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1 *Annunciation*. Mystras,  
*katholikon* of the  
Pantanassa monastery,  
south upper gallery

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# VISUAL ANTIQUARIANISM IN MYSTRAS

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From the year of its foundation in 1249 as a military outpost of the Villehardouin, through its transformation into the capital of the Byzantine Despotate of the Morea<sup>1</sup> in 1348, to the decades preceding its Ottoman conquest in 1460, the city of Mystras, in the Peloponnese, has always been denoted by its connection to antiquity, partially because of its proximity to ancient Sparta. This link was so strong that it outlived the end of Byzantine rule in the city: as late as the late seventeenth century the Venetian cosmographer Coronelli described the city as “Sparta hoggidi Misitra”, Sparta nowadays Mystras.<sup>2</sup>

Discussing how the classical tradition was received in the Byzantine era and its use in cultural production is a complex task. Several authors have remarked on the antiquarian and classicising nature of the cultural production of the late Byzantine Empire and of Mystras, and have shown how Byzantine intellectuals had a persistent literary and textual interest in the classical tradition.<sup>3</sup> While texts were an important factor in knowledge transmission throughout the history of the Byzantine Empire, knowledge was also passed on through objects and visual exempla from the past.<sup>4</sup> For example, as observed by Doula Mouriki, ‘quotations’ from antiquity were also used in visual

<sup>1</sup> For a recent interdisciplinary survey of the Byzantine Morea, see *Viewing the Morea: Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese*, conference proceedings Washington, D.C., 2009, ed. by Sharon Gerstel, Washington, D.C., 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Vincenzo Coronelli, *Memorie istoriografiche de’ regni della Morea, Negroponte, e littorali sin’a Salonichi [...]*, Venice 1686, p. 86.

<sup>3</sup> Research on the reception of the classical tradition in Byzantium has

been recently synthesised by Anthony Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition*, Cambridge 2007, p. 389.

<sup>4</sup> For a comparative analysis of antiquarianism, see Arnaldo Momigliano, “Ancient History and the Antiquarian”, in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XIII (1950), pp. 285–315.

contexts, similarly to how they were employed in Byzantine literature.<sup>5</sup>

This essay analyses antiquarianism and its specific meaning in Mystras at the time of the Byzantine despotate, when the court aspired to turn the city into a capital of the late Empire. It has already been observed that the style of the wall paintings in two churches in Mystras, Theotokos Peribleptos and Hagia Sophia, tended towards classicism and idealisation to satisfy the classical taste common in aristocratic circles in the city during the sixties and seventies of the fourteenth century.<sup>6</sup> This paper shows that this tendency can also be connected to a broader, Adriatic, cultural environment informed by exchanges between intellectuals active in both the Latin West and the Greek East. In particular, it argues that a form of visual antiquarianism can be detected in a specific case: the depiction of the architectural backdrop of the *Annunciation* scene in the church of the Theotokos Pantanassa in Mystras.<sup>7</sup> In order to demonstrate these hypotheses, we will consider new, unexplored details found in the historical accounts and surveys of a Westerner who visited Mystras and the Morea in the first half of the fifteenth century: Cyriacus of Ancona. His diaries and drawings, produced during his visits to the Byzantine court in Mystras, provide important evidence of the antiquarian interest in that region.

<sup>5</sup> Doula Mouriki, “Revival Themes with Elements of Daily Life in Two Palaeologan Frescoes Depicting the Baptism”, in: *Okeanos: Essays Presented to Ihor Ševčenko on His Sixtieth Birthday by His Colleagues and Students*, ed. by Cyril Mango/Omeljan Pritsak, Cambridge, Mass., 1984, pp. 458–488: 458. On the complex issue of classical citations in Byzantine art see *ibidem*, p. 458, note 2. For a general introduction to the Greco-Roman heritage of the Byzantine culture, see Alexander P. Kazhdan/Ihor Ševčenko, s. v. Antiquity, in: *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. by Alexander P. Kazhdan et al., Oxford 1991, I, pp. 120–122. See also *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition: University of Birmingham Thirteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, conference proceedings 1979, ed. by Roger Scott/Margaret Mullett, Birmingham 1981; Hélène Saradi, *Aspects of the Classical Tradition in Byzantium*, Toronto 1995; *Antiquity Renewed: Late Classical and Early Modern Themes*, ed. by Zweder von Martels/Victor M. Schmidt, Leuven 2003.

## Intellectual Exchanges and Antiquarianism in Mystras

Antiquarianism is intended here not just as an interest in the classical tradition, as expressed by the vast collection of literary knowledge that formed an essential part of Byzantine education, culture and writing tradition. Rather, it is a more complex, intercultural, intellectual, and artistic process. For the purposes of this study, it is seen as both the result of multiple historical approaches to antiquity – for instance that typical of intellectuals of the Byzantine court in Mystras or of Western intellectuals travelling or residing in the region – as well as the procedure patrons and artists used while visually referencing, or incorporating, specific objects from the past.<sup>8</sup> Our definition is partially informed by the question of whether, in the Byzantine world after the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204, the antique past can be considered a common denominator between the Latin West and the Greek East, a common ground that remained central until 1439, when Church officials and intellectuals attempting to unify Catholic and Orthodox Churches met at the Council of Ferrara-Florence.<sup>9</sup>

What is important here is that the notion of antiquity in Mystras was informed by a connection with Sparta, which was reinforced by the presence of Georgios Gemistos (ca. 1360–1452), also known as Plethon, and his school.<sup>10</sup> A particularly meaningful

<sup>6</sup> Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, “Patronage and Artistic Production in Byzantium during the Palaiologan Period”, in: *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557). Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, conference proceedings New York 2004, ed. by Sarah T. Brooks, New York 2006, pp. 76–97: 81.

<sup>7</sup> For a recent introduction to and a survey of the secondary literature on the church of the Theotokos Pantanassa, see Maria Aspra-Bardabakē/Maria-Melita Emmanuēl, *Ē Monē tēs Pantanassas ston Mystra*, Athens 2005; Stephanos Sinos, *Ē architektonikē tu katholiku tēs Monēs tēs Pantanassas tu Mystra*, Athens 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Ernst Kitzinger, “A Virgin’s Face: Antiquarianism in Twelfth-Century Art”, in: *The Art Bulletin*, LXII (1980), pp. 6–19: 7.

<sup>9</sup> Amy Papalexandrou, “The Architectural Layering of History in the Medieval Morea: Monuments, Memory, and Fragments of the Past”, in: *Viewing the Morea* (note 1), pp. 22–54: 25f.

<sup>10</sup> On Plethon, see in general Christopher M. Woodhouse, *George Gemistos*

piece of evidence, of the many, is codex Mut. Gr. I44 preserved in Modena's Biblioteca Estense.<sup>11</sup> Copied in Mystras on the initiative of one of Plethon's students, Demetrios Raul Kabakes,<sup>12</sup> the codex contains texts by Aristotle, Isocrates, Lucian, and Plethon himself, among others, all reflecting the scholarship associated with Plethon and testifying his interest in antiquity, fostered by close proximity to ancient Sparta.<sup>13</sup>

Plethon was an assiduous promoter of the revival of ancient philosophy and, in particular, of Plato.<sup>14</sup> Aiming to save the Byzantine Empire from the Ottoman threat, which he sought to oppose partly through an alliance with the Latins, he turned "to antiquity in search of common ground between East and West".<sup>15</sup> This openness to the West was mirrored by the admiration Plethon enjoyed at Italian courts, especially in Florence and Rimini, where he was ultimately buried in an *arcosolium* on the southwest façade of the Tempio Malatestiano.<sup>16</sup>

Plethon put forward the idea that a possible vehicle for the salvation of the Hellenes was not just antiquity but the "modern reception of antiquity".<sup>17</sup> He was fully aware of the social, economic, and mil-

itary challenges faced by the Byzantine Empire, and, following his teacher Demetrios Kydones, he recommended, in his writings addressed to the despots of the Morea, reforms that were inspired by the antique past.<sup>18</sup> He promoted a political and cultural agenda that referenced classical Greece and recalled the role of Lykurgos as lawgiver of ancient Sparta,<sup>19</sup> whose laws Plethon considered the basis for the Greek civilisation of the Byzantines.<sup>20</sup> Plethon considered Sparta, as it was represented in the political philosophy of the Hellenistic and late antique eras, as a model for the policy of the Despotate of the Morea.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, for him ancient Sparta represented an active presence, a source of inspiration, and a historical example for the administration, economic growth, defence, and, not least, the cultural flourishing of the capital.

The connection between ancient Sparta and the city of Mystras can also be deduced from accounts by Cyriacus of Ancona, one of the earliest informed Western travellers in the region. Cyriacus visited Mystras in both 1437 and 1447/48, meeting members of the Palaiologan imperial family as well as Plethon and the scholars he gathered around him.<sup>22</sup> During his

*Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, Oxford 1986; *Georgios Gemistos Plethon (1355–1452): Reformpolitiker, Philosoph, Verehrer der alten Götter*, ed. by Wilhelm Blum/Walter Seitter, Zurich 2006; George Gemistus Plethon, *Trattato delle virtù*, ed. by Moreno Neri, Milan 2010; Niketas Siniossoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon*, Cambridge 2011; Clare Teresa M. Shawcross, "A New Lykourgos for a New Sparta: George Gemistos Plethon and the Despotate of the Morea", in: *Viewing the Morea* (note 1), pp. 419–452; Vojtěch Hladký, *The Philosophy of Gemistos Plethon: Platonism in Late Byzantium, between Hellenism and Orthodoxy*, Farnham 2014; Jozef Matula/Paul R. Blum, *Georgios Gemistos Plethon: The Byzantine and the Latin Renaissance*, Olomouc 2014.

<sup>11</sup> For a description of the codex and its contents see Vittorio Puntoni, "Indice dei codici greci della Biblioteca Estense di Modena", in: *Studi Italiani di Filologia Classica*, IV (1896), pp. 379–536: 475–478; Anna Pontani, "I Graeca di Ciriaco d'Ancona (con due disegni autografi inediti e una notizia su Cristoforo da Rieti)", in: *Thesaurismata*, XXIV (1994), pp. 37–148: 124f.; Giuseppe De Gregorio, "Attività scrittoria a Mistrà nell'ultima età paleologa: il caso del Cod. Mut. Gr. I44", in: *Scrittura e Civiltà*, XVIII (1994), pp. 243–280.

<sup>12</sup> His name is recorded on fol. I30r of the codex. On Kabakes see Alex G. Keller, "Two Byzantine Scholars and Their Reception in Italy", in: *Journal*

*of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XX (1957), pp. 363–370: 366–370; Salvatore Lilla, "Gli excerpta di Strabone fatti da Demetrio Raul Cabakes nel codice Vat. gr. 2238", in: *Scriptorium*, XXXIII (1979), pp. 68–75.

<sup>13</sup> On this see Shawcross (note 10).

<sup>14</sup> See Siniossoglou (note 10), p. 349.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 350.

<sup>16</sup> On Plethon's tomb and the Tempio Malatestiano, see Angelo Turchini, *Il Tempio Malatestiano, Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta e Leon Battista Alberti*, Cesena 2000, pp. 379–384.

<sup>17</sup> Siniossoglou (note 10), p. 350.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 327–392.

<sup>19</sup> Christos P. Baloglou, "The Institutions of Ancient Sparta in the Works of Pletho", in: *Antike und Abendland*, LI (2005), pp. 137–149.

<sup>20</sup> See Georgios Gemistos Plethon, "Advice to Theodoros II regarding the Peloponnese", in: *Palaiologia kai peloponnesiaka*, ed. by Spyridōn P. Lampros, Athens 1912–1930, IV, pp. 113–135: 116f., 126f. See also Anthony Kaldellis, *A New Herodotus: Laonikos Chalkokondyles on the Ottoman Empire, the Fall of Byzantium, and the Emergence of the West*, Washington, D.C., 2014, pp. 207–236.

<sup>21</sup> Shawcross (note 10), p. 435.

<sup>22</sup> For the first visit to Mystras, see Cyriacus of Ancona, *Epigrammata reperta per Illyricum a Cyriaco Anconitano apud Liburniam: Epigramma Laderae prope maritima*



2 Mystras, metropolitan church of Hagios Demetrios, central nave

first visit to Mystras he was received by Despot Theodore II Palaiologos and had the opportunity to see the city of Sparta for the first time.<sup>23</sup> During his second visit, he met Despots Thomas and Constantine Palaiologos, future Emperor Constantine XI, Plethon, and his student Laonikos Chalkokondyles, who would later compose his *Histories* following the classic model of Herodotus. On 2 August 1447, Cyriacus recorded a second visit to the antiquities of Sparta in the company of Chalkokondyles.<sup>24</sup>

In Mystras, the connection to Sparta's ancient past is evidenced by a complex series of references in the metropolitan church dedicated to Hagios Demetrios.<sup>25</sup> As in other churches in Mystras, visual antiquarianism is expressed in many ways: in the painted rendition of body armours of military saints, in the costumes and garments of minor figures adorning scenes of the lives of Christ and Hagios Demetrios, in the use of stone decorations – such as *opus sectile*<sup>26</sup> – and in the use of *spolia*. The church was erected in the middle of

*Civitatis mulieris, in quo Tubicen ille aequorei Numinis, Triton, suis cum insignibus mira fabrefactoris arte conspicitur*, ed. by Carlo Moroni, Rome 1654, pp. XXXVIII; Edward W. Bodnar, *Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens*, Brussels 1960, pp. 45–49 and pl. VI. For the second visit see Cyriacus of Ancona, *Later Travels*, ed. and transl. by Edward W. Bodnar/Clive Foss, Cambridge, Mass., 2003, pp. 298–305 and 329–335. For a recent study about the visits of Cyriacus to Greece, see Michael Chatzidakis, *Ciriaco d'Ancona und die Wiederentdeckung Griechenlands im 15. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden 2017.

<sup>23</sup> Cyriacus of Ancona 1654 (note 22), p. XXXVII.

<sup>24</sup> *Idem* 2003 (note 22), p. 301.

<sup>25</sup> On Hagios Demetrios, see in general Suzy Dufrenne, *Les programmes*

*iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, Paris 1970, pp. 5–8; Stephanos Sinos, s. v. Mistras, in: *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*, ed. by Klaus Wessel/Marcell Restle, VI, Stuttgart 1999, pp. 380–518, cols. 416–422; Geōrgia Marinou, *Hagios Dēmētrios, hē Mētropōlē tou Mystra*, Athens 2002; *eadem*, “Hagios Dēmētrios, hē Mētropōlē tou Mystra”, in: *Ta mnēmēia tou Mystra: to ergo tēs Epitropēs Anastēlōsēs Mnēmēiōn Mystra*, ed. by Stephanos Sinos, Athens 2009, pp. 115–135.

<sup>26</sup> On *opus sectile* and its antiquarian connotations, see Henry Maguire, “Heaven on Earth: Neoplatonism in the Churches of Greece”, in: *Viewing Greece: Cultural and Political Agency in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean*, ed. by Sharon Gerstel, Turnhout 2016, pp. 53–65: 63.



3a, b Mystras, metropolitan church of Hagios Demetrios, central nave, northeast elevation, waterleaf capitals

the thirteenth century and renovated at the end of the century to the configuration of the so-called *Mistratypus*, which has a basilica plan on the lower level and a cross-in-square plan on the upper level.<sup>27</sup> The church has three naves divided by two sets of three columns. The capitals of four of the six columns in the central nave appear similar, but closer inspection reveals slight differences in their design,<sup>28</sup> suggesting that they are *spolia* (Figs. 2, 3a, b). The use of *spolia* is not uncommon in Byzantine architecture,<sup>29</sup> but the way these

particular capitals are employed inside Hagios Demetrios is distinctive. The four capitals are very similar to a Corinthian type known as waterleaf, *Blattkelch*, or Tower of the Winds capital, widespread all around the Mediterranean and thus also in the region of Mystras.<sup>30</sup> In fact, several such examples can be found in the archaeological site of the theatre of Sparta (Figs. 10, 11)<sup>31</sup> suggesting that some of the capitals employed as *spolia* in the church of Hagios Demetrios might have come from the *scaenae frons* of the theatre.

<sup>27</sup> The *Mistratypus*, which is employed in two other churches in the city – the Pantanassa and the Aphantiko – creates a synthesis, in plan and elevation, of an early Christian design based on the late antique basilica plan and a middle period one. See Horst Hallensleben, “Untersuchungen zur Genesis und Typologie des ‘Mistratypus’”, in: *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, XVIII (1969), pp. 105–118.

<sup>28</sup> See Gabriel Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris 1910, pls. 46.1–4.

<sup>29</sup> For an introduction on *spolia* in Byzantine architecture, see Robert G. Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium*, Princeton, N.J., 2008 (1999), pp. 140–145. See also Helen G. Saradi, “The Use of Ancient Spolia in

Byzantine Monuments: The Archaeological and Literary Evidence”, in: *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, III (1997), pp. 395–423: 418f. For the use of *spolia* in the Peloponnese, see Papalexandrou (note 9), p. 26. See also in general Michael Greenhalgh, *Marble Past, Monumental Present: Building with Antiquities in the Mediaeval Mediterranean*, Leiden/Boston 2009.

<sup>30</sup> On the Corinthian waterleaf capitals, see Peter Liljenstolpe, “The Roman Blattkelch Capital: Typology, Origin and Aspects of Employment”, in: *Opuscula Romana*, XXII/XXIII (1998), pp. 91–126.

<sup>31</sup> See Geoffrey B. Waywell/John J. Wilkes/S. E. C. Walker, “The Ancient Theatre at Sparta”, in: *Sparta in Laconia*, conference proceedings London 1995, ed. by William G. Cavanagh/S. E. C. Walker, Athens 1998, pp. 97–111.

The architect in charge of the renovation is unknown, but an inscription dating to 1291/92, now on the wall of the exonarthex, records the patron of the building campaign: the Bishop of Lakedaimon Nikephoros Moschopoulos.<sup>32</sup> The first part of the text reads: “Nikephoros, the humble *proedros* of Crete, along with the brother Aaron makes new this divine home while Andronikos Palaiologos with his son Michael powerfully holds the scepter.”<sup>33</sup> Rather than having the inscription painted on a fresco, as was customary for the period, Moschopoulos chose to engrave it on a stone slab, a classicising statement in itself. The inscription claims that the renewal of the church occurred during the reigns of Emperors Andronikos II (r. 1282–1328) and his son Michael IX Palaiologos (co-emperor since 1281, r. 1294/5–1320). The word Moschopoulos used to refer to Andronikos is σκηπτροκρατοῦντος, the present participle active masculine genitive singular of the verb σκηπτροκράτέω – to powerfully hold or control the sceptre.<sup>34</sup> The use of this verb to indicate the regency of power is classicising: it was employed by a twelfth-century historian, Constantine Manasses (ca. 1130–1187), in his *Chronike synopsis*, in verse 2638, in the expression Οὐαλεντινιανῶ σκηπτροκρατοῦντι, referred to Emperor Valentinian I (r. 364–375) “holding the scepter”.<sup>35</sup> This is one of the many allusions to Homer for which Manasses’ work is known:<sup>36</sup> the word σκῆπτρον re-

curred with the highest frequency, among classical authors, in Homer’s first three books of the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*.<sup>37</sup> In fact, the noun *skeptron* was not the word commonly used for imperial staff at that time: in the fourteenth-century treaty by Pseudo-Kodinos both the emperor’s staff and those assigned to different court officials were referred to as *dikanikia*.<sup>38</sup>

Moschopoulos, as Manasses, was interested in Homer. The *proedros* was known for his considerable library, requiring four horses to transport it. It included a copy of the *Odyssey* compiled by Manuel Gabalas, known as Bishop Matthew of Ephesos (ca. 1271/72–ante 1359/60) and also a scholar of Homer.<sup>39</sup> This is particularly relevant as it demonstrates Moschopoulos’ interest in antiquarian erudition and in the study of this classical text, which might have inspired his use of the term *skeptrokratountos*. His copy of the *Odyssey* – now in a codex of the Biblioteca Malatestiana, Cesena, D.XXVII.2<sup>40</sup> – also reveals connections between different generations of scholars: Moschopoulos’ hand has been identified in a couple of hexameters in fol. 204v, as well as in other comments and emendations on several parts of the text.<sup>41</sup> The manuscript also contains handwritten *marginalia* by Cyriacus of Ancona himself, indicating that Cyriacus was in possession of Moschopoulos’ *Odyssey* before it entered the library founded in Cesena by Malatesta Novello Malatesti.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>32</sup> On the inscription see Gabriel Millet, “Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra”, in: *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*, XXIII (1899), pp. 97–156: 121f; Manousos Manousakas, “Hē chronologia tēs ktitorikes epigraphēs tou Hagiou Dēmētriou tou Mystra”, in: *Deltion tēs Christianikēs Archaio-logikēs Hetaireias*, XIX (1960), pp. 70–79.

<sup>33</sup> The first part of the inscription reads: “Τὸν θεῖον οἶκον τόνδε καινουργεῖ πόθῳ / κρήτης πρόεδρος εὐτελής νικηφόρος / ἔχων ἀδελφὸν ἀαρὸν συνεργάτην / σκηπτροκρατοῦντος αὐσόνων ἀνδρονίκου / παλαιολόγου σὺν μιχαὴλ υἱεῖ” (Millet [note 32], p. 122; my translation).

<sup>34</sup> Henri Estienne, s. v. σκηπτροκράτέω: scerptrum teneo, in: *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae*, Paris 1831, VII, p. 374.

<sup>35</sup> *PG*, CXXVII, Paris 1864, cols. 220–472: 349.

<sup>36</sup> See Alexander P. Kazhdan, s. v. Manasses, Constantine, in: *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (note 5), II, p. 1280.

<sup>37</sup> For a discussion on the uses, declensions, and implications of the

word σκῆπτρον (sceptre or staff) in the *Iliad*, see Geoffrey S. Kirk, *The Iliad, a Commentary*, Cambridge 1985, I, pp. 55, 77f., 124, 126, 128, 134, 136, 145, 296.

<sup>38</sup> Ruth J. Macrides/Joseph A. Munitiz/Dimitar Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court: Offices and Ceremonies*, Farnham 2013, pp. 336–339 and 336, note 114.

<sup>39</sup> Robert Browning, “A Fourteenth-Century Prose Version of the ‘Odyssey’”, in: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XLVI (1992), pp. 27–36: 28.

<sup>40</sup> For a description of the codex, see “Scheda codice completa Malatestiana D.XXVII.2”, in: *Catalogo aperto manoscritti malatestiani*, [http://catalogoaperto.malatestiana.it/ricerca/?oldform=mostra\\_codice\\_completo.jsp?CODICE\\_ID=143](http://catalogoaperto.malatestiana.it/ricerca/?oldform=mostra_codice_completo.jsp?CODICE_ID=143) (accessed on 8 July 2016).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, the comments on fols. 12v, 13r, 19v, 27v, 198v, and integrations on fols. 4r, 146r, 149r, 150r.

<sup>42</sup> Anna Pontani, “Ciriaco d’Ancona e la Biblioteca Malatestiana di Cese-

The latter's cousin Cleophe Malatesti was the wife of Despot Theodore II Palaiologos and an important link between the Malatesti court and Mystras.<sup>43</sup>

The antiquarian reference made by the Nikephoros Moschopoulos in the stone inscription, along with the classicising use of the word *skeptokratountos*, is visually emphasised by the four *spolia* employed in the renovation of the church which he sponsored and finds correspondences in the use of *spolia* in other instances. Around the same time, the Latin Archbishop of Corinth, William of Moerbeke (1278–1285), is thought to have been heavily involved in the decoration of the church of the Dormition of the Theotokos, in the village of Hagia Triada (Merbaka), where he made a similarly conscious use of selected *spolia* to express an antiquarian taste in his act of patronage.<sup>44</sup> Some of these *spolia* were surveyed by Cyriacus of Ancona during his travels in the Peloponnese.<sup>45</sup>

### Local Antiquity in the Pantanassa Wall Paintings

This kind of antiquarianism can also be detected in the last building completed under Palaiologan rule in the city of Mystras, the *katholikon* of the monastery dedicated to the Theotokos Pantanassa.<sup>46</sup> A member of

the prominent aristocratic family of the Phrangopoulos sponsored the construction of the church: Ioannes Phrangopoulos was *protostrator* and *katholikos mesazon*, commander and prime minister to Theodore I and Theodore II Palaiologos, and his name is recorded in two inscriptions, one now lost and dating to 1428,<sup>47</sup> the other on the dome of the gallery above the narthex.<sup>48</sup> The year 1428 has therefore been suggested as a *terminus post quem* for the construction and decoration of the church. This dating has recently been contested by Titos Papamastorakis, who believes that the inscription is problematic and that it does not originate from the fifteenth century but rather from a later period.<sup>49</sup> However, given that Phrangopoulos was in Florence in 1439 for the Council<sup>50</sup> and was later mentioned, in an *argyrobull* by Despot Constantine Dragases Palaiologos from 1444, as general,<sup>51</sup> it is plausible to assume that the construction and decoration of the church date to the 1430s.

The church and its interior decorations (Fig. 4) are one of the most complex achievements of fifteenth-century Byzantine art.<sup>52</sup> Scholars have already noted several classicising motifs and artistic solutions adopted by the workshop that executed the wall paintings,<sup>53</sup> underlining the connections with four-

na", in: *Filologia umanistica per Gianvito Resta*, ed. by Vincenzo Fera/Giacomo Ferrau, Padua 1997, II, pp. 1465–1483.

<sup>43</sup> On this marriage and on Italian women at the Palaiologan court, see Julian Chrysostomides, "Italian Women in Greece during the Late 14th and Early 15th Centuries", in: *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi (Miscellanea Agostino Pertusi)*, II (1982), pp. 119–132; Silvia Ronchey, "Malatesta – Paleologhi: un'alleanza dinastica per rifondare Bisanzio nel quindicesimo secolo", in: *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, XCIII (2000), pp. 521–567.

<sup>44</sup> See Guy D. R. Sanders, "William of Moerbeke's Church at Merbaka: The Use of Ancient Spolia to Make Personal and Political Statements", in: *Hesperia*, LXXXIV (2015), pp. 583–626.

<sup>45</sup> See the drawings in the lower portion of fol. 115r of the codex Trotti 373 at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan, for which see Chatzidakis (note 22), pp. 60f. and 220, no. 28.

<sup>46</sup> On the church of the Pantanassa, see more recently Aspra-Bardabakē/Emmanuel (note 7); Titos Papamastorakis, "Myzithras of the Byzantines / Mistra to Byzantinists", in: *Oi byzantines poleis (8os-15os aionas): prooptikes tes ereunas kai nees ermeneutikes proseggiseis*, conference proceedings Rethymno 2009, ed. by Antonia Kiousoupoulou, Rethymno 2012, pp. 277–296.

<sup>47</sup> It is recorded on fol. 93v in manuscript Suppl. Gr., 855 (no. 235) of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (Millet [note 32], pp. 137f.).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 137.

<sup>49</sup> Papamastorakis (note 46), pp. 292–296.

<sup>50</sup> See the letter sent to Cardinal Bessarion in Florence by a member of the Eugenikos family in Mystras, published in *Palaiologia kai peloponnēsiaka* (note 20), I, pp. 164f.

<sup>51</sup> See Franz Miklosich/Joseph Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca mediæ aevi sacra et profana*, Vienna 1860–1890, III, pp. 258f.; *Palaiologia kai peloponnēsiaka* (note 20), IV, pp. 17f.

<sup>52</sup> Doula Mouriki, "The Wall Paintings of the Pantanassa at Mistra: Models of the Painting in the Fifteenth Century", in: *The Twilight of Byzantium: Aspects of Cultural and Religious History in the Late Byzantine Empire*, conference proceedings Princeton, N.J., 1989, ed. by Slobodan Ćurčić/Doula Mouriki, Princeton, N.J., 1991, pp. 217–231.

<sup>53</sup> In particular, see Doula Mouriki, "The Theme of the 'Spinario' in Byzantine Art", in: *Delton tēs Christianikēs Archaïologikēs Hetaireias*, VI (1972), pp. 53–66; Manoles Chatzedakes, "Classicisme et tendances populaires au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle: les recherches sur l'évolution du style", in: *Actes du XIV<sup>e</sup> Congrès*



teenth-century Constantinopolitan trends<sup>54</sup> as well as possible exchanges with contemporary Cretan painting, and recognising, in some points of the Mystras paintings, a sort of “over emphasis and mannerism”.<sup>55</sup> Mouriki, in particular, highlights how certain distinctive elements in the wall paintings of the Pantanassa, while responding to Constantinopolitan models, also feature variations on classical and late antique motifs, such as the children and the *spinario* portrayed in the *Entry into Jerusalem* (Fig. 5),<sup>56</sup> the mask motif in the pendentive of the cupola in the upper gallery, or the amphora vase in the *Annunciation* (Fig. I).<sup>57</sup> Mouriki suggests that the painters in the Pantanassa “adapted, in an eclectic way, iconographic features and stylistic devices from [...] earlier decorations of Mystras, [...] showing their independence vis-à-vis their models”.<sup>58</sup>

In the case of the wall paintings of the Pantanassa, I would argue that the strategy of adapting models and standards from earlier visual traditions in what Mouriki referred to as “an eclectic way” was in fact determined by an innovative approach to referencing antique remains found near Mystras, and specifically in Sparta.<sup>59</sup> In order to analyse this point I will consider a portion of the wall paintings in the upper galleries of the Pantanassa, and in particular some of the iconographic solutions employed to illustrate the *Annunciation* (Fig. I).

The central bays of the north and south upper galleries constitute the central transversal axis of the church (Fig. 4). The importance of this vaulted surface is reinforced by the choice of subjects decorating

it. Four of the main scenes of the cycle of the feasts – the *Annunciation* (Fig. I), the *Nativity* (Fig. 6), the *Resurrection of Lazarus* and the *Transfiguration* – are depicted in the four half vaults.<sup>60</sup> The *Annunciation* and the *Nativity* form a cleverly conceived unity on the barrel vault that covers the central bay of the south upper gallery (Figs. I, 4, 6), occupying respectively the western and the eastern portions of the vault.

The *Annunciation* scene takes place in an open-air courtyard, enclosed by a wall appearing in the background (Figs. 7, 8). On the lower section of the wall there are two narrow, tall, round-arched windows, framed by three columns rising in front of them and detached from the wall. The three columns support the end of three beams, which, on the other side, rest on a yellow wall. On top of the three beams there is a long architrave bearing three smaller columns, which hold up a horizontal architrave with two architraves jutting out, resting – on the ends facing the viewer – on two other columns rising from a lower architrave. Pillars built in front of the three columns of the loggia support the lower architrave.

The configuration of this courtyard combines elements that are reminiscent of the architecture of a late antique palace set in an urban context, as suggested by the cityscape visible on the left and right of the painting. The free-standing columns in front of a wall and the superposed columns made of precious marbles recall late antique monumental walls decorating public spaces in important cities. One example of many is the wall closing the Forum of Nerva in Rome. This ar-

*International des Études Byzantines: Bucarest, 6–12 septembre 1971*, ed. by Mihai Berza/Eugen Stănescu, Bucarest 1974–1976, I, pp. 153–188; Doula Mouriki, “The Mask Motif in the Wall Paintings of Mistra: Cultural Implications of a Classical Feature in Late Byzantine Painting”, in: *Δελτίον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Αρχαιολογικῆς Ἡεταρείας*, X (1980/81), pp. 307–338; Thalia Gouma-Peterson, “Manuel and John Phokas and Artistic Personality in Late Byzantine Painting”, in: *Gesta*, XXII (1983), pp. 159–170.

<sup>54</sup> Chatzedakes (note 53); Mouriki 1980/81 (note 53).

<sup>55</sup> Gouma-Peterson (note 53), p. 169.

<sup>56</sup> Mouriki 1972 (note 53).

<sup>57</sup> *Eadem*, “Palaeologan Mistra and the West”, in: *Byzantium and Europe*, conference proceedings Delphi 1985, ed. by Athanasios Markopoulos, Athens 1987, pp. 209–246: 238.

<sup>58</sup> *Eadem* (note 52), pp. 219f.

<sup>59</sup> The complex issue of Byzantine visual and cultural borrowings from antiquity has been the subject of many and important studies. For an introductory bibliography see *eadem* (note 5), p. 458, note 2. See also Saradi (note 5) and Papalexandrou (note 9).

<sup>60</sup> For a description of the wall painting cycle in the Pantanassa, see Dufrenne (note 25), pp. 8–13, pls. 21–28 and diagrams XIVa, b.



4 Mystras, *katholikon* of the Pantanassa monastery, south upper gallery



5 *Entry into Jerusalem*. Mystras, *katholikon* of the Pantanassa monastery, north upper gallery

6 *Nativity*.  
Mystras,  
*katholikon* of  
the Pantanassa  
monastery,  
south upper  
gallery



chitectural backdrop was developed from iconographic solutions adopted in earlier Byzantine depictions of the Annunciation.<sup>61</sup> However, within that Byzantine convention, it confronts the typically Western iconographic issue of evoking an ambience of domesticity and *hortus conclusus*,<sup>62</sup> similar to the one Fra Angelico created in the *Annunciation* of circa 1440–1445 in the northern corridor of the San Marco convent in Florence.<sup>63</sup>

A fountain, painted in the centre of the courtyard, reinforces the impression of a late antique setting (Fig. 9). This iconographic motif is rare in the

Annunciation of the Virgin scene,<sup>64</sup> it consists of a lower, square basin from which a small pilaster emerges, supporting another, smaller, circular basin. From this second basin another pilaster rises terminating in a bud-like shape, from which four spouts jet out water into the circular basin. In the Byzantine tradition fountains with a similar arrangement of tiered and connected basins, but different formal solutions, feature in depictions of the Annunciation of Saint Anne, as in the case of the early eleventh-century mosaic in the Daphni church,<sup>65</sup> or the mosaic in the inner narthex of

<sup>61</sup> On the iconography of the Annunciation in general see H el ene Papastavrou, *Recherche iconographique dans l'art byzantin et occidental du XI<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> si ecle: l'Annonciation*, Venice 2007; *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. by Maria Vassilaki, Milan et al. 2000; *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed. by eadem, Aldershot 2005, pp. 23, 27, 33, 103f., 123, 130, 155, 158f., 175–179, 184f., 188f., 285.

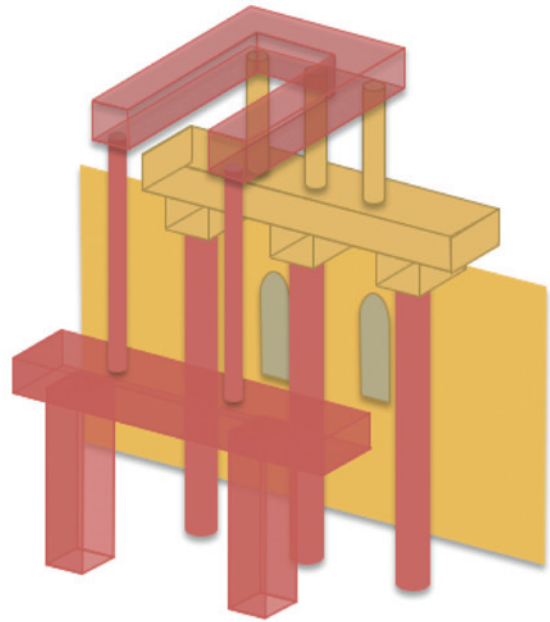
<sup>62</sup> On the *hortus conclusus* see Maria Chiara Cozzi, "Hortus Conclusus: sacro giardino", in: *I beni culturali*, XVIII (2010), 6, pp. 51–63; s. v. Hortus Conclusus, in: *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Art and Architecture*, ed.

by Peter Murray/Linda Murray/Tom Devonshire Jones, Oxford 2013, p. 263.

<sup>63</sup> See Laurence B. Kanter/Pia Palladino, *Fra Angelico*, New York 2005, pp. 184f. and fig. 106.

<sup>64</sup> Mouriki 1991 (note 52), p. 224.

<sup>65</sup> On the mosaic of the *Annunciation of Saint Anne* and its fountain at Daphni, see more recently Robin Cormack, "Viewing the Mosaics of Monasteries of Hosios Loukas, Daphni and the Church of Santa Maria Assunta, Torcello", in: *New Light on Old Glass: Recent Research on Byzantine Mosaics and Glass*, ed. by



7, 9 *Annunciation*, details of the architectural background and the fountain. Mystras, *katholikon* of the Pantanassa monastery, south upper gallery

8 Schematic rendering of the architectural background in Fig. 7



the *katholikon* of the Chora monastery in Istanbul;<sup>66</sup> they do not however appear in scenes of the Annunciation of the Virgin, where water is sometimes referenced by a well in the iconography of the Annunciation of the Virgin at the well, as also seen in the mosaic rendition of the episode in the church of Chora.<sup>67</sup>

This presence of water at the centre of the composition recalls an aristocratic Roman *domus* setting furnished with a fountain either connected to an *impluvium* or to the main city aqueduct, which is rendered schematically in the painted scene as a long horizontal red structure, supported by pillars, running parallel to the yellow back wall. The water theme alludes to a domestic context, but is also reminiscent of Hellenistic and late Roman rectilinear *nymphaea* and monumental fountains. Often composed as monumental façades in public spaces, these fountains were sometimes adjacent to theatres in order to provide and display water for the public. In general, their design was inspired by the *scaenae frons* of a theatre: one example of many is the Septizodium in Rome.<sup>68</sup>

A rectilinear *nymphaeum* can be found in nearby Sparta, next to the ancient theatre, the remains of which were still visible in the early fifteenth century as evidenced by Cyriacus of Ancona's accounts, discussed below. The *nymphaeum* might have been built during the middle or second half of the second cen-

tury C.E.<sup>69</sup> Similar rectilinear *nymphaea* were located all around the Peloponnese. One of them, the late antique Peirene fountain in Corinth with monumental columns and trabeations, was probably known up to the fourteenth century when it may have still been partially recognisable, as in the tenth or eleventh century a Byzantine chapel had been built on its premises, incorporating part of the late antique architecture.<sup>70</sup>

### Cyriacus of Ancona, Giuliano da Sangallo, and the Antiquities in Sparta

A new hypothesis for reading the painted architectural backdrop of the *Annunciation* wall painting in the Pantanassa can be proposed. It emerges from evidence associated with the presence of Cyriacus of Ancona in Mystras in the thirties and forties of the fifteenth century, suggesting that the source of inspiration for the architectural setting can be identified with antiquarian and archaeological evidence from the area of the Roman theatre of Sparta (Fig. 10).

The theatre, located on the slopes of the acropolis, was restored in Hellenistic times. It was excavated by the British School at Athens during the twentieth century, over the course of various campaigns.<sup>71</sup> The site is composed of a *cavea*, a recognisable structure for the *scaena*, and, to the west of the *scaena* along the lateral wall of the *cavea*, the above-mentioned *nymphaeum*.

Chris Entwistle/Liz James, London 2013, pp. 242–253; Henry Maguire, “Where Did the Waters of Paradise Go after Iconoclasm?”, in: *Fountains and Water Culture in Byzantium*, ed. by Brooke Shilling/Paul Stephenson, Cambridge 2016, pp. 229–245: 235.

<sup>66</sup> On the *Annunciation of Saint Anne* in the church of the Chora monastery see Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne, “Iconography of the Cycle of the Life of the Virgin”, in: *Studies in the Art of the Kariye Djami and Its Intellectual Background*, ed. by Otto Demus/Paul Underwood, Princeton, N.J., 1975, pp. 161–194: 168f.

<sup>67</sup> On this work see *ibidem*, pp. 187–190.

<sup>68</sup> On the Septizodium see Charmaine Gorrie, “The Septizodium of Septimius Severus Revisited: The Monument in Its Historical and Urban Context”, in: *Latomus*, LX (2001), pp. 653–670; Susann S. Lusnia, “Urban Planning and Sculptural Display in Severan Rome: Reconstructing the Septizodium and Its Role in Dynastic Politics”, in: *American Journal of Archaeology*, CVIII (2004), pp. 517–544.

<sup>69</sup> On the *nymphaeum* in the proximity of the theatre of Sparta see Geoffrey B. Waywell/John J. Wilkes, “Excavations at the Ancient Theatre of Sparta 1995–1998: Preliminary Report”, in: *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, XCIV (1999), pp. 437–455: 438–453 and pls. 5I, 55 and 60. On another *nymphaeum* in the acropolis of Sparta see *idem*, “Excavations at Sparta: The Roman Stoa, 1988–91. Part 2”, in: *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, LXXXIX (1994), pp. 377–432: 386.

<sup>70</sup> On the Peirene fountain in Corinth and its chronology and developments, see most recently Betsey A. Robinson, *Histories of Peirene: A Corinthian Fountain in Three Millennia*, Princeton, N.J., 2011, pp. 3–26; on the Byzantine chapel see *ibidem*, pp. 66, 77, fig. 50 and pp. 295–298. On water displays and fountains in late antiquity and during the Byzantine Empire, see also *eadem*, “Playing in the Sun: Hydraulic Architecture and Water Displays in Imperial Corinth”, in: *Hesperia*, LXXXII (2013), pp. 341–384; *Fountains and Water Culture in Byzantium* (note 65).

<sup>71</sup> For recent archaeological studies and secondary literature on the thea-



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10 Sparta, acropolis, theatre



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11 Sparta, acropolis, theatre,  
waterleaf capital

The excavations also revealed the presence of various types of columns, suggesting that the *scaenae frons* of the theatre had superimposed orders of columns.<sup>72</sup> During the Byzantine period, the theatre was abandoned and parts of the architecture were incorporated into the Byzantine defence walls of the acropolis.<sup>73</sup> The relevant question is whether those who painted the *Annunciation* in the Pantanassa might have seen these architectural elements.

The execution of the wall painting in the 1430s preceded or overlapped with the years in which Cyriacus of Ancona visited Mystras. On 24 September 1437, during his first trip to Laconia, Cyriacus describes his visit to Mystras and to the antiquities of Sparta, in particular the gymnasium:

[...] we arrived at the famous city of Lacedaemon of the Spartans, which is three miles away from the hill, where nowadays the so-called Spartans reside. At the top of the hill is built the city of Mizythras [...]. Here we saw the reigning Despot Theodore Palaiologus Porphyrogenitus. Subsequently, the day after we descended to the plain, and we saw the vestiges of the great city, remarkable statues, marble columns, and architraves, collapsed through the fields in antiquity. [...] We saw the *scaena* of the gymnasium still recognisable in most parts, extraordinary, and of polished marble; [here] many marble bases of statues were inspected.<sup>74</sup>

tre of Sparta, see in general Geoffrey B. Waywell *et al.*, “Excavations at the Ancient Theatre of Sparta 1992–4: Preliminary Report”, in: *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, XC (1995), pp. 435–460; Waywell/Wilkes/Walker (note 31); Waywell/Wilkes (note 69).

<sup>72</sup> See Waywell/Wilkes/Walker (note 31), pp. 103–111.

<sup>73</sup> See Alphonse M. Woodward/Margaret B. Hobling, “Excavations at Sparta, 1924–25”, in: *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, XXVI (1923–1925), pp. 116–310: 137–139.

<sup>74</sup> “[...] ad insignem Spartanorum Lacedaemonumque Urbem venimus, quam contra distans ad III. mil. collis, qui dicebatur Spartanus in hodiernum ab incolis habitatur. Cuius in vertice conditam Civitatem Mizythratem ab aliqua situs, & nominis conformitate dixere. In qua Theodorum Palaeologum Porphyrogenitum Despotem regnantem vidimus. At & postquam die postero ad planiciem descendimus, vidimus amplissimae Civitatis vestigia, Statuas insignes, marmoreas columnas, & epistylia, hincinde

Cyriacus paid particular attention to the Spartan gymnasium, of which he could see the *scaena* and survey the marble bases of its statues. Cyriacus was interested in ancient Greek literature and he acquired a copy of Plutarch’s *Moralia*.<sup>75</sup> He knew from Herodotus’ *Histories*, which he also owned,<sup>76</sup> that the theatre in Sparta was not primarily used for drama but also for the *Gymnopaediai*, the gymnastic festival celebrated at Sparta by boys and men, and other ceremonies.<sup>77</sup> So when Cyriacus described the *scaenae frons* of the gymnasium in his diary, he was referring to that of the theatre.

The 1995 excavation of the theatre of Sparta has revealed that a *scaenae frons* was added to it during its last renovation in the first century C.E.<sup>78</sup> This phase, named ‘Corinthian’, added three pairs of projecting columns to the stage wall and a row of columns behind them, all topped by Corinthian capitals. The central columns had a fluted shaft made of Pentelic marble, while those along the stage wall were unfluted and made of Laconian marble. The capitals of the latter columns had rounded sepals similar to those of the waterleaf capitals that adorned at least part of the upper order.

It is likely that this *scaenae frons* is the one Cyriacus saw during his visit to the ruins of Sparta. Indirect evidence comes from codex Barb. Lat. 4424, in which the Florentine architect Giuliano da Sangallo

per agros longa antiquitate collapsa. [...] Vidimus adhuc magna ex parte cognibilem, egregiam, & polito marmore Gymnasiorum scenam, cuiusce non paucae conspiciuntur statuarum marmoreae bases” (Cyriacus of Ancona 1654 [note 22], p. XXXVII; my translation). On this account, see also Chatzidakis (note 22), pp. 139, 144 and p. 253, no. 18.I.

<sup>75</sup> The copy is contained in manuscript Vat. Gr. 1309 of the Biblioteca Vaticana. We know that Cyriacus bought the manuscript at the Iviron monastery on Mount Athos on 23 November 1444. On Cyriacus’ collection of Greek manuscripts, see Pontani (note 11); on the ownership of manuscript Vat. Gr. 1309 in particular *ibidem*, pp. 122f.

<sup>76</sup> See Bodnar (note 22), p. 42; Pontani (note 11), pp. 119f.

<sup>77</sup> Robert C. Bosanquet *et al.*, “Laconia: II. Excavations at Sparta, 1906”, in: *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, XII [1905], pp. 277–479: 395.

<sup>78</sup> For a survey and reconstruction of the *scaenae frons* of Sparta’s theatre, see Waywell/Wilkes/Walker (note 31), pp. 108–111 and figs. 9.18, 9.30–33.

(ca. 1445–1516) and his son Francesco (1494–1576) collected drawings of exemplary buildings and antiquities.<sup>79</sup> Of the five gatherings that make up the codex, the third one consists of drawings of central plan buildings and starts with two folios, nos. 28 and 29, surveying ancient Greek buildings from Athens and sites in the Peloponnese, including Sparta. Both folios show drawings by Giuliano da Sangallo and annotations in Latin and Greek by an unidentified hand.<sup>80</sup> These drawings were copied from the diaries compiled by Cyriacus of Ancona during his trip to Peloponnese.<sup>81</sup> The diaries are now lost and we know of their existence through copies and printed editions that circulated during the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries.<sup>82</sup>

One of the drawings, on folio 29r (Fig. 12), shows three superimposed orders of twin-fluted columns topped by Corinthian capitals and architraves with Greek inscriptions.<sup>83</sup> Between the columns a torso is depicted, which has been identified with the seated marble statue of *Dionysus* originally placed over the monument to Thrasyllus in Athens.<sup>84</sup> This identi-

fication is based on both iconographic analysis and on the inscription, transcribed in the Sangallo codex from Cyriacus' diary. Later, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the monument was surveyed by Stuart and Revett, who recorded its location and reconstructed its general outline.<sup>85</sup>

Leaving aside the statue of *Dionysus*, the location of the objects depicted in the drawing is confirmed by a Latin text above the columns and architraves, probably by a scribe working for Sangallo,<sup>86</sup> which states that what is seen in the drawings is to be found “in Lacedaemonia”, Sparta. The fragments of architrave represented by Giuliano da Sangallo also have a fragmented inscription in Greek. While the inscription is known, its meaning is not entirely clear since its elements are too generic to permit a precise interpretation.<sup>87</sup> The first three lines read: ΤΕΚΝΩΝ - ΘΕΟΙΣ - ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΙΣ / ΚΑΙ - ΤΗ - ΛΑΚΕΔ - ΑΙΜΟΝ - / ΟΥ - ΚΑΙ - ΙΟΥΛ - ΑΓΗΣΙΑΟΣ (“dedicated to the venerable gods / and of Lakedaimon / and Iul. Agesiaos”). This can be surmised to be a generic dedication to the gods and a reference to the city of Sparta. Clearly it

<sup>79</sup> The anastatic edition of codex Barb. Lat. 4424 is in Christian Hülsen, *Il libro di Giuliano da Sangallo (codice vaticano Barberiniano latino 4424 riprodotto in fototipia)*, Leipzig 1910. On the codex see more recently Sabine Frommel, “I disegni di Giuliano da Sangallo: relazioni tra studio dell'antico e progettazione”, in: *Opus incertum*, III (2008), 5, pp. 12–27; Dario Donetti, “Le ‘Antichità greche’ di Giuliano da Sangallo: erudizione e rovinismo nel Libro dei Disegni, Codice Barberiniano Latino 4424”, in: *Les ruines: entre destruction et construction de l'Antiquité à nos jours*, conference proceedings Paris 2011, ed. by Karolina Kaderka/Sabine Frommel/François Queyrel, Rome 2013, pp. 85–93; Sabine Frommel, *Giuliano da Sangallo*, Florence 2014, pp. 82–86; Bianca de Divitiis, “Giuliano da Sangallo in the Kingdom of Naples: Architecture and Cultural Exchange”, in: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, LXXIV (2015), pp. 152–178.

<sup>80</sup> The two folios 28 and 29 are described in Hülsen (note 79), II, pp. 39–45. For a recent study of the drawings and accompanying inscriptions, see Donetti (note 79).

<sup>81</sup> On the identification of the drawings by Giuliano da Sangallo with those by Cyriacus of Ancona, see Hülsen (note 79), I, p. XXIX; Beverly Louise Brown/Diana E. E. Kleiner, “Giuliano da Sangallo's Drawings after Ciriaco d'Ancona: Transformations of Greek and Roman Antiquities in Athens”, in: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XLII (1983), pp. 321–335: 321. For a bibliography of the studies of Sangallo's drawings on fols. 28r–29v in

the codex Barb. Lat. 4424 and their sources and connections with Cyriacus' now lost diaries, see *ibidem*, p. 321, note 1.

<sup>82</sup> A selection of the I437 diary was printed in Cyriacus of Ancona 1654 (note 22). The diary of Cyriacus' second visit to the Peloponnese in 1447 is on fols. I01r–I24r of codex Trotti 373 in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan. On this, see Cyriacus of Ancona 2003 (note 22), pp. 298–303.

<sup>83</sup> The drawing and its inscriptions are mentioned but not copied nor transcribed in Cyriacus of Ancona 1654 (note 22), p. XXXIX, no. 254. On this see Bodnar (note 22), p. 83 and note 3.

<sup>84</sup> Hülsen (note 79), p. 43. The torso is now identified with the seated marble statue of *Dionysus* in the British Museum collection, inv. 1816,0610.I11, for which see the entry on the object on the online database of the museum: [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online.aspx) (accessed on 3 April 2018).

<sup>85</sup> See James Stuart/Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens Measured and Delineated by James Stuart E.R.S. and F.S.A. and Nicholas Revett: Painters and Architects*, London 1762–1816, II, ch. IV, pls. I–III.

<sup>86</sup> On the handwritten inscriptions on Sangallo's drawings, see Hülsen (note 79), p. 36; Brown/Kleiner (note 81), p. 324, note 23; Donetti (note 79), p. 89.

<sup>87</sup> The inscription is transcribed and discussed in August Boeckh, *Corpus inscriptionum graecarum*, Berlin 1828, I, part IV, sect. III, p. 641, no. 1298. See







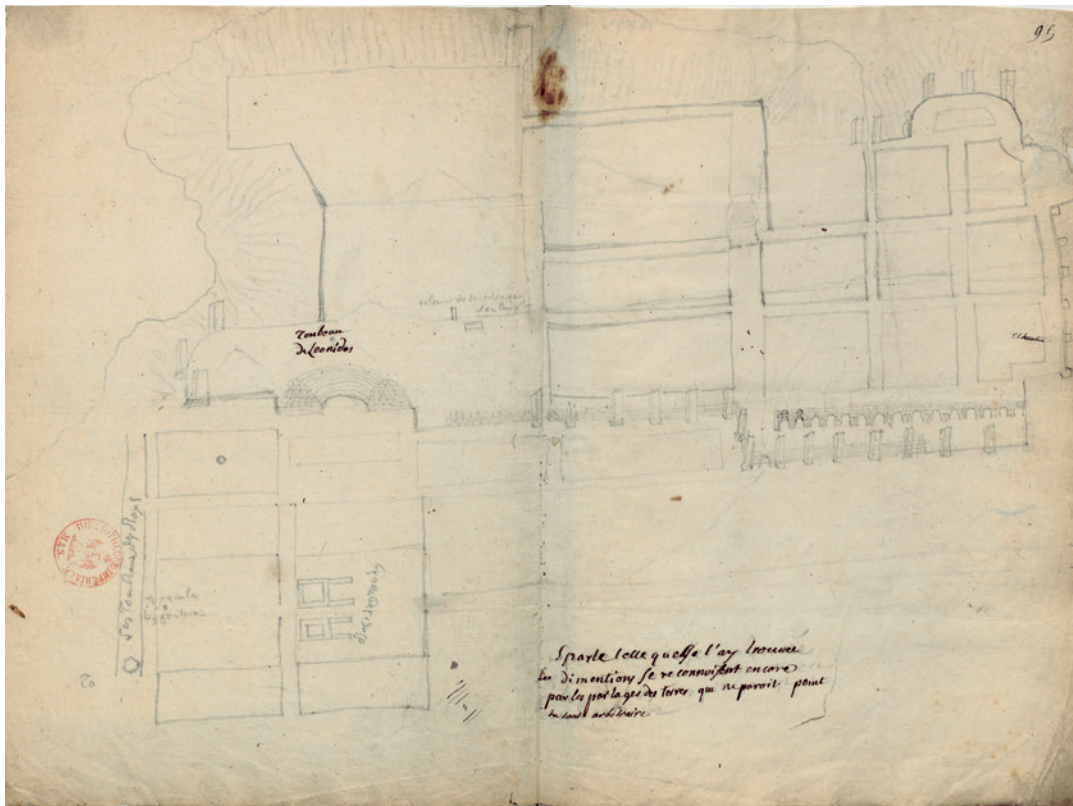
13a, b Sparta, theatre, general view and detail of the inscription on the eastern *cavea* wall

does not refer to the Athenian statue of *Dionysus*. However, while as a whole the inscription does not provide much information, there is one revealing detail. The name found on the second fragment, the middle one in Sangallo’s drawing, is “Iul. Agesiaos”, which can be read as Julus Agesiaos. This is a slightly corrupted version of a name found elsewhere in the premises of the theatre in Sparta. On the east wall delimiting the *cavea* a stone block bears a long inscription that has

been transcribed and contains the name Julus Agesilaios (Figs. 13a, b).<sup>88</sup> As the drawing of the architrave is clearly attributed to a monument in Sparta, it seems likely that the name in the inscription documented by codex Barb. Lat. 4424 corresponds to the one seen in the epigraph in the theatre; the missing lambda in the Sangallo drawing can be explained by the corruption of the name due to its double transcription – first by Cyriacus and then by the unidentified hand in the

also Hülsen (note 79), p. 43; Brown/Kleiner (note 81), p. 333; Chatzidakis (note 22), p. 216, no. 22.1.

<sup>88</sup> The inscription is transcribed and commented in Woodward/Hobling (note 73), pp. 170 and 195f.



14 Michel Fourmont, *Tabulæ geographicæ ad M. Fourmont iter græcum spectantes*, fol. 95r.  
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Suppl. Gr., 856

Sangallo workshop.<sup>89</sup> In conclusion, we can state with some degree of confidence that Sangallo's copy of Cyriacus' drawing shows a structure in Sparta, likely part of the architecture of the theatre, which Cyriacus saw and drew in his diary along with the accompanying inscription, also copied in the Sangallo codex.

This hypothesis is further confirmed if we look at the integration of the acropolis fortress wall, which archaeologists have dated generically to the Byzantine era, and at the architecture of the theatre itself.<sup>90</sup> This wall had been documented by Michel Fourmont, who

travelled across Greece documenting inscriptions and collecting manuscripts on behalf of Louis XV and who visited the acropolis of Sparta in the 1720s. His writings and drawings surveying Sparta are found today in manuscript Suppl. Gr., 856 at the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris.<sup>91</sup> On folios 94v–95r of the manuscript there is an unpublished drawing with a schematic depiction of the *cavea* of the theatre and the boundary walls of the acropolis, including the theatre scene (Fig. 14). David Le Roy incorporated a similar view of the Spartan theatre in his *Les ruines des plus beaux monu-*

<sup>89</sup> We know from archaeological findings and excavations that, in the early second century C.E., there was indeed a magistrate named Julos Agesilaos in Sparta. See Woodward/Hobling (note 73), p. 161.

<sup>90</sup> On the Byzantine fortress wall of Sparta's acropolis, see *ibidem*, p. 138 and pl. XIV.

<sup>91</sup> See Michel Fourmont, *Tabulæ geographicæ ad M. Fourmont iter græcum spectantes*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Suppl. Gr., 856. On Fourmont and his 1729/30 travels in Greece and the Peloponnese, see Henri Auguste Omont, *Missions archéologiques françaises en Orient aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris 1902, I, pp. 537–662; Ian Macgregor Morris, "Liars, Ec-



15 David Le Roy, *Les ruines des plus beaux monuments de la Grèce considérées du côté de l'histoire et du côté de l'architecture*, Paris 21770, II, pl. XIII

ments de la Grèce (Fig. 15).<sup>92</sup> The corner of the wall, the main focus of Le Roy's plate, is also visible on the upper left in Fourmont's drawing; in the former, we also see cylindrical portions of columns, close to another wall in the proximity of the acropolis wall, which are no longer visible. On the other hand, archaeological excavations near the Byzantine wall have brought to light an architrave decorated on both sides and bearing an inscription providing further evidence of a monumental colonnade pertaining to the late antique theatre.<sup>93</sup>

The columns and capitals found during the archaeological campaigns in the theatre – in particular

the shaft of the fluted column with the Corinthian capital that was part of the above-mentioned central pier of the *scaenae frons*<sup>94</sup> – and the visual documentation by Fourmont and Le Roy can be related to the fluted twin columns, the Corinthian capitals, and the inscribed architrave of Sangallo's drawing (Fig. 12). It is difficult to directly relate Sangallo's rendering to the excavation, but based on the inscription of the *cavea* wall and on the correspondence between the drawn columns and those found in the excavation, we can assume one of two things: when Cyriacus visited the theatre, either the columns were still free standing

centrics and Visionaries: Early Travellers to Sparta and the Birth of Laconian Archaeology", in: *British School at Athens Studies*, XVI (2009), pp. 387–395.

<sup>92</sup> See David Le Roy, *Les ruines des plus beaux monuments de la Grèce [...]*, Paris 21770 (1758), II, pl. XIII.

<sup>93</sup> See the findings in trench B of the 1906 excavation at Sparta in Bosanquet *et al.* (note 77), pp. 396, 400f., and 456f.

<sup>94</sup> See Waywell/Wilkes/Walker (note 31), pp. 108–111 and fig. 9.31, p. 110.



16 *Annunciation*, ca. 1220.  
Regensburg, Prüll charterhouse,  
church of Saint Vitus

or they had collapsed, but in a way that enabled him to reconstruct their original setting in his drawings.

Therefore, it is plausible that the architectural backdrop of the *Annunciation* was modelled on the fifteenth-century remains of the *scaenae frons* and other parts of the theatre of Sparta, which may have been seen by the painters of the wall painting in the Pantanassa, hence providing an actual first-century model for the scene of the *Annunciation*.

### The Iconography of the Fountain in the *Annunciation*

The particular choice of using an antique iconographic repertoire to frame the scene of the *Annunciation* in the Pantanassa also corresponds to an antiquarianism that expresses religious content via visual elements borrowed from antiquity. This visual strategy determines the way in which the fountain in the foreground of the scene (Fig. 9) relates to the remains found in Sparta and how it is depicted. Due

to the presence of the *nymphaeum*, the wall painters may have viewed the remains of the theatre of Sparta as an innovative visual analogy to the Byzantine liturgical and hymnographical tradition which associated the Theotokos with water-related motifs such as a spring or a fountain, inspiring a new visual association with the cult of the Ζωοδόχος Πηγή or Life-Giving Spring.<sup>95</sup>

In the *Annunciation* (Fig. 1), the Virgin is portrayed seated on the right side of the painting, while Archangel Gabriel enters the scene from the left. From the top, directly above the Virgin, a ray pierces through a circle in the heavens. This circular opening is introduced as a variation on the traditional iconographic theme of the Holy Ghost's descent through the sky into the scene.<sup>96</sup> The light springing from the central circle unites the scenes of the *Annunciation* and the *Nativity* on the other side of the vault (Figs. 1, 6).

The descent of the Holy Ghost is integral to the visual rendition of the *Annunciation*, and the event is described in most textual sources on the life of the Virgin.<sup>97</sup> The medium through which the Holy Ghost is made visible can vary in form.<sup>98</sup> Here, the light emanates (ἀπόρροια) from God through the Holy Ghost to the Virgin, and from her to the world as Mother of the Son of God. The Virgin is, in a sense, the terrestrial source of divine light, the πηγή τοῦ φωτός, the earthly spring of the light of God.<sup>99</sup> The idea of the Virgin as a spring of light is reinforced by the careful rendition of the archangel's tunic, which is shown as translucent and reflective due to the light reflected by the body of the Virgin. The yellow and red colourations of the archangel's tunic match the colours and tones used for the yellow wall and red columns.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>95</sup> See Helena Bodin, "'Rejoice, Spring': The Theotokos as Fountain in the Liturgical Practice of Byzantine Hymnography", in: *Fountains and Water Culture in Byzantium* (note 65) pp. 246–264.

<sup>96</sup> See Papastavrou (note 61), figs. 13, 16, 18, 26, 54f., 57.

<sup>97</sup> See Lk. 1,35; Protoevangelium, X, 1–XI.3; the Gospel of the Nativity, IX, 4; Pseudo-Matthew, IX; the Armenina Gospel, V, 9.

<sup>98</sup> For a detailed analysis of the different solutions see Papastavrou (note 61), pp. 77–84.

<sup>99</sup> See Gregory Thaumaturgus of Neocaesarea, "Homilia I in annuntiatione sanctae Virginis Mariae", in: *PG*, X, cols. 1145–1156: 1152B; Methodius of Olympus, "Sermo de Symeone et Anna", in: *PG*, XVIII, cols. 347–382: 381B.

<sup>100</sup> The illumination of the scene might also be a response to the centrality

The presence of the fountain (Fig. 9) may relate to this role of the Theotokos and, moreover, visually comment in an original way on the late Palaiologan cult of the *Zoodochos Pege*,<sup>101</sup> without, however, referring to its iconography as developed in the late Byzantine period.<sup>102</sup> It shows the Theotokos with child portrayed on the top basin of a fountain from which water comes out, thus appearing to originate from her. This iconography was well established in Mystras, featuring in the church of the Hodegetria<sup>103</sup> and in the south funerary chapel in Hagioi Theodoroi.<sup>104</sup>

In the *Annunciation* of the Pantanassa, however, the artists chose not to use the iconography of the *Zoodochos Pege* to reference the generative power attributed to the Virgin in the cult of the Life-Giving Spring. Rather, they employed a fountain iconography taken from other models, which may have been inspired by antique representations of springs, fountains, and other water features. Fountains similar to the one in the Pantanassa wall painting appear in a variety of contexts, as early as the thirteenth century, as visual antiquarian notations. The motif of the fountain had already been used in the context of the Annunciation, for example in the thirteenth-century mural painting at Prüll charterhouse in Regensburg (Fig. I6),<sup>105</sup> where, as in the Pantanassa fresco, a vase and fountain feature prominently. However, there were many variants



17 Matteo de' Pasti, Medal of Guarino da Verona, reverse, ca. 1446. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Samuel H. Kress Collection

of this fountain iconography between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries in depictions of the Spring of Life – which ultimately trace back to early Christian imagery, for example in the Roman catacomb of Via Latina, where the spring is represented either as a basin on pillars or as a *kantaros* vase<sup>106</sup> –, the Spring of Eternal Youth, or the fountain of the Muses:<sup>107</sup> examples are the Spring of Life or the Spring of Eternal Youth on fifteenth-century *deschi da parto*, for instance on the *desco* with the scene of *Ameto's discovery of the nymphs* by the Master of I4I6 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York;<sup>108</sup> visual allegories of the fountain of the Muses in the Helicon mountain, as seen in the *Dance of*

of light in the theology of the Hesychast movement, which was particularly influential in the Byzantine Morea. See Ivan Drpić, “Art, Hesychasm, and Visual Exegesis: Parisinus Graecus I242 Revisited”, in: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, LXII (2008), pp. 217–247: 218, note 8.

<sup>101</sup> On the late Palaiologan revival of the cult of the *Zoodochos Pege*, see Alice-Mary M. Talbot, “Epigrams of Manuel Philes on the Theotokos Tes Peges and Its Art”, in: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XLVIII (1994), pp. 135–165; Coccinus Philotheus, *Miracle Tales from Byzantium*, trans. by Alice-Mary M. Talbot/Scott F. Johnson, Cambridge, Mass., 2012, p. xiv.

<sup>102</sup> On the development of the iconography of the *Zoodochos Pege* see Rodoniki Etzeoglou, “The Cult of the Virgin *Zoodochos Pege* at Mistra”, in: *Images of the Mother of God* (note 61), pp. 239–249; Natalia Teteriatnikov, “The Image of the Virgin *Zoodochos Pege*: Two Questions Concerning Its Origin”, *ibidem*, pp. 225–238; Rodonikē Etzeoglou, *O naos tēs Odēgētrias tou Brontochiou sto Mystra: oi toichographies tou narthēka kai ē leitourgikē chrēsē tou chōrou*, Athens 2013.

<sup>103</sup> See Etzeoglou 2005 (note 102).

<sup>104</sup> See Millet (note 28), pl. 90.2.

<sup>105</sup> On this painting see Heidrun Stein-Kecks, “‘O mirabilis artifex spiritus!’ Das Bild der Verkündigung an Maria in der ehemaligen Benediktinerkirche zu Prüll”, in: *1000 Jahre Kultur in Karthaus-Prüll: Geschichte und Forschung vor den Toren Regensburgs. Festschrift zum Jubiläum des ehemaligen Klosters*, Regensburg 1997, pp. 164–192.

<sup>106</sup> On the fountains in the catacomb of Via Latina, see Antonio Ferrua, *Le pitture della nuova cataomba di Via Latina*, Vatican City 1960, p. 46 (pls. IV.2, XVI.2), p. 49 (pl. XIX), p. 53 (pl. XXXIV.1), p. 63 (pl. LII.2) and p. 68 (pl. XLVIII.2).

<sup>107</sup> For a brief survey see William D. Wixom, “A Glimpse at the Fountains of the Middle Ages”, in: *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art*, VIII (2003), pp. 6–23.

<sup>108</sup> On this *desco* see the entry on the object on the online database of the

the *Muses* in manuscript Urb. Lat. 899 in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, dating to the second half of the fifteenth century;<sup>109</sup> or the fountain on the reverse of the circa 1446 bronze medal of Guarino da Verona by Matteo de' Pasti (Fig. 17).<sup>110</sup>

The latter example is particularly important because Guarino da Verona (1374–1460) was not only in touch with Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos and Manuel Chrysoloras, but was part of the same group of humanists to which Cyriacus of Ancona also belonged.<sup>111</sup> As a matter of fact, the fountain depicted on the obverse of the medal is similar to that of the Pantanassa fresco, with a circular basin that collects water from a sphere positioned on top of a pillar. The formal correlation between the fountain in the foreground of the *Annunciation* and the one portrayed in Guarino's medal, both dating to the second quarter of the fifteenth century, suggests the existence of a cultural environment where similar visual motifs were employed in diverse contexts and associations of meanings. In the case of Mystras, the fountain is an allusion to the Virgin as the source of life, while in the case of the medal it refers to Guarino as “the source of learning” and to flowing water as a “metaphor of learning and literary creativity”.<sup>112</sup> The energy of the springing water finds direct visual correspondence in the iconography of the fountain of the Muses,<sup>113</sup> which Guarino studied and helped to revive at the humanist court of Ferrara.<sup>114</sup>

museum: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search> (accessed on 3 April 2018).

<sup>109</sup> The illumination is on fol. 110v of the manuscript; it is reproduced in *Le Nozze di Costanzo Sforza e Camilla d'Aragona celebrate a Pesaro nel maggio 1475*, ed. by Tammara De Marinis, Florence 1946, pl. XXIX.

<sup>110</sup> On this medal see *Le muse e il principe: arte di corte nel Rinascimento padano*, exh. cat. Milan 1991, ed. by Andrea Di Lorenzo *et al.*, Modena 1991, I, p. 157, no. 36; John G. Pollard, *Renaissance Medals*, New York *et al.* 2007, I, pp. 56f., no. 39.

<sup>111</sup> On the connection between Guarino and Byzantine intellectuals, see Michael Baxandall, “Guarino, Pisanello and Manuel Chrysoloras”, in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXVIII (1965), pp. 183–204; Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti, “Guarino, i suoi libri, e le letture della corte estense”, in: *Le muse e il principe* (note 110), II, pp. 63–79. Guarino da Verona had direct exchanges with Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos. The

The architectural backdrop and the fountain in the scene of the *Annunciation* in the Pantanassa make reference to a series of antique themes: a late Roman *nymphaeum*, the water features of a Roman *domus* and early examples of the iconographic motif relating to water, which, while belonging to the Roman culture, were also part of the Byzantine visual tradition.<sup>115</sup> Overall the scene is related to a broader antiquarian debate that developed in Mystras as well as in Italian centres, such as Florence, Venice, Rimini, and Ferrara, and involved exchanges with the Despotate of the Morea in the fifteenth century.

### Conclusions

This essay argues for uninterrupted continuity in the relationship between Mystras and ancient Sparta. Evidence comes from the reuse of *spolia* from the ancient city in the medieval buildings of Mystras. Within this continuity, however, something different occurred from the beginning of the fifteenth century, when a new understanding of the antiquities emerged. The architectural backdrop and the fountain in the *Annunciation* scene in the church of the Pantanassa can be interpreted as examples of this new approach to local antiquities.

The strategic use of the vestiges of ancient Sparta served the imperial ambitions of the despots of the Morea and was triggered in particular by exchanges between Greek intellectuals such as Plethon and

latter sent him a funerary oration he wrote to commemorate his brother, the Despot Theodore I Palaiologos. For a recent study of the orations, see Florin Leonte, “A Brief ‘History of the Morea’ as Seen through the Eyes of an Emperor-Rhetorician: Manuel II Palaiologos’s Funeral Oration for Theodore, Despot of Morea”, in: *Viewing the Morea* (note I), pp. 397–417: 397f., 414.

<sup>112</sup> Pollard (note 110), I, p. 56.

<sup>113</sup> Guarino da Verona's interest in the Muses is attested in a letter written on 5 November 1447 to Leonello d'Este, in which he provides instructions for their depiction. See Baxandall (note 111), pp. 186f.; *Le muse e il principe* (note 111), I, pp. 158–161, no. 37. For an Italian translation of the letter, see *ibidem*, II, pp. 322f.

<sup>114</sup> See Baxandall (note 111); Tissoni Benvenuti (note 111).

<sup>115</sup> See Maguire (note 65).

Chalkokondyles and Western humanists travelling in the region, such as Cyriacus of Ancona. These exchanges functioned as a cultural mediation which encouraged a new consideration of the vestiges from antiquity and their strategic use.

This dialogue between East and West has been long ignored or underappreciated, since it was overshadowed by the broader narrative of the fall of Constantinople, which represented a profound political and cultural trauma. The network of relations – both visual and literary – analysed in this article indicates that more extensive research is required to reach a deeper understanding of the antiquarian culture in Greece and its exchanges with the West in the first half of the fifteenth century, which were dramatically interrupted by the events of 1453.

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#### Abbreviations

PG *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, Paris 1857–1866

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#### Abstract

This essay analyses antiquarian aspects of the visual artistic production of the city of Mystras, the capital of the Byzantine Despotate of the Morea, in the first half of the fifteenth century. It builds on the connection the city had with the ancient ruins of nearby Sparta and puts forward a case study of the visual antiquarianism that can be detected in the art and the architecture of the city. In particular, the study suggests that the unique design solution adopted for the architectural elements in the fresco of the *Annunciation* in the church of the Theotokos Pantanassa in Mystras is inspired by the remains of the late antique theatre of Sparta. For this purpose the essay considers Cyriacus of Ancona's diaries describing his visit of Sparta in 1437 and 1447 and Giuliano da Sangallo's reproductions of Cyriacus' drawing of the remains of the theatre and develops comparative analyses with depictions of fountains to be found in different iconographies. Through these examples, it explores the complex visual antiquarianism shared between humanists at the court of Mystras, such as Georgios Gemistos Plethon, and those related to Italian courts such as Cyriacus of Ancona.

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Archive of the author: Figs. 1–11, 13a, b – From Hülsen (note 79): Fig. 12. – Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris: Fig. 14. – From Le Roy (note 92): Fig. 15. – © Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Photothek (Müller & Sohn), Munich: Fig. 16. – Courtesy of the Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.: Fig. 17.



Umschlagbild | Copertina:  
Santa Maria Capua Vetere, anfiteatro, dettaglio di una delle due chiavi  
d'arco ancora in situ  
(Abb. 13, S. 79 | fig. 13, p. 79)

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