receiving more investments than he was, the end result of a gradual shift in investment and patronage stretching over the whole period. There was no government penalty for usury, as in much of Europe; indeed, the Emperor set the interest rates.⁴ While trade and manufacturing were important sources of wealth for the city, agriculture was always more important than long distance trade for the basic economic health of the city; thus, peace in

¹For the Byzantine Economy: Runciman, S. "Byzantine Trade and Industry." in Cambridge Economic History of Europe, v. II. ed. M. Postan and E.E. Rich. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952; pp. 86-118; For patronage: Cutler, A. "Art in Byzantine Society: Motive Forces of Byzantine Patronage." IOB 31/2 (1981) pp. 759-87

²Eustathios of Thessaloniki: The Capture of Thessaloniki. ed. and tr. J.R. Melville Jones; p. 157

³Angold, M. The Byzantine Empire: 1025-1204.; pp. 234-5

the countryside brought more wealth to the city.⁵ The Middle Byzantine economy dipped in times of war, yet also grew steadily throughout the period with the expansion of markets and manufacturing.

Trade and Manufacturing

Throughout the Middle Byzantine Period trade gradually reached farther up the Vardar river into the hinterland of Thessaloniki, as demand for her products grew; wars with the Bulgarians periodically disrupted this trade. The most popular export from Thessaloniki in all eras seems to have been textiles, and especially clothing, of wool, linen and silk (See Ill. 5).⁶ While there were quality restrictions on the provincial manufacture of luxury goods, there was definitely a silk guild in Thessaloniki.⁷ Others in the city wove the linen of the surrounding areas, then sent it on to Constantinople for dyeing and finishing; the city was famed for both cloth and carpets.⁸

Other luxury goods, especially metal and glass work, joined coastal agricultural products like wine, fruits and fish in the list of Thessaloniki's exports to the interior (See Ill. 6-7).⁹ These products were produced in small workshops scattered throughout the city, and perhaps a few larger factories. Trades were

⁴Sharf, A. Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium.; p. 67

⁵Hendy, M.F. "The Economy: A Brief Survey." in Byzantine Studies: Essays on the Slavic World and the Eleventh Century. ed. S. Vryonis Jr. New Rochelle: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1992; pp. 141-52; p. 147

⁶Starr, J. The Jews in the Byzantine Empire: 641-1204. Athens: Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jarbucher, 1939; p. 29

⁷ibid. pp. 22-4

⁸Runciman. "Byzantine Trade and Industry."; pp. 103-4

⁹Kamieniates recorded "silver, precious stones, silk, wool, bronze, iron, tin, lead and gold," as the main riches stolen from the city: Lopez, R.S. "Beati Monoculi: The Byzantine Economy in the Early Middle Ages" in Cultus et Cognitionis. Festschrift Alexander Gieysztor. Warsaw: 1976; pp.

usually hereditary, and there was a limited amount of slave labor in use; by the ninth century, slaves were fairly rare, and probably limited to a few domestic servants.¹⁰

After the treaty with the Bulgarians in around 816, most of the ninth century was a good time for trading up the river; the Aegean was disrupted by Arab piracy, and refugees were pouring into the city from the Greek islands. Important information on trade through the city during the ninth century is also revealed in Kameniatas' account of the city before the sack of 904.¹¹ He depicts the city as an active market for the villages around it, a trading partner with the nearby Bulgarians and others in times of peace, and especially acquiring "revenue from fishing and through passage of ships from the sea up the rivers."¹² By land, a "journey of eight days" along the old Roman road brought Thessalonikan merchants to Belgrade on the Danube.¹³ Although there were pirates on the Strymon River east of the city in the early ninth century, the Via Egnatia to Constantinople was still passable, a twelve day journey through villages and fields of grain.¹⁴

The mint in Thessaloniki resumed production of copper coinage during the reign of Theophilos (829-42), with a provincial weight, perhaps for trade with

341-52; reprinted in Byzantium and the World around it: Economic and Institutional Relationships. London: Variorum, 1978; p. 345

¹⁰Kazhdan, A.P. and A. Wharton Epstein. Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985; pp. 9-10

¹¹Ioannis Caminiatae De Expugnatione Thessalonicae. Berlin: 1973

¹²"Ioannes Cameniata De Excidio Thessalonicensi."; pp. 495-6, tr. in Macedonia: Documents and Material; p. 22

¹³De Administrando Imperio. Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos. ed. G. Moravcsik. tr. R.J.H. Jenkins. Budapest: Pazmany Peter Tudomanyegyetemi Gorog Filologiai Intezet, 1949; p. 183

¹⁴Life of St. Gregory Dekapolites, in Teall, J.L. "The Grain Supply of the Byzantine Empire." DOP 13 (1959) pp. 87-140; p. 123; "Harun Ibn-Yahya and His Description of Constantinople." ed. and tr. A. Vasiliev. Seminarium Kondakovianum 5 (1932) pp. 149-63; p. 162

the Bulgarians.¹⁵ In the city a cash economy, based mostly in copper and gold, never disappeared, although outside reforms and developments affected the amount of coin in the city.¹⁶ Indeed, part of the reason for the economic upswing throughout the Empire in the ninth century was a new influx of gold into the Empire from the Caucasus and the Arab world.¹⁷

Trade in the city was carried on at a number of levels, by a variety of people. Local farmers brought their products to market, to exchange for coin to pay taxes, and some manufactured goods. However, the greater market for manufactured goods was farther afield, in this era probably mainly the Greek cities to the south, Constantinople, and Bulgaria to the north. The ninth century witnessed a dramatic increase in both the quantity and quality of goods exported and retained for use. In exchange for exports, from the cities of the Empire, and especially the textile centers of Corinth and Thebes, Thessaloniki imported cloth for the garment industry and other goods, while the under-developed Balkans to the north supplied raw materials (especially salt and minerals) and slaves. While internal trade flowed fairly freely, there were extensive regulations on imports and exports for both Byzantine and foreign traders.¹⁸ The luxury goods of the Empire, especially silk, purple and gold-embroidered textiles, were a "weapon of

¹⁵Metcalf, D.M. "The Coinage of Thessaloniki, 829-1204, and Its Place in Balkan Monetary History." *Balkan Studies* 4 (1963) pp. 277-88; p. 284

¹⁶Metcalf, D.M. *Coinage in Southeastern Europe: 820-1396*. London: Royal Numismatic Society, 1979; p. 9; Coins were used for commercial transactions, as well as salaries and taxes.

¹⁷Runciman, S. "Byzantine Trade and Industry."; p. 92

¹⁸Lopez, R.S. "Foreigners in Byzantium." *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome* 44 (1974) pp. 341-52; reprinted in *Byzantium and the World around it: Economic and Institutional Relationships*. London: Variorum, 1978; p. 351

economic and psychological warfare," for use against the merchants of other countries, who had no other source.¹⁹

Additionally, there was probably some transit trade from east to west, and although most of this went through Trebizond or Constantinople, Egyptian cotton and Syrian Damask made its way to Thessaloniki.²⁰ There were markets in each quarter of town, and the trade fair at the Festival of St. Demetrios provided a place for merchants, pilgrims and locals of all persuasions to meet once a year.²¹ The merchants originally came from north or south of the city, but from the ninth century onwards the economy of the Empire became more and more oriented towards the west, as the fledgling kingdoms of Europe began to develop cash economies again.²²

All of this was carefully (some would say restrictively) regulated by the Imperial bureaucracy. Thessaloniki had an *Apotheki*, where Imperial officials regulated the flow of trade in and out of the Empire. The officials, *Kommerkiarioi*, carefully inspected incoming and outgoing goods and people, and took the Emperor's cut of 10%.²³ The *mitaton*, or caravansary, was home for foreign merchants, who could stay a maximum of three months in the city.²⁴

Although plenty of Bulgarian trade flowed through Thessaloniki, the Bulgarian *mitaton* was not moved to the city from Constantinople until 894. In

¹⁹Lopez, R.S. "Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire." *Speculum* 20 (1945) pp. 1-42; reprinted in *Byzantium and the World around it: Economic and Institutional Relationships*. London: Variorum, 1978; p. 2

²⁰Lopez, R.S. "Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire."; p. 29

²¹Tafrafi. *Topographie de Thessalonique*.; p. 147; *Timarion*. tr. B. Baldwin.; pp. 43-4

²²Metcalf, D.M. *Coinage in Southeastern Europe: 820-1396*.; p. 2

²³Lopez, R.S. "Foreigners in Byzantium."; p. 347; Metcalf, D.M. *Coinage in Southeastern....*; p. 78; Seals of the *Kommerkiarioi* appear in the city from the eighth century onwards.

²⁴Runciman. "Byzantine Trade and Industry."; p. 95

fact, this move occasioned great protest within the Bulgarian community, and an invasion by Khan Symeon, resulting in a quick return to Constantinople. This indicates the amount of trade flowing through Thessaloniki, but also the low scruples of Stavrakios and Kosmas, the merchants who made the move, and who also raised the duties at the same time. The Bulgarians had no choice but to trade at the mitaton, and they had no wish to pay higher fees, farther from Constantinople. That city was undoubtedly the final destination of much trade through Thessaloniki, and the Bulgarians wanted a trading house alongside all of the other foreign traders in the capital city. Probably the Byzantine merchants who moved the mitaton to Thessaloniki wanted to control the Bulgarian trade without so much Imperial oversight, but they were not successful.²⁵

The Byzantine economy continued to grow throughout the tenth century, and Thessaloniki shared in it, despite the sack and Bulgarian wars.²⁶ The tenth century was a period of widespread urban growth in the entire Empire, with cities once again becoming centers of production, and not just safety and administration.²⁷ In Thessaloniki as elsewhere, polluting industry like tanning, inside the city in earlier years for safety, was moved outside the walls again, and business resumed in the areas of the ancient agora.²⁸

However, normal trading did not resume in the city until after the final victory of Basil II over the Bulgarians in 1018, when the countryside settled down

²⁵Browning, R. *Byzantium and Bulgaria*.; p. 58; Metcalf, D.M. *Coinage in Southeastern....*; p. 43

²⁶Emperor Leo VI codified Guild regulations in the early tenth century in the *Book of the Prefect* dividing guilds between the manual and professional, and providing rules to regulate them and protect them from one another. The guilds were hereditary, had elders, and many admitted women as well as men. They may or may not have existed in Thessaloniki, outside of the silk workers and merchants.

²⁷Bouras, Ch. "City and Village: Urban Design and Architecture."; p. 638

²⁸ibid. p. 644

again and wheat, millet, wine and honey began to pour in as taxes from Bulgaria.²⁹ In the early eleventh century, the economic life of the city and the Empire was probably more active than ever before.³⁰ Thessaloniki in particular was in a favorable position to benefit from Basil II's victory over the Bulgarians. The Bulgarian communities to the north were finally turning into real urban centers; quarries were reopening there, and the cash economy was spreading.³¹ The development of urban life in the hinterland of Thessaloniki meant more products came south into the city for transport to Constantinople, and there was a wider market for Thessaloniki's own goods and services.³² Peace meant a bigger harvest in the hinterland of Thessaloniki, and wealthier farmers shopping in the city.

In the city itself, the early eleventh century brought the immigration of Jews from Egypt, and growing numbers of resident merchants from Bulgaria, Russia and the Arab world.³³ Although the Jews in the city were under pressure from monks to convert, they were prosperous enough to welcome Russian merchants to the city, and keep a letter of introduction to Jewish merchants in the Holy Land on file for them.³⁴ The Jews of 1096 were garment workers, and the fact that the Emperor took an interest in their situation suggests they were part of a silk guild.³⁵ The destination of their letter suggests that Alexandria may have been a regular trading partner of the city. In 1173, the Jewish merchant and

²⁹Browning, R. *Byzantium and Bulgaria*.; p. 80

³⁰Kazhdan, A.P. and A. Wharton Epstein. *Change in Byzantine Culture...*; pp. 26-7; Hendy, M.F. "The Economy: A Brief Survey."

³¹Kazhdan, A.P. and A. Wharton Epstein. *Change in Byzantine Culture...*; pp. 32-4

³²Eustathios of Thessaloniki: *The Capture of Thessaloniki*. ed. and tr. J.R. Melville Jones.; p. 250

³³Kazhdan, A.P. and A. Wharton Epstein. *Change in Byzantine Culture...*; p. 175

³⁴Starr, J. *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire: 641-1204*.; Selections 118, 119; pp. 170-2

traveler Benjamin of Tudela passed through the city, and commented on the community of five hundred Jews there, led by the learned Rabbi Samuel.³⁶ He probably referred to textile workers, and may have therefore underreported the number of Jews in the city, especially if they were Karaites.³⁷ Eustathios not only referred to Jewish and Armenian settlements outside the walls, but also to Jews spread throughout the city.³⁸

Manufactures increased in the eleventh century, especially in new types of ceramics, silk, glass and metal crafts, and many things were exported to meet the growing demand for luxury goods in the West.³⁹ In the workshops of the city, artisans produced goods for every tier of society: jewelry of bronze and gold, icons in marble, bronze and wood, and vessels in glass and common clay.⁴⁰ Although many merchants still feared "invasion, storms, pirates and the schemes of sailors," the century saw steady growth in sea trade, mostly using stable but slow cargo ships which hugged the coasts of the Aegean (See Ill. 8-9).⁴¹ Constantinople was some two weeks away by horse or mule train, while in this era it took about four days by sea.⁴²

³⁵Sharf, A. Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium; p. 142

³⁶The World of Benjamin of Tudela: A Medieval Mediterranean Travelogue. ed. and tr. S. Benjamin. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995; pp. 123-9

³⁷Ankori, Z. Karaites in Byzantium. New York: Ams Press, 1968; pp. 148ff.

³⁸Eustathios of Thessaloniki... ed. and tr. J.R. Melville Jones.; p. 125; Starr, J. The Jews in the Byzantine Empire....; Selection 184; p. 237

³⁹Kazhdan, A.P. and A. Wharton Epstein. Change in Byzantine Culture....; pp. 40-1

⁴⁰Cutler, A. "Art in Byzantine Society: Motive Forces of Byzantine Patronage."; p. 772

⁴¹Kazhdan, A.P. and A. Wharton Epstein. Change in Byzantine Culture....; p. 47ff; There was a revolution in shipbuilding in the eleventh century as well, with new techniques making ships safer: Angold, M. The Byzantine Empire: 1025-1204; p. 63

⁴²Obolensky, D. Six Byzantine Portraits. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988; p. 55

The Thessalonikan mint, opened briefly in the ninth century, reopened for good during the reign of Constantine X (1059-67).⁴³ Debasement of coinage in the eleventh century is undeniable, but its effects are more murky; greater distribution of coins probably followed, as money was forced out of hoards and into circulation.⁴⁴ The growth in the use and available amount of coinage in the eleventh century was certainly linked with the large amount of art in the city from that period, for in the Byzantine world construction was predicated upon ready cash. There was a general shift from public to private patronage, and with several monumental churches in the city already, the local nobility increasingly put their money into smaller structures, monasteries and portable art.⁴⁵ In the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, however, the impact of troop movements must have been devastating to the countryside; Byzantine armies were composed mainly of mercenaries, and they, the Norman armies and the Crusaders often plundered fields and farms of both crops and livestock.⁴⁶

The accession of Alexios in 1081 after some thirty years of war, though, ushered in an era of further economic prosperity, for Thessaloniki especially. His reforms of the coinage were sensible, and probably helped Greek merchants as much as those of the West; his Chrysobull of 1082 relaxing trade restrictions on Venetian merchants included Thessaloniki, but seems to have had few negative effects in the city itself.⁴⁷ His coinage reform initially involved the re-

⁴³Hendy, M.F. "Byzantium, 1081-1204: An Economic Reappraisal." Transactions of the Royal Historical Society. 5th series, vol. 20 (1970) pgs. 31-52; p. 43

⁴⁴Angold, M. The Byzantine Empire: 1025-1204; pp. 59-63

⁴⁵Bouras, Ch. "City and Village: Urban Design and Architecture."; p. 653

⁴⁶Teall, J.L. "The Grain Supply of the Byzantine Empire."; p. 113

⁴⁷For the text of the Chrysobull: Byzantium: Church, Society and Civilization Seen through Contemporary Eyes. ed. D.J. Geanakoplos. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984; p. 287ff.

establishment of a precious-metals mint in Thessaloniki and the creation of a new coin in 1081. In that year, and for several afterwards, the mint at Thessaloniki struck a coin with the Emperor on one side, and St. Demetrios on the other. The message, that the saint was with him, must have impressed both his troops and the residents of the city.⁴⁸ Although he probably had the short term goal of making enough currency to pay his troops, the increase in the amount of coin in the city was helpful to the local economy.⁴⁹

Additionally, in 1092 he restored the gold standard and issued several new denominations of coins, to create a "flexible and efficient instrument of exchange;" larger numbers of coins, often accompanying new construction, began appearing all over the Empire almost immediately.⁵⁰ While his Chrysobull of 1082 to the Venetians has been criticized for displacing Byzantine merchants in other Aegean cities, it apparently had no effect in Thessaloniki. Perhaps local merchants were too powerful and well established, as Venetian traders never really appeared in the city until the late thirteenth century. The Venetians may also have been uninterested in Thessaloniki's land-based trade network, which focused on local products, the Vardar river and the Via Egnatia.⁵¹

In the mid-twelfth century, Timarion described the fruits of this network, displayed at the Trade Fair of the Festival of St. Demetrios, outside the western wall of the city: a long aisle of booths, with smaller aisles to each side like "a

⁴⁸Hendy, M.F. *Coinage and Money in the Byzantine Empire, 1081-1261*. New York: J.J. Augustin, Publisher, 1969; p. 45

⁴⁹Metcalf, D.M. *Coinage in Southeastern Europe: 820-1396.*; p. 77

⁵⁰Hendy, M.F. "Byzantium, 1081-1204: An Economic Reappraisal."; pp. 43-5

⁵¹Angold, M. *The Byzantine Empire....*; pp. 198, 258; Nicol, D.M. *Byzantium and Venice.*; p. 91

centipede with a very long body showing innumerable little feet under its belly."⁵² Running for six days before the Festival on Sunday, the Fair attracted merchants and pilgrims from all of the lands around the city, including Italians, Franks, Bulgarians and Georgians, as well as Byzantine merchants from Constantinople. The products described by Timarion, unsurprisingly, were mostly textiles:

...all kinds of men's and women's clothes both woven and spun, everything that comes from Boeotia and the Peloponnese, and all the things that merchant ships bring from Italy and Greece. Phoenicia also supplies many goods, as do Egypt, Spain, and the Pillars of Hercules, where the finest altar clothes are made. These items the merchants export directly from their respective countries to old Macedonia and Thessalonica. The Black Sea also contributes to the fair...⁵³

The usual trading partners of Thessaloniki hid behind the archaic place names Timarion used. Alongside the wholesome trade of the Cappadocian tourist Timarion were the activities of the merchant described by Symeon the Theologian, who "roams around the tents of the tavern keepers, cooks, and other petty traders in victuals and tastes here and there, eats and drinks, and squanders his gold in drunken revels and licentiousness."⁵⁴

New coinage and increasing Western demand for luxuries both helped to motivate the twelfth century economy of the Empire and Thessaloniki.⁵⁵ Besides the textiles described by Timarion, the Archbishop Eustathios recorded the luxuries left in the streets that the Normans didn't know the value of: books, fine

⁵²Timarion, tr. B. Baldwin.; p. 44

⁵³ibid. p. 45

⁵⁴Symeon the Theologian, Traites theologiques et ethiques, tr. in Kazhdan, A.P. and A. Wharton Epstein. Change in Byzantine Culture....; Ex. 4, pp. 236-7

wines, perfumes, dyes, make-up and medicines.⁵⁶ While the Empire had decreasing political power, her economic power and vitality were still exceptional, especially compared with Europe. Byzantine merchants may have waited in the city for the trade to come to them, but at the end of the Middle Byzantine Period they were still wealthy and powerful in Thessaloniki, where there was a minimal Western presence.⁵⁷

Mt. Athos

Besides the merchants, land owners and Imperial officials in the city, there was another important economic player during the Middle Byzantine period: Mt. Athos. From the ninth century onwards this peninsula of hermits developed into a thickly settled district of monasteries, fields and vineyards, with its own port, ships, masons, artists and business-savvy monks.

Despite mythical origins under the Virgin Mary or Constantine I, Mt. Athos became a real holy center only in the early ninth century.⁵⁸ Thessaloniki was the origin, or transit point, for the growing numbers of hermits withdrawing there both during and after Iconoclasm. The easternmost of three peninsulas that extend from the larger Chalkidiki peninsula east of Thessaloniki, Mt. Athos drew hermits from all over the Empire during the course of the ninth century, settling in caves or huts, individually, or in loose groups.

By 862, St. Euthymios of Thessaloniki was the leader of a group, or Lavra, of hermits on the mountain, and dealt with the outside in matters of wider

⁵⁵Hendy, M.F. "Byzantium, 1081-1204: An Economic Reappraisal."; p. 50

⁵⁶Eustathios of Thessaloniki... ed. and tr. J.R. Melville Jones.; pp. 149-53

⁵⁷Hendy, M.F. "Byzantium, 1081-1204: An Economic Reappraisal."; pp. 39-40

concern. His friend John Kolobos founded a monastery on the peninsula near Athos, and by the late ninth century the hermits were beginning to acquire land and power, live together, and take each other to court in the city.⁵⁹ In 870/1, Euthymios supervised the building of the Church of St. Andrew in Peristerai, a village near Thessaloniki, on the model of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople.⁶⁰ From this time onwards, the presence of this growing religious community would influence the city in various ways. Many of these wandering Holy Men stayed in the city, or passed through on their way to Constantinople, while others came to buy or sell.⁶¹

The tenth century was a watershed for the growth of Mt. Athos, as St. Athanasios the Athonite founded the Great Lavra, the first cenobitic monastery on the mountain, in 963; many other monks and monasteries quickly followed (three other tenth century foundations survive today), and the numbers of independent hermits began to decline. In 943 the Strategos and the Archbishop of Thessaloniki fixed the official boundary of the Mountain, and in 972 the Emperor John Tzimiskes issued a Typikon, or monastic rule, for the entire Mountain.

By the end of the tenth century, these monasteries had become wealthy from Imperial patronage, and began acquiring land and other monasteries, and

⁵⁸Hasluck, F.W. Athos and Its Monasteries. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1924; p. 11ff.

⁵⁹ibid. p. 14

⁶⁰Wharton, A.J. Art of Empire: Painting and Architecture of the Byzantine Periphery. University Park: The Penn State University Press, 1988; p. 101

⁶¹Herrin, J. "Aspects of the Process of Hellenization in the Early Middle Ages." Annual of the British School at Athens 68 (1973) pp. 113-26; p. 122

exporting their produce to Thessaloniki and Constantinople.⁶² Their ships brought produce like wax, olive oil, wine and timber into the city from their port on the Mountain; their business activities were almost worthy of a modern corporation, and not only tended to keep the number of independent monasteries small, but also must have kept notaries and public servants in Thessaloniki busy.⁶³ While they were close to Thessaloniki geographically, the monasteries of Mt. Athos appear to have had a more profound economic than artistic impact on the city in this century. In the future, however, that would change.

In the eleventh century Mount Athos was more populous and wealthy than ever before; eight existing monasteries were founded during this century, and there were many more on the mountain then.⁶⁴ The Great Lavra alone had seven hundred monks, and while other monasteries were smaller, there were many of them.⁶⁵ These foundations typically involved both a monk and a lay founder, usually an imperial official, who provided money and land. After foundation, a monastery quickly began acquiring more land, until it was acquired by another monastery, or acquired one itself. The typical *katholika* of these monasteries were cross in square plan churches in brick, with extra apses

⁶²Hasluck, F.W. *Athos and Its Monasteries*; pp. 15-8; Morris, R. "The Origins of Athos." in *Mount Athos and Byzantine Monasticism*. ed. A. Bryer and M. Cunningham. Brookfield: Variorum, 1996; pp. 37-46

⁶³Soulis, G. "On the Slavic Settlement..."; p. 71; Runciman, S. *Byzantine Trade...*; p. 106

⁶⁴Hasluck, F.W. *Athos and Its Monasteries*; p. 22; By the end of the century, there were Italian, Bulgarian, Georgian, Russian and Serbian monasteries on the Mountain, besides many Greek ones.

⁶⁵Charanis, P. "The Monk as an Element of Byzantine Society." *DOP* 25 (1971) pp. 63-84; reprinted in *Social, Economic and Political Life in the Byzantine Empire*. London: Variorum, 1973; pp. 69

on the north and south, and one or more narthexes.⁶⁶ This design probably originated in Anatolia, but it quickly spread to both Athos and Thessaloniki.

Almost all land traffic in or out of Athos passed through Thessaloniki: monks and missionaries from all over the Orthodox world; convoys and ships bringing wood, wine and produce out for sale in the city; supplies going back to the Mountain. Population increases and improvements in agriculture made the monasteries prosperous, and although they tried to expand into other markets, the legislation of several emperors endeavored to keep their produce in Thessaloniki.⁶⁷ The monasteries, like the Church, also carried out some banking functions for the people of the city.⁶⁸ This traffic also kept the city abreast with widespread developments in religion. Although in earlier years the artistic impact of Mount Athos was fairly minimal, by the end of the Middle Byzantine Period Athonian monasteries owned most monasteries in the city. The mountain's main artistic influence lay after our period, when Athonite architecture and art penetrated the city. In the ninth through twelfth centuries, the Mountain was above all an economic force, bringing produce, business and trade to the city.

⁶⁶Hasluck, F.W. Athos and Its Monasteries.; p. 96ff.

⁶⁷Harvey, A. "The Monastic Economy and Imperial Patronage from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century." in Mount Athos and Byzantine Monasticism. ed. A. Bryer and M. Cunningham. Brookfield: Variorum, 1996; pp. 91-7; pp. 94-5

⁶⁸Talbot, A-M. "Women and Mount Athos." in Mount Athos and Byzantine Monasticism. ed. A. Bryer and M. Cunningham. Brookfield: Variorum, 1996; pp. 67-79; p. 74

IV.

The Middle Byzantine City

Although at the end of Iconoclasm the city had the general appearance and character that it would retain for the next four hundred years, there was constant construction, and significant changes in daily life during the Middle Byzantine Period (See Ill. 3).

The Physical City

From the sea, Thessaloniki was a narrow swath of buildings climbing up a hill, crowned with an akropolis. The residential and commercial areas, and most of the churches, lay between the sea and Odos Dimitriou, in the lower town. Between that road and the northern inner wall, the space in the lower city was occupied by fields, scattered houses and monasteries. In the northern part of the city, the inner wall separated the more sparsely settled akropolis from the rest of the town. Throughout the period the city gradually expanded northwards into these empty areas, and outside the walls in times of peace.

The survival of Thessaloniki's monumental Classical walls meant that there were always fields and orchards within the city itself, as well as room for walled monasteries, and probably extensive ruins. The fifth-century walls encircled and defined the city on three sides, and needed constant maintenance throughout the period. The harbor at the western end of town was protected by a breakwater, while the open area of the hippodrome lay at the eastern end.¹ Almost alone outside of Constantinople, the hippodrome, theater and baths were all still in use during the Middle Byzantine Period, although probably not

¹Gounaris, G. The Walls of Thessaloniki. Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1982; Vickers, M. "The Byzantine Sea Walls of Thessaloniki." Balkan Studies 11 (1970) pp. 261-280

fulfilling their original functions.² It was a city which retained many Classical buildings and features, but was smaller, poorer and less populous than the Roman or Early Byzantine city.³

The sack of 904 decreased the population of the city, and certainly lowered the amount of riches in the city, but also necessitated rebuilding. An inscription found at the western end of the harbor in 1874 records that the sea walls were repaired "under the auspices of Emperors Leo VI and Alexander (886-912), during the time of Leo Chitzilakes, strategos of Thessaloniki."⁴ If this is the Strategos Leo mentioned in Kameniates' account as well, this repair probably dates from shortly after the sack, as a continuation of the repairs he tried to effect before the sack.⁵ The nearby Gate of Leo was built at about the same time; it was the second gate built to access the harbor. There was other construction work going on in the city too: the galleries of Hagia Sophia were renovated, and may have received a floor of opus sectile during this century.⁶ Despite the danger of an argument from silence, the tenth century was evidently a rebuilding time for Thessaloniki, with artistic developments of more importance happening outside the city.

In the early eleventh century, however, Thessaloniki in particular was in a favorable position to benefit from Basil II's victory over the Bulgarians. His

²ibid. pp. 103-20; The mysterious blocks in the West wall are too shallow to be the seats of the Hippodrome. What they are is a mystery, but the hippodrome was still used for gatherings in the Middle Byzantine Period, if not for chariot races. The evidence for the active use of the theatre and baths is better.

³Cormack, R. "The Classical Tradition in the Byzantine Provincial City: The Evidence of Thessaloniki and Aphrodisias." in *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition*, ed. M. Mullett and R. Scott. Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine Studies, 1981; pp. 103-20; reprinted in *The Byzantine Eye: Studies in Art and Patronage*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1989

⁴Full Greek text of the inscription: Tafrafi, O. *Topographie de Thessalonique.*; p. 43

⁵ibid. p. 43; Vickers, M. "The Byzantine Sea Walls of Thessaloniki."; p. 267ff. prefers a later date.

attention to the city is reflected in an inscription recording repairs he made to the walls, and his patronage reached into other areas in the eleventh century as well.⁷ A new public bath was built in the city in the eleventh century, and there is evidence that public bathing never disappeared from the city entirely.⁸ The Chortiatis aqueduct, built in the Early Byzantine Period, brought water into the city from the mountains to the north during much of the period; the city was full of cisterns and fountains, and water mills powered industry as well.⁹

Most families lived in houses with internal courtyards, and probably a garden; many owned land outside the city. The letters and works of the Archbishop Eustathios are an extensive, if biased source for daily life in the twelfth century.¹⁰ His own house was near Hagia Sophia, and with an orchard, vegetable garden and bath house it was probably one of the finest in the city.¹¹ He wrote of the beauty of the twelfth century city: the streets of marble, fountains and cypress trees around the churches.¹² The city was also endowed with hospitals, orphanages and hospices, either Imperial foundations or attached to monasteries.¹³

⁶Theoharidou, K. The Architecture of Hagia Sophia, Thessaloniki; p. 147

⁷Gounaris, G. The Walls of Thessaloniki; p. 15

⁸On the general revival of urban culture, especially festivals: Kazhdan, A.P. and A. Wharton Epstein. Change in Byzantine Culture....; pp. 79-97

⁹Bouras, Ch. "City and Village: Urban Design and Architecture."; p. 642; Water-ways in the City of Saint Demetrios. ed. D. Milosis. Thessaloniki: Typo-Mougos, 1997; pp. 3-4; Besides the huge cistern in the narthex of the Octagon, there were Byzantine cisterns in many monasteries, alongside the Heptapyrgion, in the Agora and probably elsewhere.

¹⁰Eustathios of Thessaloniki.... ed and tr. J.R. Melville Jones.; Letters collected in Fontes Rerum Byzantinum, v. 1. ed. W. Regel. Petropoli: S. Eagers and I Glasunoff, 1892

¹¹Eustathios of Thessaloniki.... ed. and tr. J. R. Melville Jones.; p. 111

¹²Tafrali, O. Topographie de Thessalonique; pp. 140-3

¹³On Imperial foundations: Byzantium: Church,.... ed. D.J. Geanakoplos.; p. 313; On monastic ones: Tafrali. Topographie de Thessalonique; p. 149

The Religious City

The city was scattered liberally with urban monasteries and convents, each with a *katholikon*, or main church, rectory and rooms for residents and visitors. Most were small, housing ten to twenty monks or nuns on average, but they were numerous.¹⁴ Their numbers grew in the wake of Iconoclasm, and, conservatively, there were probably around twenty in the city at any given time.¹⁵ An Arab visitor at the end of the tenth century remarked upon the large number of monks in the city.¹⁶ These monasteries were all supervised by an Archimandrite, chosen from among the monks, and probably provided schooling for some children in the city.¹⁷ Eustathios also founded a school in the city, and his writing style bespeaks his own excellent education.¹⁸ Latomou Monastery (Hosios David), and possibly the Panagia Chalkeon, are the only surviving *katholika* in the city from this period; there were at least thirteen other monastic institutions in the city by the end of the twelfth century.¹⁹

Two urban convents, St. Luke and St. John the Baptist (later St. Theodora), are mentioned in the Life of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki (812-892), a good source for the whole ninth century due to its near contemporary composition (894) and great detail.²⁰ Theodora came to Thessaloniki from Aegina with her family in the mid-ninth century; doubtless she was only one of many refugees in the city, most

¹⁴Charanis, P. "The Monk as an Element of Byzantine Society."; pp. 71-2

¹⁵ibid. p. 68

¹⁶"Harun Ibn-Yahya and His Description of Constantinople." ed. and tr. A. Vasiliev.; p. 162

¹⁷"Life of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki." tr. A-M. Talbot, in Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in Translation, ed. A-M. Talbot. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1996; p. 194; For Greek editions see p. 163.

¹⁸Kazhdan, A.P. and A. Wharton Epstein. Change in Byzantine Culture....; p. 121

¹⁹Janin, R. Les Eglises et Les Monasteres des Grands Centres Byzantins....

²⁰"Life of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki." tr. A-M. Talbot.

fleeing from Arab attacks on the Greek islands. Theodora's family, including her extended family in the city, held almost every office of the church, from her father, a hermit who retired outside the city, to her relative Archbishop Antony, who replaced Leo in 843. Although he died before the end of the year, he delivered a speech in the stadium south of St. Demetrios, which indicates it was still in use.²¹

Theodora herself became an urban nun, making flaxen and woolen crafts for sale in the market, and gathering wood outside the city.²² After her death, the lamp above her tomb began to gush healing oil, and work urban miracles. Amongst other things, she cured a small boy frightened by demons in the empty cisterns and ruins of Thessaloniki, and appeared to a local icon painter so that he might create a realistic icon of her. In 894, St. Theodora was reinterred in a stone sarcophagus with a hole for the gushing oil, and this, with the addition of her icon and Life made her a genuine Byzantine saint. She continued to attract pilgrims from the city and its hinterland for many years afterwards.

In the early eleventh century St. Photios of Thessaloniki founded the Akapniou Monastery, perhaps on the site of the fourteenth century Church of Profitis Elias. This venerable monk and later saint was the godfather of Emperor Basil II, who supported the monastery in his later years.²³ An inscription from 1074 was found near the church, as was a marble icon, demonstrating the high quality of stonework going on in the city (See Ill. 10).²⁴ Although the modern church cannot therefore be identified with the katholikon built near the Prefect's

²¹Vickers, M. "The Stadium at Thessaloniki."; p. 347

²²"Life of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki." tr. A-M. Talbot.; pp. 200, 184

²³Papazotos, Th. "The Identification of the Church of 'Profitis Elias'...."; p. 125, n. 33

palace, it was built with reused fifth century bricks. Sometime later in the century its abbot, Ignatios, composed his mythohistorical work on the neighboring Latomou monastery.²⁵

The city also became famous after the ninth century as the origin of two remarkable brothers, Saints Constantine (or Cyril) and Methodios.²⁶ The well-to-do sons of the Drungarios Leo, a deputy of the Strategos, they were brought up by a nurse, educated at a school and spent their free time hunting along the Vardar.²⁷ Constantine, however, left the city early in life to pursue further education and the imperial favors available in Constantinople; Methodios probably did likewise.²⁸ In any case, in 863 both were summoned to court, where the Emperor assigned them to lead a mission to the Slavs of Moravia, on the pretext that, "all Thessalonians speak pure Slavic."²⁹ The two brothers ended up inventing an alphabet, translating the scriptures into the Slavic language, visiting with the Pope and bringing the Slavs into the Patriarch's sphere of influence. They trained a generation of Slavic proselytizers like Clement of Ochrid, who continued the work of converting the Slavs and Bulgarians of the Balkans.³⁰ They also tirelessly promoted the cult of their patron St. Demetrios, who became one of the patron saints of the Slavs and Bulgarians.³¹

²⁴Tafrafi, O. Topographie de Thessalonique; p. 177

²⁵Varia Graeca Sacra. ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus. Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat, 1975

²⁶The Vita of Constantine and The Vita of Methodius. ed. and tr. M. Kantor and R.S. White. Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1976

²⁷The Vita of Constantine; p. 5ff.

²⁸ibid. p. 9

²⁹The Vita of Methodius; p. 75

³⁰Obolensky, D. Six Byzantine Portraits; pp. 25-34

³¹Nichoritis, K. "Unknown Stichera to St. Demetrius by St. Methodios." in The Legacy of Saints Cyril and Methodius to Kiev and Moscow. ed. A-E.N. Tachiaos. Thessaloniki: Hellenic Association for Slavic Studies, 1992; pp. 79-85; Obolensky, D. "The Cult of St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki...."; pp. 11-12

Pilgrims, especially Slavs, flocked to the Festival of St. Demetrios, and also came to Thessaloniki in other seasons for healing from the Saint in his ciborium in the north aisle of the basilica.³² The cult of St. Demetrios seems to have become widely popular in the eleventh century: Anna Komnena wrote of, "the magnificent church named after the great martyr Demetrius, where the myrrh which ever trickles from his venerable coffin works marvelous cures."³³ The Emperor Michael IV (1034-41), who suffered from seizures, "spent much of his time in Salonica at the tomb of St. Demetrios."³⁴ There he was advised by priests and monks to limit his sexual activity, and received forgiveness for his underhanded acquisition of the Imperial throne.³⁵ In the twelfth century the Serbian Zupan Nemanja sent gifts to the Basilica of St. Demetrios, while a Russian prince took a stone from the church as a relic, to dedicate a new St. Demetrios in Vladimir; they were probably only two of many Slavic patrons of the city.³⁶

The church was indeed a powerful force in the city, and the Archbishop himself wielded considerable power. The end of Iconoclasm brought the deposition of the Iconoclast Archbishop Leo the Mathematician, yet the same Leo also advised his flock on the best methods of agriculture.³⁷ The conversion of Khan Boris of Bulgaria in 864 made Thessaloniki henceforth the origin of missionaries to Bulgaria, and the source of much Bulgarian culture and

³²For the Ciborium: Hoddinott, R.F. Early Byzantine Churches....; p. 149; On Slavic pilgrims and St. Demetrios: Obolensky, D. "The Cult of St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki...."; p. 13

³³The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena. tr. E.A.S. Dawes.; p. 62

³⁴The Chronographia of Michael Psellos. tr. E.R.A. Sewter.; p. 297, n. 47

³⁵ibid. p. 64

³⁶Dvornick, F. The Slavs in European History and Civilization. New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1962; p. 93; Obolensky, D. "The Cult of St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki...."; p. 15

architecture. Ochrid, on the Via Egnatia west of Thessaloniki, became an important center of Byzantine Slavic culture and religion, mainly transmitted through Thessaloniki.³⁸ The Archbishop Eustathios appealed frequently to both the Emperor and the Patriarch, to repair the cisterns and aqueducts of the city or to prevent Jews from living in houses with Christian frescoes.³⁹ In the twelfth century Archbishops of Thessaloniki also held debates with Catholic clergy over the Great Schism, and wrote further accounts of the miracles of St. Demetrios.⁴⁰

The Secular City

Timarion, the fictional narrator of the satire of the same name, visited the city for the Festival of St. Demetrios one October sometime in the twelfth century. On horseback, he set out from Constantinople on the Via Egnatia, and stayed with friends along the road, with an escort to each house and back to the road.⁴¹ By horse it probably took about fifteen days, the amount of time it took Benjamin of Tudela going the other way. Arriving in the city, Timarion sampled the pleasures of hunting along the Vardar, much like St. Cyril some three hundred years earlier. Then he moved on to describe the extensive Trade Fair, and the religious portion of the Festival: all night vigils by choirs of monks, nuns and priests; the reception of the dashing strategos, Michael Palaiologos Doukas,

³⁷Teall, J.L. "The Grain Supply of the Byzantine Empire."; p. 130

³⁸Wharton, A.J. Art of Empire: Painting and Architecture of the Byzantine Periphery.; p. 95ff.

³⁹Tafrafi. Topographie de Thessalonique.; p. 115; Fontes Rerum Byzantinum, v. 1. ed. W. Regel.; pp. 127-8; Starr, J. The Jews in the Byzantine Empire: 641-1204.; Selection 184, p. 237

⁴⁰Kazhdan, A.P. and A. Wharton Epstein. Change in Byzantine Culture....; p. 189; Janin, R. Les Eglises et Les Monasteres....; p. 347; Vickers, M. "Sirmium or Thessaloniki?...."; p. 340

⁴¹Timarion. tr. B. Baldwin; p. 42

and his troops by the Archbishop. There was also a procession of the icon of Mary around the city, ending at the Acheiropoietos Basilica.⁴²

Finally, the tired traveler retired to his inn, where he unfortunately came down with a fever. All of this was meant only as a proem to the satire itself, a Pseudo-Lucianic descent to the underworld, where Timarion met many famous people, and then returned to tell the tale to a friend in Constantinople.⁴³

However, as a proem the description of Thessaloniki was certainly intended to be realistic to contemporary readers, and is doubtless mostly accurate; after the conventions of Atticizing Greek, Ekphrasis and Panegyric are taken into account, the Timarion is still an excellent description of Thessaloniki in the heyday of the eleventh century. The journey and the Fair that Timarion describes belong to a city enjoying peace and prosperity, under the auspices of commerce and the church.

Within the city, the strategos typically shared political, economic and spiritual power with resident representatives of the Imperial bureaucracy, local gentry and especially the Archbishop of Thessaloniki.⁴⁴ Reorganization of the themes in the eleventh century gave the civil administration and theme judge more power, while the strategos had less military and more ceremonial authority.⁴⁵ Sometimes one group or individual exercised tyrannical control over the city, especially in times of crisis, but in times of peace, as during the

⁴²Eustathios of Thessaloniki: The Capture of Thessaloniki. ed. and tr. J. R. Melville Jones.; p. 141

⁴³Timarion. tr. B. Baldwin; p. 46ff.

⁴⁴Kazhdan, A.P. "Some Questions Addressed to the Scholars who Believe..."; p. 302

⁴⁵Kazhdan, A.P. and A. Wharton Epstein. Change in Byzantine Culture...; pp. 71-2

celebration of the Festival of St. Demetrios described in the Timarion, they seem to have worked together very well.⁴⁶

The Middle Byzantine Period witnessed a growth in local landed gentry, who were often also Imperial office holders, but there were always independent farmers living within the city too.⁴⁷ The wealthy residents and church officials increasingly controlled the affairs of the city towards the end of the twelfth century, though, as Imperial offices became largely ceremonial.⁴⁸ Local officials handled, "marriages, commerce and exchange," while according to the Archbishop Eustathios those things had formerly been the responsibility of Imperial officials.⁴⁹ His active agitation on the part of his see was part of a larger pattern of Byzantine provincial life, as ecclesiastical and local authorities assumed the powers of incompetent or invisible Imperial officials.⁵⁰

The strategos and the archbishop ran a city occupied by a mix of soldiers, refugees, farmers with local land holdings either within the walls or just outside, artisans, merchants, clergy, monks, nuns, beggars and slaves. The tenth century occupations of Constantinople, organized into guilds in the Book of the Prefect, probably give a fairly good idea of employment among the residents of Thessaloniki. The silk industry was highly specialized, and included raw silk merchants, dressers (who were also weavers), dyers and finished silk merchants; linen merchants are also mentioned. There were dealers in bullion (jewelers,

⁴⁶Conflict: Eustathios of Thessaloniki.... ed. and tr. J.R. Melville Jones; Cooperation: Timarion. tr. B. Baldwin; pp. 46-9

⁴⁷Charanis. "Town and Country in the Byzantine Possessions of the Balkan Peninsula..."; p. 137

⁴⁸Herrin, J. "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government: Hellas and Peloponnesus, 1180-1205." DOP 29 (1975) pp. 255-84; p. 266ff.

⁴⁹Angold, M. The Byzantine Empire: 1025-1204.; p. 251

⁵⁰Herrin, J. "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government..."; p. 255

goldsmiths, money-lenders), bankers and notaries. Then there were the trades people: perfumers (scents, dyes, spices), wax and soap makers, leather workers (pelters, tanners, saddlers) and all the rest. Grocers, butchers (lamb / beef or pork), fishmongers, bakers and innkeepers (also winesellers) kept the city fed. Additional Imperial regulations mention building contractors, carpenters, masons, locksmiths and painters.⁵¹ There were certainly fewer of these people in Thessaloniki than in Constantinople, but this list gives an idea of the occupations of the city.

There were certainly also many fishermen, and people engaged in the occupations of the sea: sailors and merchants, ship builders and dock workers. Michael Psellos numbered the various Byzantine maritime occupations, in his description of a caulker:

...the fellow turned his attention to the sea. He had no mind to engage in commerce, or to act as the navigator on a ship, or to pilot vessels, at a fee, when they put into harbour or sailed out to sea...he became something big in the shipbuilding line. Please do not imagine that he cut timber or planed off the wood they use in the ships, nor did he fit and fasten together the planks...when others had done the assembling, he very skillfully smeared the assembled parts with pitch.⁵²

The residents of the city described by Archbishop Eustathios in the twelfth century include a supervisor of fish prices, a horse groom and prostitutes, who he woefully observed prospering after the Norman conquest.⁵³ He also added

⁵¹Runciman, S. *Byzantine Trade and Industry*.; p. 107ff.

⁵²*The Chronographia of Michael Psellos*. tr. E.R.A. Sewter.; p. 69

⁵³*Eustathios of Thessaloniki: The Capture of Thessaloniki*. ed. and tr. J. R. Melville Jones.; pp. 93-5, 123

description of the animals of the city: horses, mules, stray and pet dogs and cats; he estimated the total population of the city before the sack at 50,000.⁵⁴

There were Jews in the city from the beginning: the Jewish Apocalyptic text the Vision of Daniel, written near the end of the eleventh century, praises the Empire and the people of Thessaloniki, and predicts that they will be saved at the end of the world.⁵⁵ The learned Jewish scholar Tobiah ben Eliezer of Kastoria was in the city in 1096, which probably signified the existence of a scholarly Jewish community as well.⁵⁶

Outside the walls, the countryside changed over time; in the eleventh century Vlachs, transhumant shepherds, began to appear in the area of the city.⁵⁷ Emperors resettled various nomadic tribes around the city during this century, which also witnessed the final conversion of the Slavs.⁵⁸ Raiding tribes often displaced peasants, who moved into neighboring lands or the city. Arab raiders sent refugees from the Aegean littoral into the city in the ninth century, while the Normans had a similar effect in the eleventh and twelfth.

In the city they faced the perennial dangers of urban life, including sack, famine, fire and epidemic. In the Middle Byzantine Period, the city was sacked twice, and experienced a small pox epidemic in 893-4 and a famine in 1038.⁵⁹ To avert famines in most of the era, the city probably continued to share grain with

⁵⁴Eustathios of Thessaloniki.... ed. and tr. J. R. Melville Jones.; pp. 115, 151

⁵⁵Sharf, A. Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium.; pp. 119-135

⁵⁶Ankori, Z. Karaites in Byzantium.; p. 148

⁵⁷Wolff, R.L. "The 'Second Bulgarian Empire:' Its Origin and History to 1204." Speculum 24 (1949) pp. 167-206; p. 174

⁵⁸Kazhdan, A.P. and A. Wharton Epstein. Change in Byzantine Culture....; p. 171; Angold, M. The Byzantine Empire: 1025-1204.; p. 15

⁵⁹"Life of St. Theodora...." tr. A-M. Talbot.; p. 231; Thessaloniki.... ed. I. K. Hassiotis.; p. 416

Constantinople throughout the period, as it had done during earlier times.⁶⁰ In the end, life in the city was preferable, for most Byzantines, to life outside of it. Thessaloniki was not only a place of refuge in dangerous times, the city was also a market for nearby farmers and itinerant merchants alike, and the Balkan center of religious and secular culture.

⁶⁰Teall, J.L. "The Grain Supply of the Byzantine Empire."; p. 121

V.

Art and
Architecture

The Middle Byzantine Period was an era of incredible development and activity for all facets of artistic expression in the city. The political, economic and social history of the period only begins to reveal the environment which shaped each of the surviving works of Byzantine art. These works reveal far more, especially when they are examined chronologically and in relation to one another.

The Ninth Century

Artistically, the end of Iconoclasm meant that some images were uncovered, others were repainted from memory or record, and many were created anew.¹ In Thessaloniki, examples of each of these types of artistic creation survive from the ninth century. Perhaps it is fitting that the first concerns the same building which bears the last work of Middle Byzantine Art in the city: Latomou Monastery.

The katholikon of the Monastery of Christ the Savior tou Latomou (of the quarryman), now known as Hosios David, was once at the center of an urban monastery (See Ill. 11-12). This small square building in the upper part of town, near the old stone quarries, was originally built and decorated with an apse mosaic of Christ in the fifth century (See Ill. 13). Ignatios, the abbot of the nearby Akapniou monastery, wrote an account of the history of Latomou, where he

¹Cormack, R. "Painting after Iconoclasm." in Iconoclasm: Papers Given at the 9th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, ed. A. Bryer and J. Herrin. Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine Studies, 1977; pp. 147-63; reprinted in The Byzantine Eye: Studies in Art and Patronage. London: Variorum Reprints, 1989

recorded the rediscovery of this mosaic, hidden during Iconoclasm, some time in the reign of Leo V (813-20).² “An Egyptian monk named Senouphios came to Thessalonica and established himself in the monastery. There he witnessed a miraculous uncovering of the image, in the midst of thunder and lightning and earthquake, during which the bricks and oxhide which had hidden the mosaic fell to the ground. The monks of the monastery thereupon buried the Egyptian, who had died of shock from the vision.”³ In the early ninth century many other works of art were probably uncovered or brought out of hiding, albeit in less dramatic circumstances.

In the Basilica of St. Demetrios, which was already extensively decorated with Early Byzantine frescoes and mosaics, and where there is no evidence for anything being covered during Iconoclasm, an unknown ninth century patron dedicated a new mosaic panel of the Virgin and St. Theodore (See Ill. 14-15). On the south face of the northern sanctuary pier, this panel is executed in a style very similar to the other votive panels of the church, suggesting that it may be a copy of an earlier icon.⁴ On the left, the Virgin turns to the right, holding a scroll with her right hand, and praying with her left. On the right stands St. Theodore, in a frontal orans pose, wearing the long chlamys of a military officer. Between them, at the top of the work, Jesus sits in the semicircle of the sun, whose rays caress the figures. Both of the figures are fairly rigid, with long, linear drapery and simple features. The close connections of the work with the other mosaics in

²Tsigaridas, E. Latomou Monastery (The Church of Hosios David). Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1988; p. 10; Ignatios' account in Varia Graeca Sacra.

³Translated in: "Life of David of Thessalonica." ed. and tr. A. Vasiliev.; p. 138

⁴Bakirtzis, Ch. The Basilica of St. Demetrius. Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1988; pp. 57-8

the church, and earlier mosaics in the city, suggests that it is a copy of an older work, or at least highly derivative in style.

Many other accessible Pre-Iconoclastic images did survive in Thessaloniki, and some were copied in this way, yet the artists working in the city after Iconoclasm invented and utilized many new styles of depiction and decoration as well. These styles laid the groundwork for artistic development throughout the Middle Byzantine Period; although influences came from outside, especially Constantinople, the decorative traditions that began in the ninth century in Thessaloniki continued to guide the art created in that city throughout the rest of this Period. In the ninth century, Thessaloniki definitely boasted icon painters and stone carvers, among other artisans.⁵ They were probably literate, and trained from an early age in order to execute iconographic programs in consultation with a client.⁶ In the late ninth century, artists in the city undertook two major new projects which survive to this day: the decoration of the Metropolitan Church of Hagia Sophia and the rebuilding and decoration of the apse of the Rotunda.

Two Ascensions: Hagia Sophia and the Rotunda

The modern Hagia Sophia was built in the seventh or eighth century on the ruins of a much larger fifth century basilica, between the Archbishop's house and the baptistery.⁷ Although the church has been remodeled many times over the years, its general form survives (See Ill. 16-18). The church has a cross-

⁵"Life of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki." tr. A-M. Talbot; pp. 209, 220

⁶Cormack, R. "Painting after Iconoclasm.;" p. 11

⁷Theoharidou, K. The Architecture of Hagia Sophia, Thessaloniki; p. 10ff.

domed nave, with a tripartite sanctuary at the eastern end and a galleried ambulatory on the other three sides. From the outside, the slightly irregular dome sits on a square drum pierced by three windows on each side, which rises above the large cubic form of the church. Although it originally bore a two-story exonarthex on the west facade, today the door of the ambulatory opens straight on to the courtyard, and the west end of the ambulatory serves as a narthex. Several chapels were also attached to the church during the Byzantine era.⁸ Although it is fairly unique architecturally, pieces of it were copied in later churches; the form of the apse, for instance, in the slightly later Hagia Sophia in neighboring Ochrid.⁹

Most of the existing decoration of the church dates from the Middle Byzantine Period, and provides a self-contained example of the changes in art over the course of the period. The stonework of the building, however, is all spolia from the original basilica on the site.¹⁰ In the sanctuary, the barrel vault and apse bear gold mosaic ground and aniconic decoration from the very end of the first iconoclast period, the dual reign of Constantine VI and his mother Eirene (780-97); the church was rededicated then, as the city began to emerge from the turmoil of the Slavic invasions. However, the dome, decorated some hundred years later, was a major undertaking, probably supported by authorities in the city and Constantinople.

The dome of Hagia Sophia is the earliest Ascension Dome surviving today, and one of the first domes decorated in the Byzantine world after the end

⁸ibid. p. 19ff.

⁹Wharton Epstein, A.J. "The Political Content of the Paintings of Saint Sophia at Ohrid." *IOB* 29 (1980) pp. 315-29; p. 326

of Iconoclasm (See Ill. 19). The surviving decoration dates from c. 886, and perhaps replaced an earlier seventh century program of unknown subject, executed in stone rather than glass.¹¹ The decoration of the dome was part of a larger renovation, which included the rebuilding of the dome and the galleries, and the construction of chapels to the north and south of the church.¹² The choice of an Ascension is not surprising for the era: there were probably two executed in Constantinople around this time, and also several among contemporary churches of Goreme, Cappadocia. There may have been monumental pre-Iconoclastic examples, but the design of the Hagia Sophia was almost certainly based on the two-dimensional Ascensions present in manuscript illuminations, ampullae and other liturgical objects.¹³ The artist of the dome of Hagia Sophia was creating a new style and a new monumental iconography with this dome composition; he did not attempt a larger program, and the rest of the church had to wait one hundred and fifty years for further decoration.

On a gold mosaic ground, Christ sits at the apex of the dome in a round mandorla, which two angels in profile grasp from below, with their legs sweeping around to either side of the disk. Below Christ, in the east, Mary stands frontal with her hands extended in prayer (orans), with a tree and an archangel to each side of her. The twelve Apostles are arrayed around the edge of the rest of the dome, expressing varying degrees of astonishment, with

¹⁰Theoharidou, K. *The Architecture of Hagia Sophia, Thessaloniki*; p. 125ff.

¹¹Curcic, S. "Some Iconographic and Stylistic Aspects of the Ascension Mosaic in Hagia Sophia, Thessalonike." Unpublished Manuscript; p. 10; Two panels from another mosaic were set into the garland of the present mosaic; their inscriptions may date from 690/1 or 885.

¹²Theoharidou, K. *The Architecture of Hagia Sophia, Thessaloniki*; p. 69

¹³Curcic, S. "Some Iconographic and Stylistic Aspects of the Ascension Mosaic...."

mushroom-topped Olive trees in between each of them.¹⁴ In opposition to the attempted narrative, the Apostles do not all look up or out, but two look down away from Christ. All of the figures "stand" on an undulating rocky background; below the ground is an evergreen garland with two inset inscriptions from the earlier mosaic. While several characteristics of this representation link it to earlier Byzantine domes, and especially the dome of the Rotunda, there are also some stylistic and technical infelicities which clearly place it in an immediately Post-Iconoclastic context, and suggest it may have been based on a manuscript image.¹⁵

In style, the figures of this Ascension are depicted in a fairly rudimentary and cartoonish way; black linear outlines enclose large blocks of undifferentiated color and dark slashes of monochrome shadow. The colors of their robes are bright, while their faces are pale and flat. Their noses and hands are elongated, while their bodies are round and shapeless. The groundline extends up to the figures' knees, and although Christ is supposed to float in the sky, St. John does not even look up at him.

In composition, it is inconceivable that the mosaicist of this Ascension was not familiar with the Rotunda mosaics, and yet he absorbed from them only some very basic ideas about dome artistry.¹⁶ The dome is still fairly coherent as a three-dimensional space, and the gold background receives the light from the windows below and reflects it around to create the impression of a brilliant sky.

¹⁴In Byzantine iconography, Paul replaces Judas as the twelfth Apostle.

¹⁵Theoharidou, K. *The Architecture of Hagia Sophia, Thessaloniki*; p. 3ff.

¹⁶The mosaics in the dome of the Rotunda depict Christ at the apex, in a round medallion born by angels, with a concentric ring of archangels (?), and a ring of saints in front of architectural facades below them. These mosaics may or may not represent an Ascension, but they share many iconographic elements with it.

However, technically the dome is very irregularly shaped, and lacks coherent axes or registers like the Rotunda. Although Christ's head is now in the west, in accordance with the viewer's perspective, he is also smaller than Mary and the Apostles, a perspectival trick of flat painting which is not necessary in a dome.¹⁷

Additionally, the two angels in the west are depicted in profile, and gently grasp the mandorla in front of them, but do not rest it on their shoulders as in the Rotunda and other later domes, where four are more often seen. The odd disposition of these two angels, as well as the positions of the two archangels and the Apostles, all find close parallels in manuscript illumination; it is therefore likely that, so soon after the end of Iconoclasm, the mosaicist of Hagia Sophia used one or more miniature illuminations to plan his Ascension.¹⁸

It has been suggested that the mosaicists of this dome were from Constantinople, perhaps the group who executed the garland in the Constantinopolitan Hagia Sophia, which is almost identical.¹⁹ However, it is equally likely that they were Thessalonikans, trained in the capital, who returned home. It is unclear whether the Ascension dome in Constantinople in the Church of the Theotokos tis Pigis, described by Leo VI sometime between 886 and 893, is earlier or later than the Ascension of Thessaloniki.²⁰ However, other Ascension domes in Cappadocia and Cyprus testify to the motif's popularity

¹⁷Demus, O. *The Mosaics of San Marco in Venice: I. The 11th and 12th centuries*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984; p. 174; This is to make the figure recede; in a dome, he is already far away spatially.

¹⁸Curcic, S. "Some Iconographic and Stylistic Aspects of the Ascension Mosaic..."; p. 5

¹⁹ibid. p. 9

²⁰Cormack, R. "Painting after Iconoclasm."; p. 12

immediately after Iconoclasm.²¹ In Thessaloniki and the surrounding area, this dome was highly influential, and echoes of it appear in many subsequent churches. While the Pantokrator became the preferred subject for main domes in the Empire in general, the Ascension continued to enjoy a special place in the art of Thessaloniki and her hinterland.

The closest surviving iconographic and stylistic parallel to the Ascension in the dome of the Hagia Sophia is the fresco in the apse of the Rotunda, which was painted at approximately the same time, either by the same artist who created the Hagia Sophia mosaic, or, more likely, by another artist who copied the figures in that dome. The painting of the apse probably occurred at the same time as reconstruction of the fabric of the apse itself, which may have collapsed (See Ill. 20-21).²² The apse is really just half of a dome, and by placing only two angels under the mandorla and pushing the Apostles together, a dome theme becomes an apse theme. Although this is the only such apse in Thessaloniki, this form had a long history, especially in Coptic churches, where it remained popular for many years.²³ In the fresco in the apse of the Rotunda, probably also executed in the ninth century, Christ is borne by two angels on the upper surface of the apse, Mary stands below him, on the back wall of the apse, and the archangels and Apostles are arrayed to either side. The fresco is damaged, but Peter, John, Luke, Bartholomew and Jacob are still visible on the right, with Paul, Andrew, Mark and traces of Matthew on the left. Olive trees also appear between the standing figures below Christ, who looks both out at the viewer and

²¹Cormack, R. "Byzantine Cappadocia: The Archaic Group of Wall-Paintings." Journal of the British Archaeological Association 3rd ser. 30 (1967) pp. 19-36; reprinted in The Byzantine Eye: Studies in Art and Patronage. London: Variorum Reprints, 1989

²²Cormack, R. "The Classical Tradition in the Byzantine Provincial City...."; p. 112

down at the figures below him. A Bible verse is written above the heads of Peter and the archangel next to him, on the right.²⁴

This work bears an incredibly detailed resemblance to the dome of the Hagia Sophia, in a number of thematic ways (See Ill. 22-23). The execution of the figures is similar in both style and typology. Although it is a fresco, it is executed like a mosaic, with large blocks of soft color and delicate black line work picking out the details and enclosing each block. The depiction of the figures themselves is also almost identical, from the feet of the two angels grasping the mandorla to the heads of the Apostles. For example, in both works St. Peter has a thick sheaf of straight white hair and a short round beard, while St. Luke is shown from the back with his head bent back, almost parallel to his shoulder, looking up. St. Peter and St. John, the first two figures to the right of the Virgin and archangel in each work, are identical in details of hair, clothing, posture and style. Additionally, while in many apses the Apostles are standing layered behind one another, as in a manuscript illumination, here it appears as if the artist copied each figure from Hagia Sophia in order.

These similarities suggest that the artist of either the dome or the apse was a resident of the city, and familiar with the other work. Indeed, the works may have been done by the same person or workshop, which would explain some of the uncertainties of the mosaic, perhaps an unfamiliar medium. The main researcher on these frescoes feels that they are older than the dome of Hagia

²³Mu'allaka (8th cent.); Chapels XLVI, XVII, XLV, XLII, Bawit, Egypt (6th-7th c.)

²⁴Χυνηγοπουλος, Α. "Η Τοιχογραφία της Αναληψεως εν τη Αψιδη του Αγίου Γεωργίου της Θεσσαλονικης." (The Wall Paintings of the Ascension in the Apse of St. George in Thessaloniki.) *Archaialogiki Ephemeris* (1938) pp. 32-53

Sophia, but if they are not strictly contemporary, they must be later.²⁵ The frescoes in the apse function very well as copies of the dome of Hagia Sophia; there is nothing painterly about the dome mosaics. The style of the frescoes is closer to mosaic than any later frescoes, and the side by side arrangement of the Apostles echoes a dome layout.

Whether or not the same artist executed both works, and which was first, their ninth century date, and connections, are undeniable. They represent, respectively, the creation of a major figurative program just after Iconoclasm for the Metropolitan Church of the city, in mosaic, the most expensive material, and the decoration of the oldest church in the city with a new apse fresco, in a new artistic style. Both of these works indicate a late ninth century city of wealth and beauty, looking to the past and the future.

The Tenth Century

The tenth century, probably on account of the Arab sack and continuous Bulgarian warfare, is an artistic lacuna for Thessaloniki. There were repairs to the walls and the churches of the city, and historical accounts record building activity, yet there is almost no monumental art surviving today from this century. Mt. Athos was growing, and probably attracted what artists and craftsmen there were from the city, as did neighboring cities not sacked by the Arabs. Two churches were constructed in Kastoria, both small, but decorated with fresco programs in a style akin to the Apse of the Rotunda.²⁶ These small churches also have intricate exteriors decorated with ornamental brickwork, as

²⁵ibid. p. 50

the Panagia Chalkeon would some years later.²⁷ In these monuments, as well as those of Mt. Athos, developments in fresco style are visible. There was also some activity in the capital, which prefigured the explosion of artistic expression in Thessaloniki in the eleventh century.

The Eleventh Century: New Works, New Styles

After the gap of the tenth century, the eleventh century witnessed an outburst of artistic patronage in the city, of portable art as well as of churches and frescoes. This growth was linked both to political stability, economic expansion and changes in patronage. The increasing numbers of landed gentry used their wealth in traditional ways, to decorate the large churches of the city, but also began to build smaller, private churches. In all of this activity, however, a coherent style of figuration is apparent, evidence for an active group of native artists, even if they were trained in Constantinople.

Just as Thessaloniki was enjoying the economic and political good fortune following Basil II's victory over the Bulgarians, in 1028 the Church of the Panagia Chalkeon (Our Lady of the Coppersmiths) was erected under the patronage of Christopher, Protospatharios and Governor of Lagouvardia in Italy, his wife Maria and their children (See Ill. 24-25).²⁸

Originally it may have been a family chapel, for burials and private worship, or the katholikon of a small monastery.²⁹ It was erected near the center

²⁶Wharton Epstein, A.J. "Middle Byzantine Churches of Kastoria: Dates and Implications." Art Bulletin 62 (1980) pp. 190-207; p. 191ff.

²⁷ibid. p. 193

²⁸For the full text of the dedicatory inscription: Tsitouridou, A. Church of the Panagia Chalkeon. Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1985; p. 10

²⁹Cutler, A. "Art in Byzantine Society...."; p. 766; Cormack, R. "The Classical Tradition...."; p. 114

of the city, in the district where the metal-workers had their workshops.³⁰ The Protospatharios spared no expense, and decorated his chapel outside with the new style of recessed brickwork, and the inside with frescoes of the Ascension, Twelve Feasts and Last Judgment, and brand new stonework.³¹ This last is very significant; the Hagia Sophia, erected some two-hundred and fifty years earlier, had columns and capitals from the earlier church, and so did many later churches in the city. In this era, however, Christopher could both afford new stone work and find someone to execute it.

The church is of the cross in square plan, with a high central dome, tripartite apse, and narthex topped by two smaller domes. The stonework-- columns, capitals and a dedicatory inscription-- was created for the structure. The fresco program includes the Last Judgment in the narthex, the Feast cycle in the nave, the Virgin and Saints in the apse and the Ascension in the dome of the nave. The cross in square type allowed greater flexibility of narrative program than the basilica, and the Panagia Chalkeon has a very individual fresco style and layout, which influenced later works in Thessaloniki and elsewhere. The painting throughout is characterized by solemn, slender, frontal figures, executed in a painterly, linear style. The faces of the figures are softly modeled with warm flesh tones, and their large dark eyes lend them humanity and holiness. The heads of the figures are the focus of attention, while the bodies are almost like pedestals, with long straight drapery hanging on them. The figures

³⁰Tafrafi, O. *Topographie de Thessalonique*; p. 132

³¹On the new style of brickwork: Vocotopoulos, P.L. "The Concealed Course Technique: Further Examples and a Few Remarks." *JOB* 28 (1979) pp. 247-60; p. 254; Cormack, R. "The Classical Tradition in the Byzantine Provincial City...."; pp. 114-7

seem static, and are fairly small in scale.³² Narrative scenes alternate with single figures in the nave, all on a dark ground.

The subject of the dome of the Panagia Chalkeon was clearly inspired by the Hagia Sophia, but also shows a new sense of style and ability on the part of the artist. The high, narrow dome is crowned with the Ascension, not the Pantokrator, as was usual by the eleventh century. However, lacking the funds for a shimmering golden ground, the fresco painter reversed the color scheme of Hagia Sophia, and put Christ in a white and green mandorla, on a dark blue background. This causes the dome to be fairly dark, despite the two rows of arched windows. Sixteen prophets are inserted between these windows, with the circle of Apostles on the drum itself.

Although there are only two angels again, in this case the artist has made each of them actually support the mandorla by hoisting it on one shoulder and bracing the other arm over his head. Mary and the Archangels are both frontal and fairly rigid; the angels do not even point at the sky as they usually do. The Apostles are more lively, but still seem to raise their arms tentatively or ponder the scene quietly. Perhaps this restraint is due to the lack of space in the dome; the angels' feet brush the Apostles heads on both sides. However, this curious calm, as well as the rounded forms of the figures, with their luminous skin and large dark eyes, are all connected to the contemporary "hieratic" style of fresco painting.³³

Although the Ascension is better suited to a wide dome, the delicate figures and rigid formality of the poses here help adapt it to a small dome, and

³²Mouriki, D. "Stylistic Trends in Monumental Painting of Greece during the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries." *DOP* 34-5 (1980-1) pp. 77-124; p. 79

keep it recognizable from ground level.³⁴ The abstraction of the landscape and static quality of the figures tie it to the Ascension in Hagia Sophia, but there is a new humanity to the figures in the Panagia Chalkeon, as well as a clearer sense of narrative. Contemporary mosaics in other parts of the Empire show a very different sensibility, with shorter, fatter figures and more episodic elements.³⁵

Although the church is very modern in every way, and in line with developments in Constantinople, it almost certainly reflects the collaboration of a citizen and an artist of Thessaloniki. This church reflected the new wealth of private individuals in the city, who increasingly poured their money into the creation of art, and in this case an entire church.³⁶ The erection of a church in the city was no longer a large-scale endeavor, with the cooperation of citizens and ecclesiastical authorities, it was the result of the partnership of an artist and a patron.³⁷ In Thessaloniki, that patron might be a rich widow, a merchant or an Imperial official; the goal was, "power, prestige, fame or spiritual advantage," and the only perquisites were ready cash, access to artists and the will to employ them.³⁸ In the eleventh century, the artistic growth of a century, peace, and a larger amount of money in circulation led directly to artistic creation. There

³³ibid. p. 79

³⁴Several later churches in Russia, including Mirozh Cathedral in Pskov (c. 1150), Staraya Ladoga (c. 1160), and Nereditzy Spas (1198-9), also have small, high Ascension domes, with Prophets below the Apostles between the windows. In these churches, although six or eight standing angels usually support the mandorla, there may be artistic connections to Thessaloniki: Demus, O. The Mosaics of San Marco...; p. 175

³⁵Mouriki, D. "Stylistic Trends in Monumental Painting..."; p. 81

³⁶Cormack, R. "Aristocratic Patronage of the Arts in 11th and 12th Century Byzantium." in The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX to XIII Centuries: Papers of the 16th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies. ed. M. Angold. Oxford: BAR International Series 221, 1984; pp. 158-72; reprinted in The Byzantine Eye: Studies in Art and Patronage. London: Variorum Reprints, 1989; p. 168

³⁷Cormack, R. "Patronage and New Programs of Byzantine Iconography." in Major Papers of the 17th International Byzantine Congress. New Rochelle: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1986; pp. 609-38; reprinted in The Byzantine Eye: Studies in Art and Patronage. London: Variorum Reprints, 1989; p. 610

were probably many of these foundations in this era; in 1110, the records of Mt. Athos record the inheritance dispute of three brothers over their family Chapel of St. Stephen.³⁹

This shift in patronage had several immediate and important effects on the art and architecture of the city. New works were often small churches, or, more often, the further decoration of existing monuments. While this decoration was often on a more modest scale with more modest materials, it was also more innovative and had a dramatically local character. The Church of the Panagia Chalkeon encapsulates all of these trends; moreover, the style of its frescoes represents a bold new decoration in painting, which is visible in the frescoes of the rest of the century in the city and outside of it.⁴⁰

A bit later in the eleventh century, the Hagia Sophia was renovated and redecorated, with a new apse mosaic and frescoes in the narthex and galleries. This may have been to repair damage from the earthquake of 1037/8, and definitely occurred after the construction of the Panagia Chalkeon.⁴¹ In the conch of the apse, the original eighth century mosaic of a cross was replaced by a seated figure of the Virgin Mary holding Christ on her lap (See Ill. 31).⁴² While a mosaic of the Virgin, enthroned with Christ on her lap, was inset in the apse of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople in 867, and this became the preferred program for the apse after Iconoclasm, the apse of Hagia Sophia was not

³⁸ibid. p. 611; Cutler, A. "Art in Byzantine Society: Motive Forces...."; p. 760

³⁹Cited in Cutler, A. "Art in Byzantine Society: Motive Forces...."; p. 767

⁴⁰Mouriki, D. "Stylistic Trends in Monumental Painting..."; p. 8

⁴¹Cormack, R. "The Apse Mosaics of Saint Sophia at Thessaloniki." Deltion tis Christianikis Archaologikis Etaireias 10 (1980-1) pp. 111-35; reprinted in The Byzantine Eye: Studies in Art and Patronage. London: Variorum Reprints, 1989; p. 135

⁴²Cormack, R. "The Apse Mosaics..."; p. 115ff.; Other dates for the apse mosaic: p. 127, n. 43

decorated in this manner until the eleventh century.⁴³ On the original gold ground, the Virgin, dressed in a robe of dark purple, sits on a backless throne with two cushions, holding Christ with her left hand and a handkerchief with her right. Christ stands in her lap, wearing a gold robe, and making a gesture of blessing with his right hand.

This mosaic is executed in a very different style from the earlier mosaics of the Ascension, and in a style much closer to the fresco style of the eleventh century. The tesserae of the garments are much larger than the tesserae of the flesh. While the face of Mary in the Ascension mosaic of Hagia Sophia is executed in mainly white, pink and green tesserae, in the apse mosaic Mary's face is modeled by the use of a range of different colored tesserae, from black to white. As in contemporary frescoes in the Panagia Chalkeon and Hagia Sophia, her eyes are emphasized by dark outlining and the use of solid black round tesserae for her large pupils. Christ's face is executed in a similar style, with prominent eyes and smaller multicolored tesserae. It has been suggested that the same artist also painted the fresco decoration of Hagia Sophia, if so, this might account for the close connections.⁴⁴ However, they also could result from a mosaicist acting within the same artistic milieu as the fresco painters, one which emphasized the humanity of the holy figures, with gradations of color and sinuous drapery.

The surviving fresco decoration in Hagia Sophia consists of four pairs of full length monastic saints, with busts in medallions below them, in the soffits of the arches of the west wall of the narthex (See Ill. 32-35). They are the only

⁴³Cormack, R. "Painting after Iconoclasm."; p. 2

survivors of a larger program of eleventh century frescoes, which included the Communion of the Apostles and more saints in the galleries, along with decorative motifs in the soffits of those windows, and may have included external frescoding of the church.⁴⁵ At the same time, the height of the galleries was raised, and there were other renovations to the structure of the church.⁴⁶

The surviving frescoes depict monastic saints with particular meaning for the city. They include St. Theodosios Koinobiarches with St. Euthymios, St. Theodore Studites with St. John Kalybites, St. Theodora of Thessaloniki with St. Theodora of Alexandria and an unidentified pair.⁴⁷ This is the only surviving icon of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki. St. Theodore Studites, who composed the monastic rule most often followed in Thessalonikan monasteries, was exiled to the city in the late eighth century, and is depicted holding a cross, with his usual bald head and double-pointed beard.⁴⁸ As he conforms to his general pattern, the others probably also adhere to their traditional iconography. However, the fresco style is very distinctive, reminiscent of the Panagia Chalkeon, with large, expressive eyes, and fluid, rounded brushwork.⁴⁹ In light of these connections

⁴⁴Cormack, R. "The Apse Mosaics...."; pp. 130-3

⁴⁵Theoharidou, K. *The Architecture of Hagia Sophia, Thessaloniki*; p. 32

⁴⁶ibid. p. 49; "Phase D"

⁴⁷Pelekanides, St. "Νεαί Ερευναι εις την Αγίαν Σοφίαν Θεσσαλονικης και η Αποκαταστασις της Αρχαίας Αυτης Μορφης." (New Investigations in the Hagia Sophia of Thessaloniki and the Restoration of her Ancient Phase) in *Πεπραγμενα του Θ' Διεθνους Βυζαντινολογικου Συνεδριου*. (Acts of the 9th International Byzantine Conference) ed. St. Kyriakidou, A. Xyngopoulos and P. Zepou. Athens: Typographeion Myrtidi, 1955; pp. 398-407; p. 404

⁴⁸Mouriki, D. "The Portraits of Theodore Studites in Byzantine Art." *IOB* 20 (1971) pp. 249-80; p. 260

⁴⁹Kyriakoudis, E.N. "La Peinture Monumentale de Thessalonique et des Regions Avoisinantes du Nord dans la Premiere Periode de la Christinisation des Slaves (du milieu du IXe au milieu du XIe siecle)." in *The Legacy of Saints Cyril and Methodius to Kiev and Moscow*. ed. A-E. N. Tachiaos. Thessaloniki: Hellenic Association for Slavic Studies, 1992; pp. 575-622; p. 592

and characteristics, the artist was more likely a native Thessalonikan than someone brought in from the capital.⁵⁰ While private patronage was becoming the pattern in the city, the renovation of the Cathedral church was almost certainly under the auspices of the Archbishop of Thessaloniki.⁵¹

There are also some surviving eleventh-century frescoes in St. Demetrios, in the South aisle.⁵² One depicts St. Luke of Stiris, a local monk of the tenth century, frontal, in a linear style, wearing a long robe (See Ill. 36).⁵³ Again, he is a local saint, depicted in new frescoes in an old church, in a very similar style to the other works of the eleventh century, with a simplified body and an expressive face.

This style was deeply influential, especially in the region to the northwest of the city, where several churches were built and decorated in the middle of the century, as part of a larger pattern of economic prosperity and Byzantinization.⁵⁴ In mid-century, the Church of Hagia Sophia at Ochrid, the seat of the neighboring Archbishop of Ochrid, received a new set of frescoes in this style, including an enthroned Virgin in the apse.⁵⁵ The first layer of frescoes in the Church of Hagioi Anargyroi in Kastoria are very similar to the style of the Panagia Chalkeon and Hagia Sophia. This contemporary church also has custom-made columns with almost identical capitals to the Panagia Chalkeon.⁵⁶

⁵⁰Despite a desire to attribute all the art of the city to artists from Constantinople, Cormack concludes, "a modified theory of local patronage and local availability of artists seems to me unavoidable.": Cormack, R. "The Apse Mosaics of Saint Sophia at Thessaloniki.;" pp. 135

⁵¹Mouriki, D. "Stylistic Trends in Monumental Painting of Greece...."; p. 100

⁵²Wharton, A.J. *Art of Empire: Painting and Architecture of the Byzantine Periphery.*; p. 110

⁵³Bakirtzis, Ch. *The Basilica of St. Demetrius.*; pp. 61-2

⁵⁴Mouriki, D. "Stylistic Trends in Monumental Painting of Greece...."; p. 93

⁵⁵Wharton Epstein, A.J. "The Political Content of the Paintings of Saint Sophia at Ohrid.;" p. 316ff.

⁵⁶Wharton Epstein, A.J. "Middle Byzantine Churches of Kastoria...."; pp. 197-8

The twelfth-century fresco of St. Theodore Studites in the Church of St. John the Theologian in nearby Verroia was probably based on the model of Hagia Sophia.⁵⁷ Throughout the century, the areas to the northwest of the city absorbed the most from her style. Artistic influences followed in the wake of religious and economic contact, and evidently this was much more extensive in this area than in the Greek peninsula or islands to the south.

The Twelfth Century: Final Glory

By the end of the twelfth century, and the last Middle Byzantine work in the city, the evolution of another century, and increases in monastic power were both reflected in the art of the city. As a nucleus of artistic style, the city also remained a vital center of both aristocratic and monastic patronage throughout the century.⁵⁸ From the beginning of the century, fresco painting in the hinterland of the city followed an increasingly independent course from Constantinople, becoming ever more dramatic and detailed, with monumental but lithe figures wrapped in colorful, clinging drapery (See Ill. 37).⁵⁹ The countryside and towns around Thessaloniki became studded with small churches and monasteries; the appearance of such a similar style of decoration in Pherrai, Chortiatis, Peristerai and Kastoria points to a vital artistic school centered in Thessaloniki.⁶⁰ This style appears in its most extreme form in the Church of St. George in Kurbinovo, but in only one surviving church in

⁵⁷Mouriki, D. "The Portraits of Theodore Studites in Byzantine Art."; p. 262

⁵⁸Although these were by no means mutually exclusive: Cutler, A. "Art in Byzantine Society...."; Kazhdan, A.P. and A. Wharton Epstein. Change in Byzantine Culture....; p. 221

⁵⁹Mouriki, D. "Stylistic Trends...."; p. 116ff.; Wharton, A.J. Art of Empire....; p. 118ff.

Thessaloniki, in a more refined and cosmopolitan form, clearly indicative of the developments of fresco since the decoration of the Panagia Chalkeon and Hagia Sophia.

The new artistic style found its expression in Thessaloniki in the monumental frescoes of the Twelve Great Feasts executed in the Latomou Monastery between 1160 and 1170 (See Ill. 37-39). The frescoes were part of other renovations of the fifth century structure, including a new sanctuary screen; originally they covered the walls and barrel vaults of the northern and southern arms of the nave. Only four of the scenes in the southern arm survive today: the Nativity and Transfiguration on the east side, and the Baptism of Jesus and Presentation in the Temple on the west side. All of the scenes retain traditional iconography, but executed in bright colors, with vivid, naturalistic and monumental modeling of the figures and drapery. In the east, Mary lies in a cave in the center, with Jesus just above her (See Ill. 38). They are surrounded by Joseph, servants bathing the infant (See Ill. 39). There are traces of the Transfiguration on this wall as well. In the west, an angel and John the Baptist attend the central figure of Jesus standing in the river, personified by a figure just below him (See Ill. 37). There are also fragments of the Presentation on this wall, recognizable from the standard iconography.

These frescoes are characteristic of the style developed in the surrounding area, but the quality and monumentality of these frescoes clearly set them apart from their provincial counterparts, and signal the development of an even newer

⁶⁰Mouriki, D. "Stylistic Trends..."; p. 103ff.; Wharton Epstein, A.J. "Middle Byzantine Churches of Kastoria..."; pp. 198-9

style in the city.⁶¹ There is an amazing contrast between these bright, voluptuous figures, posed together in a natural setting, and the frontal, abstracted figures of the Panagia Chalkeon, placed on a dark featureless background. The prosperity and artistic development of the city in the late twelfth century is vibrantly reflected in these frescoes.⁶²

⁶¹Mouriki, D. "Stylistic Trends in Monumental Painting..."; pp. 119, 123

⁶²Tsigaridas, E. Latomou Monastery (The Church of Hosios David).

VI.

Conclusion and Epilogue

The sweeping changes and strong continuities of Middle Byzantine Thessaloniki are most apparent in her art and architecture. The artistic program in the dome of the Hagia Sophia was very powerful: the Ascension was envisioned in exactly the same way in the Panagia Chalkeon. Mary occupied the apse of both churches by the end of the period; the nave of Hosios David was adorned with the same set of Feasts as the nave of the Panagia Chalkeon. All of these works belong to the same artistic and cultural tradition; in both Nativities, for instance, Mary is in the center of the scene, lying in a cave. However, in almost every other way, these works reflect the changes happening within the city and Byzantine art from the ninth through twelfth centuries.

Political and economic changes are clearly reflected in the art of the city. Both sacks were followed by almost one hundred years with no surviving monumental art or architecture in the city. The two periods of greatest patronage, the late ninth and mid-eleventh centuries, each occurred in times of relative peace. Significantly, artistic activity in the surrounding area followed each of these periods closely, in similar styles.

Additionally, patronage by an Imperial official-- Christopher-- happened during the eleventh century, but not afterwards. From the reign of Alexios I Komnenos onwards, the Strategoi of Thessaloniki, and many of the other Imperial officials, were members of the Imperial family. Titles were allotted to keep relatives happy, and in support of the Emperor; in this situation, most officials originated in Constantinople, and many stayed there.¹ If they took time to commission art, it was usually in the capital, not the city which paid their

¹Herrin, J. "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government: Hellas and Peloponnesus, 1180-1205."

salary. Yet, due to her geographical position, strong walls and flourishing trade network, Thessaloniki continued to prosper under them. Perhaps it was a wealthy merchant or landowner who commissioned the frescoes of the Latomou Monastery late in the twelfth century. Eustathios, for one, was jealous of the monasteries' influence in the city, yet the main churches of the city were all adorned, and he appears to have been occupied with secular issues much of the time. When the wealthy of the city looked for opportunities for investment, the monasteries, which offered solace in old age and burial after death, were very attractive.

Architecture

Paradoxically, increasing wealth in the city did not lead to more monumental architecture, but the individuals and families of Thessaloniki commissioned buildings on a smaller, more personal scale. The decoration of the ninth century consisted of further adornment of large, public buildings, the monuments of the city then, as now. By the eleventh century, however, this form of patronage had been joined by the erection of churches like the Panagia Chalkeon. This church reflects both personal initiative, by the members of one family, and personal wealth, enough to hire and pay masons and artists. Although this is the only surviving building of the period, it was only one of many small churches built in the city then, like St. Photios' Akapniou monastery. Many of these other buildings were replaced in later times, but history is a testament to their existence and construction.

An important facet of this eleventh century construction was its relation to older buildings. The Akapniou monastery was built over a fifth century

structure, while the Panagia Chalkeon occupied a "once profane place."² This probably reflected an increase in building activity, and a new desire and ability to decorate the city. Additionally, while many earlier and later buildings were built using reused pieces of other structures, the Panagia Chalkeon stands out as all original. This one structure bespeaks the presence in the city of skilled masons, architects, artists and stone carvers. While it is possible that all of these people could have been hired in Constantinople and brought to the city, it is highly unlikely. By the eleventh century, at the very latest, skilled artisans of all types were at work in the city.

Art

Within the constraints of the established Byzantine iconography, the artists active in Thessaloniki made revolutionary developments in style over the course of the Middle Byzantine Period. At the end of the ninth century, representational art was highly imitative, of both older and contemporary works, and highly abstract. By the eleventh century, some of this abstraction had given way to a greater degree of personality in the figures. While the bodies of the figures in the Panagia Chalkeon, Hagia Sophia and St. Demetrios are still fairly abstract, their faces possess an exceptional vitality. Even on a blank ground, interacting very little with each other, these people interact with the viewer, demanding attention with their large eyes. They are people, and must have been even more striking to contemporaries; perhaps it is not coincidental that the saints in Hagia Sophia and St. Demetrios are local saints, with special

²Papazotos, Th. "The Identification...."; Tsitouridou, A. Church of the Panagia Chalkeon; p. 10

significance for Thessaloniki. In the figures of Hosios David, this quality of immediacy remains, along with a vital sense of dynamic narrative. Now, bodies are animated by swirling drapery, and reside in realistic landscapes. The deep personal contact of the frontal figures, however, remains in the style of the faces and eyes.

A trio of bearded heads from three monuments showcase this evolution: St. Andrew in the apse of the Rotunda, St. Gregory Agrigentum in the apse of the Panagia Chalkeon and Joseph in the scene of the Nativity in Hosios David (See Ill. 40-42). St. Andrew has a soft face, shaded nearly imperceptibly, pure white hair and large eyes looking off to the side. His long nose and mustache reflect the late ninth century style, as does the delicate use of black lines for his eyebrows, nose and top lip. In contrast, St. Gregory stares at the viewer directly, with his large, deep set eyes. His face is sharply modeled in darks and lights, and his features are defined by solid, thick black strokes. He is almost a figure in a coloring book. Joseph is turned away from the viewer, lost in thought, yet still manages to look out. In his face the contrasts of Gregory's face are enhanced, resulting in the visage of an old, timeworn man.

The figures move towards greater connection with the viewer, and also greater vitality: this is the achievement of four hundred years of evolution in Thessalonikan fresco painting. While the fortunes of the city rose and fell, art moved from one stage to another, sometimes in relation to those fortunes, and sometimes independently of them. Without the knowledge of the economic and political forces, however, the art loses context, and many changes in its nature become unintelligible. In the period after Iconoclasm, the artists of the Empire grappled with the problems of resurrecting representational art. When those

were mastered, they immediately needed to be applied to the new church form of cross in square. The end result was a general set of iconographic rules, with a regional flexibility. In Thessaloniki, this involved the placement of the Ascension on the dome, an emphasis on solitary images of saints and the development of a highly dramatic form of painting. These changes happened in tandem with economic changes in patronage, political changes in Emperors, and constant repair and renewal of the city itself. Underlying everything, however, was the continued existence of the city, which made the history, and the art, possible.

Epilogue

The next eight hundred years were also filled with conquests and occupations, periods of independence and prosperity, and patronage of art and architecture in the city. The thirteenth century saw the Kingdom of Thessaloniki, then reincorporation into the Byzantine Empire, while the fourteenth was characterized by renewed building in the city, especially of small monasteries. The fifteenth century brought the end of the Empire, Venetian occupation and then the birth of a new Empire based in Constantinople. Thessaloniki remained the second city, still a center of art and trade, and the lodestone of the region. Then, the twentieth century brought an almost dizzying series of changes, from Ottoman to Greek city, with influxes of refugees and the turmoil of two long wars. The twentieth century, however, also witnessed the renovation and study of the Byzantine monuments of the city. Their conversion back into churches, and the removal of subsequent layers of plaster revealed these buildings' features, and permitted the reconstruction of the history of the city to a degree never previously possible. Although many facets of these buildings remain

controversial, it is only now, at the end of the century, that scholarship is coherent enough to place these Middle Byzantine monuments in a chronology, and relate them to history and one another.

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Abbreviations

<u>BZ</u>	-	<u>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</u>
<u>DOP</u>	-	<u>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</u>
<u>JOB</u>	-	<u>Jahrbuch der Osterreichischen Byzantinistik</u>

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