The Urban Continuity and Size of Late Byzantine Thessalonike

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I

Thessalonike was founded by synoikismos (gathering together the populations of the surrounding towns in one site) in 316/315 B.C. by Cassander, in the innermost recess of the Thermaic Gulf, between the sea and the foothills of Mount Chortiates (ancient Kissos), a strategic location then as now (Fig. 1). Although the city always had a busy port, which served the Balkan peninsula as a link with the Aegean and the Mediterranean, the sea was never its sole productive area. Thessalonike always looked to its hinterland and the routes leading to it. To the west of the city lay the plain of Thessalonike, to the north the Mygdonian basin, and to the east and southeast an area of Chalkidike known since 1003 as Kalamaria.

In the mid-fourteenth century, Thessalonike’s productive and commercial hinterland was delineated by the castles, built in 1341 by Andronikos III, of Chrysoupolis (Amphipolis) at the mouth of the Strymon, Siderokastron north of Serres, and Gynaikokastron southwest of Kilkis overlooking the lower Axios valley. Coins of Anna of Savoy, empress of Thessalonike (1354–65), and of John V minted in Thessalonike are not found beyond Drama, Serres, and Pella, being of local interest only.


5 Grierson, DOC 5: 204–6, N. Zekos, “Ἡ κυκλοφορία τῶν παλαιολόγειαν νομισμάτων στὴν Ἀντιοκχική Μακεδονία καὶ Θράκη μέσα απὸ ἀνασκαφικά δεδομένα,” Όμολόγος 4, Τὸ νόμισμα στὸν μακεδονικό χώρο. Πρακτικά Β’ ἐπιστημονικῆς συνάντησης νομισματοκινείων, κυκλοφορία, εἰκονογραφία, ιστορία: ἀρχαῖοι, βυζαντινοὶ καὶ νεότεροι χρόνοι (Thessalonike, 2000), 239. See also the article by Cécile Morrissone in this volume.
The Thessalonian plain was traversed by the Vardar (ancient Axios) and Gallikos (ancient Echedoros) Rivers, and extended as far as the Loudias lagoon and the River Loudias. Administratively it belonged to the Vardar (or Paravardaron) katepanikon. The unhealthy and sparsely populated alluvial coastal plain had no harbor but was suitable for agriculture, and its grasslands for hunting and pasturing livestock. A trade fair known as the Demetria was held in October on the Thessalonian plain outside the west city wall. In the late Byzantine and post-Byzantine periods, water mills operated on the streams in the surrounding hills. The discovery of a water tower during a recent rescue excavation more or less in the center of the upper city of Thessalonike shows that there were workshops in this area which used water as motive power, an example being water mills. This meant that at times of insecurity in the countryside and during sieges, it was possible to process agricultural produce inside the city.

An arterial road with three branches cut across the plain. One road connected Thessalonike with the area of the Morava and Serbia via the Vardar (Axios) valley and Skopje. The kastra (forts) which have been located in the Gallikos valley are connected with this road: Aëtos kastron at Panteleémon, Melanthion, Kolchis, Plagha, and Sebaston. The second road, to Upper Macedonia, led to the Prespa Lakes and Lake Ohrid and hence via the Adriatic ports to Venice. The third road went south, via the katepanikon of Kitros, the plain of Pieria, Platamon castle, and the Tempe valley, and under the shadow of Mount Olympus connected Thessalonike with Thessaly and central Greece.

The second road is associated with the Via Egnatia, which did not run through Thessalonike, but after crossing the Thessalonian plain entered the Mygdonian basin north of Thessalonike via the lower Gallikos valley. One branch of the Via Egnatia was the road which led from the Mygdonian basin to Thessalonike (Litea gate) through what is now the Derveni pass. The Mygdonian basin has two lakes: Langadas (ancient Koroneia) and Bolbe, both charmingly described by Kameniates.

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6 G. I. Theocharidis, Κατασκευές της Μακεδονίας. Συμβολή είς την διοικητικήν ιστορίαν και γεωγραφίαν τῆς Μακεδονίας κατά την τοποθετηθήνα χρόνων, Μακεδονικά, suppl. 1 (Thessalonike, 1954), 34–37.
7 Description of the lower Axios valley by the 12th-century Pseudo-Luciano, Timarione, ed. R. Romano (Naples, 1974), 52–74:
8 Description of the lower Axios valley by the 12th-century Pseudo-Luciano, Timarione, ed. R. Romano (Naples, 1974), 52–74:
and Stephaniana.\textsuperscript{14} The \textit{kastron} of Rendina (Artemision)\textsuperscript{15} on the western edge of the basin commanded the valley through which the River Rhechios discharged the waters of Bolbe into the Strymonic Gulf, and the Via Egnatia passed by this \textit{kastron} on its way to Constantinople. As Angeliki Laiou has pointed out, the road was difficult to travel already by the 1320s; after 1341 there is no evidence that it was still functioning as a communications route to Constantinople, and the area to the east of the Strymon River ceased to be related economically with Thessalonike.\textsuperscript{16} The declining presence at Rendina of fourteenth-century coins, all from the Thessalonike mint, and the construction in the mid-fourteenth century of a church with all the characteristics of the ecclesiastical architecture of Thessalonike suggest that in this century Rendina marked the easternmost edge of Thessalonike's ever dwindling province.\textsuperscript{17}

Apart from Rendina, another important town in the Mygdonian basin, and a crossroads on the Via Egnatia, was Langadas, which was used as a base by Thessalonike's conquerors: Ioannites camped here in 1207, as did John VI Kantakouzenos when he was preparing to quell the Zealot uprising in 1350, and Murad II when he was preparing to take Thessalonike in 1430.\textsuperscript{18} An oil press north of Bolbe and the Via Egnatia, dated by a brick inscription to 1324/25 (Fig. 2), is connected with the region's agricultural production in the late Byzantine period.\textsuperscript{20} The produce of the basin was stored before being sold in, or traded via, Thessalonike in a Palaiologan tower with projecting pilasters at the village of Aghios Basileios on the southern shore of Lake Langadas. A. Vakalopoulos believes that this tower served a military purpose and was built by Manuel Palaiologos (1382–87) for the protection of Thessalonike.\textsuperscript{21}

The \textit{katepanikion} of Kalamaria had been part of the theme of Thessalonike since 1300, and mainly comprised western Chalkidike.\textsuperscript{22} The documents of Mount Athos contain numerous references to monastic property, villages and place-names, on the basis of which J. Lefort has drawn up a plan of how the land was used in this area in the Byzantine period.\textsuperscript{23} The close connection between Thessalonike and Kalamaria in the late Byzantine period is also reflected in the trade in ceramics. Late Byzantine glazed pottery from Olyn-
Thus, as classified by A. Xyngopoulos, presents close similarities with pottery of the same period found in Thessalonike and probably comes from this city’s workshops.24

The best-known local monastery in the late Byzantine period was the Chortaiotes monastery in the northern foothills of Mount Chortiates (ancient Kissos), which supplied Thessalonike and the area to the east of the city with water.25 Parts of an aqueduct, water mills, and clay pipes which carried water from Chortiates survive in the foothills and the hilly area toward Thessalonike.26 A late twelfth-century octagonal chapel outside the monastery precinct survived as a church of the settlement which grew up around the monastery and appears as the Chortiates kastron early in the fifteenth century.27

The last part of Thessalonike’s surrounding province to retain links with the city by sea after the conquest of Kalamaria was the furthermost limit of Kalamaria, the Kassandra peninsula (katepanikon of Kassandra).28 This was why the Thessalonians made repeated requests to Venice in 1423 and 1429 that Kassandra (ancient Potidaia on the neck of the peninsula) be refortified with a wall in order to protect their few sources of food supply.29

In 1372 Turkish akinci (raiders) appeared before the walls of Thessalonike, and the following years the Thessalonian plain and the Mygdonian basin were seized by the ghāzīs (warriors for the Faith) of the great march-lord (uc-begı) Evrenos, thus starting the process of conquering Thessalonike in three stages (devastation of the countryside, subjugation, conquest).30 Under Murad I (1385) and Bayazid I (1393) the area was settled by yiırııks (Turks of nomadic origin) whose religious center was Evrenos’ tomb at Yenice-i Vardar (now Genitsa).31 The Turks besieged Thessalonike from 1383 to 1387; after its inhabitants had surrendered, they maintained control of the city from 1387 to 1403.32 The city’s economic prosperity came to an end. There is no record of any major construction during this


28 Theocharidis, Κατεπανίκια, 19.

29 K. D. Mertzios, Μνημεία μακεδονικής ιστορίας (Thessalonike, 1947), 47 and 74. The Palaiologan tower at Nea Phokaia on the east coast of the Kassandra peninsula was used to keep an eye on the local crops of oil seed and its transportation by sea (I. Papangelos, “Η Χαλκιδική κατά τους μέσους χρόνους,” in M. Pappa, K. Sismanidis, I. Papangelos, and Er. Zellios-Mastorokosta, Η ιστορία της Χαλκιδικής [Thessalonike, 1998], 106).


Map of central Macedonia (author; drawing by S. Sylaïou, courtesy of the Ephoria of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessalonike)
2 Bolbe; oil press (courtesy of the Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessalonike)
3 Basilica of St. Demetrios, tomb of Loukas Spantounes (photo: S. Chaidemenos, 2000, courtesy of the Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessalonike)
Late Byzantine Thessalonike (author; drawing by S. Sabanopoulou and S. Sylaioú, courtesy of the Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessalonike)
5 Brick inscription (after P. Papageorghiou)

6 Aghiou Demetriou Street, Roman and early Christian cobbled road surfaces and water canalization systems (2001, courtesy of the Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessalonike)
Heptapyrgion (photo: Y. Kyriakidis, 2001, courtesy of the Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessalonike)
8 Heptapyrghion; main gate and tower (drawing by E. Malle, courtesy of the Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessalonike)
Crypt of the basilica of St. Demetrios; marble capital with the monogram of the Palaiologoi (1999, courtesy of the Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessalonike)
Acheiropoietos basilica, interior (photo: S. Chaidemenos, 2001, courtesy of the Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessalonike)
11 Rescue excavation of the katholikon of the monastery of St. Theodora (2001, courtesy of the Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessalonike)
12 Rescue excavation in Dioikitiriou Square (1995, courtesy of the Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessalonike)
13 Roman Agora and St. Demetrios basilica today (photo: S. Chaidemenos, 1998, courtesy of the Ephoria of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessalonike)

14 The Galerius palace complex (photo: S. Chaidemenos, 1998, courtesy of the Ephoria of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessalonike)
The church of the Taxiarchs (photo: S. Chaidemenos, 2000, courtesy of the Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessalonike)
The Holy Apostles and the western wall of the city (photo: S. Chaidemenos, 1998, courtesy of the Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessalonike)
17 Prophitis Elias, the basilica of St. Demetrios, and the Agora (photo: S. Chaidemenos, 1998, courtesy of the Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessalonike)
Bathhouse, axonometric section (drawing by S. Sabanopoulou and S. Sylaion, courtesy of the Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessalonike)
period in Thessalonike. No works of art in Thessalonike have been dated later than 1380. No buildings attributable to this period have been found in the surrounding countryside. The righting of some social wrongs in Thessalonike by the Turks in this period mentioned by N. Necipoğlu represent one aspect of the real situation. Under John V and during the period 1365–76, between the end of Anna’s reign and the revolt of Andronikos IV, the city’s mint issued bronze coins with a representation of the martyrdom of St. Demetrios on the reverse, the intention probably being to draw a parallel between the Ottomans’ assault on Thessalonike and his executioners’ assault on St. Demetrios. At this time the saint’s iconography, always adjusted to reflect contemporary concerns, was enriched with the type of the soldier armed with a bow and arrows, the Turkish symbols of sovereignty.

The late Byzantine levels in excavations in Thessalonike have not yielded any examples of imported ceramics that would indicate the existence of trade. Three late fourteenth-century bowls from Spain and the Golden Horde khanate are incorporated as rare and curious items into the south wall of the katholikon of Vlatadon monastery. Commerce in Thessalonike was based mainly on the production and export of grain and the import and export of textiles, and was directed toward Greece, Epirus, Serbia, Dalmatia, and Venice; that is to say, it was attached to the Venetian commercial system, which it accessed via the plain and especially the port of Thessalonike via Negroponte in Euboea. A testimony to this commerce with Venice after 1430 and to the channel which supplied Thessalonike with the breath of life is the monumental tomb of the grain merchant Loukas Spantounes, which was manufactured in the workshop of Pietro Lombardo in Venice and erected in the basilica of St. Demetrios in 1481 (Fig. 3). This work is the last funerary monument of the Byzantine aristocracy and the only one the nobility of late Byzantine Thessalonike dedicated to the place where they amassed their wealth, two generations after the fall of the city.

II

The Fortifications

The triangular layout of Thessalonike’s fortification wall (Fig. 4) has not changed since it was built in the middle of the third century A.D. and rebuilt in the fifth cen-
Consequently, Thessalonike covered the same area in the late Byzantine period as in the Roman and early Christian periods. Like Constantinople and Nicaea, Thessalonike did not shrink as did most of the ancient *poleis* when they were converted into medieval *kastra* after the end of antiquity. That life continued without interruption from late antiquity to the middle ages and that the size of the city did not change explain why Thessalonike was described as the second city.

In other words, the question which arises, and which I intend to answer based on archaeological finds, is: was the size of late Byzantine Thessalonike (Fig. 4) commensurate with its area? At this time in Constantinople, Nikolaos Mesarites (in about 1200), describing the area around the church of the Holy Apostles, in the heart of Constantinople, mentions plants, trees, fruits, vines, crops, and fields of wheat. According to the accounts of two travelers, Ibn Battuta (1332) and Clavijo (1403), a number of scattered urban nuclei (quarters) had sprung up within the walls. Demetrios Kydones reported that they were separated by profuse vegetation. A. Bryer relates this phenomenon with the ancient *dioikismos* (the opposite of *synoikismos*) and has proposed that this was a widespread characteristic of the late Byzantine city.

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42 Kantakouzenos II, 93 (CB II, 57): Θεσσαλονίκη, μετά την μεγάλη παρά Ρωμαίων πρόση πόλην. E. Kaltogianni, S. Kotzabassi, I. Paraskevopoulos, *Εθνικοί Οικισμοί στη βυζαντινή λογοτεχνία*. Ρητορική και ηγετική υψηλά (Thessalonike, 2002), passim. For the equivalent English term *city*, M. Angold, “The Shaping of the Medieval Byzantine ‘City’,” *ByzF* 10 (1985): 15, states that “the cities were mostly those that survived intact through the Dark Ages, while the towns are always places that grew from the end of the tenth century.”

43 I rely mainly on finds from rescue excavations conducted prior to the construction of new buildings. However, the following considerations must be borne in mind: (1) The sites of the rescue excavations are entirely random and are not determined by any investigative plan. (2) Monitoring of building excavations in the city begins only after the old building has been demolished, and digging is halted only if antiquities are found. It is usually Roman and early Christian ruins that are found. The overlying Byzantine layers were very likely lost when the Turkish and modern Greek buildings were built or demolished. (3) Of necessity, the rescue excavations are carried out mainly to locate finds, not to stratify them. As a result, the finds from rescue excavations are not properly stratified and remain uncataloged as an assemblage. (4) Until 1978, rescue excavations in Thessalonike were carried out by the 16th Ephoria of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities. Since 1978, the 9th Ephoria of Byzantine Antiquities has taken part in the rescue excavations in the Upper City and around Thessalonike’s Byzantine monuments. Because there is no central directorate for the rescue excavations, it has not been possible to produce an accurate archaeological map of the city. Rescue excavation reports have been published in the *Chronika* of the Αρχαιολογικών Δελτίων and presented at the “Το Αρχαιολογικόν Δέλτιον στη Μακεδονία και Θράκη” annual conferences.

44 G. Downey, “Nikolaos Mesarites: Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople,” *TAPS* n.s. 47.6 (1957): 863, 897–98.


47 A. Bryer, “The Structure of the Late Byzantine Town: Dioikismos and the Mesoi,” in *Continuity and Change* (as in note 31), 263–79.
Parts of the unified fifth-century fortification of Thessalonike were rebuilt at a later date, towers were built or repaired, gates constructed, and its defensive capacity continuously strengthened.48 The later interventions are frequently covered by more recent Turkish ones.49 However, some isolated and limited fourteenth-century interventions, mostly in the acropolis area, are mentioned in inscriptions, together with the names of the persons who carried them out.50

(a) A marble inscription of 1315/16 was found when the sea-wall was being demolished in the early twentieth century. It refers to the repair of part of the wall or the extension of the sea-wall toward the sea by Hyaleus, logothete of the army in Thessalonike, a year before the death of Empress Irene-Yolanda, wife of Andronikos II, who had been living in Thessalonike since 1303.51

(b) A brick inscription in the north wall, which divides the city from the acropolis, on the face of the first tower to the east of the newer gate, which stands opposite the entrance to the Vlatadon monastery and is known today as Portara, preserved the letters ∆A(ndronik(o") P(alaiologo") (Fig. 5). This is Andronikos III (1328–41), who showed an interest in protecting Thessalonike.52

(c) An inscription of 1356 refers to the construction or widening of a gate by the kastrophylax John Chamaetos, who was probably related to Nicholas Kavasilas (Chamaetos), by order of Anna (of Savoy) Palaiologina, widow of Andronikos III Palaiologos and mother of John V, who lived in Thessalonike from 1351 until her death in 1365.53

(d) The four-line brick inscription in the northwest corner of the enclosure is of a triumphal nature. It refers to the building of a tower by the doux of Thessalonike, George Apokaukos, σθένης Μακεδονίας δεσποτοῦ (by the power of the despot Manuel), who is identified as Manuel II Palaiologos, who governed Thessalonike with the title of despot (1369–73).54 In point of fact, the work carried out was not the actual building of a tower, but merely involved adding a rather shoddy superstructure to an existing well-built triangular bastion, which had a commanding view of the broad plain to the northwest of the city and the main road leading to it.

More extensive repairs to the walls were carried out less frequently, as after the violent earthquake of 1395/96 mentioned by a Russian chronicle (βρεχού  χρονικού), for instance.55 All the same, despite constant repairs, the Venetian governor of the city reported in 1429

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48 The most complete description of Thessalonike's walls remains that by Tafrali, *Topographie*, 30–114, for the late Byzantine period 44–51.
49 Repairs of the walls are attested into the 18th century: Tafrali, *Topographie*, 51.
50 Spieser, “Inscriptions,” 170, no. 23; 175–76, no. 28; 176–77, no. 29. Βυζαντινα και Μεταμερισμα της Θεσσαλονικης, guide published by the Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessalonike (Thessalonike, 1997), 32–33 with drawings of the inscriptions (Th. Papazotos).
51 Spieser, “Inscriptions,” 170, no. 23.
53 Spieser, “Inscriptions,” 175–76, no. 28.
54 Spieser, “Inscriptions,” 176–77, no. 29. For the doux George Apokaukos see PLP 1182.
that the walls were collapsing before people’s very eyes.\(^{56}\) Anagnostes said that the eastern wall was crumbling away on the eve of the siege.\(^{57}\) It was mainly the walls of the acropolis that underwent a great many repairs, because they had to withstand the brunt of the assaults in the late Byzantine period.

\textit{The Division of the City}

Following the lie of the land, Thessalonike was divided into the lower, flat, coastal city and the upper city on the slopes of the foothills. The dividing line between the two areas was Aghion Demetriou Street (\textit{decumanus}), which ran past the south side of the basilica of St. Demetrios. The basilica had been built on the ruins of a Roman bath on the first embankment in the middle of Thessalonike.

\textit{The Street Plan} The ancient streets uncovered by rescue excavations frequently coincide with those of modern Thessalonike. This is understandable in a city that has been continuously inhabited from antiquity to the present and whose main roads at least were in constant use. This discovery confirms the view put forward first by H. von Schoenebeck and later by M. Vickers that both before and after the fire of 1917, Thessalonike’s street plan more or less followed the Hippodamean grid plan of the ancient city.\(^{58}\) This phenomenon of continuity can be seen in other cities of the Hellenistic eastern Mediterranean (Nicaea, Sinoe, Trebizond).\(^{59}\) Therefore, the street plan of late Byzantine Thessalonike also followed the same Hippodamean system, though with the modifications necessitated when from the fourth century A.D. onward the width of the Roman streets was occasionally reduced and \textit{insulae} were merged. Also many streets changed course or were abolished. Excavations have traced the grid plan as far as the lower third of the upper city. In the rest of the upper city and the acropolis, the location of the gates in the wall and the entrances to the Byzantine monasteries and churches suggest that the streets did not follow the Hippodamean system.

The laying of a central water main along Aghion Demetriou Street has provided an opportunity for excavations. Beneath the modern street the late Roman and early Christian cobbled or paved road surface of the \textit{decumanus} has been revealed (Fig. 6). During the late Byzantine period the road was narrowed as large buildings were built on its pavement. In late Byzantine times it had a packed earth surface. It had mostly been destroyed by nineteenth- and twentieth-century structures. \textit{Cardines} revealing the street plan of Thessalonike have been found where Aghion Demetriou Street crosses the following streets (going east):


\(^{57}\) Anagnostes, 30.23–24: εὐκλαύστερον δὲ τὸ κατ' ἀναπολίας ἐθείασαντο μέρος. 30.30–32: ἄγνοι γὰρ εὐχερέστερον ἐκεῖθεν λησθήσεται τὴν πόλιν, τὸν τε σωτηρίτα τοῦ πείχους ἱδον.


\(^{59}\) Bryer, “Dioikismos,” 266.
Philotas, Aghiom Nikolaou, Sophocles, Aghias Sophias, Euripidou, Sokratous, Philippou Dragoume, and Lazou Exarche. These cardines of course belong to the original town plan but were still functioning at the same sites though at a higher level in late Byzantine times.

The harbor operated in the southwest corner of the city from the time of Constantine the Great, even when the land routes leading to the hinterland were blocked. Even though after the Zealots (1342–50) the harbor did not flourish as before, Demetrios Kydones referred to it as a large fortified harbor. It had probably become partly silted up, like the sea front of the city. The inner wall of the harbor was not as wide as the main fortification wall proper, but it did have towers. Kantakouzenos mentions that near the sea gate of this wall, which led to the harbor, was a quarter inhabited by sailors, who played a decisive role in the Zealot insurrection. Anagnostes mentions the Samaria Tower, which stood at one end of the tysembolon (συμβόλον), a kind of mole built to protect the harbor from the open sea and from silting, which also served as a dockyard, where the Venetian ships were anchored in 1430.

The northern triangular section of Thessalonike, with a citadel (Heptapyrgion) at the northern corner, is separated from the city by a wall and is known today as the Acropolis. The acropolis is a Byzantine structure and did not exist in the early Christian period. Velenis suggests that the acropolis was built after Thessalonike was attacked by the Saracens


64 Kantakouzenos, ΠΙΙ, 94 (CB ΙΙ, 575.7–14): τήν προς θάλασσαν πύλην . . . περί ην οἰκούμενον πόλις τινα. Ου πλείστοι τε οι νεκροι και προ φόνους ευχερείς, άλλας τε και υψηλόμενοι πάντες, όσερ το κράτησαν εις το δήμον, και σχεδόν εν της παραπάσης πάσης ευφροσύνης εκείνης παντοπλήθους έχοντοι προσάνετε εκείνης; Μετά της πρώτης πόλεως αι άλλης πόλεως ου εκείνης (Ἀνδρέας Παλαμίωλος) της έφησε.


66 Velenis, Τέχνη. 133. I myself am of the opinion that there was a fortification with alternating square and triangular bastions on this site, and more specifically at its highest part, in the early Christian period. This fortified enclosure was contemporary with the rest of Thessalonike's early Christian walls and was part of the same plan, though it was not connected to them, being independent and containing a large three-aisled early Christian basilica. I wonder if this fort could have been the shrine of St. Matrona, which, owing to its size and fortified strength, the attacking Slavs in 586 or 597 mistook for the nearby city of Thessalonike (P. Lemerle, Les plus anciens recueils des Miracles de Saint Démétrius, vol. 1 [Paris, 1979], 134.31–135.3). If the Roman spolia built into the Heptapyrgion walls were not brought from elsewhere, there is good reason to suppose that on the site of the Heptapyrgion and before the early Christian fort of St. Matrona stood the arcus oppidum of Thessalonike, mentioned by Cicero (Spieser, Thessalonique, 62). For further documentation see Ch. Bakirtzis, “Τό έργον της Θης Εφορείας Βυζαντίνων Αρχαιοτήτων τό 2001.” Τό άρχαιολογικό έργο στη Μακεδωνία και Θράκη 2002 (in press).
in 904. The Greek term *akropolis*, mentioned in the Byzantine sources since 1078, refers sometimes to this confined precinct and sometimes to the citadel. In the first half of the fourteenth century Nikephoros Choumnos and John Kantakouzenos more clearly described this quarter as residential and, like the harbor, distinct from the city proper.

The acropolis communicated with the city via two gates secured on the acropolis side with keys that together with those of the outer gate were held by the keeper of the keys, a resident of the acropolis. Within the acropolis were the quartermaster’s depot, cavalry stables, and the dungeon, either as separate buildings or as part of the citadel. In other words, the acropolis was a barracks and a residential area for its civilian personnel, who sometimes took a different stand on political issues raised in the lower city.

In the acropolis are found ruins of houses, cisterns, and churches. According to Symeon, archbishop of Thessalonike (d. 1429), during the first occupation of the city (1387–1403) the Turks demolished all the churches within the acropolis, including the church of the Savior, which was the most important. It is likely that this clearance was carried out in order to install an army of occupation in the acropolis of Thessalonike without sharing it with the Byzantines as in the case of the acropolis of Sardis. For this reason and also to secure and control their barracks, I believe that they demolished such monasteries as stood near the acropolis walls either on the side facing the city or beyond the acropolis. For their place of worship they founded within the acropolis the Atik Camii, also known as Eski Camii.

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67 Kantakouzenos III, 94 (CB II, 576): ο δήμος δὲ τῆς ἁγίας (πύλει γὰρ τούτων ἐν τῇ εἰκή μικρᾷ) καὶ οἰκήτους ἰδίους ἔχει. See the same description by Nikephoros Choumnos (1310), *Θεσσαλονικείου συμβουλευτικός*, ed. J. F. Boissonade, *Anecdota Graeca*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1830), 139: Ἀκρόπολις μὲν ἀνέθεσα οὗτοι μεγάλη καὶ περίφανής ἀνέχει, ὡς καὶ δοκεῖν τὸς αἵτής £ς αὐτὴν ὀρόσων αὐτὴν εἶναι καὶ μόνην τὴν ἄλλην πάλιν κάτεις δ’ ἐκείθεν ή πάλις μεγάλη, μεγαλωσία. The acropolis was similarly characterized in the Turkish period. M. Hadji-Ioannou, *Ἀστυνομία Θεσσαλονίκης* (Thessalonike, 1880; repr. Thessalonike, 1976), 48, gives the name of the area within the acropolis as Κίυκ μέλαν (Little Thessalonike).
68 Kantakouzenos III, 94 (CB II, 578 and 579.1–3 and 580.15–16): τὸν τό κλείθρα τῆς ἁγίας ἔχοντα. . . . Συντήρησις δὲ οὐ τὸ κλείθρα ἔχον. . . . πολὺ δὲ τοῦ πυλῶν ἐκτεταρτοῦ τῆς ἁγίας ἄλλης διένεος, Ἀποκακουκό μὲν τῷ τῶν ἄλλων ἐξώθών ἐπὶ τῇ εξαγώσαν τῶν τείχων. . . . οἱ πρὸς τὴν ἁγία δὲ δείσαντες τὴν ἐκδόσαν τοῦ δήμου, μὴ τὰ αὐτὸν ἐνδόν διαφανσάτις γενόμενοι, ἀπέκλεισαν τὰ πύλας.
69 Kantakouzenos III, 94 (CB II, 579.12–13 and 580.3–5): ἐπείτη (after the people entered the acropolis) πρὸς ἁρπαγήν ἐτράπτων ὅπλων τε καὶ ὑπον., . . . Ἀπόκουκός δὲ καὶ τῶν πολιτῶν ἅλιγον ἐλάσσους ἐκατόν κατέκλεισαν ἐν τῷ δεισμισθῷ πρὸς τῇ ἀκροπόλη καὶ φρουράν ἐπέστρωσαν αὐτοῖς.
70 Kantakouzenos III, 94 (CB II, 578.11.12, 579.24–580.1, and 581.5–7): πρὸς τὴν ἁγίαν ἀναχαιρεῖν, ἐνὸν ἀκριβίνδους σώζεσθαι. . . . διήρεσαν (the people) καὶ τῶν ἑγχειρίων (inhabitants of the acropolis) . . . καὶ πάντα τοὺς ὀμοίους ἀπέκλεισαν πλῆν ἀλίγον λίκνον, οἱ ὑπὸ τῶν τὴν ἁγιάν οἰκούντων κατεκρύπτων.
74 V. Demetriadis, *Πολιορκία τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης κατά τὴν ἐποχή τῆς Τουρκοκρατίας* (Thessalonike, 1983), 212, has suggested that the Atik Camii or Eski Camii within the acropolis was built on the site of the church of the Savior. The second Eski Camii in Thessalonike was the basilica of Acheiropoietos in the center of the lower city, which was converted into a mosque after the second, final fall of Thessalonike in 1430 (Anagnostes,
The Citadel at the northern corner of the acropolis is known as Iç Kale (= inner fort) or as Heptapyrghion (< Yedi Kule, Seven Towers) (Fig. 7). S. Čurčić includes it among the late medieval fortified palaces of the Balkans. According to the Ottoman inscription over the main gate (Fig. 8), the citadel was repaired either wholly or in part by Çavuş Bey Sungur, Thessalonike’s first Turkish governor, who also resided in it, immediately after the city fell to Murad II in 1430. The findings of dendrochronological investigations agree with the inscription. However, the citadel was not built ex novo in 1430/31. The inner foundation trench of part of the south wall of Heptapyrghion, which dendrochronology has dated to 1431 and which appears to have undifferentiated masonry from top to bottom, has yielded only sherds of the late Roman period. I have already mentioned my opinion that an early Christian fort, separate from the city, stood on the site of the Heptapyrghion. This area was later joined to the city as the acropolis and parts of the early Christian fort were incorporated into the acropolis fortification wall. Marble architectural members of Roman and early Christian buildings and stones were reused as building materials in the citadel at the highest point of the acropolis. This citadel is described by Henri de Valenciennes (1208/9) as a castiel, and S. Kissas has identified it with the kastellion, which appeared in a document of 1235.

The Life of the Despot Stefan Lazarević, written by Konstantin Kostenichki (also known as Konstantin Filozof), contains the information that between 1389 and 1402 Bayazid I built a koula somewhere in the uppermost part of the city and that Manuel II dismantled Bayazid’s koula during his stay in Thessalonike, between October 1414 and March 1415, “lest the Ishmaelites forward a demand [for its return], since it was their own construction.” We have no reason to reject the opinion of both Kissas and Čurčić that Bayazid’s koula was located in Heptapyrghion.

We know neither the exact size nor the precise location of Bayazid’s koula. Nor do we...
know whether it was included within some older fortified complex, nor yet whether it was built *ex novo* or incorporated into older buildings. Neither do we know the extent of its destruction at the hands of Manuel II, whether it was razed, or whether its demolition was symbolic. It was common practice in the late middle ages to incorporate foundations and walls of older buildings into newer ones. I think it likely that Çavuş Bey Sungur restored Bayazid’s *koula*, which Manuel II had demolished, and resided in it himself by right of succession. I am certain that a systematic investigation of the construction history of Hetaopyrgion will allow us to locate building phases and periods from both before and after the fourteenth to fifteenth century, one incorporating the other.

The acropolis in a late Byzantine city offered security to its governors. The acropolis of Thessalonike played this role; for example, the grand *primikeros* John Apokaukos had a private (?) house (*oikia*) in Thessalonike, from which he governed the city. When relations with the zealots worsened in the summer of 1345, however, he stayed in the acropolis. I do not know if the residence in which Maria (Margaret of Hungary), wife of Boniface of Montferrat, was living when she was besieged by the Thessalonians in 1205 must be sought in the acropolis or somewhere in the lower city. Certainly when the emperors and members of the imperial family stayed in Thessalonike for a short or long time, they lived in some palace or important imperial residence (*basileia*) in the city. An encomium of Metropolitan Gabriel (1397–1416/17) provides information about the palace of Thessalonike; first, it locates Nea Mone, which was built by Makarios Choumnos shortly after 1360, on the ruins of a palace. The identification of the church of Prophitis Elias with Nea Mone has been questioned by later opinion. Rescue excavations south of Prophitis Elias have so far brought to light finds that cannot be attributed to a Byzantine palace. Second, they attest that this palace was in ruins in 1360. Was it perhaps destroyed by the zealots, along with the houses of John Kantakouzenos’ supporters? Bearing in mind the conditions of heightened external and internal insecurity and social upheaval prevailing in Thessalonike in the mid-fourteenth century, I consider it likely that John V, his mother

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83 It is worth noting that in both the first (1387–1403) and second (1430) occupations of Thessalonike, the Turks set up the city government in the acropolis. In 1696 one of the acropolis’ two neighborhoods was named *Đewa* (Demetriadies, *Topografia*, 212).

84 Kantakouzenos III, 94 (CB II, 575): *παντῶν ἡφαιστείων ἐν τῇ Ἀποκαύκοσ φόικη*.

85 Kantakouzenos III, 93 (CB II, 571): *οἰκία τοῦ πατέρας δεδομένη, οἰκία τῶν συνοίκων ἀπόστολον, ὃς τὴν ἀκρόπολιν ἔλλειψε*.


89 See note 193.


91 Kantakouzenos (III, 58; CB II, 234) refers to destruction of houses only: ὠς ἑαυτῶς δὲ ὁ Ζηλῳστὶ τὴν πόλιν ποιησάμενος, ἐτράπανεν εἰς τὰς οἰκίας τῶν θυγατέρων καὶ αὐτῶς τὰ καθήκοντα καὶ τὰς οὐσίας διήρησαν. Rautman ("Palaces," 302), however, believes the zealots certainly destroyed the palace.

92 Kantakouzenos states that Anna Palaiologina διεδέχεται γὰρ ἐφοσκούσαν ὡς μᾶλλον τοῦ πατέρας (John V) τὴν ἡμᾶς ὑπόσεις εὐεξιάπτητον, ὡς τὸν εὐσεβέστατον τὴν μοχθηρίαν καὶ τὴν ἑσθήμορα πρὸς νεοπατρίσιος (IV, 16; CB III, 112–13). . . . òν (danger in Thessalonike) οὖν ἡ ἀδύναμη τῶν ἐνοικιοῦντος μᾶλλον ἐπίθεσαν, ἡ μοχθηρία (IV, 16; CB III, 113). He himself said of John V, while he was residing in Thessalonike, that ἡ ὑπὸ Ῥήματος (Serbs) ἐκπόλευρησάμενον ἢ προδοθησάμενον ὑπὸ οὕτως ἐπάκουτο δήμου καὶ τολμῶντος πάντα εὐχερέως (IV, 27; CB III,
Anna Palaiologina (Anna of Savoy), widow of Andronikos III, who governed Thessalonike as *augusta* and empress (1352–65), and Manuel Palaiologos as despot of Thessalonike (1369–73), made use of the acropolis rather than the city itself, turning its citadel into a place of imperial residence and government, that is, a palace. Due to its fortified character, this palace was referred to as divinely guarded, θεοφρούρητον (1360), and divinely protected, θεοφύλακτον (1375).95

Anagnostes mentions the *Trigonion*, which was not the northeast round tower dated to the second half of the fifteenth century, but the northeast area of the walls of Thessalonike.94 Owing to its triangular shape, Anagnostes uses this name to refer to Thessalonike’s Roman inner enclosure or “citadel,” for which, as G. Velenis has pointed out, the northeast corner of the city was chosen because of the naturally steep and rocky configuration of the terrain there.95 Rescue excavations in two plots of land between Akropoleos and Xenokratous Streets in this area of Thessalonike have found parts of this internal wall. This stretch of the wall was solidly built of stone and lime mortar and had Byzantine additions on the upper part which however have been razed by the foundations of the existing houses. It is likely that this was the fortifying enclosure called by Kameniates acropolis and “internal wall” (ἐσωτερικὸς τείχος).96 It survived into the late Byzantine period and was demolished during the Turkish period, after which all trace of it vanished. We do not know what its purpose was in the late Byzantine period. A reading of Anagnostes suggests that there were no residences in this area. A small church with eleventh-century frescoes has been excavated beside the northernmost tower on the east side, and a chapel has been excavated inside the same tower, with marble tiles with early Christian monograms.97 Apart from the gates which would have led from the Trigonion to the city proper, two gates led to the citadel and one, that of Anna Palaiologina, to the area outside the walls.98

III

The archaeological data on which I have based my answers to the question asked above, “Was the size of late Byzantine Thessalonike commensurate with its area?” fall into
two groups: the surviving buildings and the excavated finds. The surviving buildings themselves may be divided into two groups: older buildings that continued to be used in the late Byzantine period and buildings constructed in the late Byzantine period.

To the first group belong churches which, owing to their size, their distinguished place in the city’s religious life, and the great historical, spiritual, and artistic value of their decoration, were cherished and preserved by the Thessalonians so they could continue to function in all periods of history. The Rotunda (Fig. 4:1) functioned as a Christian church from the end of the fourth century onward. Its form in the late Byzantine period was no different from today. The ring corridor which had doubled the building’s capacity in the early Christian period no longer survived, because walls of buildings have been found in its place and parts of it were probably replaced by an open portico. In the late Byzantine period, the interior of the church still preserved the splendid mosaics in the dome and soffits of the bays and the ninth-century fresco of the Ascension in the sanctuary apse. The figures in the second zone of mosaics and Christ in the central majestic medallion were destroyed when the building was converted to a mosque in 1590. As John Iliadis has argued, the interior was brilliantly illuminated by the light which streamed in through the large windows and the smaller lunettes. The sixth-century marble ambo probably stood inside the church and was moved outside at the time of the Rotunda’s conversion to a mosque. Graves containing glazed Palaiologan bowls were found under the floor of the church during excavations in the early twentieth century and after the earthquake of 1978. The area around the Rotunda was used as a cemetery and continued as such into

99 I quote R. Cormack, “The Classical Tradition in the Byzantine Provincial City: The Evidence of Thessalonike and Aphrodisias,” in Byzantium and the Classical Tradition, University of Birmingham, Thirteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, 1979, ed. M. Mullett and R. Scott (Birmingham, 1981), 118: “Buildings survived for centuries not because there was any aesthetic wish to preserve ancient monuments, but because they were originally built to last.”


101 Walls and coins of 1282–95 have been found in the southeast part of the ring corridor, between the south entrance and the sanctuary apse (section E9); see “Ρωτόνδα. Μελέτη ἀποκατάστασης ζημίων” by N. Moutsopoulos (typescript, Thessalonike, 1980), 271–81. N. Moutsopoulos, “Η παλαιοχριστιανική φάση της Ρωτόνδας του Άγιου Γεωργίου Θεσσαλονίκης,” X IntCongChrArch (1980): 366 and 369, claims that the ring corridor was destroyed around the 9th century, and K. Theocharidou, “Η Ρωτόντα της Θεσσαλονίκης. Νέα στοιχεία και άποστολήσεις με άφορα τής αναστηλωτικές έργασιες,” Δελτ.Χριστ. Αρχ. Ετ. 16 (1991–92): 67 and 75 suggested that the ring was finally destroyed after 1430.


104 The ambo has survived in two pieces; one in the courtyard of the Rotunda and the other in the courtyard of St. Panteleimon, before being removed to the Archaeological Museum of Constantinople in 1900 (G. de Jerphanion, “L’ambon de Salonique, l’Arc de Galère et l’ambon de Thèbes,” MemPontAcc ser. 3, 3 [1932]: 107).

the Ottoman period. The few late Byzantine coins which have been collected so far from excavations in the Rotunda all date before 1341.

Despite numerous subsequent interventions, the basilica of St. Demetrios (Fig. 4:5) retained in the late Byzantine period its original form of a five-aisled basilica with a transept. The inscription of Michael VIII Palaiologos (1261–82) or Michael IX, who resided in the city for two years (1319–20), concerning the replacement of the entire timber roof, shows that emperors and officials were always concerned about the maintenance of the church of Thessalonike's patron saint and that it received offerings and donations, such as the marble capital from a colonnette of an iconostasis with the monogram of the Palaiologoi (Fig. 9).

To the early Christian mosaics surviving in the late Byzantine period and to the wall paintings were added new wall paintings, such as the scenes illustrating the martyrdom and miracles of St. Demetrios at the north inner aisle arcade, or replacing slabs of marble revetment, such as the Paschal calendar for the years 1474–93 on the north wall of the tribelon, the depiction of the man fleeing from the unicorn on the south wall of the tribelon, the representation of St. Joasaph with the features of St. Demetrios, Christ Antiphonites and the twin horsemen, Demetrios and George, on the right side of the entrance to the chapel of St. Euthymios. The chapel was frescoed in 1303 at the expense of a major military leader, the Protoprator Michel Glabas Tarchaneiotes, who was sent to Thessalonike in 1298 by Andronikos II to regulate relations with the Serbian kral Stefan Uroš II Milutin.

The adjacent structures on the north side of the basilica and the tombs in the chapel, which at the end of the ninth century was dedicated to St. John the Baptist, were in use in the Palaiologan period too, as is attested by the glazed bowls which have been found inside them. The entrance to the two chambers at the northwestern corner of the basilica, where the saint's tomb was located, was refrescoed, and from this phase survive St. Demetrios on horseback and St. Photeine.

The crypt played an important part in the functioning of the basilica in the late Byzantine period as a place where crowds of pilgrims drew myron-cum-holy water in bowls bearing the monogram of St. Demetrios. The crypt lost its prestige after 1387, when the Turks


109 G. and M. Sotiriou, Ἡ βασιλική τοῦ Ἁγίου Δημητρίου Θεσσαλονίκης (Athens, 1952), 204–12.


began to interfere in the city's internal affairs. The myron-cum-holy water ceased to flow in the crypt after the city fell in 1430 and Murad II prayed in the basilica. Until the basilica was converted into a mosque in 1492, the myron-cum-holy water and myron-oil flowed from the tomb. It flowed on certain days at the west end of the basilica via the narthex, which underwent numerous repairs at that time, attested by inscriptions. At this time the vaulted peristyle was built over the marble early Christian phiale, which filled with myron-cum-holy water. The mixture was collected by Christians and Muslims alike in glass ampullae, not lead koutrouvia, which were no longer being produced.

There is considerable written evidence concerning the Acheiropoietos basilica (Fig. 4:4) in the late Byzantine period. At some time after the middle of the fourteenth century, Constantine Harmenopoulos extolled the great age of this house of prayer and the spirituality of its piers and colonnades. If the built piers with pointed arches in the gallery, which we see in old photographs before they were replaced with new marble columns and composite Ionic capitals in 1910–14, date to after 1430, they were probably part of the extensive repairs costing 30,000 silver coins that were carried out in Acheiropoietos in 1487 by the governor of Thessalonike, Ceseri Kasim Pasha.

The basilica's early Christian marble floor, with its huge 4 m-long veined marble slabs, is still in use today (Fig. 10). The floor of the nave still bears traces of the underpinnings of the great early Christian ambo with two flights of steps which was in use during the late Byzantine period until 1430, parts of which have recently been found built into a wall of the Ottoman period on the north side of the narthex.

The earthfill around the basilica in the late Byzantine period must have reached quite high. The south entrance would have been used as the main entrance, through the monumental propylon, which led to the city’s main thoroughfare. Opposite the entrance, the front of the south colonnade was frescoed at the beginning of the thirteenth century with

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115 Tafrali, Topographie, pl. XXV:1 and Thessalonique. Les autochromes du Musée Albert Kahn, 1913 et 1918 (Athens, 1999), 129, fig. 16.


118 The narthex of the Acheiropoietos basilica lost its ecclesiastical purpose after 1430 and was cut off from the naos when the tribelon was sealed up and a small entrance was made to the south of the tribelon. See a photograph of 1913(?): S. Tambaki, Η Θεσσαλονίκη στὶς περιγραφὲς τῶν περιήγησιών, 12ος–19ος αἰ. μ.Χ. Λατρευτικὰ μνημεία (Thessalonike, 1998), pl. XV: 2.
a representation of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia, which takes its stylistic features from the mosaics in the Rotunda.\(^\text{119}\)

The consolidation work carried out in the basilica after the 1978 earthquake confirms W. E. Kleinbauer's conclusion, based on the observations of W. S. George, who visited the basilica in 1908 before the extensive repairs of 1910–14, that Acheiropoietos is far removed from its early Christian state, owing to numerous Byzantine, Turkish, and modern interventions.\(^\text{120}\)

The church of Hagia Sophia (Fig. 4:6) was Thessalonike’s metropolitan church from its erection until it was converted to a mosque in 1523/24.\(^\text{121}\) It held an important place in the life of the city; for instance, the Venetian Senate recognized the church of Hagia Sophia as a place of asylum (1425).\(^\text{122}\)

The church preserves the boxlike form which it had at the beginning of the twentieth century, after drastic repairs were carried out following the fire of 1890.\(^\text{123}\) The church’s original form had already changed in the middle Byzantine period. For instance, the vaults over the narthex, which were originally visible, were covered with a roof and filled with ordinary broken pottery in the eleventh century.\(^\text{124}\) The sanctuary and dome mosaics existed in the late Byzantine period.

Early in the fifteenth century (1416/17–29), Archbishop Symeon gives copious information about the layout of the various parts of the church and its adjacent structures.\(^\text{125}\) Thus we know that the naos was floored with marble slabs, the veins of which, as in Acheiropoietos, formed potamoi or “rivers,” which is why the floor was described as potamion, meaning that the veins flowed like rivers toward the ambo.\(^\text{126}\) There was a large marble ambo with two flights of steps in the middle of the church.\(^\text{127}\) Parts of a sixth-century ambo were found during excavations and are today in the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessalonike.\(^\text{128}\) I believe that these fragments come from the ambo described by Symeon and in use in the early fifteenth century and possibly until the church was con-

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\(^{122}\) Mertzios, Μυστικά, 61.


\(^{124}\) S. Kissas, “Ἀγία σε μεταφορά καὶ ἀποθήκευση κρασιού απὸ τὸ δυτικὸ ὑπέρω τῆς Ἁγίας Σοφίας Θεσσαλονίκης,” Ἀμπελοσινική ιστορία στὸ χώρο τῆς Μακεδονίας καὶ Θράκης (Nausoua, 2001), 241.


\(^{126}\) Phountoulis, “Μαρτυρία,” 142: Δ1: ‘Ο δὲ ἄρχεσις ἢστατα ἐν τῷ ποταμῷ τῷ ὄντι ἀνός τῶν ὑφαίσθων πιλῶν καὶ τῷ ἄμβωνος, μέλος κατὰ ἀναπτικόν. J. Darrouzès, “Sainte Sophie,” 46 note 4 and 68–69, explains the term as “un bandeau du pavage reliant les deux piliers ouest de la coupole.” E. Antoniades, Εκάφαρσις τῆς Ἁγίας Σοφίας, vol. 2 (Athens, 1908), 51, associates the potamion in Hagia Sophia at Constantinople with four green bands or strips set in the floor, which come into contact with the ambo.

\(^{127}\) On the ambo’s location, see Darrouzès, “Sainte Sophie,” 65–66, figs. 1 and 2.

\(^{128}\) P. Jakobs, Die frühchristlichen Ambone Griechenlands (Bonn, 1987), 338–39.
verted into a mosque. There was in Haghia Sophia a second smaller, monolithic ambo, known according to Symeon as the anabathra, which dates to the early Christian period and is now in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum. Symeon mentions the tombs of two archbishops of Thessalonike: Basil the Confessor (d. 870?) and Gregory Palamas (d. 1359). The funerary inscription of another archbishop of Thessalonike, Gregory Koutales (d. 1336), also comes from Hagia Sophia. It is likely that Hagia Sophia was Thessalonike’s late Byzantine metropolitan church.

North of the metropolitan church of Hagia Sophia lay the bishop’s palace. This was described during the years of the Latin Empire (1204–24) by John Apokaukos, metropolitan of Naupaktos, as huge, rambling, windowless, built of brick and timber, and with long corridors. Rescue excavations located there a complex of buildings, smaller churches, and gardens. According to Symeon, from the two-story bishop’s palace with a large triclinium and an open gallery (peripatos), the archbishop observed the ceremony of the Elevation of the Holy Cross on the evening of 13 September. After sunset, cantors and readers carrying lights, candles, and wooden sounding boards went up into the galleries and, via wide staircases inside the two western corner piers supporting the dome, came out onto the roof of the church, on a balcony around the four-sided base of the dome. A narrow stairway in the thickness of the base and in its northeast corner took a few of them to the outside of the east side of the dome, and they elevated the cross on top of the dome, in the presence of the entire city.

If we look at the sites of these four large old churches, which were functioning in the late Byzantine period, we notice that they were all in the center of lower Thessalonike. Anastostes calls them καθολικοί (katholikoi), which means the principal churches of a diocese.
Apart from these, other early Christian and middle Byzantine churches continued to function in late Byzantine Thessalonike. In the upper city, an early Christian church was the *katholikon* of a monastery known since the ninth century as the monastery of Latomou (Fig. 4:8), dedicated to Christ the Savior. The splendid early Christian mosaic in the bema and the twelfth-century wall paintings were visible, and the fresco decoration was supplemented ca. 1300. The monastery was very active in the late Byzantine period and in 1405 was visited by the Russian monk Ignatij of Smolensk.

In the lower city, at the southwest corner of the Megalophoros (main forum or agora), stands the church of the Virgin which is known today as the church of the Panaghia ton Chalkeon (1028) (Fig. 4:9). In the first half of the fourteenth century the west wall of the *naos* was painted with illustrations of the Akathistos Hymn. This fresco work was probably connected with major repairs to the superstructure of the narthex, the arches and domes of which differ in shape from the main church and main dome and deviate from the longitudinal axis of the main church.

Apart from these, other churches functioned in late Byzantine Thessalonike and were demolished or entirely rebuilt in later periods. One example is the *katholikon* of the monastery of St. Theodora (Fig. 4:10), which was already functioning in 837 as the monastery of St. Stephen. The cult of St. Theodora flourished in the late Byzantine period, and John Stavrakios and Nicholas Kavasilas wrote encomia of her. We also know of lead pilgrim ampullae made in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries which bear rep-
resentations of St. Demetrios and St. Theodora and contained fragrant oil (myron) from their tombs.147

Recent excavations in the courtyard of the monastery of St. Theodora in the center of Thessalonike have uncovered part of the old katholikon, which belongs to several building phases (Fig. 11).148 The semicircular apse with the originally large triple-light window is the oldest part.149 In the late Byzantine period, several interventions were carried out and the church was extended southward. The church in this period was a three-aisled basilica with a portico along the south side. I connect the epigram of Nicholas Kavasias dedicated to the translation of the saint’s relics with the interventions in the church carried out in the fourteenth century.150 After the city fell in 1430, the saint’s tomb was rebuilt,151 and the church as the monastery’s katholikon throughout the Ottoman period underwent repairs and modifications.152 Under the floor of the church were found numerous cist- and large barrel-vaulted tombs, which had been used for successive burials.153 The earliest finds from the tombs, glazed sgraffito bowls, date to the Palaiologan era. When the church was destroyed by the fire of 1917, it was no different in form from other nineteenth-century basilicas in the lower city, under some of which lie Byzantine churches (St. Antonios, St. Athanasios, St. Charalambos, St. George, Hypapante [church of the Presentation], St. Menas [Fig. 4:18], Nea Panaghia, Panaghia Gorgoepekoös, Panaghia Lagoudiane).154

**IV**

The rescue excavations conducted by the Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities in recent decades in Thessalonike have uncovered only a few late Byzantine finds in comparison with the wealth of late Roman and early Christian finds.155 The late Byzantine finds consist of the foundations of usually roughly made buildings of indeterminate use and nature, mixed up with buildings from earlier or later periods. The nature and use of these build-

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149 Compare the east window of St. Euthymios’ chapel in the basilica of St. Demetrios, which has been dated to the end of the 9th century and the first decades of the 10th century (N. Montsopoulos, "Τὸ ωφρικόλυσι τοῦ Ῥήγου, Υεκτομένης τῆς Μεγάλης Αγίας Ἀθηναίους," Χριστιανική Θεσσαλονίκη 3, 1989 (Thessalonike, 1991), 154–55.

150 Λόγω ἐν τριτῆτι νέκιας ἀναθάνθη, / ὡς μισρόν ἔμεθε ἐπιστυνοισι ἄνηκε (Paschalidis, O βιος, 33 note 44 and p. 36).

151 Anagnostes, 50, 21–27.


155 See the remarks in note 43.
ings can only be ascertained in the case of chapels, around which are graveyards. It has also been shown that the Hippodamean town plan of ancient Thessalonike was maintained into late Byzantine times, with the difference that the streets had been narrowed or rerouted, or in some cases ceased to exist because buildings had been erected on them. It has also been determined that lower Thessalonike was more densely inhabited than upper Thessalonike. I give two typical examples, which concern extensive rescue excavations.

An extensive salvage excavation was carried out in the city center, on the north side of the *leophoros* or *decumanus maximus*, west of the Acheiropoietos basilica, in the probable location of the historical monastery of St. John Prodromos. E. Marke reports that this site has yielded the second vertical street east of the agora, which coincides with what is now Menelaou Street. In the insula to the west of the street are found crowded buildings of the tenth to fourteenth centuries at the same level as late Roman and early Christian structures, parts of which they had incorporated. For instance, walls of an early Christian house were incorporated into a chapel, around which were found simple pit burials of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

A similar picture of crowded development and the rather less frequent reuse of earlier walls is also seen higher up in Dioikitiriou Square (Fig. 12), that is, south of the street that divided the lower from the upper city. I. Kanonidis reports that most of an insula to the east of a vertical street 6 m wide leading to the harbor area was occupied by a large early Christian house of the Graeco-Roman type, which replaced a house of the same type and size of the second century B.C. We do not know whether the early Christian house was still in use in the late Byzantine period. Isolated walls of middle Byzantine buildings and a glass workshop were found further north in the same insula, but at a higher level. The late Byzantine period is represented in the northeast corner of the site by an aisleless chapel, which was built on the site of an existing barrel-vaulted tomb. Numerous pit and cist-burials were found around it. This cemetery was connected with houses of the late Byzantine period, which are characterized by crowded development, small rooms, and the presence of abundant everyday pottery. The houses yielded three bronze coins minted in Thessalonike, of Andronikos II, Andronikos III, and Michael IX.

Small private houses of late Byzantine Thessalonike are described in Athonite deeds of transfer. According to Denise Papachryssanthou, they were small, one-room apartments, owned by different people, and sharing a single courtyard. Little culs-de-sac led from the city streets to these courtyards. Groups of such houses, with little churches between

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them, replaced the large dwellings of the ancient period and constituted the neighborhoods, creating a labyrinthine street plan in the insulae.\textsuperscript{161}

These little houses bear no resemblance to either the “very great houses” of Thessalonike, which Nikephoros Choumnos extols in 1310 saying as a metaphor that the city had two stories, nor the large, beautiful houses that Murad II awarded to his officers after 1430.\textsuperscript{162} This category of accommodation, which would have been located in lower Thessalonike, for instance around Hagia Sophia, was represented by old, two-story houses with an inner courtyard situated in the lower eastern part of the city, which escaped the fire of 1917 and survived until the Second World War.\textsuperscript{163}

We may therefore conclude that in late Byzantine lower Thessalonike there were the four large old churches (\textit{katholikoi}), monasteries, churches, and chapels among houses that were distributed in densely built-up neighborhoods. These socioenvironmental units, centered on churches and small markets, created numerous discrete quarters in the heart of the city and changed the overall perception of the city’s scale and size. The large dimensions of the ancient city were replaced by the medieval microcosm.\textsuperscript{164}

V

Apart from all this, in late Byzantine lower Thessalonike there were also older structures, survivals from the Roman period. I am referring to the Arch of Galerius and the portico known in the nineteenth century as the \textit{Eidola} (Ειδολα) or the \textit{Incantadas}, with its relief piers which Emmanuel Miller took to the Louvre in 1863.\textsuperscript{165} To these we must add the triumphal arch decorated with elaborate reliefs of the second half of the first century B.C. which was built just inside the western “Golden Gate.”\textsuperscript{166} We do not know why these structures escaped destruction. Their relief representations had probably acquired some sort of Christian interpretation or magical properties, and people therefore took care to maintain them. The Byzantine sources, however, do not mention them, although Nikephoros Choumnos praises the painters of this time, who followed the models of Lysippus and Apelles.\textsuperscript{167} One might imagine an air of indifference to them; but the fact that they were


preserved suggests the opposite. However, one cannot discount the possibility that they became a focus of a humanistic interest in antiquities, as evidenced in Cyriacus of Ancona’s description of Thessalonike in 1431.168

In the center of the city was the Roman agora (Fig. 13), whose colonnades and buildings had already collapsed and disappeared in the earthfill by the seventh century and whose marble architectural members had been used elsewhere.169 The cryptoporticus had been converted into a water cistern in the sixth century, but it too was now filled with earth.170 The odeion-theater was not converted into a fort as at Miletos, or into a neighborhood as in Aphrodisias, Messene, and in Arles,171 but was also filled with earth.172 In the late Byzantine period it was used as a burial site, as was also the case elsewhere in the agora. No Byzantine buildings have been found in the agora. Only pottery kilns of the late Byzantine period have been found in the southeast corner (unpublished). In late Byzantine times the area was just an open square which had nothing in common with the appearance of the monumental agora of the Roman period. It may, however, be identifiable with the “public agora” near the basilica of Acheiropoietos, the site of executions, pillorings, and stonings and beatings to death.173 The agora was a favorite gathering place for the Thessalonians for discussion, gossip and no doubt also because of the taverns there.174 It was probably in this open “square” free of buildings that the Venetians raised the flag of St. Mark on 14 September 1423.175

The palace complex built by Galerius (Fig. 14) in the beginning of the fourth century at the east end of the lower city was also in a ruinous condition in the late Byzantine period.176 The area was dominated by the ruins of the Octagon (Fig. 4:2), whose dome had collapsed in the early Christian period.177 The antechamber of this great building was used

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173 The last reference to the theater’s use for performances dates to the end of the 6th century (Lemerle, Miracles, I, 14: περί τός τραγωδοῦ). For the comic satire performed at this time in the theater at Thessalonike, see Αγίου Δημητρίου θεάμα. Οι συλλογές ἄρχετοπόκοι τοῦ Ἰωάννου καὶ Ἀνανίου, Ο Ἰσώσ, Υἱοθεάμη καὶ Ἡ Θεσσαλονίκη τοῦ Ἀγίου Δημητρίου, introduction-commentary by Ch. Bakirtzis, translation by A. Sidere (Athens, 1997), 390–93.
176 Mertziou, Μυμεία, 43.
in the late Byzantine period as an open cistern for irrigating orchards and gardens. Palaiologan glazed pottery found in large quantities during the excavation of Galerius’ palace probably indicates the presence of workshops or a rubbish dump.

The hippodrome, between the palace and the east wall, was also in ruinous condition and was being used as a burial site. On the ruins of the spina of the hippodrome and on the north street (decumanus) leading to the coastal area of east Thessalonike, on the site of the post-Byzantine church of Nea Panaghia (Fig. 4:11) some distance from the late Byzantine residential areas, a monastery of the Virgin had been built by Hilarion Mastounis in 1185 or earlier. It was itself in ruins at the beginning of the fourteenth century and in 1324 was renovated by the monk Lavrentios Kladon.

A second large octagonal early Christian building (Fig. 4:3), excavated at the west fringe of the lower city, close to the western wall, was also in ruins in the late Byzantine period. A monastery (?) had been built on the site. The width of the street (decumanus) which ran past the north side of this large building was reduced by 3.10 m in the late Byzantine period because a building of this period encroached on it.

In late Byzantine lower Thessalonike were the unoccupied sites with the ruins of the Roman agora and the palace of Galerius. Part of the first site was used as a public agora and another part for workshops and burials. The second site was also used for workshops and for burials or as a rubbish dump. Roman and late Roman monuments, such as the “Golden Gate,” the Incantadas (Eidola), and the Arch of Galerius escaped destruction due to the Christian or magical meaning ascribed to their relief decoration. Monumental buildings of the late Roman/early Christian periods, like the two Octagons mentioned above, on the fringes of the lower city, were not maintained by the Thessalonians and collapsed. Their sites were used in the late Byzantine period for burials and cultivation and were also taken over by monasteries.

The overall picture of late Byzantine Thessalonike is completed by the surviving late Byzantine buildings, which were built within a period of about a hundred years (1280–1380) and are almost all churches, and more specifically katholika of monasteries connected with the Metropolitanate of Thessalonike.

Only two of these churches were built in the densely inhabited eastern lower city. The

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first, St. Panteleimon (Fig. 4:12), north of the main street (leophoros), is believed to have been the katholikon of a monastery of the Panagia Peribleptos founded by the archbishop of Thessalonike James/Isaac (1289/93–99). According to the location of the church on pre-1917 surveyors’ maps of Thessalonike, the boundaries of the churchyard and the cells show that the extent of this Byzantine monastery was 1,000 m². The second, the sepulchral chapel of Sotiras (Fig. 4:19), dedicated to the Theotokos, is dated after 1340.

The other late Byzantine churches are dispersed throughout the upper city and around the western fringes of the lower city. One is St. Nicholas Orphanos (Fig. 4:15) toward the east city wall with frescoes of the second decade of the fourteenth century. From this monastery the west gate has survived. The outer wall encloses today an area of 4,000 m². Further up is the church of the Taxiarchs (Figs. 4:16 and 15), also the katholikon of a late Byzantine monastery of unknown name and size, which preserves a burial crypt with arcosolia. St. Aikaterine (Fig. 4:14) was built at the end of the eleventh century or according to dendrochronological investigations in 1315, near the west city wall as the katholikon of a monastery, probably dedicated to Christ.

The church of the Holy Apostles (Fig. 4:13) is believed to have been the katholikon of a monastery of the Theotokos near the western, Litea gate, south of the decumanus (Aghiou Demetriou Street) and is on the lower western fringes of the city 10 m from the west city wall (Fig. 16). The church was firmly connected with Niphon when he was on the patriarchal throne (1310–14), since he appears three times, as patriarch and as founder, in inscriptions on the church façade. However, this dating has been called into question by dendrochronological results, according to which the church was founded fifteen years before...
later, in 1329. Of the monastery precinct there survives the gate on the south side, to which led a horizontal street (decumanus) and a vertical street (cardo) which ran parallel to the west city wall. North of the katholikon and within the monastery precinct survives a large cistern, which collected the spring water from the Asvestochori and Retziki area to the north of Thessalonike. The monastery covered an area of more than 10,000 m², which was much larger than that of the Peribleptos (St. Panteleimon) monastery, located in the densely populated late Byzantine central lower city.

After the Zealots (1342–50), the ownership of large properties was strengthened, and sizable monastery complexes were built in Thessaloniki by local ecclesiastical elites. Examples are Nea Mone, founded in 1360 by Makarios Choumnos, and at one time identified with Prophitis Elias (Figs. 4:20 and 17), also in the upper city, and Vlatadon monastery (Fig. 4:17), which was built on a natural plateau in front of the north city wall by two monastic brothers, Dorotheos and Markos Blatades, on the site of an older church, parts of which were incorporated within it. It covers today an area of 13,000 m². This monastery played an important role in the life of the city, since Thessalonike’s water supply from Mount Chortiates was distributed from three cisterns in its courtyard and the area controlled by the monastery.

These, like other monasteries, were not exclusively religious foundations. Although they derived their revenues mainly from estates, their activities might have included scriptoria and workshops for minor art and other crafts, which produced many of the works which still survive today and are connected with late Byzantine Thessalonike. O. Volk


193 Theodorides, Χαμαξιώτακα, 114.


195 Theodorides, Χαμαξιώτακα, 114.

suggested that the galleries of the churches of Panaghia Chalkeon and Prophitis Elias functioned as *scriptoria*. The urban monasteries were not isolated complexes; outside their precincts there would have been houses for the monasteries’ servants with their families, and other adjacent structures, forming entire districts which took their names from the monasteries themselves.

A bathhouse (Figs. 4:18 and 18) survives in the upper city, which operated in the late Byzantine period and even into the modern period. It is a four-chambered bathhouse, with a double vestibule and two domed main chambers. The east side was taken up by a large cistern. We do not know if it was used by the citizenry or by monks in the late Byzantine period.

We do not know how many monks lived in these monasteries. P. Charanis estimated the average number at between ten and twenty. Although we are not familiar with the distinctive features of the monasteries in the cities and the countryside, a comparison can be made with the excavated Byzantine monastery at Synaxis near Maroneia in western Thrace, which functioned until the thirteenth century. The refectory had places for twenty-four monks at most. It seems that the number of monks was not related to the population of the cities, which in the case of Thessalonike is estimated at twenty-five to forty thousand.

The sites of the surviving late Byzantine churches confirm that large monasteries were built on the outskirts of the city, especially in the upper city. Why was this? N. Karydas, who has made a collective study of finds from recent rescue excavations in the upper part of the Hippodamean grid and the lower part of the upper city (the area north of Kassandrou Street), has concluded that large early Christian houses were converted into monasteries from the beginning of the middle Byzantine period and occupied entire insulae. The rescue excavations have indeed shown that there was no dense habitation in the upper city and on the outskirts of the city in the middle and late Byzantine periods. These finds

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and conclusions, together with the uninterrupted, dense habitation noted in parts of the lower city, suggest that Thessalonike’s residential space diminished in size in the middle Byzantine period and that this process accelerated in the late Byzantine period.

Despite the shrinking of the residential space, the area of the city was not reduced by moving the fortification wall as in the case of two other major centers, Constantinople and Nicaea, for the empty spaces were immediately used for other purposes demanding prompt solution. Activities which had been conducted in the open countryside outside the walls in the early Christian period, such as monastic life and workshop manufacture, were now brought inside the city. Excavation in the lower part of the upper city has shown that early Christian mansions were abandoned and gradually converted into monasteries. The surviving late Byzantine churches/katholika of monasteries are dispersed in the upper city. People also seized the opportunity to bring their livestock into the city and to grow food on the empty sites, so that a small part of the productive space of the countryside was also relocated within the walls. Additionally, the monasteries that sprang up in this area had kitchen gardens. The natural rock provided opportunities for excavating stone for building purposes; so there would have been quarry areas, as the name of Latomou (“quarry”) monastery attests. Some areas were free of houses. John Apokaukos met secretly with the Zealot leader Michael Palaiologos in the “unbuilt places” of the city and murdered him there.

Consequently, the insecurity produced by wars and conflicts in the open countryside during the late Byzantine period prompted the monasteries there to move inside the fortified entities. In the early fourteenth century, Andronikos II urged the monks of Mount Athos to abandon their unsafe monastic centers and take refuge in the cities. To the examples given by Sv. Popovic one should add the Chortaites monastery on Mount Chortiates, which is mentioned by Gregoras in 1322 and by Anagnostes in 1430 as a monastery very close to the eastern wall of Thessalonike and not in the foothills of Mount Chorti-
ates. It is no accident that not only individual monasteries but also large monastic centers, such as Mount Papikion in western Thrace, and smaller ones too, such as Synaxis near Maroneia, declined and were abandoned in the thirteenth century. The monks from these monastic centers very probably moved to the nearby cities of Maroneia and Peritheorion, whose fortifications were being repaired. I have no reason to doubt that, for the same reasons, new monasteries were being established within Thessalonike, on the fringes of the city, and in the upper city, because these areas offered available sites, owing to the reduction of the residential space, isolation, and cultivable plots, as the numerous water cisterns in the area indicate.

Cemeteries

During the seventh and eighth centuries the extra muros cemeteries ceased to be used regularly and burials appeared inside the city. The insecurity of the extra muros areas, the development of the neighborhoods, together with the new microcosmic perception of the city, were all factors contributing to this development. For this reason, among the commonest finds during rescue excavations inside Thessalonike are Byzantine graves, which are found almost everywhere: in monastery courtyards, around churches, wherever space was available. The tombs are of various kinds: pit-graves mostly, and also cist-graves and clusters of large barrel-vaulted tombs, which repeat the form of early Christian barrel-vaulted tombs. The tombs of the late Byzantine period are usually rather makeshift structures, and nails found inside them suggest that the dead were buried in wooden coffins or laid out on wooden litters. The head, resting on a “pillow” of stone or brick, was surrounded by stones to support it, and the face was covered with a roof tile. The occupants were frequently accompanied by an open vessel or personal items, such as enkolpia or jewelry. The bones from earlier burials were collected and laid at the feet of the deceased, and metal buttons from their grave clothes are found scattered about.

215 E. Marke, “Τα χριστιανικά κοιμητήρια στην Ελλάδα,” Διεθνές Χριστιανικό Συμπόσιο Λέον Β’ Ιουλίου Β’ 23 (2002): 172–75. This was a widespread phenomenon and is observed in Constantinople too. Leo VI’s 53rd novel (ed. P. Noailles and A. Dain, Les nouvelles de Léon VI, le Sage [Paris, 1944], 203–5), which permitted cemeteries inside cities, simply endorsed a custom which had become widespread (C. Mango, Le développement urbain de Constantinople, IVe–VIIe siècles [Paris, 1985], 57–58).
VII

The picture we have of Thessalonike in the late Byzantine period is as follows. The city still had its Roman and early Christian fortification wall and covered the same area and had the same street plan as in the Roman period. Meanwhile, a large inhabited acropolis had been added to the north part of the city. However, in the middle and late Byzantine period, the core of urban life and the city’s main functions were confined to the lower city, shifted slightly toward its eastern part. There were densely inhabited residential neighborhoods with churches and markets in labyrinthine insulae, in which the houses had shared courtyards and private chapels. Between them were old churches (katholikoi) and monasteries. Inside the lower city were open ruined spaces, which were used by workshops and as burial grounds. This urban core was not bounded by an enclosure, but had free access to the upper city. Although the upper city was still within the city limits, its decreasing population had gradually been abandoning it ever since the middle Byzantine period, and the available space was being taken over by monasteries, gardens, small plantations, workshops, or used as burial grounds. All these functions also took place in the open country outside the city walls.

So, to answer the question which I asked earlier on, Thessalonike’s size in the late Byzantine period was not commensurate with its area, which was bounded by the fortification walls, but smaller and confined mostly to the lower city. However, the distinction is not apparent in the late Byzantine texts concerning Thessalonike. The description of late Byzantine Thessalonike which I have attempted applies to Thessalonike the theory of dioikismos developed by A. Bryer for Constantinople partially.219 The acropolis and the harbor area appear in the fourteenth century as separate quarters in Thessalonike since they had clearly different functions, military and administrative in the first and commercial and maritime in the second. On the contrary, Manuel II refers to early fifteenth-century Thessalonike as a whole in his recommendation to Demetrios Chrysolares to visit the city.220 The same conception is hinted at in Anagnostes’ description of the fall of Thessalonike; the city was the entire entity, protected by its walls and by its myroblytes patron, St. Demetrios.

Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities, Thessalonike

220 G. T. Dennis, The Letters of Manuel II Palaeologus (Washington, D.C., 1977), 112–14, letter 43: “everything is within the walls; there you may walk about if you desire without hurting your feet, whether you wish to relax, play, take a breath of fresh air, or enjoy the beauty of the flowers; and so there is no need for you to ride about on a noble horse.”