

Church of Panagia, Koimisis tis Theotokou

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District of Marmara, Ekinlik Neighbourhood	Construction period/date: 1845-1848
	Current status: Ruinous
GPS: 40°32'46.1"N 27°29'07.6"E	Ownership: Unknown
Registration date and number: Bursa KTVKKBK 18.04.1990 - 1297	

History

The Church of Panagia (Κοίμησις της Θεοτόκου, Assumption of the Virgin) in the 'Apokikat' (in Greek: «Αποκεικάτ», literally meaning 'down there') neighbourhood was the cathedral of Ekinlik Island (Pl. X.42) Panagia is not the oldest of the three churches on the island, the other two being Agios Nikolaos and Rodon to Amaranton (or Panagia Faneromeni) (Pl. X.40-41). Gedeon (1895, 79-82) refers to the Church of Agios Nikolaos being older than Panagia and to the fact that

Rodon to Amaranton was built on the ruins of an even older church with a holy fountain discovered on 8 May 1867.

According to the Oral Tradition Archives, the church of Panagia in Ekinlik was built during the office of Anthimos VI as the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople (Folder B77). Anthimos Ioannidis was from Koutali and became three times a patriarch: 1845-1848, 1853-1855 and 1871-1873. It is likely that the



Fig. 1: General view of the Greek school and the church

construction of the church may have been one of his first merits for his homeland during his first office he served as patriarch, that is 1845-1848.

Little is known about the cathedral that was certainly erected before the 16th century, since Gedeon (1895, 78-79) notes that two of the oldest icons of the church dated from the 15th century. The oral tradition of the island indicates that both icons (depicting Christ the Saviour and the Mother of the Lord) came from Crete after being washed out to sea arriving to the shores of Ekinlik. Among the items that impressed Gedeon inside the church was an icon depicting the Assumption of the Virgin, which was commissioned by the ordained monk Filaretos and his family in 1694. Later, a sailor from Koutali called Nikolaos, son of Ioannis, added a long inscription in gold capital letters to the top and bottom of the icon to show his gratitude to Panagia after surviving a heavy storm in the sea. Furthermore, the wooden altar of the church was gilded. The richness of Panagia's decorations was well known in the area, since the wealthy captains and sailors of Ekinlik were often offering valuable icons, liturgical books and other religious objects to the church.

According to the locals, the building was demolished in the 1940s so that parts of it could be sold. In the 1950s, it fell into ruin and became private property.

Architecture

The church is located to the northwest of the Greek school, rising on top of a rocky outcrop to the west of the harbour. The white-washed eastern façade of the church stands next to the school, which creates a majestic view of this prominent position in the island's landscape from the sea. (Fig. 1). From land, it seems as if the church stands alone, however, there are some wall remains at a lower level to its south. To the west of the church lies the terminus of a dead-end street and to its north is a path separating it from neighbouring houses.

The building is in ruins and entirely overgrown with berry bushes. Its roof no longer exists. The eastern, northern, and southern walls mostly still stand, with the eastern wall

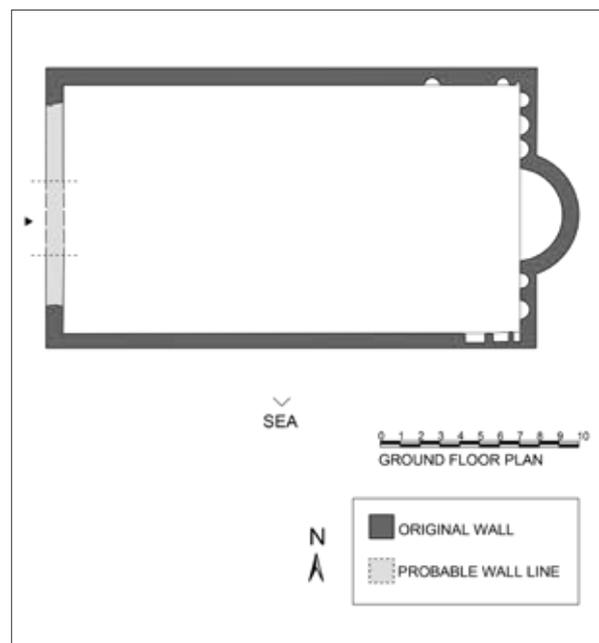


Fig. 2: General view of the eastern wall

being in better condition than the other two (Fig. 2); however, the western wall where the entrance was located cannot even be traced. Observation of the remains revealed that the walls were built using rubble, brick fragments, and lime mortar, then coated with lime plaster. Some of the timber bands in the walls are still in place.

The eastern façade features a single round protrusion in the middle that housed the apse (Fig. 2). This is covered by a very shallow, conical, and tiled roof. A triangular gable evidently connected the eastern wall to the roof; this suggests a pitched timber roof structure covered by tiles. Only the northern and southern ends of the gable survive today. It is likely that its dilapidated center portion had windows. The southern and northern façades of



Fig. 3: Detail from the apse wall



Fig. 4: Apse and northern niches



Fig. 5: Niches in the south

the church each have four windows, discernible in their better preserved, eastern halves. The western façade has almost entirely collapsed.

The narthex is not discernible due to extensive foliage. The team had to clear a path to reach the eastern façade. The erect semi-circular apse features baked clay jars embedded in the wall to improve acoustics, some of which are now exposed (Fig. 3). The apse is flanked by three niches to the north (Fig. 4) and two niches to the south (Fig. 5). Of the former three, the middle niche is the taller than the other two. All five niches are semi-circular, topped with round, brick arches. The eastern end of the southern wall features two rectangular niches also topped with round, brick arches, while the northern wall has two semi-circular niches.

Current Condition

The building is almost concealed under dense overgrowth, thus the. The interior layout is not discernible. However, the Oral Tradition Archives (B77) reveal that the church was a

three-aisled basilica separated by two colonnades. The southern end of the eastern façade is in poor condition; its collapse is prevented by a makeshift rubble wall. The existence of the colonnades and narthex is not attested. There are cracks in the walls and mortar has degraded at many points, which accelerates the decay of the timber bands. There is no trace of the lavish decoration mentioned by Gedeon.

Risk Assessment and Recommendations

The residents of Ekinlik Island are very self-aware of their cultural heritage and they oppose illicit digging. However, only a dozen or so people live on the island during the winter, which renders the remains vulnerable to human damage in addition to the season's weather conditions. A preliminary cleaning and basic excavation will yield much more about the structure. In the meantime, an information panel should be put up for visitors. Any work at this church should involve the Greek school, as the structures are located very close to each other and have a prominent place in the landscape.