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IMPERIAL ΧΟΡΟΣ:
A SPATIAL ICON OF TIME AS ETERNITY

It was under imperial auspices that light was once in the attention of the Byzantine beholder, when a “circling chorus of bright light” literally “filled the eye (of men) with wonder”¹ in Hagia Sophia. Revolving round the temple, the evening light sailed through the “bright air” creating a true sacred choreography (fig. 1). In my article “Χορός of Light” devoted to the one hundred and fourteen stanzas from Paulus’ poem describing the illumination of the church, I assigned the χορός as a constitutive concept of the aesthetics of light in the sacred space of Hagia Sophia. Χορός, the sacred circular movement was the source of light and radiance, and of light as radiance, which informed the whole space of the imperial church, as well as the vision of the Constantinopolitan beholder. But I must stress again that the celebration of light in Hagia Sophia was liturgically unspecific, for as I have proposed Paulus’ quality of “timelessness” is related to the paradigm of contemporary sixth-century Byzantine vision. The abundant light in the church was related to the tradition concerned with spiritual worship, advocated by, among others, Hypathius for whom light was an important channel of communication with the Divine Light. Therefore, the sophianic χορός of Paulus was not objectively detailed, yet it was liturgically implicated, its “timeless” dimension being shared with Pseudo-Dionysius’ text who relates liturgical actions to timeless and intelligible realities specific to the Neoplatonists².

¹ *Mango C.*, trans. Paulus the Silentiary, *Descr. S. Sophiae // The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453: Sources and Documents*. University of Toronto Press, 1986, p. 89–91; *Marie-Christine Fayant and Pierre Chuvin*, trans. Paul le Silentiare. *Description de Sainte-Sophie Constantinople*. Paris: Éditions A Die, 1997, p. 113–121.

² *Shaw G.* Neoplatonic Theurgy and Dionysius the Areopagite // *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7.4 (1999), p. 582.

Where has the *χορός* gone – one might rhetorically ask oneself? What happened to the dance of light and its radiance? This paper attempts to assess the sacrosanct momentum in which *χορός* resurfaces again in Byzantine discourse, after more than half a millennium. Like the first time, *χορός* emerges in the imperial context, in the *typika* of the Komnenian foundations (fig. 2), which prescribe in detail a magnificent celebration of light. But unlike the time of Justinian, when a more abstract philosophical and poetical aura surrounded *χορός*, the Komnenian *χορός* made its entrance into the monastic liturgical vocabulary of the imperial ecclesia as a specific lighting device. This is by all means an important shift in the history of the term with consequences yet unexplored. However, we are confronted again with a similar problem: there is no trace of the physical object, the medium in which *χορός* has been embodied. Its description in the *typika* is laconic, as if a tradition was still going on³. All we can retrieve from that time is the white space of the dome of the imperial church Pantokrator of John II Komnenos, robed by its original image, perhaps a golden mosaic of Pantokrator around which the *χορός* once hung down. But if none of the lavish mosaic decoration exists anymore, the floor above which the *χορός* was once suspended is still well-preserved and newly restored, disclosing (though not yet for the public), a spectacular cosmatesque mosaic in the technique *opus sectile* (fig. 3). The space under the *χορός* is occupied by the central disc of a quincunx composition displayed on the floor. The composition is divided into nine other squares, with lateral panels covered by discs of porphyry and verde antique framed by a triple band of coloured marbles. The disks are arranged in a quincunx pattern (fig. 4). In the spandrels around each disk, there are *rinceaux*, filled with birds, animals and mythological beasts. To the west at the entrance, a large disk is surrounded by the zodiac cycle with the symbols and personifications of the four seasons (fig. 5). To the east at the entrance to the bema, there is another large disk framed by a scene from the life of Samson (fig. 6). Scenes of hunting and farming fill up the panels and the bands with land and sea creatures. The centre of the quincunx underneath the *χορός* has certainly been a significant mark on the floor of the hierotopic space of Pantokrator, a sacrosanct point of choreography. In the absence of the *χορός*, the quincunx might be for us an important mirror to reflect to us something of the original *χορός*. It must be stressed that the decoration of the floor of the southern church (the Pantokrator church) belongs to the first phase of

³ It is possible that *χορός* existed as well in the Philantropos church, the joint foundation of Irene Doukaina, now lost.

construction during John II Komnenos, beginning in 1118, which is more or less contemporary with Irene's *typikon* (1116). This temporal relationship should grant me permission to refer to this text in my further interpretation.

STAGING LIGHT: ΧΟΡΟΣ

Χορός is first mentioned in the *typikon* (written in 1110–1116) of the church Kecharitōmenē (Full of Grace)⁴, the foundation of the Empress Irene Doukina, the wife of emperor Alexios I Komnenos. It reappears in Pantokrator *typikon*⁵ of John II Komnenos, written in 1136, on the occasion of the consecration of the monastery. Both *typika* make extensive references concerning the illumination of the churches. In the Kecharitōmenē *typikon* we read in chapter 67 “Concerning the crater lamps that hang around the dome and the rest of them:

Every second one of the crater lamps that hang in the middle of the χορός must be lit at the beginning of the services that are usually celebrated in the church, at matins, vespers, and the liturgy; and they must be extinguished again at the end of these. The same thing should be done concerning all the lamps of the *templon*⁶.

In comparison, chapter 6 of the Pantokrator *typikon*, concerning the illumination (φωταγωγία) of the main church on ordinary days, reads:

The following lamps also should burn continuously at night—one in the narthex, another in the exonarthex, and another before the [representation] of the ecumenical councils. But during the services of matins, the liturgy, and vespers all the crater lamps of the χορός, sixteen in number, should be lit all around as well as lamps of the *templon*, four of the triple lamps, four lamps in the four vaults, three in the narthex in addition to the night-lamp, and two in the exonarthex in addition to the night-lamp there too⁷.

⁴ *Kecharitomene: Typikon* of Empress Irene Doukina Komnene for the Convent of the Mother of God *Kecharitomene* in Constantinople / Eds. John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero, trans. Robert Jordan // *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, vol. 2, Dumbarton Oaks Studies 35 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000), p. 649–724; Gautier P.. Le typikon de la Théotokos Kécharitōménē // *REB* 43 (1985), p. 1–155.

⁵ *Pantokrator: Typikon* of Emperor John II Komnenos for the Monastery of Christ *Pantokrator* in Constantinople / Eds. Thomas and Hero, trans. Robert Jordan // *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, vol 2, Dumbarton Oaks Studies 35 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000) , p. 735–781; Gautier P. Le typikon du Christ Sauveur Pantocrator // *REB* 32 (1974), p. 1–131.

⁶ *Kecharitomene: Typikon* 698.

⁷ *Pantokrator: Typikon* 740.

Although the instructions are laconic, they indicate a formalized liturgical apparatus. The *typikon* prescribes that “during the services of matins, the liturgy, and vespers all the crater lamps of the χορός, sixteen in number, should be lit all around” (κύκλω το χοροῦ οἱ κρατήρες ἅπαντες) as well as other lamps of the templon etc.⁸ As I will show further, the contribution of the Komnenian *typika* to the monastic reform of the twelfth century was significant; it reflected such an emulation of light that could explain the origins of the Komnenian χορός. The *typikon* also shows how time was liturgically set up in the Komnenian churches, and how the lighting (χορός) was specifically connected to the liturgical hours (matins, liturgy, and vespers). But could one learn more about these matters? Some valuable information could be retrieved from the *typikon* of Kecharitômenè, already available in 1116 at the time of the foundation floor of Pantokrator (1118). The prologue of the *typikon* of Kecharitômenè is a statement addressed by the Empress to the Mother of God. From this we learn that, animated by the desire to imitate the holy model, she constructed this monastery, just as the Mother of God made herself a temple to contain the holy child⁹. The idea of imitation is re-iterated further in connection with the liturgical instruction (paragraph 32), where she points out again that the liturgical services should imitate God and should start with the first hour, just as God himself has started the creation with the apparition of light (φωτὸς ἀρξώμεθα):

[P]our commencer avec l'apparition de la lumière (φωτὸς ἀρξώμεθα), nous débiterons par la première heure du jour, imitant en cela Dieu qui a commencé la création du monde par la création de la lumière. Donc, après avoir achevé la doxologie de l'aurore, nous devons lui rejoindre aussitôt prime comme à l'accoutumée, et à la fin de cette heure dire cette prière: “Celui qui à tout moment et à toute heure”¹⁰.

[I]n order to begin with the light, let us begin with the first hour of the day *imitating God* in this, who began his formation of the world with the creation of light. So then after the completion of the worship of matins, we must continue with the first hour in the customary way and at the end of this the following prayer should be said, “Thou who at all times and all hours”¹¹ [my italics].

⁸ *Pantokrator: Typikon* 741.

⁹ *Gautier*. Le typikon de la Théotokos Kécharitômenè, p. 22–23.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 78–79.

¹¹ *Kecharitomene: Typikon* 686.

This means that the liturgical hours and the monastic time should reflect and follow God's movement, imitating the creation of the "Eternal God, the Maker of all creation", and the Creator "[Who] *set the heavens in a circle, divided up time*, poured out the air and spread the earth underneath, and appointed man as overseer divide of the visible world [my emphasis]"¹². Thus, the *typikon*¹³ *divides the time* of the sacramental life of the monastery, structuring it in like manner of the divine creator, who makes light the first instant of creation¹⁴, which becomes the Christian hours. The prologue makes consistent the idea that the monastic settlement is an imitation of the divine creation; it is an image of the universe. According to the principle of imitation, the liturgical services should begin with light, that is, with the prime (ῥα). It is remarkable that the Byzantine liturgical hours (the prime, terce, sext and none) have preserved the old name of ancient resonance, the ῥαῖ (sing. Ὠρα). The prologue of the Empress' *typikon* reflects a fine theological argumentation concerning the central role of light and its cosmological implication, where light is a function of time. Never after Hagia Sophia was this connection among light, cosmology, and χορός made so poignant. And this might perhaps answer, at least, partially why χορός resurfaced the twelfth century and how it was liturgically framed. It resurfaced in completely different circumstances in which a more formalized liturgical frame was at stake although, as I will show in a moment, the Classical tradition seems to have been still alive. I think the mindset described in the *typikon* of the Empress should be applied to Pantokrator church as well, with the view to assess the Komnenian Hierotopy. But before broaching the topic of hierotopy, I want to introduce another iconographical detail which survives from that period and which might have been an interesting visual compound in the space of Pantokrator to be read in conjunction with the liturgical hours¹⁵. This concerns the representation of the seasons and the zodiac cycle in the iconographic program of the floor. In a study on architecture, art and Komnenian ideology at the Pantokrator monastery, Robert Ousterhout takes up the wheel of the zodiac and notes its *nou-*

¹² *Kecharitomene: Typikon* 664.

¹³ Chapter 32: "Concerning the office of the first, third, and sixth hour" (cf. (22) *Evergetis* [4], ed. lines 75–117) discusses the ecclesiastical office and, the liturgical order of the services in the convent. Like the *Evergetis typikon*, but unlike the Studite rule, Irene's *typikon* specifically associates the matins with the first hour.

¹⁴ This evokes the cosmologic model of the world Plotinus mentioned before: "Thus all begins with the great light, shining self-centred; in accordance with the reigning plan (that of emanation) this gives forth its brilliance" (*The Enneads* 4.3.17, trans. MacKenna).

¹⁵ Unfortunately, we are unable to assess the true nature of this cosmatesque dance of the Ὠραῖ in Pantokrator, particularly important since we know that the Ὠραῖ and the zodiac surrounded a disc of porphyry.

veauté in the context of church decoration. Although he understands the need to view the zodiac as part of a larger theme of the iconography of the floor representing order in the Christian cosmos, Ousterhout thinks that the appearance of the zodiac at Pantokrator must be associated with a twelfth-century fascination with the astrology¹⁶. He develops his analysis exclusively in this direction.

STAGING TIME: THE DANCE OF ΩΡΑΙ

To the western part of the naos, at the entrance, a large porphyry disc (fig. 5) is surrounded by the zodiac cycle divided in sixteen segments containing the personifications of the four seasons placed at cardinal points and in between them the twelve zodiacal signs set against black marble and separated by columns. In ancient Greek culture, the course of the seasons (or hours) was symbolically described by the dance of the ΩΡΑΙ; in conjunction with the Charites, Hebe, Harmonia, and Aphrodite, they accompany the songs of the Muses and the playing of the lyre by Apollo with their dancing (*Hymn to Apollo* 3. 194–203). The presence of such pagan iconography in the ecclesiastical context might be, at first sight, intriguing. Ousterhout ascribes it to the imperial interest for astrology, more exactly, of Manuel I, who endorsed astrological pursuits and whose court poets wrote treatises on astrological subjects¹⁷. Although I think it is an interesting point of view, I would like to propose a different approach to the image using a different tool, namely, typology. I regard the presence of ΩΡΑΙ and the zodiac at Pantokrator as a synthesis of ancient thinking on time rather than perceiving it as a mere zodiac cycle. The iconography from Pantokrator is, however, not original. Similar visual patterns could be found in Hellenistic floors and Jewish synagogues (fig. 7, 8). The sixth century representations of the months on the floor mosaic from Jerash and Scythopolis show how this imagery entered the ecclesiastical context. Other examples show that the depiction of the months had come back in fashion in the twelfth century associated with the literary circles of poets, like Theodore Prodromos and Makrembolites. Like the contemporary poetry, the ΩΡΑΙ-zodiac seems to pick up on a fashionable motif which the Byzantine literati brought to attention. However, as Elisabeth Jeffreys notes, at the time of the Komnenians the reappearance of the months in Canon Tables was “not a meaningless piece of Byzantine antiquarianism but rather the redevelopment of a theme consistent with their earlier function, though the mechanism by which it reappeared remains ob-

¹⁶ Ousterhout R. *Architecture, Art and Komneian Ideology at the Pantokrator Monastery // Byzantine Constantinople. Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life / Ed. Nevra Necipoglu*. Leiden: Brill, 2001, p. 144–145.

¹⁷ Ousterhout, p. 145.

scure”¹⁸. As Jeffreys argues, when the personification of the months appeared again it was in an ecclesiastical context, as a decoration of the liturgical books. In the canon tables of the Melbourne Gospels and the Venice Gospel, the arches of the architectural frame are supported by little figures identified as personifications of the months, like in the floor mosaic of Pantokrator. The justification for the presence of these figures in a liturgical context was meant perhaps to demonstrate that time is subject to a higher order. Likewise, in my view, the placement of the pagan Ωραι-zodiac at the threshold of the entrance in the naos of Pantokrator might have pointed to a similar idea, giving a clue to what has appeared, at first sight, to be in contradiction to the liturgical hours. Therefore, with these considerations in mind, I restrain myself from interpreting this iconographical detail exclusively from the perspective of astrology and, instead, look for typological connections.

The idea of concordance between the liturgical feasts and the months as ideal form is present for example in the twelfth-century diptych (fig. 9), described in the inventory of the monastery of Xylourgos of 1143 as “the twelve feasts with the twelve months” (calendar icons)¹⁹, illustrated as a choral disposition of the row of saints around the Virgin and the Pantokrator. According to Hans Belting, the association of the circular images with the motion of the planets is a poetic idea with some literary equivalent in a dedicatory poem of the Georgian calendar book of 1030 from Constantinople, which says that the book is a cosmos in which Christ is the sun, Mary is the moon and the “choirs of all the just who have truly pleased the Lord are the shining stars”²⁰. This example of typological view on images might not have been singular at the time. In fact, it reflected a mode of thinking that could be traced back to as far as the Christian Fathers. One of the most fascinating texts of Christian cosmology that specifically likens God to the sun is the Oration 28.30 of Gregory Nazianzes, which might be helpful in the interpretation of this complex of images in the Pantokrator church:

I wonder if you have noticed the important truth that, as a non-Christian writer (i.e. Plato, *Rep.* VI) puts it, “the Sun has the same place in things of sense as God has in things ideal.” It gives light to the eyes, just as he does to the mind. The Sun is

¹⁸ Jeffreys E. *The Labours of the Twelve Months in twelfth-century Byzantium // Personification in the Greek World: From Antiquity to Byzantium* / Eds. Emma Stafford, Judith Herrin. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2005, p. 321.

¹⁹ Belting H. *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* / Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1994, p. 252–253; and Appendix 24D.

²⁰ Sevcenko I. // *DOP*, 1962, 273 n. 97; Mijovic P. *Gruzinkie menologii XI po XIV vek // Zograph* 8 (1977): 17ff. The poem is a manuscript (Sion) A 648 in the National Library in Tiflis. Apud. Belting, *Likeness and Presence* 581, note 96.

the noblest thing we can see, God the noblest we can know by thought. (Oration 28.30)²¹

Yet Gregory's comparison between the Sun and God is not made for the sake of comparison, but for a deeper purpose. Gregory's final concern is to identify the *cause* that made the sun to be "the maker and the divider of the season:"

How does he create the orderly arrival, and assign the disciplined departure of the seasons? Love rules that they embrace, seemly discipline that they part, like dancers they gradually mingle (ὥσπερ ἐν χορῷ συμπλεκόμενων ἀλλήλαις), stealthily closing in exactly as do days and nights, to avoid giving pain by their novelty. (Oration 28.30)²²

Who made heaven rotate and set the stars in order? Can you tell me what heaven and the stars are?... Granted you have a grasp of revolutions and orbits, conjunctions and separations, settings and risings, the finer points of degrees (as they are called) and all the other subjects you take such inordinate pride in knowing, ...explain the cause of the order and movement. What makes the Sun a beacon for the whole world to look at, a chorus-leader (ὥσπερ χοροῦ τινος χορυφαῖος), as it were, who puts the other stars in the shade by his superior brilliance, out-going them more than any of them can outdo the others? (Oration 28.29)²³

Similar questions might also have been the concern of the faithful, the monks and the Empress herself, who attentively stressed in her *typikon* the role of God who is "the Maker of all creation", the Creator "[Who] set the heavens in a circle, divided up time". Placed at the threshold of the naos, where the zodiac lies and where the seasons make their choral circuit, such questions might have been inevitable. But for the faithful and especially for the members of the monastic χορεία, that is, the choir of monks of Pantokrator, the answer was to be found at the very centre of the naos, under the χορός where, according to the *typikon*,

²¹ Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen / Trans. Lionel Wickham, Frederick Williams. E. J. Brill: Leiden, New York, København, Köln, 1991, p. 243.

²² Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen 243. (PG 36, 69).

²³ Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen 242. (PG 36, 68).

the ecclesiarch stood in direct line to the heavenly choregos in the dome to proclaim the Word. Yet in order to achieve that vision, an initiation was required for the monks. As mentioned already, the liturgical services of the monastery have been under the strict rules of the *typika* governed by the principle divine imitation of the divine Creator. The liturgical services should imitate God and should start with the first hour, as God himself has started the first instant of the creation with the apparition of light (φωτὸς ἀρχώμεθα). In fact, the same principle of imitation of the divine order by the monastic life is at work throughout the entire *typikon*. This was true for the sisters²⁴, as well as for the Empress.

Looking through the instructions, one is surprised to see how specifically topological are the ones concerning the monks' disposition in the space, and how their gestures were ritualized and supposed to be performed in absolute order:

The position of the monks will be as follows: the priests will stand in front of the deacons and the deacons behind them and the rest like this in order, in whatever position the ecclesiarch assigns to each one on the instruction of the superior.

Whenever the monks are gathering in the church no one is allowed to pray in front of the sanctuary screen or in any other place, but when each one is about to enter the church he will bow in front of the royal doors and then he will enter reverently and stand *in his own place* not bowing to the monks.

The monks having said "Amen" will immediately begin the six psalms not chanting them raucously but quietly to themselves, taking care to harmonize with the ecclesiarch who is standing in the middle of the church and reciting clearly enough to be heard.

When the *hypakoe* or another chant of this kind is being sung, the specialist chanters should stand in front of the sanctuary and sing this in a fitting and orderly way²⁵.

With these typikonal instructions, one could almost draw a chart of the position on the ground for each member of the χορεία, the priest, the monks, the chanter and the ecclesiarch, and of their choreographic *schemata* according to their active role in the liturgical performance. The place near the iconostasis which may be on a spot at the threshold to the altar,

²⁴ "I bid them... to serve their own sisters in imitation of him, who says 'I came not to be served but to serve and give my life...' You see, sisters, what work you perform, you see whom you imitate" (*Kecharitomene: Typikon* 683).

²⁵ *Pantokrator: Typikon* 740.

the priest and, on some occasions, the chanter should stand; the middle circle is for the priest but also for the ecclesiarch when reciting²⁶. Therefore, I believe that the presence of the ancient Ωραι at Pantokrator should be read typologically. Placed at the threshold of the entrance into the sacred space of the naos, the Ωραι-zodiac cycle challenged, perhaps, both the faithful, as well as the monks. Perhaps the idea of the designer of the sacred chart on the floor was that by entering the church, one was expected to cross the threshold and perform a rite of initiation and, eventually, of transformation. The movement was performed from the west to the east, which symbolically was the movement from the ancient earthly pagan vision of the cosmos, a mere dance of the Ωραι, towards the ecclesiastical performance. In mythological tradition, the Ωραι reflected the circuit and the course of the seasons (hours) symbolically described by the dance of the Ωραι, an idea consistent with the circular disposition of the visual pattern from the floor. Ωραι were embodiments of the right moment, the rightness of Order unfolding in time; hence, their names, Good Order, Right and Peace (Eunomia, Dike, Eirene). But the Byzantine faithful, without denying the creation of God, was supposed to move forward, leaving behind the pagan vision of the ancient personified seasons and, by approaching the centre, to reach the true vision on high, the cause of Good Order²⁷.

It cannot be mere coincidence, but deep iconographical thinking, that the disposition of the lost χορός appears to have been a polygonal structure, perhaps a hexadecagon or an octagon, given the fact that the *typikon* prescribes that sixteen candles should be lit on the feasts. Note that the circuit of the Ωραι-zodiac is also a hexadecagon. Could one read the χορός as an image of the cosmos, of which the sixteen-sided zodiac would have been a mere anti-image? Be it as it may be, the zodiac is to be found in a later period of Byzantine culture in the dome, surrounding the Pantokrator, the ruler of the universe; or rolled as a scroll (a circular book mentioned in the Georgian poem) like in the Last Judgment from Chora. But as mentioned before, to achieve the vision of Christian Order, an initiation was required. The liturgical services of the monastery have been designed as rites of initiation with strict rules governed by the prin-

²⁶ For that reason, we have already similar charts, and one from Athos could help us draw one similar for Pantokrator.

²⁷ In his *Homily IX to the Antiochians on the Making of the World* (PG 49, 103–110), John Chrysostomos, praised the “good order of seasons”, which “like the virgins dancing in a χορός, they move in perfect order, one after the other one, almost imperceptibly, so that those who are in the middle take us ceaselessly towards those who are in front of them. Therefore, after the winter does not come the summer immediately but between them comes the spring, so that peacefully, little by little, we reach the summer without our bodies being damaged”.

ciple of divine imitation of the divine Creator, so to reflect the divine order which was contained in the first instant of creation, and that first instant was light. And thus, light, Ωρα, and χορός are brought together again to complete an image of the Christian Eunomia: the rightness of Order unfolding in Time.

On this ground we may read the Komnenian Hierotopy as a complex spatial image. Midway between the dome and the ground, between heaven and earth, one should imagine, as an intimate part of this setting, the χορός lighting device as a grand corona, itself a projection, as well as an epiphany of the dome, the heavenly sphere described by the Russian pilgrim Stephen of Novgorod as “glowing like sun”²⁸. The ground quincunx would have been just a shadow, an anti-image of the χορός, similar to how the Ωραι-zodiac is an anti-image of the χορός. Under the dome, the quincunx was the projection on the ground of a crystallised luminous vision in the shape of the cosmatesque image of *poikilia* captured in stone. It was an image of the universe, the Christian cosmos on earth, where the choir of the monks gathered every day at precise hours in order to constantly re-enact the χωρα space by imitating the primordial divine act (fig. 10). It is remarkable that both *typika* use the word χορός not only to define the lighting device, but also to designate the whole monastic community, the choir of the monks (χορὸν ἀσκητικόν)²⁹, as well as the angelic choir (χοροὶ ἀγγέλων)³⁰. In my view, this linguistic detail reflects a consistent theological thinking as regards heavenly and earthly bodies, as well as light in the Komnenian Hierotopy.

Thus, we may conclude, a complex and dynamic Byzantine liturgy was staged in Pantokrator church. It was emphatically centred on a spatial vertical “wheel of light” — to use Mathews fortunate term, which binds visible and invisible, image and anti-image in a fine invisible network of “living” geometry. The imperial idea seems to have been exalted in the liturgical discourse, as well as in the visual setting of the huge spatial quin-

²⁸ According to Majeska, it is most likely that the dome of the church was covered in gold, possibly mosaic, which would make the sanctuary shine “like the sun” (*Majeska G. Russian Travellers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries // Dumbarton Oaks Studies, XIX. Dumbarton Oaks Library and Collection, Washington, D. C.: 1984, p. 291.*

²⁹ John II Komnenos dedicates his monastery to God, and together with it, he brings the choir of the monks (χορὸν ἀσκητικόν), a precious gathering of monks to praise God (*Gautier, Le typikon du Christ Sauveur Pantocrator, p. 28–29*). See also: *The Alexiad of Anna Comnena / Trans. E. R. A. Sewter. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969. Book XV ix, 500.*

³⁰ In her prooimion at the beginning of the *typikon*, the Empress invokes the choirs of angels in hope that they will present the Virgin her gratitude as well as the nones of the monastery who devoted their life to the ascetic life (*Gautier, Le typikon de la Théotokos Kécharitô-ménè, p. 24–25*).

cunx³¹. But in order to grasp the full complexity of this image, one more thing about the principle of divine imitation which governed that space needs to be noted.

ΧΟΡΟΣ, QUINCUNX, AND THE IMPERIAL CROWN

The aspiration to imitate the divine order and to relate to the universal Ruler should be applied to the emperor himself, and this idea is made clear throughout both imperial *typika*. As Doukina herself states in her *typikon*, the Kecharitômenê foundation is a gift in exchange to the merciful and plentiful gifts offered to her by God. The church is the likeness of the divine creation, offered as an imitative gesture of the divine gift: “imitating and copying the condescension and humility of the Word, I myself have built for you, the mother of Word, a holy temple from those who are around us and are of our kind for you”³². This idea presented by the Empress is, in fact, the principle that governs the Komnenian sacred space, where the emperor and the Empress call themselves *basileus* and *basilissa*³³, in the likeness of the heavenly rulers. Pantokrator means All Ruler³⁴. Its embodiment in the imperial foundation could be interpreted as an imitative gesture to reflect the divine rulership on earth. As a reflection of divine likeness, power is once again bound to the χορός and its quincunx projection on the floor of Pantokrator. The centre of the quincunx, originally an immense Egyptian onyx, red porphyry in the Byzantine tradition, marked the position on which the sovereign was crowned (fig. 11). Although perhaps the coronation of John II took place at the reserved place for such celebrations at Hagia Sophia on the omphalos of the quincunx, the same idea seems, however, to be emulated in the imperial church of Pantokrator, yet rephrased hierotopically. One must consider the insistence with which the *typikon* instructs the specific celebration of the emperor at the *pannychis* with the exclusive chanting of the psalm 20 (21), reserved for the emperor John II while he was alive³⁵. Psalm 20 (21) is the trium-

³¹ In architecture, a *quincuncial plan* is defined as a “cross-in-square”, cross-inscribed, *croix inscrite*; a structure divided into nine bays, the centre bay a large square, the corner bays small squares, the remaining four bays rectangular; the centre bay, resting on four columns, is domed, the corner bays are either domed or groin-vaulted, the rectangular bays are barrel-vaulted (*Krautheimer R. Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*. Baltimore: Penguin, 1965, p. 536).

³² *Gautier P.* Le typikon de la Théotokos Kécharitômenê, 22.

³³ In the *typikon* of the Kecharitomene monastery, this parallel between the Virgin (ἀπάντων βασιλίσσα) (*Gautier* 27) and the Empress Irene (τῆς βασιλείας μου) (*Gautier* 33) is drawn.

³⁴ *Matthews J. T.* The Byzantine Use of the Title Pantocrator // *OCP* 44 (1978), p. 444.

³⁵ Unlike the Kecharitomene *typikon*, the Pantokrator *typikon* prescribes the singing of the Psalm 20 exclusively for John II Komnenos, but it allows for the emperors who are alive at the time to be celebrated with Psalm 19.

phant royal psalm of David, which celebrates the power of the emperor and his courageous deeds in the battles. Therefore, this is a psalm of thanksgiving for his many victories upon enemies. John II was a campaigning emperor, and this is suggested in the imperial mythological iconography on the floor of Pantokrator (Samson cycle, the mythological beasts, birds, etc.); and such iconography might have decorated the imperial costume as well, like in the choral patterns of the costume of Alexios Dukas V (fig. 12). Paramount for this research is the third verse of the Psalm 20: “*Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head*”, which suggests a divine reward and is perhaps visualized in the space of Pantokrator by the huge corona or crown-like χορός. There is no archaeological evidence to support this supposition, except the striking similarity between the royal crown and the appearance of the only available χοροί we have as early as the fourteenth century from Serbia and Athos, dominating the space with their wide corona. This supposition is based also on the particular interest the Emperor Alexios I took in the shape of the imperial crown, which he finally changed, so that the new stone-encrusted diadem was shaped like a half-sphere (*episphairômatos*)³⁶. In literal translation, this means “that which was contiguous (*epi*) to the sphere (*sphairôma*)”, which makes it strikingly similar to the vault of heaven and the dome. Clusters of pearls and precious stones hung down. But while all this might be mere supposition, the fact that the same psalm was sung during the ceremony of the raising of the emperor on the shield on the imperial coronation, could have been, no doubt, documented³⁷. Its representation exists in a series of manuscripts and, even if the ceremony has fallen out of use, it no doubt remained in the Byzantine imaginary. The Chludov Psalter from the ninth century illustrates Psalm 20 (21) with the ceremony of the raising on the shield (see the tondo of John II) of Hezekiah king of Juda (fig. 13).

In this complex liturgical and visual discourse of the Komnenian Hierotopy, χορός might have been no doubt a powerful element. It might have been perhaps a figure of the imperial crown, a sign of reward in battles, as well as an aspiration for the heavenly reward yet to come. As suggested by the *typika*, the divine imitation was an ongoing process, constantly to be undertaken in the liturgy, as well as in the charitable or philanthropic acts of the emperor. Indeed, the whole Pantokrator project should be connected to the philanthropic idea, Pantokrator and Philanthropos being interchangeable concepts. Since late antiquity, *philanthropos*

³⁶ The Alexiad of Anna Comnena / Trans. E. R. A. Sewter. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969. Book III, p. 111.

³⁷ The fact that the same line is engraved on a set of crowns from the tenth century makes one speculate that the psalm might have been used for coronation.

was a chief quality that could make man truly godlike (ὁμοίσις τὸν θεόν)³⁸. As we have seen, the aspiration to imitate the divine ruler was for the Komnenian family a liturgical precept and a principle³⁹. The principle was the prime instant (Ωρα) of creation that was light (φωτὸς ἀρξώμθα). The Komnenian Hierotopy was the place of this theophany, the spatial icon of Time. Χορός was the means by which this cosmological moment was captured in light; it was a performative image of the Christian Eunomia. Suspended midway between the dome and the ground, it marked the centre of the quincunxial earthly cosmos ruled by its philanthropic emperor, imagining himself on direct line with the image of the heavenly ruler. The imperial numismatics also shows the labarum quincunx as a projection of the ideal cosmos, an imperial aspiration to the divine likeness⁴⁰.

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ИМПЕРАТОРСКИЙ ХОРОС:

ПРОСТРАНСТВЕННАЯ ИКОНА КАК ОТРАЖЕНИЕ ВЕЧНОСТИ

В своей статье «Хорос света», посвященной 114 станцам поэмы Павла Силенциария о церковном освещении, я определила «хорос» (χορός) как базовое понятие эстетики света в пространстве Святой Софии Константинопольской. Хорос, священное круговое движение, было источником света и сияния, а также света как сияния, заполнявшего все пространство императорской церкви и определявшего визуальное восприятие константинопольского зрителя.

³⁸ The aspiration to imitate the divine ruler is implicit in the name of the joint foundation of the Empress: Philanthropos. It evokes the old theme of the imperial *philanthropia*, where the attribute *philanthropos* has been perceived, since late antiquity, as the only ground quality which could make man truly godlike. For the idea of the emperor akin to God (ὁμοίσις τὸν θεόν) as a justification of his reign in the fourth century see *MacCormack S. G. Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*. University of California Press: 1981. 206ff; and *Downey G. Philanthropia in Religion and Statecraft in the 4th c. // Historia 4*, 1955, p. 199–208.

³⁹ Philanthropos is also the name of the joint foundation of the Empress, now lost, which shows a consistent concern of the Komnenian emperors.

⁴⁰ Moreover, the quincunx and the imperial power are associated in numismatic iconography, which relates the divine power and the earthly imperial power. Thus, on an imperial *histanomenon* (fig. 14) from the time of the Komnenos, one could see the image of Christ with a cruciger humn (Latin *globus cruciger*, “cross-bearing orb”) perused trice by the quincunx, on one side; and the image of the Byzantine emperor, on the reverse, holding the labarum decorated by the same pattern of quincunx. The quincunxial labarum carried by the emperor is a projection of the ideal cosmos, an imperial aspiration to the divine likeness, expressed in the ray of light.

Куда же делся этот хорос? Что случилось с танцем света и его сиянием? Данная работа представляет собой попытку ответить на вопрос, когда и почему хорос вновь возник в византийской практике после более чем пяти веков забвения. Как и в ранневизантийской традиции, хорос появляется в имперском контексте. В монашеском Типиконе Комниновской эпохи (Устав монастыря Пантократора) описывается, как проводить величественную церемонию световозжигания. Но, в отличие от времен Юстиниана, когда понятие «хорос» существовало в более абстрактном философском и поэтическом контексте, комниновский хорос был введен в литургическую практику монастырей как специфический осветительный прибор. Это, несомненно, стало важным изменением в истории явления, и последствия этого изменения все еще остаются не исследованными. Однако мы вновь сталкиваемся со знакомой проблемой: не сохранилось никаких следов материального предмета, воплощавшего понятие хорос.

Его описание в Типиконе монастыря Пантократора 1136 г. весьма лаконично, можно полагать, что на тот момент традиция была жива и не нуждалась в разъяснениях. Все, что можно понять из этого источника: пространство купола императорской церкви Пантократора при Иоанне II Комнине было украшено золотой мозаикой с образом Пантократора, а под ним висел круглый хорос. Но если роскошная мозаика не дошла до наших дней, то пол под некогда висевшим там хоросом сохранился и недавно был отреставрирован — раскрыта впечатляющая мозаика, выполненная в технике *opus sectile* (инкрустация из разноцветного камня). Пространство под хоросом занимает центральный диск с пятилопастной композицией, выложенной на полу. Эта композиция делится на 9 квадратов; боковые панели включают круги из порфира и зеленоватого серпентина, обрамленные тройной лентой из цветного мрамора. Эти круги входят в пятилопастную структуру композиции. В перемычках вокруг каждого круга присутствует витой орнамент, заполненный птицами, животными и мифологическими существами. Большой диск окружен изображениями знаков Зодиака и персонификациями времен года. К востоку у входа в виму выложен еще один большой диск, обрамленный сценами из жизни Самсона. Сцены охоты и сельских работ заполняют панели, а на лентах изображены земные и морские обитатели.

Центр пятилопастной композиции под хоросом несомненно был значительным по смыслу в иеротопическом замысле организации пространства храма Пантократора и наиболее священной частью хореографии. В сложном литургическом и визуальном дискурсе Комниновской иеротопии хорос, без сомнения, являлся мощным структурным элементом. Вероятно, он обозначал императорскую корону, был знаком

военных побед и обещанием грядущей награды на небесах. Согласно Типикону, подражание Богу было постоянным действием, совершающимся во время каждой литургии, а также в актах благотворительности и филантропии со стороны императора. Собственно говоря, весь проект по созданию монастыря Пантократора был связан с филантропической идеей: Пантократор и Филантроп — понятия взаимосвязанные. Со времен поздней античности такое качество как «филантропия» считалось одной из главных богоподобных черт (ὁμοίσις τὸν θεόν). Стремление подражать божественному правителю было для династии Комнинов литургическим правилом и принципом. Этот принцип был первопричиной (Ὡρα) сотворения света (φωτὸς ἀρξάμεθα). Комниновская иеротопия была подчинена идее теофании и созданию пространственной иконы Времени. Хорос служил средством превращения космологического момента в свет; он был перформативным образом христианской Евномии (Благого Законопорядка). Подвешенный на середине высоты между куполом и полом, хорос маркировал центр пятичастного земного космоса, управляемого императором-филантропом, который видел себя на одной линии по вертикали с образом небесного правителя в своде. Данные нумизматики также позволяют трактовать *labarum quincunx* (пятилистник) как проекцию идеального космоса, стремление императора к богоподобию.

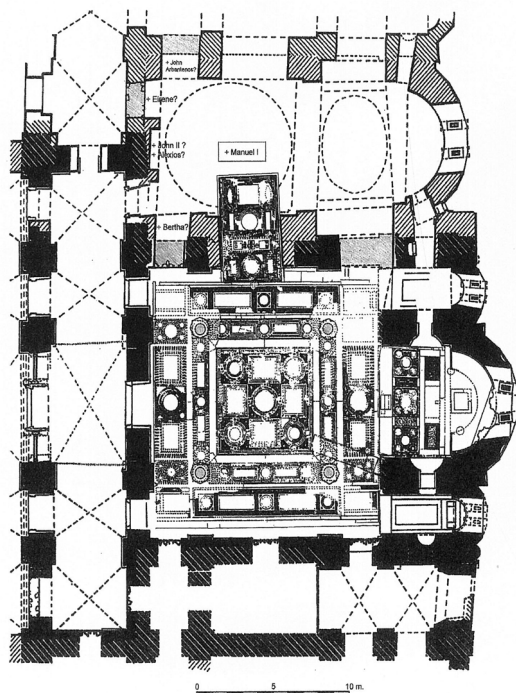
Однако все, что мы можем восстановить из бывшего величественного действия в императорской церкви, это лишь следы на полу. Пятилопастная композиция под куполом церкви Пантократора — тень (контробраз) того, что было некогда живой схемой, хореографической записью танца комниновской κοινωνία. Это был χορὸν ἀσκητικόν (аскетический хорос) монастыря, а также императорский хорос в те времена, когда предпринимались попытки возродить классическое образование, а классиков античности еще читали, комментировали, даже подражали им. Пример тому — пролог Типикона, изобилующий платоническими терминами; считается, что он был составлен императрицей Ириной. Могло ли случиться, что имперское мышление императрицы и есть главная причина возобновления этого светового праздника и что именно она стала источником вдохновения сына-императора, который принял решение о возвращении хороса? Конечно, это риторический вопрос, но он предполагает поиски ответа. А таким ответом может стать приведенное здесь рассуждение.



1. View of Hagia Sophia bathed by the light.



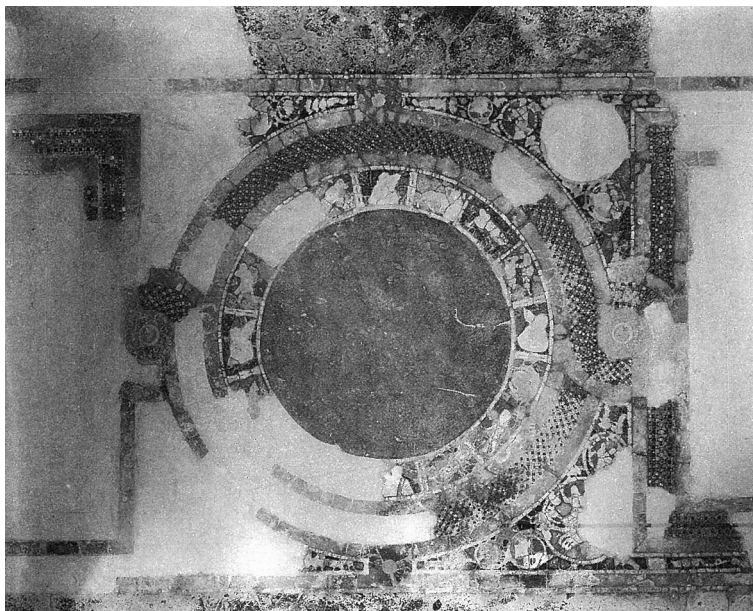
2. The monastery of Pantocrator (Zeyrek Kilise Camii), eastern exterior, c. 1120–1136, Istanbul.



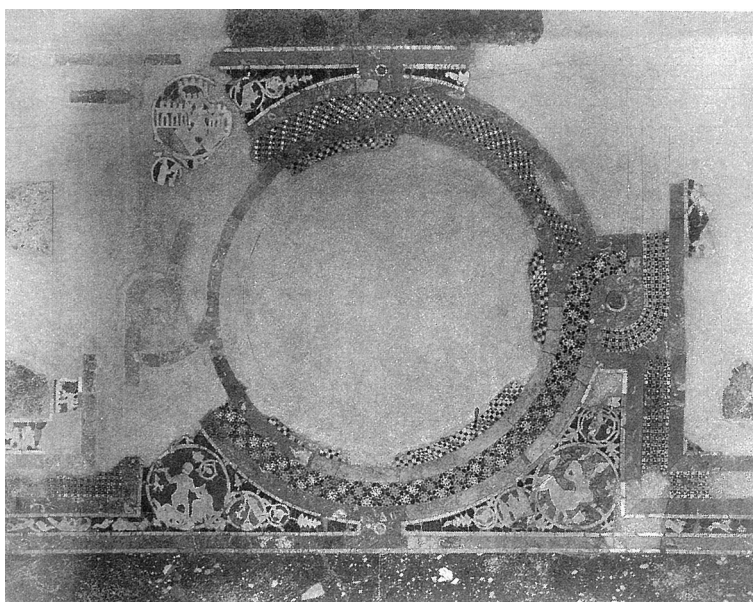
3. Istanbul, Pantocrator, Zeyrek Camii, plan of the south and central churches, showing the disposition of the opus sectile floor. R. Ousterhout, based on Megaw (N. Necipoglu ed., *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life*)



4. Floor of the south church with quincunx, before restoration, looking east (R. Ousterhout, in Necipoglu ed., *Byzantine Constantinople*)



5. The disk with the zodiac at the west
(R. Ousterhout, in Necipoglu ed., *Byzantine Constantinople*)



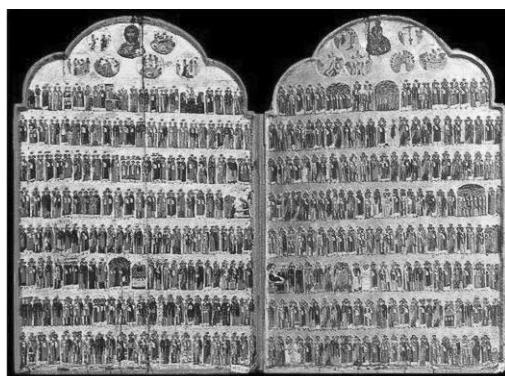
6. The disk with the life of Samson at the east
(R. Ousterhout, in Necipoglu ed., *Byzantine Constantinople*)



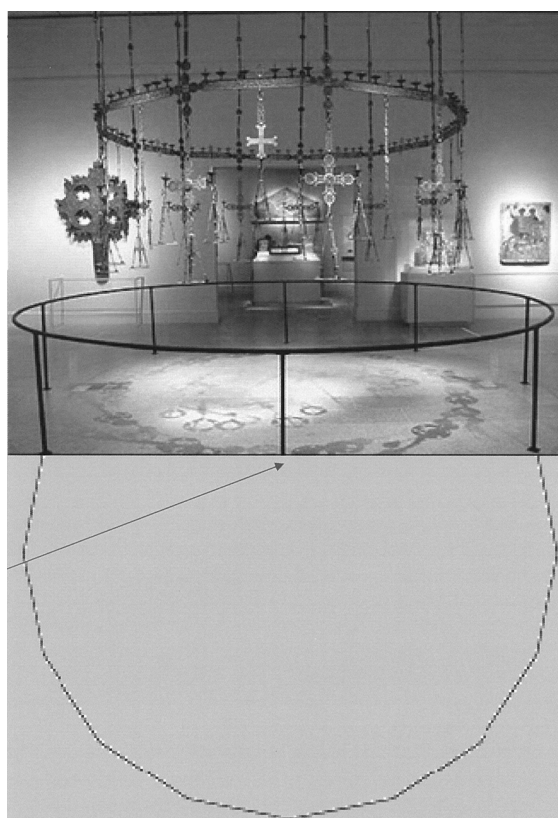
7. Helios mosaic, synagogue Hamath Tiberias, c. 4th cent.
CE, Israel. Sol Invictus-Christus



8. Roman Mosaic of the Four Seasons taken from Villa Zliten at Leptis Magna,
and now displayed in the Jamahiriya Museum, Tripoli.



9. Dyptic calendar with the twelve feasts of the year — the monastery of Xylourgos 1143



10. Hypothetical reconstruction of the choro from Pantocrator.
Hexadecagon — the reconstruction of the configuration
of the choro from Pantocrator (similar to the horai-zodiac)



11. The omphalion of red porphyry which marks the place where the emperor was crowned. Hagia Sophia in Constantinople



12. Emperor Alexios V Dukas Murtzuphlos with costumes with circular patterns.
Hist. gr. 53, folio 291v.



13. Imperial coronation — the raising on the shield (Chludov Psalter 9th c.)



14. Imperial histamena with quincunx