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CAVE AND CHURCH.  
AN EASTERN CHRISTIAN HIEROTOPICAL  
SYNTHESIS

In this article I propose to examine certain aspects of the symbolic and functional definition of sacred space in the religious sphere of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Specifically, my focus will be on the appearance of a distinctive, albeit relatively rare phenomenon — the juxtaposition of a natural cave with a man-made church building and on the implications of such a relationship in Eastern Orthodox Christian practice.

The symbolic understanding of the sanctuary (bema) of an Eastern Orthodox Christian church as “the cave of Bethlehem where Christ was born, and that of the cave where He was buried” (i. e. Jerusalem) was articulated in these words in the so-called *Historia Mystagoga*, a work attributed to Patriarch Germanos I (715–730)<sup>1</sup>. Thus, symbolizing the beginning and the end of Christ’s earthly life, the bema of a Byzantine church may be said to have encapsulated in the minds of the believers the Holy Land itself. Expanding this notion to the paradigm of the Byzantine church, symbolically perceived as the Christian Cosmos, sacred earthly topography as embodied in the bema may be thought of as having been juxtaposed with the symbolic vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem embodied in the domed naos<sup>2</sup>. The symbolic vision of the Holy Land, architecturally speaking, was given the setting of the semicircular apse that, according to the quoted metaphor of Patriarch Germanos, could also be understood as a cave<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Mango C.* The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453. Sources and Documents. Toronto, Buffalo and London, rpt. 1993, p. 141–143.

<sup>2</sup> The notion of the ‘Heavenly Jerusalem’ as symbolically expressed in Byzantine church architecture and its interior decoration has been a subject of several studies in recent years. See especially: *Lidov A.* Heavenly Jerusalem: The Byzantine Approach // The Real and Ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Art = Jewish Art 23–24 (1997–1998), 341–353, with older literature on the subject.

<sup>3</sup> “The conch is after the manner of the cave of Bethlehem where Christ was born, and that of the Cave where He was buried...”; cf. *Mango* (as in f. n. 1), p. 142.

At this point, it is essential to articulate two distinct aspects related to the notion of sacredness of caves. The first, mythical in essence, is linked directly to Christ himself. Though rooted in unsubstantiated accounts, the idea of Christ having been born in a cave and having ultimately been buried in one was fully articulated long before Patriarch Germanos. Its author actually may have been Eusebius of Cesarea<sup>4</sup>. The second notion of the sacredness of caves is a direct product of monasticism and specifically of Palestinian monasticism, where anchorite dwelling in caves began early, and from where it appears to have spread to other parts of the Eastern Christian world. The latter phenomenon is unmistakably linked to the first, but since neither is the specific subject of my paper, I will merely offer a few general observations on the topic by way of an introduction.

We may fruitfully begin with Eusebius, Bishop of Cesarea (c. 265–340), who is thought to have been the author of an ideological concept recently defined by Peter Walker as “The Triad of Caves”. These involve: (1) the cave of Bethlehem, according to Eusebius “the Cave of His first Theophany”; (2) the cave “of His great struggle over death”, or Jerusalem; and finally (3) the cave “of his ultimate Ascension”, or the Mount of Olives<sup>5</sup>. Notwithstanding the fact that serious problems, both textual and physical, exist with ‘the three caves’ in Eusebius’ writing, according to Walker, the concept of the “Triad of Caves” was his conscious construction. As such this idea would have been either a reflection of, or even possibly the programmatic basis of Constantine’s building program in the Holy Land. This involved, it must be recalled, the three great basilicas — the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the Basilica of Eleona on the Mount of Olives. Eusebius, at least in his *de Laudatio Constantini*, credits the emperor in these words: “He chose these three places, each distinguished by a sacred cave, and adorned them with rich buildings”<sup>6</sup>.

The question of the credibility of Eusebius’ identification of the crucial events from Christ’s earthly life — Nativity, Crucifixion / Resurrection, and Ascension — with the three caves, need not detain us at this point. Far more important in my argument is the reception of this idea in later times. One of the more remarkable aspects of monasticism in Palestine, from its beginnings in the fourth century on, was the proliferation of ascetic seclusion in individual caves. It would appear that the monastic emulation of Christ’s earthly path toward ultimate triumph over death, in Palestinian practice very

<sup>4</sup> Egeria’s Travels to the Holy Land / Transl. and ed. by J. Wilkinson. Jerusalem and Warminster, 1981, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Walker P. W. Holy City, Holy Places? Christian Attitudes to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the Fourth Century. Oxford, 1990, p. 184–194. I am indebted to Peter Brown who brought this book to my attention.

<sup>6</sup> Eusebius, de Laud. Const. 9 // PG 20.1369.

specifically involved sequestering in natural caves. Thus — if one were to take the Eusebian paradigm of the “Triad of Caves” as a model — spending one’s life in a cave would have implied following of Christ’s example symbolically, but also physically<sup>7</sup>. While this particular aspect of the argument cannot be fruitfully proven at this point, we can begin our analysis with an observation of the growing importance of caves by the end of the fourth and into the fifth century.

Certainly, by the time of Egeria’s travels in the East, in 381–384, the “cult of caves” would seem to have been fairly established. She repeatedly mentions various ‘sacred caves’ — not only the three identified by Eusebius<sup>8</sup>. By her own time, many of these caves, some related to the New and yet others to the Old Testament, were commemorated by churches built directly above them, or adjacent to them. By the end of the fourth century, one may argue, sacred caves in the Holy Land had acquired the status of ‘martyria’. As with other martyria, initially they existed independently, but eventually they began to be adjoined to churches whose function was the accommodation of liturgy. The presence of a cave, much like the presence of a relic, imparted sacredness in a distinctive way to the church in question. Beyond the Eusebian ‘triad’, among the places visited by the pilgrim Egeria, we may single out two more churches directly associated with sacred caves. The first is the so-called Chapel of the Beatitudes, in the vicinity of the Church of the Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes at et Tabgha. The chapel, according to Bellarmino Bagatti, should be dated to the fourth century<sup>9</sup>. Here, in a mountainside cave, Christ is believed to have taught the Beatitudes to His disciples. A relatively small single-aisled church marks the spot, below which is a cave, ca. 5 m deep and ca. 2 m wide. Whether this should be accepted as the actual site visited and described by Egeria as “...the cave to which the Saviour climbed and spoke the Beatitudes”, or not, it certainly is an early church deliberately built over a cave that must have had some ‘sacred’ associations<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> The case St. Theodore of Sykeon, though chronologically later, is particularly instructive in this context. According to his *vita*, on two separate occasions he dug a cave with the purpose of totally sequestering himself; cf. *Three Byzantine Saints. Contemporary Biographies of St. Daniel the Stylite, St. Theodore of Sykeon, and St. John the Almsgiver* / Trans. by E. Dawes and N. H. Baynes. Crestwood, 1977, p. 98 and p. 100. Cf. also *Browning R. The ‘Low Level’ Saint’s Life in the Early Byzantine World // The Byzantine Saint* / Ed. S. Hackel. London, 1981, p. 126.

<sup>8</sup> *Wilkinson* (as in f. n. 4), *passim*.

<sup>9</sup> *Bagatti B. The Church from the Gentiles in Palestine. History and Archaeology. Jerusalem, 1971, p. 217; also idem. La Cappella sul Monte delle Beatitudini // Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana 14 (1937), p. 43–91.*

<sup>10</sup> *Wilkinson* (as in f. n. 4), p. 200.

We are on much safer ground with the Martyrium of St. Thecla at Meriamlik, on the south coast of Asia Minor, visited by Egeria in May 384<sup>11</sup>. The great basilica whose ruins dominate the site was constructed only around 480 — a century after Egeria's visit, over a system of underground caves associated with St. Thecla's abode during the last years of her life, from where she departed alive disappearing into the bowels of the earth. Already in the fourth century, however, the site had evidently been outfitted with a church built into the opening of the cave (fig. 1). The reconstruction of this church by John Wilkinson provides an idea of what that building may have looked like and its intimate relationship with the cave behind it.

The Holy Land abounds with monastic dwellings within natural caves. Whether we are dealing with single-monk cells — hermitages — or larger monastic complexes, a tendency to utilize the dramatic rocky landscape of the general area was distinctly pronounced. Equally pronounced is the characteristic relationship between man-made components and natural caves — buildings, or parts of buildings that co-exist with natural formations. Such a symbiosis between architecture and nature has several dimensions in Palestine. The first is a function of needs and practicalities. Few caves, one might say, had all four walls — thus enclosing a cave and giving it a 'façade, must have been an inescapable necessity reflecting the environmental realities within which Palestinian monasticism grew. The second is a function of memory and symbolism. Caves made sacred by an event or an occupant, in later times were marked by the construction of a church, so that liturgy could be performed at the holy site. Eusebius' "Triad of caves" belongs to this category, but so do many monastic caves also adjoined by man-made churches.

Some of these churches were extremely small, as is the case with the hermitage of a holy man, Cyriac, at Sousakim (fig. 3)<sup>12</sup>. Here, a natural cave initially inhabited by Cyriac around 535 was subsequently enlarged, possibly also by him, and was ultimately enhanced by what must have been a professionally built small domed chapel that enclosed the entrance into the upper part of the cave in which the holy man once dwelt. The chapel is miniscule in its dimensions, providing barely 2×2.5 m of interior space. Massively built, its walls 0.8 m thick and made of carefully cut ashlar, this structure stands in stark contrast with its rugged natural setting. The chapel is a jewel-like symbol, highlighting the presence of a cave made sacred by the holy man living within it. According to Yizar Hirschfeld, who published this cave, the presence of such a finely built edifice in a

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 288–292.

<sup>12</sup> Hirschfeld Y. *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period*. New Haven and London, 1992, p. 218–222.

hermitage “is unusual but can be explained by the fact that Cyriac was a holy man and much venerated”<sup>13</sup>.

A comparable example of a venerated dwelling, possibly also once containing a tomb of a holy person is the church at Darat el Fanun, also known as “the Chapel of Jabal-al-Akdar, near Amman in Jordan (fig. 2)<sup>14</sup>. Here the sacred cave was incorporated into a sizeable basilica (c. 14×29.5 m) with a type of a transept axially aligned with the cave. In this case we do not know the name of the hermit associated with the cave, but the relationship of the cave and the building unmistakably followed the established pattern of highlighting the presence of a sacred cave, by the construction of a church edifice physically adjacent to it.

The formula cave-and-church that I have outlined as having emerged in the course of the fourth through the sixth centuries in the Holy Land must have been witnessed by pilgrims visiting the region, though it did not seem to have had any immediate impact on developments elsewhere. The earliest emulations of the cave-and-church scheme apparently are not older than the Middle Byzantine era. In the eleventh and especially in the twelfth century a wave of emulation of the Palestinian holy men derived from reading hagiographical texts, as well as through direct, first-hand experience of their habitat by the visiting monks from afar apparently took place. Both must have shaped the results in such far-flung places as Cappadocia, Cyprus, Calabria, Apulia, and the Balkans<sup>15</sup>. The case of St. Neophytos and his celebrated Enkleistra on the outskirts of Paphos may well be mentioned, but need not be dwelt on in the present context<sup>16</sup>. The incidence of constructing churches adjacent to vener-

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>14</sup> Michel A. Les églises d'époque Byzantine et umayyade de la Jordanie, V<sup>e</sup>–VII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Turnhout, 2001, p. 283, fig. 271, with older literature; also Al-Tarawneh A. Monuments of the Central Plateau of Jordan // Deltion. Eurôpaiko kentro Vyzantinôn kai Metavyzantinôn mnêmeiôn 3 (2002), p. 217–221. The exact date of this church is in dispute, though it cannot be later than the early Umayyad period (early 8<sup>th</sup> cent.).

<sup>15</sup> Recent years have witnessed a considerable amount of new literature focused on cave monasticism. Here we should note: Kostrof S. Caves of God. The Monastic environment of Byzantine Cappadocia. Cambridge, MA, 1972; Rodley L. Cave Monasteries of Byzantine Cappadocia. Cambridge, 1985, notwithstanding the most recent spate of revisionist literature that endeavors to demonstrate that a large number of complexes in Cappadocia previously identified as monastic were actually secular, residential complexes; Popović D. Srednjovekovne pecine-isposnice u Prizrenskom kraju. Prethodna istrazivanja // Istorijski casopis 44 (1997), p. 129–154; Popović D. and M. Pecinska lavra Arhandjela Mihaila u Rasu // Novopazarski zbornik 22 (1998), p. 15–61. D. Popović is currently preparing a major study of cave monasticism in medieval Serbia; Manastir Crna Rijeka i Sveti Petar Koriški / Ed. D. Bojovic. Pristina and Belgrade, 1998; Ostrog / Ed. R. B. Saranovic. Belgrade, 1997.

<sup>16</sup> Mango C. and Hawkins E. J. W. The Hermitage of St. Neophytos and Its Wall Paintings // DOP 20 (1966), p. 119–206, is a detailed report on this important complex; a more accessible presentation of the essential aspects of the complex with some new interpretations is: Cor-

able caves, however, appears to have proliferated in a significant way only in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The phenomenon, undoubtedly, was an offshoot of the general rise in the anchorite form of monasticism in the Late Byzantine world. As in the case of Palestinian monasticism from the fourth to the sixth centuries, this thousand-year younger rebirth of the phenomenon is also marked by a rare, but distinct form of juxtaposition of natural caves and built churches. In the remainder of this paper we will concentrate on this Late Byzantine idiosyncrasy. The subject has not been articulated in scholarship, but deserves closer attention both as a distinctive and relatively widespread phenomenon in its own right, and because of its obvious associations with the Holy Land, the undisputed source of the intrinsic ideas. In attempting to articulate this topic, I must underscore the fact that I will be concentrating exclusively on caves with associated churches and not on churches within caves, as important as the latter category is and as much as the two categories may be relatable in other ways.

On the shrunken territory of the Late Byzantine Empire and in the neighboring Balkan states numerous examples of small monastic caves appeared during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, attesting to a greatly increased popularity of anchorite monasticism during the late Middle Ages. Various referred to as *askētaria*, or *hesihastēria*, they include also a small distinctive group in which a built church accompanies the cave itself. Some of these are miniscule in size and their churches thoroughly unassuming, as is the case with the so-called *askētarion* of the Holy Cross on Mt. Pythion, its wall paintings dating from 1339 (fig. 4)<sup>17</sup>. Another such an *askētarion*, is situated near the abandoned monastery with its cave church of the Forty Martyrs in Lakedaimonia (fig. 5)<sup>18</sup>. The monastery dates from the late thirteenth century and this also appears to be the date of the small *askētarion*. The *askētarion*, in a location difficult of access, consists of a well-constructed chapel dedicated to St. John the Baptist, an integrally built adjacent two-storied room, possibly a cell, and a cave in the natural rock, which the chapel abuts with its west façade. The chapel, accessible only through the adjacent room, was intentionally built in this manner because of the cave,

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mack R. Writing in Gold. Byzantine Society and Its Icons. London, 1985, Ch. 6. For a broader historical perspective: Galatariou C. The Making of a Saint. The Life, Times, and Sanctification of Neophytos the Recluse. Cambridge, 1991. For Neophytos' personal cave cell and its changing relationship to the adjacent cave church see: Ćurčić S. The Meaning and Function of Katechoumenia in Late Byzantine and Serbian Architecture // Manastir Žiža. Zbornik radova. Kraljevo, 2000, p. 83–93, esp. 84–85 (in Serbian, with an English res.)

<sup>17</sup> Nikonanos N. Vyzantinoi naoi tēs Thessalias apo to 10<sup>o</sup> aiōna ôs tēn kataknēsē tēs periochēs apo tous Tourkous to 1393. Athens, 1979, p. 133–135.

<sup>18</sup> Drandakēs N. V. To paliomonastērio tōn Agiōn Saranta stē Lakedaimona kai to askētario tou // Deltion tēs Christainikēs archaiologikēs etaireias, Ser. 4, 16 (1991–1992), p. 115–138, esp. 129–138.

whose meaning, though presently unknown, does not obscure the general implications. In a few rare cases the church is a more elaborate building, giving the site greater prominence, invariably reflecting the sacred nature of the site on account of the cave.

Very few of the preserved examples are adequately documented. Most common are the cases where nothing is known about its occupant and the church associated with the cave. In a few rare examples we are fortunate to have enough information that enables us to understand the evolution of a site and the manner whereby the sacredness of the original cave dwelling was enhanced by the construction of a church, and at times even a monastery adjacent to it. The best-documented, in fact exceptional case is that of Sv. Petar Koriški (St. Peter of Koriša), the first Serbian anchoretic saint<sup>19</sup>. On the basis of his preserved *vita*, and on the basis of the preserved physical evidence, it has been possible to reconstruct the Holy Man's life as a hermit, and the subsequent development of his cult in a monastery associated with his name. After the death of his parents, sometime in the 1190s, seeking complete seclusion, Peter finally settled in the 'desert', a rocky formation on the slopes of Mt. Rusenica, in the vicinity of the village Koriša, not far from Prizren in the present-day region of Kosovo and Metohija. This was a location that shares many characteristics with that of Neophitos' Enkleistra near Paphos. According to his hagiographer, Peter finally settled in a cave from which, with the help of Archangel Michael, he had chased away a huge serpent. Offering repeated thanks to God, for helping him achieve this feat, he finally experienced the supreme bliss and — "after that his cave became filled with indescribable light, chasing away sleep by day and by night, and he felt as though in Heaven and not on earth, filled with joy and Divine happiness"<sup>20</sup>. The text also says that Peter "began to worship the snake's cave as a God's church and as a sacred spot, saying as Abraham had said "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided" (Genesis, 22, 14)<sup>21</sup>. The Holy Man, according to his hagiographer, did not worry about "building a house, but derived joy from living in God-carved caves as if in beautiful palaces"<sup>22</sup>. His hagiographer, a Monk by the name Teodosije, writing ca. 1310, reports on his own arrival at the site of Peter's cave thus: "Seeing his (i. e. Peter's) desert and the cliff upon which he had sequestered himself, I beheld the God-built dwelling made for anchorites... The cave of the most holy father, in which he lived superhumanly, like an angel, had been made into a God's church and his tomb and the remains of his sacred relics repose in it"<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> For the *vita* of St. Peter cf. *Teodosije. Žitija* / Ed. D. Bogdanović. Belgrade, 1988, p. 265–288.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 282, № 28 / English translation by S. Ćurčić.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275, № 17 / English translation by S. Ćurčić.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 282, № 28 / English translation by S. Ćurčić.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287–88, № 41 / English translation by S. Ćurčić.

Indeed, archaeological evidence has confirmed all of this (figs. 6 and 7)<sup>24</sup>. The Holy Man's tomb was found in the cave, adapted in the course of the fourteenth century as a side chapel of the church of St. Peter, the focus of a monastery grown around the sacred cave<sup>25</sup>. In every respect this fits the description of the Holy Land monastic sites in which caves and churches were juxtaposed in such a distinctive manner.

Some 300–400 m from the monastery of Sv. Petar Koriški is another small church with a tiny cave, evidently another sacred locus that the tradition associates with Jelena, the sister of Sv. Petar Koriški (fig. 8)<sup>26</sup>. Despite its miniscule scale, this church, archaeologically proven to have been inhabited at the time of its final destruction in the 15<sup>th</sup> cent., was obviously a small-scale version of the katholikon of St. Peter's Monastery.

A fine example of a cave-and-church juxtaposition is at Berat in Albania. Here, the church of Archangel Michael was built ca. 1300, next to a cave situated on a cliff just below the main city walls of Berat (fig. 9)<sup>27</sup>. Unfortunately, we have no knowledge regarding the function of this cave, but clearly the choice to build a church in this location was not fortuitous. The phenomenon has been noted, though not adequately studied, along the Dalmatian coast as well. A small, undoubtedly medieval chapel of an unknown date, built against the opening of a natural fissure on the cliffs of Mt. Mosor, was recorded and published by Ejnar Dyggve, who saw in this phenomenon evidence of links between Christian and pagan cults (fig. 10)<sup>28</sup>. Dating from the thirteenth or fourteenth century, the church of Panagia Hagiogalousena, was also constructed against a steep cliff just below a tiny village of Hagion Ghalas, on the island of Chios (fig. 11)<sup>29</sup>. In this case the church was also built in front of the entrance into a deep cave in the cliff side, and was evidently once associated with a small monastery.

Undoubtedly one of the finest Late Byzantine cave-and-church complexes is the Perivleptos at Mistra. The church, dating from the third quarter

<sup>24</sup> Popović D. The Cult of St. Peter of Koriša. Stages of Development and Patterns // *Balcanica* 38 (1997), p. 181–212, with older literature; also Marković O. Ostaci manastira Petra Koriškog // *Starine Kosova i Metohije* 5–6 (1968–1971), p. 409–423, the first comprehensive report on the architecture of the monastery and its relationship to the cave of St. Peter.

<sup>25</sup> Marković (as in f. n. 24), esp. p. 410–411.

<sup>26</sup> Ivanović M. Ostaci crkava isposnica u anahoretskoj naseobini Sv. Petra Koriškog u današnjem selu Kabašu kod Prizrena i njegovoj okolini // *Manastir Crna Rijeka i Sveti Petar Koriški* / Ed. D. Bojović. Priština and Belgrade, 1998, p. 167–176, esp. p. 169; also Popović D. Srednjovekovne pećine-isposnice u Prizrenskom kraju — prethodna istraživanja // *Istorijski časopis* 44 (1997), p. 129–154, esp. 135–136.

<sup>27</sup> Koch G. Albanien. Kulturdenkmäler eines unbekannten Landes aus 2200 Jahren. Marburg, 1985, p. 56–57; also Meksi A. Tri kisha Byzantine të Beratit // *Monumentet* 4 (1972), p. 73–95, Fr. sum. esp. p. 99–102.

<sup>28</sup> Dyggve E. History of Salonitan Christianity. Oslo, 1951, p. 10 and fig. I, 16.

<sup>29</sup> Bouras Ch. Chios. Athens, 1974, p. 70.



of the fourteenth century, is well known for its frescoes. Its architecture and sculptural decoration were subjects of a 1980 doctoral dissertation at the Sorbonne in Paris, by Aspasia Louvi-Kizis<sup>30</sup>. The question of the exact relationship of the church and a cave in the steep rock to which the church is attached, however, has never been fully resolved. In a recent article, Louvi-Kizis reiterates her opinion that the southwestern entrance to the church was opened only in 1714<sup>31</sup>. In making this proposition, she ignores a small cave in the rock, directly above the entrance with which the church shares a large window (fig. 12). It seems that this very cave was the actual *raison d'être* for building the church, and possibly even the entire monastery, in this location. The church has an unusual orientation — its apse facing southwest — while more than a third of its exterior is built directly against the rock. The unusual orientation of the church, as I have shown in another context, is reflected in the uncommon placement of fresco compositions in the interior<sup>32</sup>. Thus, for example, the Dormition of the Virgin is here situated on the southeast wall, directly above an entrance, instead of being, as was customary, on the wall facing the main apse and above the non-existent, conventional point of church entry. The changes appear to have been governed by the relationship to the pre-existing cave, whose interior is visible through a window above one of the alternative entrance doors (fig. 13). Its frescoes indicate unmistakably that this window was never glazed, and that the intention was to maintain the internal communication with the church.

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The wave of monastic conservatism in the Late Byzantine world, encapsulated in the movement known as Hesychasm, was shaped to a great extent by the grim realities that the Byzantine world was confronted with at the time. Retreat “into the desert”, became a new ‘old call’ of the venerable Holy Fathers of the monastic movement. In that context, the cave — not the symbolic, but the real cave — once more became the ideal monastic setting. Late Byzantine art in its ever-expanding vocabulary also embraced the cave as a favorite topos. “Prophet Elijah in His Cave fed by a raven” is one of the subjects that commonly appeared on walls of monastic chapels and cells (fig. 14). The hierotopical language it bespoke was far more direct and

<sup>30</sup> Louvi A. L'architecture et la sculpture de la Perivleptos de Mistra / Thèse de doctorat de III<sup>e</sup> Cycle, Université de Paris, Panthéon, Sorbonne. Paris, 1980.

<sup>31</sup> Louvi-Kizis A. Oi ktêtores tês Perivleptou tou Mystra // Deltion tês Christianikês archaiologikês etaireias, Ser. 4, 24 (2003), p. 101–117, esp. p. 101 and fig. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Ćurčić S. Smisao i funkcija katichoumena u poznovizantijskoj i srpskoj arhitekturi (The meaning and function of katichoumenia in Late Byzantine and Serbian architecture) // Manastir Žiça. Zbornik radova. Kraljevo, 2000, p. 84–93, esp. 86–87.

comprehensible than the sophisticated symbolic language of Caves of Christ as embodied in the representations of the Mother of God in church apses of the Middle Byzantine era. This new visual language — “the Holy Land vernacular”, we might call it — would have been far more understandable to the fourteenth-century monks, but also to Egeria in her days, than the sophisticated theological language developed by the elite of Constantinopolitan urban monks and ecclesiastics during the intervening centuries.

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ПЕЩЕРА И ХРАМ.  
ВОСТОЧНОХРИСТИАНСКИЙ ИЕРОТОПИЧЕСКИЙ СИНТЕЗ

Настоящая статья посвящена рассмотрению определенных символических и функциональных аспектов сакрального пространства в православной культуре. Более точно — появлению особого феномена: совмещения природной пещеры и рукотворного здания церкви и следствию такого совмещения в богослужебной практике православия. Символическое понимание алтаря (вимы) в православии как «пещеры в Вифлееме, где родился Христос, и пещеры, в которой Он был погребен (т. е. Иерусалима)» — хорошо известное богословское представление, сформулированное не позднее 700 г. В известном смысле алтарь церкви, символизировавший начало и конец земной жизни Христа, в представлениях верующих являлся самой Святой землей. Сакральная земная топография была поэтому совмещена с символическим видением Небесного Иерусалима, воплощенного в покрытом куполом главном нефе церкви.

В ряде пещерных храмов (например, энклизтре Св. Неофита рядом с Пафосом на Кипре) такое символическое понимание топографии Святой земли было дано в осязаемой материальной форме. Здесь естественная пещера создавала для алтаря особую среду, наряду с фресками, написанными на неровных поверхностях приспособленного природного пространства. Можно понять выбор св. Неофита: его церковь изначально была закрытой часовней, которую он сделал для себя как монах-отшельник, уединившись в пещере в холмах к северу от своего родного Пафоса. Образ монашеской жизни св. Неофита, впечатляющий благодаря обширным сведениям, сохранившимся в его собственных трудах, а также благодаря хорошо выполненным и сохранившимся фрескам, вряд ли был новым для того времени, 1160-х гг. Его идея точно и сознательно воспроизводила сравнительно более старые отшельнические

пещерные жилища, в которых когда-то проживали преподобные палестинские отцы — основатели монашеского движения: свв. Савва, Феодоктист и другие, доведшие до совершенства духовную практику подражания земной жизни Христа.

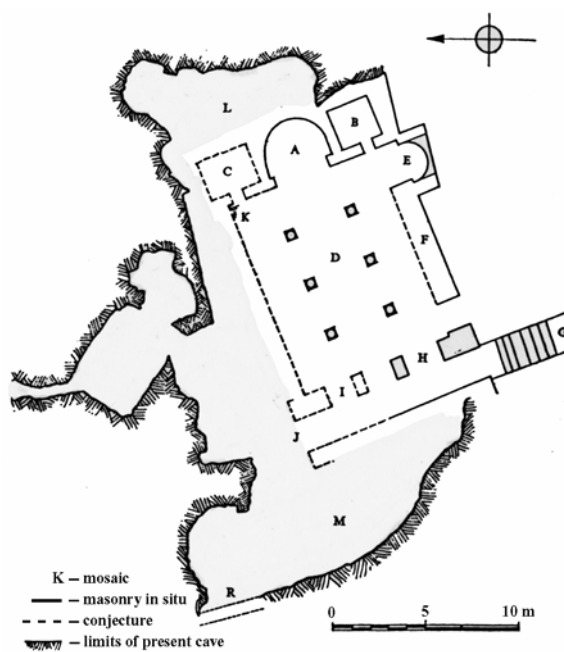
Приспособление под жилище пещеры естественного происхождения рано стало одним из наиболее высоких проявлений иноческого аскетизма и отказа от мирской жизни через победу отшельника над всеми трудностями и искушениями. Часто пещеры, в которых жили такие святые, становились местами их погребения. Таким образом, они становились местами их духовного рождения и земной кончины, можно сказать, их Вифлеемом и Иерусалимом. Через их присутствие в жизни и в смерти такая пещера сама по себе становилась *locus sanctus*, сакральным пространством, предопределявшим вечное поклонение. Ландшафт Святой земли был испещрен подобного рода пещерными жилищами, привлекавшими паломников и продолжавшими вдохновлять последующие поколения монахов.

В ряде случаев первоначальная пещера, фактически являвшаяся мартириумом, становилась центром религиозной жизни. Такая пещера, как своего рода реликвия, обосновывала постройку прилегающей к ней церкви. Так возникла особая, характерная категория *церквей с пещерами*. Такие церкви, конечно, возникали рядом с пещерами исключительно из-за присущей им святости. Церковь Рождества Христова в Вифлееме, построенная в правление Константина Великого над гротом, в котором, как считается, родился Иисус, могла являться высокочтимым прототипом, освящавшим такую практику. Ряд монастырских церквей в Святой земле, датируемых V–VI веками, например, церковь монастыря Святого Кириака в Сусакиме, монастырская церковь в Хозиве и монастырская церковь Дарат ал Фанун в Иордане, подпадают под такое описание. Кажется, практика создания таких связанных с пещерами церквей была мало распространена в восточном христианстве с конца VI в. и до начала поздневизантийской эпохи.

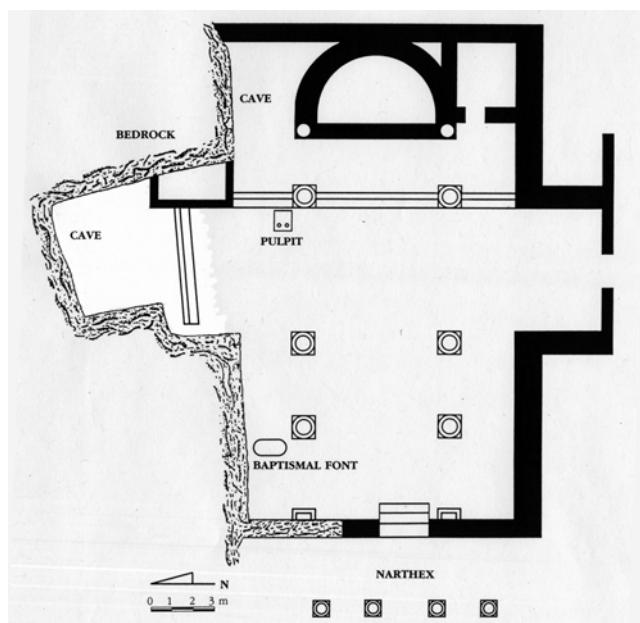
Возрождение и значительный расцвет строительства церквей рядом с почитаемыми пещерами относится к XIII–XIV векам. Мы уделим внимание монастырским церквям Св. Петра Коришского, а также его сестры Елены в Косово в Сербии, церкви XIV века Св. Михаила в Берате в Албании, а также нескольким скитам в Фессалии и Пелопоннесе, которые обладают общими чертами, выражая одну сущностно важную идею. Несомненно, самой замечательной из церквей с пещерами этого периода является монастырь Перивлепта в Мистре, построенный и описанный в третьей четверти XIV века. Эта монастырская церковь была сооружена у естественной скалы, в которой находится маленькая пещера, которая, в свою очередь, связана с внутренним пространством. Дру-

гим важным моментом здесь является отклонение осей церкви от стандартного их расположения. Так, главная апсида здесь направлена на юго-юго-восток, а не на восток. Такое отклонение позволяет предположить, что естественная ориентация пещеры, с которой должна была соотноситься церковь, была символически более важной, чем установленные правила постройки храмов. Другими словами, сакральные качества церкви проистекали не из абстрактных символических норм, а из святости самой пещеры. В эпоху, когда доступность важных реликвий и путешествий в Святую Землю стала почти нулевой, внимание, очевидно, было обращено к новым, местным источникам святости.

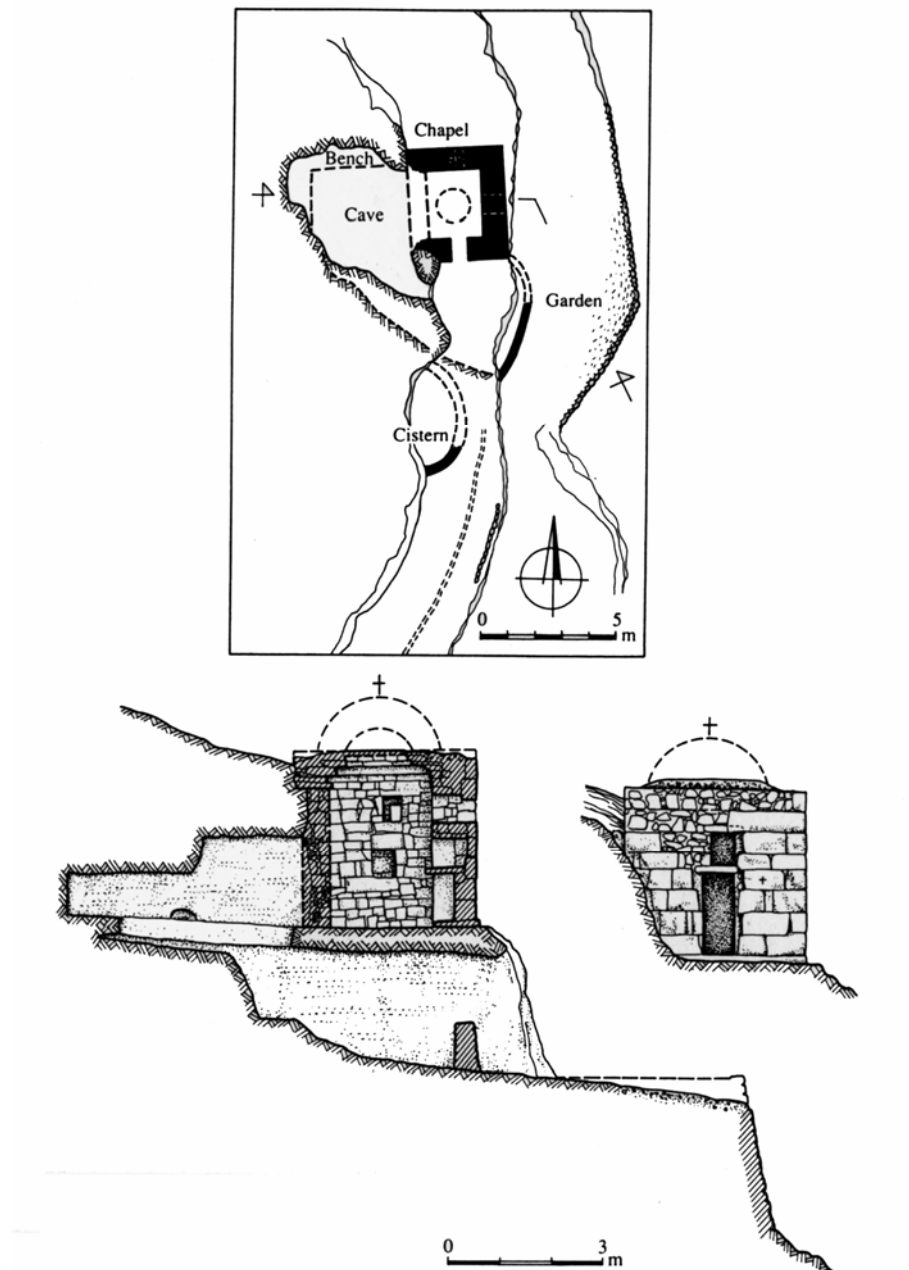
Описанный выше феномен, свойственный возродившейся в XIII–XIV веках монашеской жизни, привел к увеличению числа келий, специально построенных внутри церквей и функционально устроенных как затворы (*hesichasteria*) для монахов определенного ранга. Важно, что изображения прототипов монашеской жизни, например, пророка Илии в пещере, которого кормит ворон, появляются в ряде таких помещений, обозначая и их назначение, и символическую важность пещеры самой по себе. Вышеупомянутое возрождение ранней практики возведения новых церквей при более ранних почитаемых пещерах может быть соотнесено с подъемом исихазма, монашеского движения, распространившегося в эту эпоху в византийском мире.



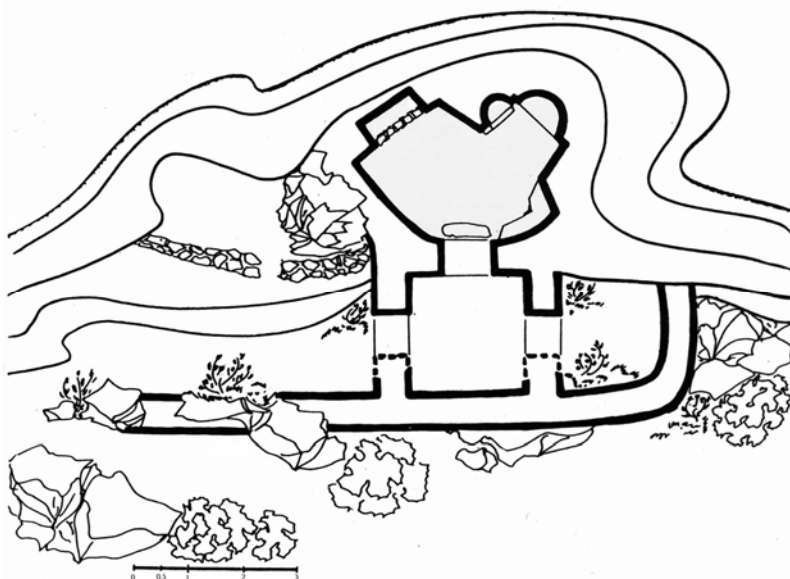
1. Meriamlik, St. Thecla as in 4<sup>th</sup> cent.; plan (reconstr. Wilkinson)



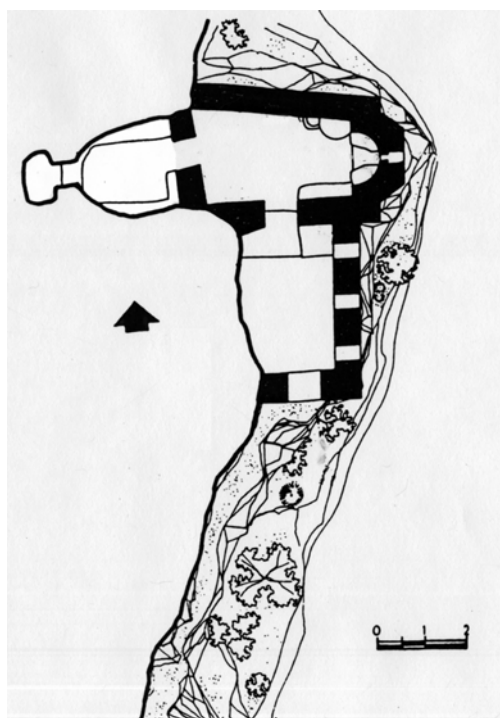
2. Darat el Fanun (near Amman), Chapel of Jabal-al-Akdar; plan (Piccirillo)



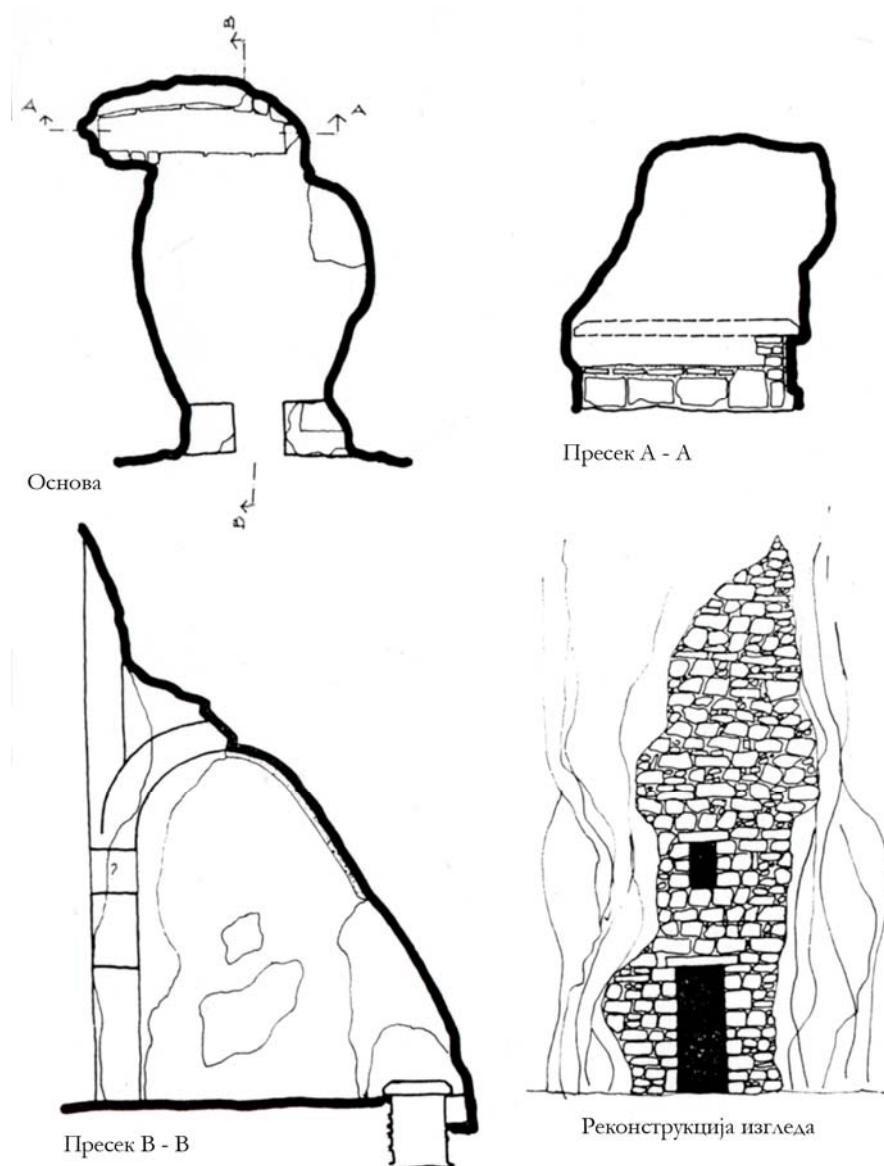
3. Sousakim, Hermitage of Cyriac; plan, section and elevation (Hirschfeld)



4. Mt. Pythion, *Askētarion* of the Holy Cross; plan (Nikonanos)

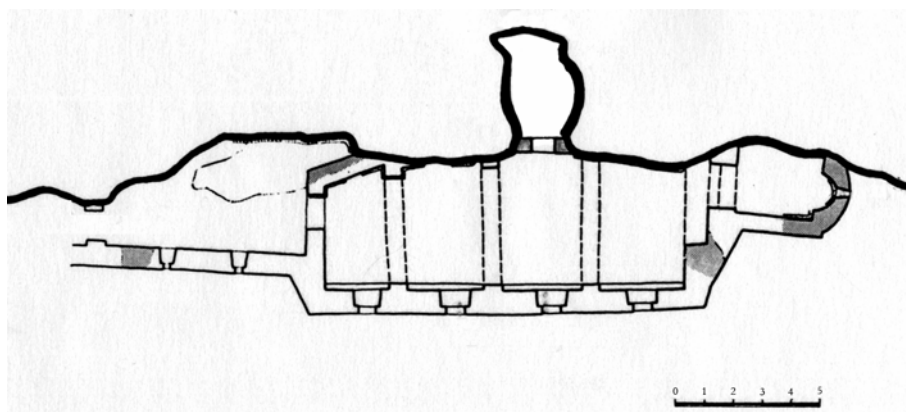


5. Lakedaimonia, *Askētarion* of the Forty Martyrs; plan (Drandakis)

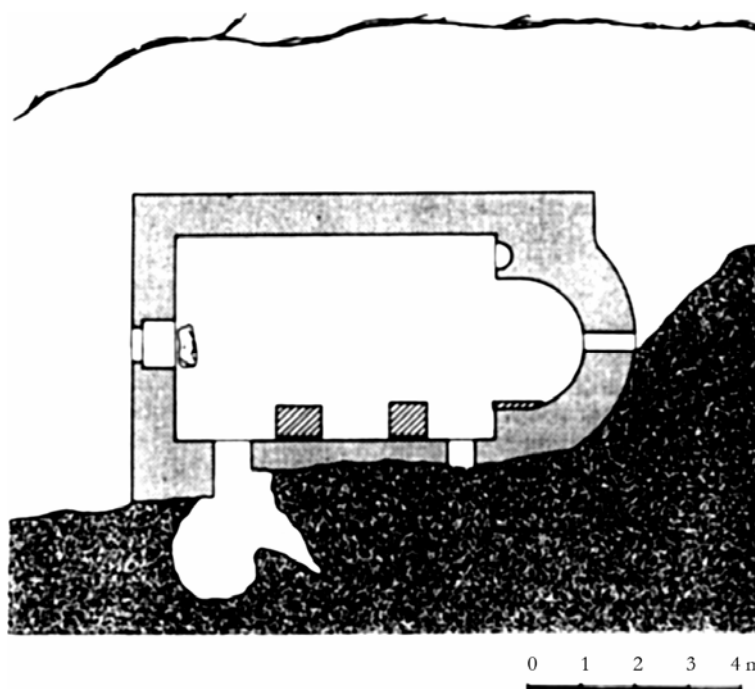


6. Koriša, Cave of St. Peter of Koriša; plan, sections, and elevation (reconstr. O. Marković)





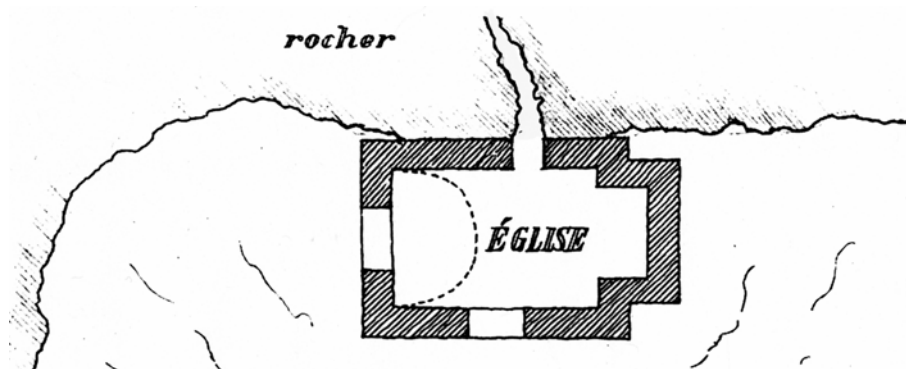
7. Koriša, Monastery of St. Peter of Koriša, cave and church; plan (O. Marković)



8. Koriša, Church and cave of Jelena (sister of St. Peter of Koriša); plan (D. Popović)



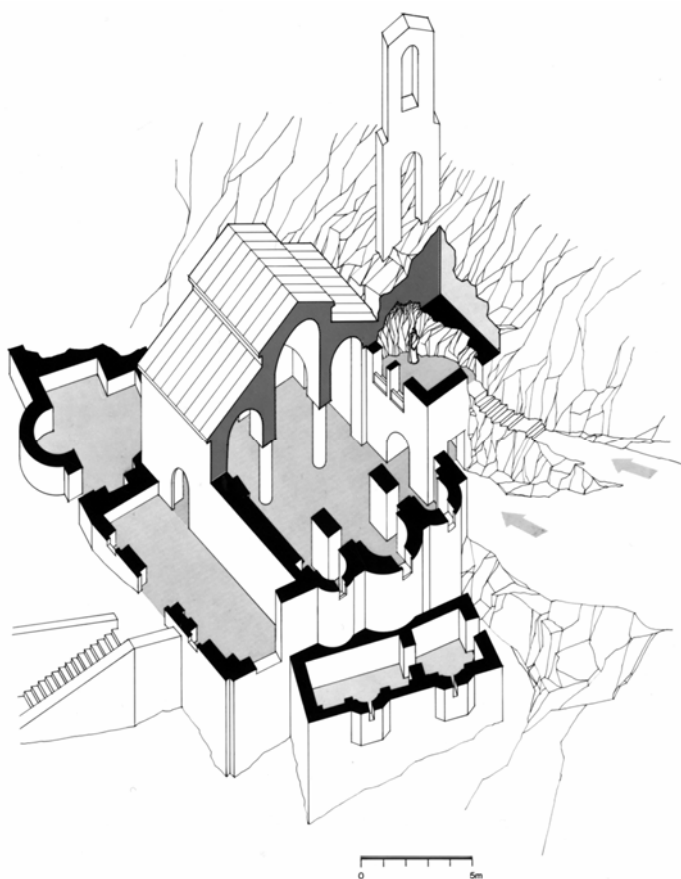
9. Berat, Church of Archangel Michael with cave (photo: G. Koch)



10. Mt. Mosor, medieval chapel and opening of natural rock fissure; plan (Dyggve)



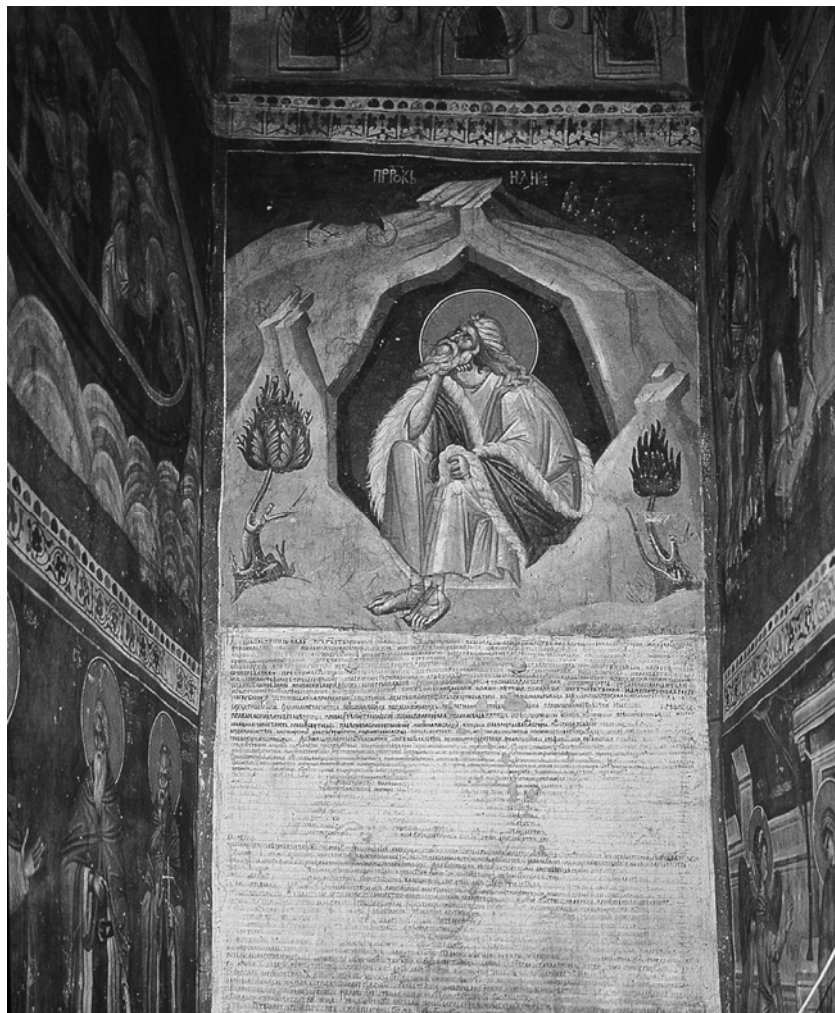
11. Hagion Galas, Chios, Panagia Hagiogalousena (photo: Ćurčić)



12. Mistra, Perivleptos; axonometric section (Ćurčić; delin. By J. Kelly)



13. Mistra, Perivleptos; interior looking southeast (photo: Ćurčić)



14. Gracanica, southeast chapel; fresco (c. 1321) "Prophet Elijah in his cave fed by a raven" (photo: J. Stojković)