CONTEXTUALIZING THE FRESCO CYCLE OF THE LIFE OF SAINT FRANCIS AT THE KALENDERHANE MOSQUE IN ISTANBUL

by

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ABSTRACT

The Fourth Crusade marked one of the most dramatic moments of the Byzantine history: the occupation of Constantinople in 1204. However, there is one surviving example of artistic activity of the Latins from this period of plunder and destruction: the fresco cycle of Saint Francis. The cycle was discovered at the Kalenderhane Mosque, a former Byzantine church and part of the monastic complex of *Theotokos* (Mother of God) *Kyriotissa*, in 1967 after being sealed and hidden in an annexed chapel for seven centuries. The frescoes portraying Francis's life were painted shortly after the canonization of the saint in 1228 and prior to the reconquest of 1261. They are regarded as the earliest depictions of Francis's life on fresco.

The cycle is an intriguing example of the hybrid works of art that emerged in the post-Crusade Mediterranean. Existing scholarship mainly focuses on four aspects of the cycle: establishing its historical setting and patronage; identifying its scenes; exploring its stylistic associations with other works of art; and interpreting the choice of Byzantine *vita* icon format. The notable ensemble of various Eastern and Western components in the program, a less discussed and researched aspect of the cycle, is commonly considered to reflect the thirteenth-century climate of the ongoing negotiations for the union of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches.

The fresco cycle is definitely a product of the Franciscans' purposeful experimentation in the broader context of the commitment of the order to the communion of the churches and missionary activity in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, this thesis argues that the joint presence of Eastern and Western elements and some overlooked particularities of its iconography may also lead to a different reading. This new interpretation of the cycle goes beyond the attempt of the mendicant order to legitimize the sainthood of their recently canonized founder and requires an in-depth reconsideration of its context. This study aims to look beyond the visible and decipher the cycle in the light of the ongoing negotiations of power and ideology in the post-Crusade Mediterranean.

Keywords: Kalenderhane, Virgin *Kyriotissa*, Latin occupation of Constantinople, Saint Francis, Byzantine *vita* icon, Franciscan art, Crusader art.

ÖZET

Dördüncü Haçlı Seferi, Konstantinopolis'in 1204 yılında işgal edilmesiyle Bizans İmparatorluğu tarihinin en dramatik anlarından birine damgasını vurmuştur. Ancak, Konstantinopolis'in yakılıp yıkıldığı ve talan edildiği bu dönemden günümüze gelebilmiş, Latin'lere ait şaşırtıcı bir sanat yapıtı bulunmaktadır: Aziz Fransis'in yaşam öyküsü döngüsü freskleri. Bu freskler, yedi yüzyıl boyunca bir yan şapelde saklı kaldıktan sonra 1967 yılında, daha önce *Theotokos* (Tanrı'nın Annesi Meryem) *Kyriotissa* manastır kompleksine ait bir Bizans kilisesi olan Kalenderhane Camii'nde gerçekleştirilen kazılar sırasında gün yüzüne çıkarıldılar. Aziz Fransis'in yaşamının anlatıldığı bu freskler, Katolik keşişin azizlik mertebesine yükseltildiği 1228 yılı sonrasına ve Konstantinopolis'in Bizanslılar tarafından 1261 yılında geri alınmasının öncesine tarihlenmektedirler. Fransis'in hayatının betimlendiği ve günümüze ulaşan en erken dönem freskler olarak kabul edilirler.

Bu döngü, Haçlı Seferleri sonrasında Akdeniz'de ortaya çıkan hibrit sanat eserlerinin ilginç bir örneğidir. Mevcut araştırmalar döngüyü dört ana açıdan ele almışlardır: tarihi bağlamını ve banisini belirlemek; sahnelerini tanımlamak; diğer sanat eserleri ile biçemsel çağrışımlarını ortaya çıkarmak ve Bizans *vita* ikona formatı tercihini yorumlamak. Resim programında Doğulu ve Batılı unsurların göze çarpan birlikteliği ise daha az tartışılan ve araştırılan bir özelliğidir ve sıklıkla on üçüncü yüzyılda Katolik Kilisesi'nin ve Ortodoks Kilisesi'nin birleşmesine yönelik olarak yürütülmekte olan görüşmelerin yarattığı ortamı yansıttığı düşünülmektedir.

Fresk döngüsü, kesinlikle Fransiskenler'in kiliselerin birleşmesine olan bağlılıkları ve Doğu Akdeniz'de yürüttükleri misyonerlik faaliyetleri bağlamında gerçekleştirdikleri ve belli bir amaca yönelik bir deneylemedir. Bununla beraber, bu tezde Doğulu ve Batılı unsurların döngüde birlikte yer almasının ve gözden kaçmış bazı ikonografik özelliklerinin farklı bir okumaya yol açabileceği savunulmaktadır. Döngünün bu yeni yorumu, dilenci tarikatının henüz yeni kutsanmış kurucusunun azizliğini meşrulaştırma çabasının ötesine geçmekte ve bağlamının yeniden derinlemesine ele alınmasını gerektirmektedir. Bu çalışma, görünenin ötesine bakmayı ve Akdeniz'de Haçlı Seferleri sonrasında devam etmekte olan güç ve ideoloji müzakereleri ışığında döngüyü çözümlemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Kalenderhane, Meryem *Kyriotissa*, Konstantinopolis'in Latin istilası, Aziz Fransis, Bizans *vita* ikonası, Fransisken sanatı, Haçlı sanatı.

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Introduction

Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, in their influential book *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, summarize the past of the Mediterranean as “dense fragmentation complemented by a striving towards control of communications,” arguing that the Mediterranean is exceptionally fragmented, but yet also exceptionally connected, both in terms of geography and culture.[1] The result of this connectivity is a Mediterranean with fuzzy boundaries, both politically and culturally. One of the major turning-points in the history, which stirred up the *corrupting sea* violently and *brought together many that had not been together before*, was the Crusades. The period from the twelfth to the fourteenth century not only witnessed numerous military campaigns of the Latins in the name of Christ and the establishment of the Crusader states in the region, but was also a period of intense cultural and artistic interchange in the Mediterranean. While the political, economic and social impacts of the Crusades redefined the trends of the Middle Ages, the Fourth Crusade marked one of the most dramatic moments of the Byzantine history: the occupation of Constantinople in 1204. The disastrous capture of the imperial city by the Latins left behind tragic memories of looting, vandalizing and terror for which Pope John Paul II apologized at the beginning of the new millennium. However, there is one surviving example of artistic activity of the Latins from this period of plunder and destruction in Constantinople: the fresco cycle of Saint Francis.[2]

[1] Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000), 25.
[2]Anne Derbes and Amy Neff, "Italy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Byzantine Sphere," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, ed. Helen C. Evans (Ainsworth: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004), 464.

The cycle was discovered at the Kalenderhane Mosque, a former Byzantine church, in 1967 after being hidden in an annexed chapel for seven centuries.[3] The frescoes portraying Francis's life were painted shortly after the canonization of the saint in 1228 and certainly prior to the reconquest of 1261. They are regarded the earliest depictions of Francis's life on fresco.[4] The excavations revealed that the Kalenderhane Mosque was part of the monastic complex of Virgin *Kyriotissa*.[5] The cycle of Saint Francis suggests the church was used as a Catholic Church during the Latin occupation. Following the conquest of the city in 1453, it was assigned by Mehmed II to the Kalenderi sect of the Dervishes. It is known as Kalenderhane Mosque since then. After being destroyed by lightning towards the end of the 1920s, the mosque was abandoned.[6] It reopened for worship following the excavations and restorations in the nineteen sixties and seventies.

The chapel with Saint Francis frescoes is part of the *diaconicon* complex of the church. The apse of the small chapel is decorated with the fresco cycle of Saint Francis. The Virgin Mary and Child with Angels is at the center of the semidome of the apse. The central figure of Saint Francis beneath it is flanked by ten scenes from the saint's life. Two Greek Church Fathers and a Latin inscription adorn the arch leading to the apse. The later Palaeologan remodeling of the church after the reconquest of the city by the Byzantines in 1261 is considered to be the reason for the suppression of the apse of the

[3] Cecil L.Striker and Ernest J. W. Hawkins, "Mosaics and Frescoes," in *Kalenderhane in Istanbul: The Buildings*, ed. Doğan Kuban and Cecil L. Striker (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1997), 128.
[4] Ibid., 140-141.
[5] Albrecht Berger and Nejat Göyünç, "Historical Topography in the Roman, Byzantine, Latin and Ottoman Periods," in *Kalenderhane in Istanbul: The Buildings*, ed. Cecil L. Striker and Doğan Kuban (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1997), 7-13.
[6] Ibid., 16-19.

chapel by a wall.[7] The apse with the frescoes of Saint Francis stayed inaccessible since then until its discovery. Besides being the earliest preserved fresco cycle of Saint Francis and the only example of artistic activity from the Latin occupation, it is an intriguing example of the hybrid works of art, which emerged in the post-Crusade Mediterranean.

Unfortunately, only less than half of the original painted surface of the semidome could be reconstructed by the assembly of the fresco pieces recovered. The cycle is like a huge jigsaw puzzle with many missing pieces, unidentified scenes and many questions not yet answered. Anne Derbes and Amy Neff describe the discovery of the earliest fresco cycle of Saint Francis in Istanbul, far away from the homeland of the saint, Assisi in Italy, as "an accident of history."[8] Whether the discovery of the fresco cycle is "an accident of history," and if not, its *raison d'etre* is the focus of this thesis. The Constantinopolitan cycle is definitely a product of the Franciscans' purposeful experimentation of artistic forms and cultural references in the broader context of their commitment to the communion of the churches and missionary activity in the East. However, I argue that the joint presence of Western and Eastern elements, or the hybridity, of the cycle and some overlooked particularities of the iconographic program of the chapel may also lead to a different reading. In order to look beyond the immediately visible and decipher the Kalenderhane cycle, both its pictorial program and iconographic features are compared with Western and Eastern works of art including panel paintings, manuscripts and monumental paintings from various parts of the Mediterranean basin. Iconographic models were crucial both for the transmission of the subject matter and also for the

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[7] Striker and Hawkins, "Mosaics and Frescoes," 128-142.
[8] Derbes and Neff, "Mendicant Orders," 449.

questions of format, composition and mode, especially in the formative period of Western art. They also carried stylistic influences. As Otto Demus writes, "a proper diagnosis of these models, that is, of their date and provenance, may also help the art historian in his search for the sources of stylistic inspiration."[9] Thus, the iconographic and stylistic associations of the cycle are investigated to establish its context in this study with a particular focus on its hybrid nature.

This study is also an attempt to benefit from the hybridological approach, which has emerged in anthropology and cultural studies in recent years to observe the processes of hybridization analytically and to describe them logically within the realm of art history.[10] This novel approach is adapted to research, analyze and contextualize the fresco cycle of Saint Francis at the Kalenderhane Mosque. Kalenderhane cycle of Saint Francis is placed at the center of the research as a hybrid artistic expression to analyze and understand the cultural permeability between the boundaries of the Byzantine East and the Italian West as well as the ongoing negotiations of power and ideology in the post-Crusades Mediterranean. Thus, this study is an attempt to decipher the hybridity of the Kalenderhane cycle and the rationale and the processes which created it.[11]

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[9] Otto Demus, *Byzantine Art and the West* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), 2.

[10] See Elka Tschernokoshewa, "Hybrid Worlds of Europe: Theoretical and Practical Aspects," in *A Companion to the Anthropology of Europe*, ed. Ulrich Kockel, Mairead Nic Craith and Jonas Frykman (Oxford, Malden: Blackwell, 2012), 520 for the definition of hybridology. Hybridology is a cross-disciplinary subject, which is hybrid in itself in that respect. Tschernokoshewa argues that it is "an attempt not to cling to the common fragmentation of subjects and disciplines." One of the goals of hybridology is to research the emergence of new hybrid forms of art, and for this reason, it will be adopted as a research methodology in this study, but the notion also describes the processes of the formation of identity and society.

[11] See Tschernokoshewa, "Hybrid Worlds," 524-528 for a detailed discussion of hybridology as a theoretical concept. The words "hybrid" and "hybridization" refer to the idea of mixture and combining, and thus to the concurrent existence of more than one phenomenon, at least two or more. By definition, the process of hybridization requires the mixed and combined to be diverse and different in some respect

It is also tempting to argue that the workshop that produced the Saint Francis cycle in Constantinople, where Franciscan friars presumably worked together with Crusader and Byzantine artists, may have been instrumental for the development and dissemination of new hybrid themes, formats and styles around the Mediterranean in the aftermath of the Crusades, especially in the first half of the thirteenth century. Although proving this proposal is a very difficult task, if not an impossible one, in the absence of textual sources, I am offering it as a working hypothesis to test as I embark on a mission to contextualize the Kalenderhane cycle of Saint Francis. Nevertheless, I believe that an in-depth research and discussion of such a proposal can contribute to our understanding of these unexpected depictions of Saint Francis in Constantinople and their role in the artistic interchange between the Latin West and the Byzantine East.

To conclude, I suggest that the Saint Francis cycle discovered at the Kalenderhane Mosque should be studied as an important link in the chain of transmission of ideas in the post-Crusade Mediterranean since it provides us with a unique opportunity to study the permeability and hybridity of the period.

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initially. The first key research question of the hybridological approach is the question of difference. As a methodological consideration, hybridological approach deals with the recognition of different experiences, sensitivities, and competencies as the starting point for analyzing the cultural processes of hybridization. The second key research is its focus of enquiry on the relationships and encounters between these previously separate phenomena. Both the kinds of the relationships and the power constellations among them are taken into consideration methodologically in the investigations of hybridization processes. The third key research question is the shift from objects to processes and their contexts and premises. Such a shift enables "acknowledging these processes not only as changing but as a mutual negotiation of belongings, solidarities, and frames for action." In summary, the key characteristics of the hybridological approach are the acknowledgement of diversity, the analysis of the relations and encounters between the components and the contexts and the premises of the processes of hybridization in order to understand the mutual negotiations and decipher the hybrid.

The Structure of the Thesis

As stated above, this thesis has two broad objectives. The first is to contextualize the fresco cycle of Saint Francis in Constantinople by a critical evaluation of the mobility and selective appropriation of themes, formats and styles through the means of wars, occupations and missionary activity in the thirteenth century. The second is to understand its role in the artistic interchange of the *duecento*.

To achieve these objectives it is first necessary to have an overall understanding of the cycle and the previous scholarship. Chapter one embarks with this mission and concludes with the questions raised by the frescoes of Saint Francis in Constantinople.

Chapter two reviews three contemporary developments of the *duecento* that played a key role in the creation of the cycle: the popularity and dissemination of the Byzantine *vita* icon to which its format resembles; the emergence of the Franciscan order and its activities in the East; and the art of the Crusades. It aims to analyze the cultural encounters and artistic interchange in the Medieval Mediterranean to shed light on the encounters that created the cycle in Constantinople.

Chapter three discusses the context of the cycle searching for the answers for the questions identified in the first chapter. Besides the discussion of its patronage, artists and dating, annexed chapel context and similarity with the *vita* icon format, this chapter focuses on the hybridity of the program of the chapel, about which a different interpretation is suggested.

1. The Fresco Cycle of the Life of Saint Francis at the Kalenderhane Mosque in Istanbul

This chapter, which aims to provide an overview of the fresco cycle of the life of Saint Francis at the Kalenderhane Mosque, is divided into four sections. The first two sections mostly derive from the final reports of the excavations carried at the site of Kalenderhane from 1966 to 1978 under the auspices of Dumbarton Oaks in Washington D.C. and Istanbul Technical University. These final reports, edited by the directors of the project, Cecil L. Striker and Doğan Kuban, came in two volumes following five preliminary reports that were published in Dumbarton Oaks Papers volumes XXI to XXIX: the buildings in 1997 and the excavations in 2007. The first volume on the buildings, published almost two decades after the completion of the project, incorporates the expertise of nine scholars of different disciplines.[12] It provides a very comprehensive analysis of the architectural history of the building from A.D. 400 to present times as well as the explorations of the finds of architectural sculpture, marble revetment and paving and mosaic and fresco decoration.

The focus of the first section is the architectural history of the Kalenderhane Mosque. An overview of the chapel where the fresco cycle of the life of Saint Francis was discovered and its decoration is provided in the second section. A review of the scholarship on the cycle of Saint Francis in the third section paves the way for the

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[12] Cecil L. Striker provides details of the project, summarizes previous scholarship, and introduces a glossary in the first chapter. Albrecht Berger and Nejat Göyünç addresses issues relating to the topography of the site. The third chapter, coauthored by the editors Striker and Kuban, is dedicated to architectural developments on the site. Urs Peschlow discusses the architectural sculpture in the fourth chapter, which also includes the analysis of the Byzantine inscriptions discovered by Giusto Traina. In the fifth chapter, Striker studies marble revetment and paving from different phases of the complex. In the last, sixth, chapter Striker and Ernest. J. W. Hawkins analyze the mosaics and frescoes from various phases of the history of the building.

questions raised by the frescoes at the Kalenderhane Mosque, which I list in the fourth section of this chapter and further investigate in the remainder of the thesis.

1.1. Kalenderhane Mosque

Kalenderhane Mosque is located in the modern day Fatih district of Istanbul, in the neighborhood of Vezneciler, and lies in the vicinity of the Valens Aqueduct (Figs. 1-2). It is a former Byzantine church, which was donated to the dervishes called *Kalenderi*, to be used as an *imaret* (soup kitchen) by Mehmet II after the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans.[13] The name *Kalenderhane* means “the house of the *Kalenderi*” in Turkish. The building was both a dervish *zaviye*, in which *mevlevi* ceremonies were held on Friday, and an *imaret* until its conversion into a mosque when a medrese was constructed nearby.

The mosque was repaired by Beşir Ağa, a chief black eunuch of the palace of the sultan, in the eighteenth century and restored by Hacı Kadri, a philanthropist, in the nineteenth century after being damaged by fires and earthquakes. It was used as a mosque until 1928 or 1929 when its minaret was destroyed by lightning. After the collapse of the minaret and the demolition of the neighboring medrese, the mosque was abandoned in the early 1930s (Figs. 3-4).[14] Following a series of excavations and restorations that spanned from 1966 to 1978 under the direction Dumbarton Oaks and Istanbul Technical University, the mosque was reopened for worship.

[13] Berger and Göyünç, "Historical Topography,” 17.
[14] Ibid., 19.

Figure 1: Topographical map of Constantinople (By Cplakidas - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5084599)

Figure 2: Exterior view from the northwest (June 2016 - Photo Kaan Dönbekci)

Figure 3: General view from the west (June 1935)

(Photo Nicholas V. Artamonoff. Courtesy of Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, D.C.)

Figure 4: Exterior view from the southwest (May 1937)

(Photo Nicholas V. Artamonoff. Courtesy of Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, D.C.)

1.1.1. Scholarship on the Kalenderhane Mosque

Kalenderhane Mosque has been subject to the studies of many scholars since the sixteenth century when it was first mentioned by Pierre Gilles in his *De topographia constantinopolis*, Lyon, 1559.[15] Although Gilles did not provide a name for the building, his description of its location and his mention of its marble revetments as *vestita crustis varij marmoris*,[16] which appears to have been noteworthy even then, indicate that it was Kalenderhane (Figs. 5-6). The scholarship on the building intensified towards the end of the nineteenth century and reached its peak in the first half of the twentieth century with many attempts to identify the Byzantine monument, its date and structural history. Its difficulty of access and lack of archaeological evidence led to myriad speculations until the Kalenderhane Archaeological Project took place between 1966 and 1978. Alexander Van Millingen, for instance, had suggested that the building was the church of *Theotokos Diaconissa* proposing an intermediate period dating to around the tenth century.[17] Alfons M. Schneider and Raymond Janin, on the other hand, had identified it as *Akataleptos* dating to the ninth century.[18] The findings of the project, which encompassed the comprehensive investigation and restoration of the standing building and the archaeological excavation of its surrounding site, shed light on the monument

[15] Cecil L.Striker, "Introduction," in *Kalenderhane in Istanbul: The Buildings*, ed. Cecil L. Striker and Doğan Kuban (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1997), 1-4. A brief summary of the literature up to 1965 is provided in the introduction chapter of the first volume of Final Reports on the Archaeological Exploration and Restoration at Kalenderhane Camii 1966-1978.
[16] Translates from Latin into "various pieces of marble clothing" in English.
[17] Alexander Van Millingen, *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1912), 183-190.
[18] Alfons M. Schneider, *Byzanz.Vorarbeiten zur Topographie und Archäologie der Stadt* (Berlin, 1936), 5-7, Raymond Janin, *La Géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin : 1re partie. Le Siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique. Tome III. Les Églises et les monastères* (Paris, 1953), 518 ff.

Figure 5: Interior view northeast (June 2016 - Photo Kaan Dönbekci)

Figure 6: Interior view southeast (June 2016 - Photo Kaan Dönbekci)

and its structural history and contributed to the work of many scholars such as Richard Krautheimer and many others.[19]

1.1.2. Architectural History and Overview

Eight major and nineteen minor construction phases are identified in the excavations dating from the fourth to the nineteenth centuries (Figs. 7-8). The stratigraphy of the site reveals its usage as a church complex following the earliest phase of a late Roman bath at the site, erected around 400 CE. Albrecht Berger argues that this bath was a *balneum privatum*, a private bath house commercially run by their owners for public use.[20] The bath, oriented towards the Valens Aqueduct, appears to have remained in operation until being selectively demolished during the construction of the first church at the site, the North Church. The bath was partly incorporated into the church and preserved in subsequent buildings.[21]

The archaeological evidence dates the first church building at the site, a basilica type church, to the last quarter of the sixth century, presumably during the reign of Justin II or subsequent to that.[22] The so-called North Church lay parallel to the Valens Aqueduct integrating two arches of the aqueduct into the north aisle of the church. It took its name from its situation to the north of its two successors, the Bema and the Main Churches.[23] The Bema Church, the second church erected on the site following the North Church, is dated to the last decades of the seventh century by the archaeological evidence of a

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[19] Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Yale University Press, 1992), 292-295.
[20] Berger and Göyünç, "Historical Topography," 7.
[21] Cecil L. Striker and Doğan Kuban. "Architecture," in *Kalenderhane in Istanbul: The Buildings*, ed. Cecil L. Striker and Doğan Kuban (Mainz am Rhein: Phillipp von Zabern, 1997), 31.
[22] Ibid., 44.
[23] Ibid., 37.

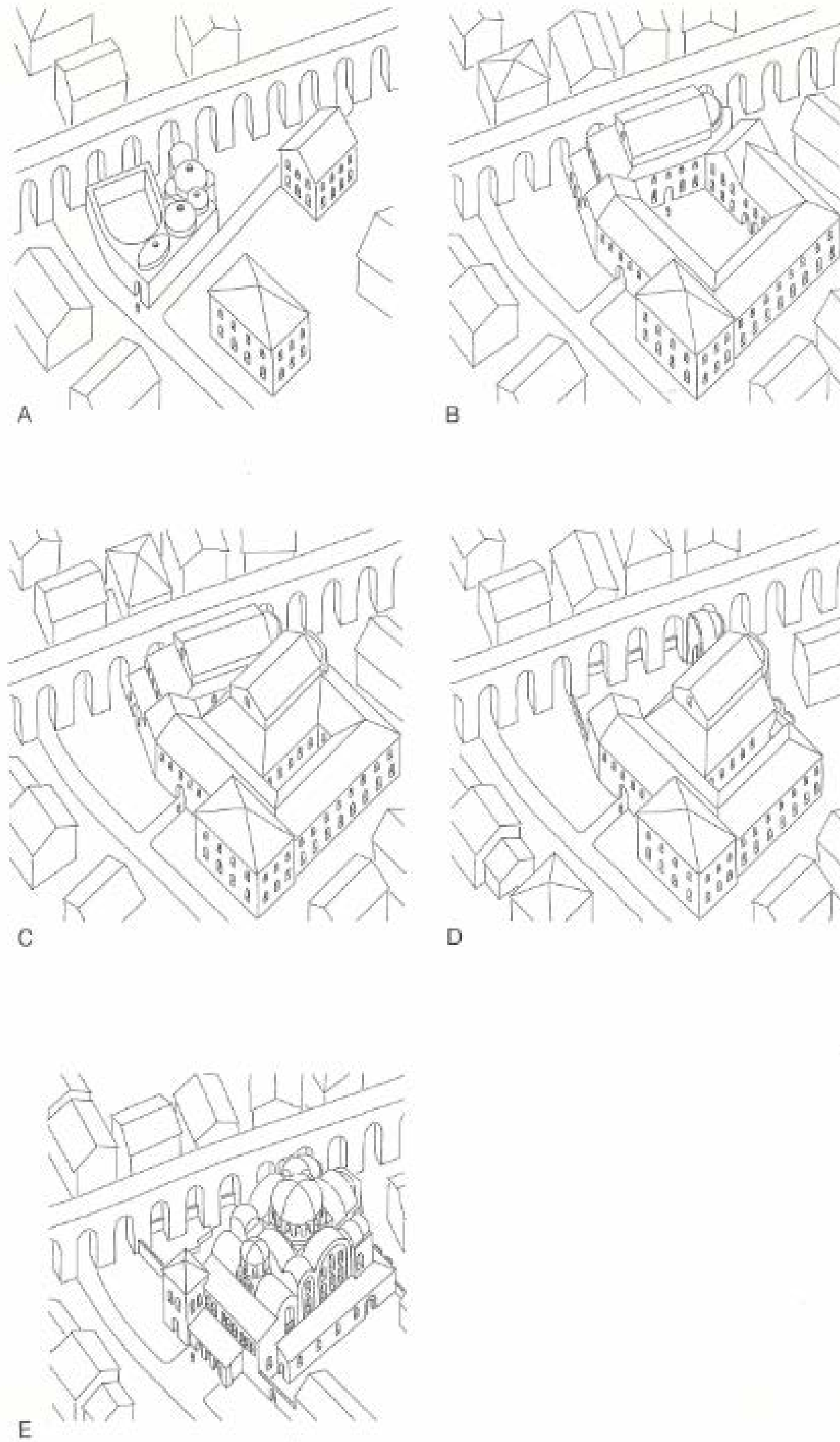

Figure 7: Reconstruction site sketch of the main phases: (a) Roman Bath (B) North Church (C) Bema Church (D) 1oth/12th c. And (E) Main Church

(Striker and Kuban 1997, p. 26, Figure 5)

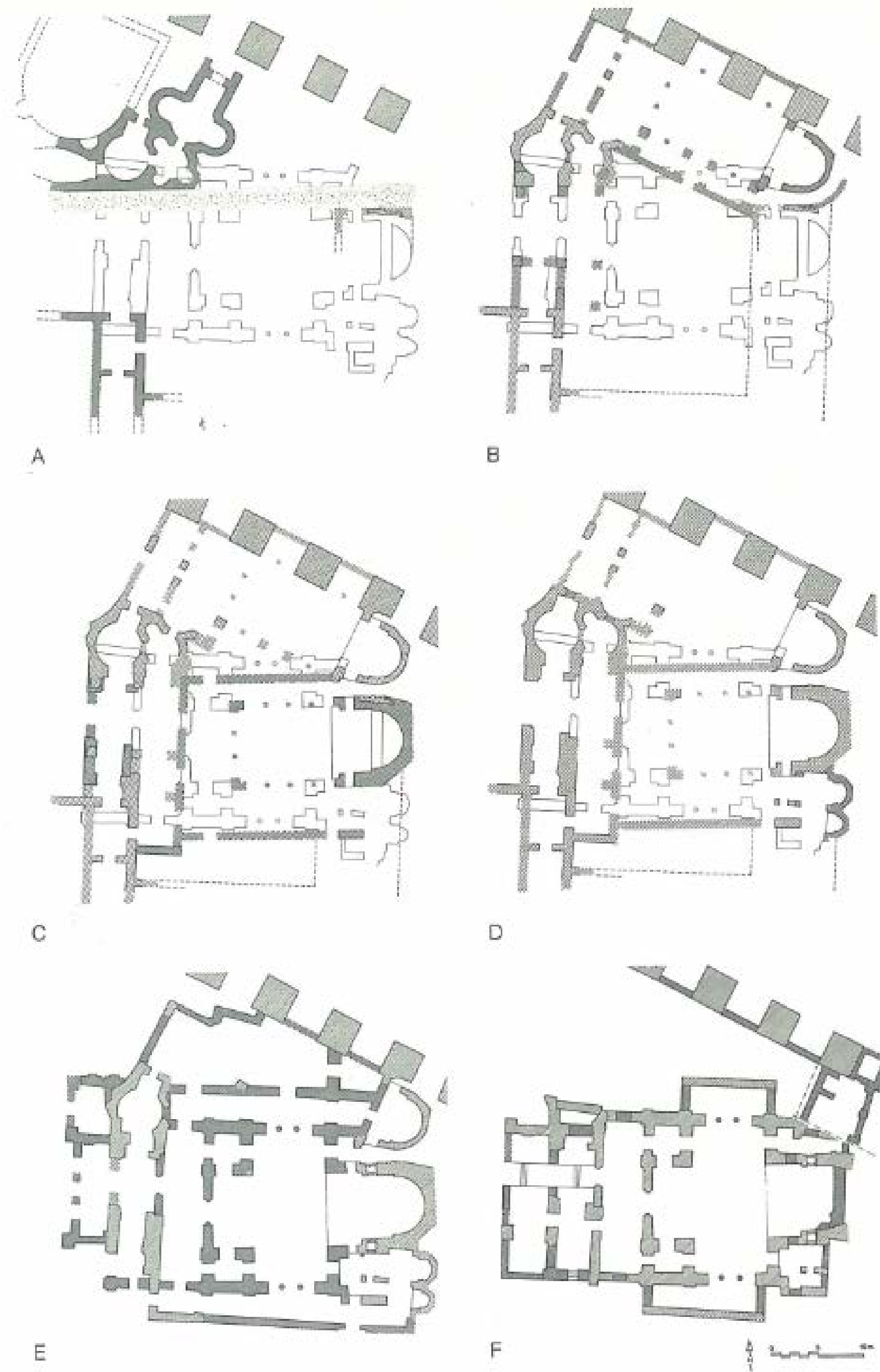

Figure 8: Reconstruction site plan of the main phases: (a) Roman Bath (B) North Church (C) Bema Church (D) 10th/12th c. (E) Main Church and (F) Ottoman

(Striker and Kuban 1997, p. 27, Figure 6)

group of amphorae and a scatter of coins associated with the construction phases of the Bema Church.[24] Its name refers to its most distinctive surviving feature that is almost completely preserved, the superstructure of its bema.[25] The Bema Church was erected to the south of the North Church on a slightly different axis. The North Church was demolished at some time between the tenth and twelfth centuries, but the Bema Church remained standing and in use until the twelfth century when it was replaced by the present-day building. Two chapels were constructed in the *diaconicon* area of the Bema Church, which were part of cumulative additions and modifications of annexed structures between the tenth and twelfth centuries (Figs. 9-10).[26]

Both Bema and North Churches were timber-roofed basilicas and were associated with a monastery. Berger argues that the identity of the North Church remains unknown since the references from the known sources do not correspond with the evidence from the North Church or its location. The original name of the Bema Church is also unknown. One of the earlier suggestions that the Kalenderhane Mosque was to be identified with the Church of the Mother of God *tes Diakonisses* is rejected by Berger since the known location of this church does not match with the location of the Bema Church but lies about 300 m to the south of Kalenderhane. According to Berger, the unearthing of an early twelfth century icon of the Mother of God *Kyriotissa* in a blocked doorway of the Bema Church leads to the consideration of the transferal of the name *Theotokos eis ta*

[24] Ibid., 56.
[25] Ibid., 45.
[26] Ibid., 58.

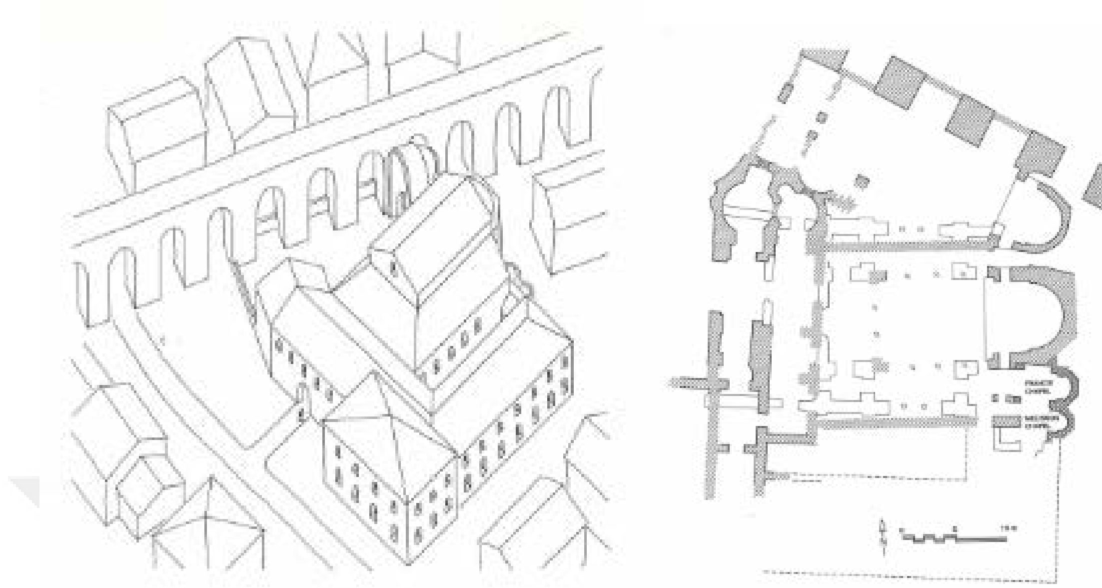

Figure 9: Reconstruction sketch and site plan in the 10th/12th c.

(Striker and Kuban 1997, p. 57, Figures 27 and 28)

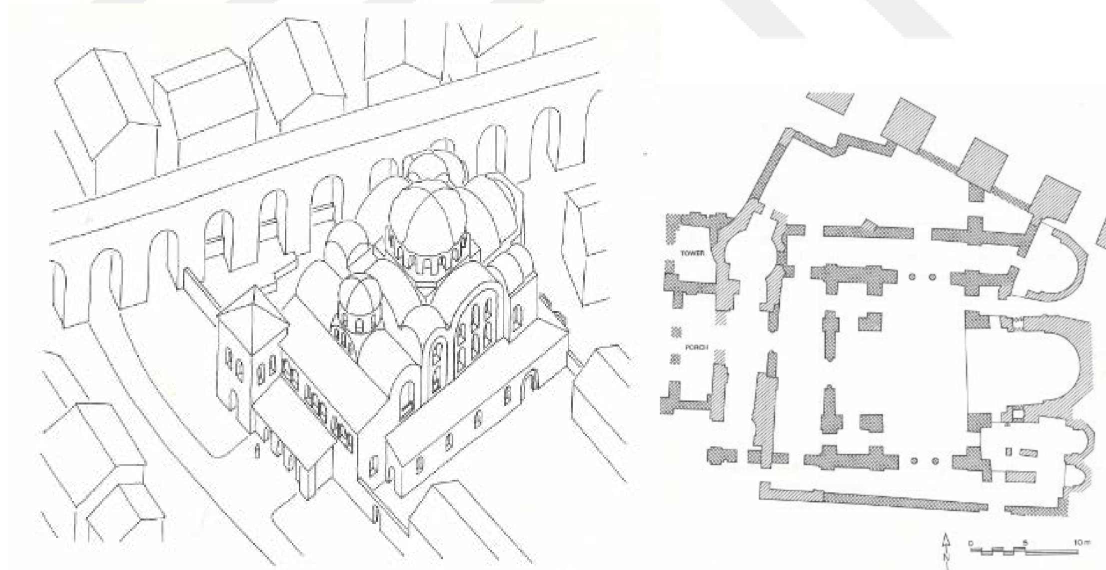

Figure 10: Reconstruction sketch and site plan ca. 1200

(Striker and Kuban 1997, p. 60, Figures 29 and 30)

Kyrou[27] from its original church in the western part of the city to the Bema Church at an unknown date but presumably after the end of Iconoclasm in 843 (Figs 11-12). Berger suggests that there can be a relationship between the name transfer and the construction of the first of the previously mentioned chapels added to the south of the bema. He argues that this chapel may have been built for the miracle-working icon of the Mother of God following the dedication of the church as *ta Kyrou*.[28]

The Main Church, which is the only standing Byzantine building on the site and the building eventually converted into the mosque of Kalenderhane, was a major reconstruction of the Bema Church around the year 1200, just prior to the Latin occupation of Constantinople.[29] This latest church gave the site its definitive form and last configuration. The new church was different from its predecessors with its cruciform plan and its large dome over the naos (Fig. 13). On the other hand, its design was governed mostly by the decision to preserve and incorporate major elements of the previous church into the new building similar to the North Church and the Bema Church that preserved certain elements of the previous phases of construction at the site. Among the preserved components of the previous churches were the aforementioned chapels in the *diaconicon*, the bema with the apse, the still-surviving apse of the North Church, and large parts of the narthex zone. The cross-domed type church had flanking aisles and two narthexes.[30] Striker and Kuban note that a screen must have divided the bema from

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[27] The name *Kyriotissa* refers to an icon of the Mother of God (*Theotokos*) that was kept in the monastery of *ta Kyrou. Theotokos eis ta Kyrou* refers to the Mother of God in the monastery of *ta Kyrou.*
[28] Berger and Göyünç, "Historical Topography," 8.
[29] Striker and Kuban, "Architecture," 71.
[30] Berger and Göyünç, "Historical Topography," 8.

Figure 11: 12th century Virgin *Kyriotissa* in the diaconicon with donor

(Striker and Kuban 1997, Plate 150)

Figure 12 : Virgin *Kyriotissa* in the diaconicon with donor (June 2016 - Photo Kaan Dönbekci)

the nave, but there is no surviving evidence of the templon screen.[31]

The dating of the Main Church to around 1200 and prior to the Latin occupation by Striker and Kuban is based on the secure archaeological evidence discovered in the excavation.[32] Among the surviving Byzantine churches, it is one of the last big churches erected in the city. According to Striker and Kuban, its rich and elaborate adornment with *opus sectile* paving and polychrome marble wall revetment, its construction in a

Figure 13: Interior view of central dome (June 2016 - Photo Kaan Dönbekci)

[31] Striker and Kuban, "Architecture," 54 and 72. Striker and Kuban report that there are some small repairs on the cross-arm flanking walls on which the epistyle of the templon screen could have leaned, but it is not possible to ascertain if they are related to the modifications in the templon, and, if so, if they date to the Latin period, in which the screening off the bema from the naos would not have been welcomed because of the liturgical practice, or later Paleologan period or the Ottoman period, in which it must have been removed definitely.

[32] The previous scholarship, based on typology, had dated the building to mid-ninth century. See Striker and Kuban, "Architecture," 71-72 for the detailed discussion of the corrected dating of the Main Church and its consequences for the general perception of the Middle Byzantine architecture and Byzantine architectural historiography.

continuous campaign and its size indicate an ambitious project and a wealthy patron.[33]

Shortly after the construction of the Main Church, the Latins captured Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade in 1204. Due to the lack of sources for the churches used by the Catholics in this period, it is not possible to identify Virgin *Kyriotissa* with a known church or monastery during the Latin Period.[34] However, the discovery of the fresco cycle with scenes from the life of Saint Francis of Assisi, the recently canonized Catholic saint in 1228 and the founder of the order of Friars Minor, in the semidome of one of the chapels in the *diaconicon* makes the presence of Latins at Kalenderhane evident. A further testimony of the Latin rite is the find of the altar table with distinct features of the Latin Church, which was later reused as floor pavement in the late fifteenth century (Fig. 14).[35] The Latins must have taken over a newly built and richly

Figure 14: Latin Period altar table-top

(Striker and Kuban 1997, Plate 125)

[33] Ibid. 72.
[34] Berger and Göyünç, "Historical Topography," 17.
[35] Urs Peschlow, "Architectural Sculpture," in *Kalenderhane in Istanbul: The Buildings*, ed. Cecil L. Striker and Doğan Kuban (Mainz am Rhein: Phillip von Zabern, 1997), 108. The cavity at the center of the top side of the altar table indicates the presence of a niche or *loculus* in which a relic was inserted. The recesses at the corners underneath the marble point out that the altar table once stood on four supports. These features, which are only found in the Latin Church, suggest that this altar table must have been used by the Latins.

decorated church only a few years after its completion. Nonetheless, the recently constructed church was not affected by the three major fires set by the Latins during the siege of the city.[36] The major modification of the Latins in the Main Church appears to have been the installation of the fresco cycle in the preexistent chapel in the *diaconicon*.

The archaeological evidence of the subsequent Palaeologan redecoration program suggests that the return of the church to Byzantine hands happened shortly after the reconquest of 1261.[37] The entire *diaconicon* was redecorated in this period with a fresco program, which was consequently covered with plaster in the Ottoman period. One of the structural changes of the *diaconicon* for the Paleologan redecoration seems to be the closure of the chapel of Saint Francis by a wall across its front. Striker and Kuban suggest that the purpose of the suppression of the chapel was presumably to create a flat surface to continue the new fresco program (Fig. 15).[38] Another structural change in the Palaeologan period was the blockage of the north side of the exonarthex by a new wall and filling up the tympanum over the door between narthexes with brick to place the fresco of *Kyriotissa* over the door of the esonarthex of the Main Church (Fig. 16).[39]

According to Berger, the discovery of the preserved fresco of *Kyriotissa* at this location is noteworthy since it is the usual place for depiction of the title saint. Berger suggests

[36] Thomas F. Madden, "The Fires of the Fourth Crusade in Constantinople. 1203-1204: A Damage Assessment," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 84/85 (1991/1992): 92-93.
[37] Striker and Kuban, "Architecture," 72-73.
[38] Ibid., 87.
[39] Ibid., 73.

Figure 15: Interior view of diaconicon – walled Saint Francis Chapel to the left (June 2016 - Photo Kaan Dönbekci)

Figure 16: Virgin over the door of the esonarthex (June 2016 - Photo Kaan Dönbekci)

that this discovery secures the dedication of the church to *Kyriotissa*.[40] Thus, the early twelfth century icon of the *Kyriotissa* in the *diaconicon* of the Bema Church, the Palaeologan fresco of her over the door of the esonarthex, and the textual and topographical evidence from various sources suggest that the Bema Church, at least in its later phase, and the Main Church was dedicated to the *Kyriotissa*.

Other structural changes in the later Byzantine period before the city was taken by the Ottomans appear to address structural problems mostly. After the conquest of Constantinople, the main change made by the Ottomans to convert the church building into a mosque was the removal of the templon screen to allow a clear view of the *mihrab*, which was built into southeast curve of the apse. Other changes were relatively few although the building was used as a mosque in the Ottoman period twice as long as its use as a church prior to that.[41] The apse was blocked in the middle of the eighteenth century and a new *mihrab* was installed, which was later replaced by a bigger one in the nineteenth century (Fig. 6). Most of the other changes were related to blocking of doors or suppressing areas by walls. The problems caused by the gradual but continuous rise in the exterior level were also dealt with by adding steps and raising floor levels. It cannot be determined if the minaret which was destroyed by lightning towards the end of 1920s was preceded by earlier ones but there must have been one in place after the conversion of the building into a mosque in the fifteenth century. The fall of the minaret in 1928 or

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[40] Berger and Göyünç, "Historical Topography," 8. For further discussion about the *ta Kyrou* and its homonym the *Kyriotissa* see Berger and Göyünç, "Historical Topography," 7-13. Berger provides a comprehensive topographical discussion of the known sources that mention the names *ta Kyrou* and the *Kyriotissa* in Constantinople to identify the churches at Kalenderhane. He also argues that various previous identifications were mistaken or speculative. His final conclusion is that the Bema Church, at least from the tenth century until the construction of the Main Church at the end of the twelfth century, and the Main Church were dedicated to the *Kyriotissa,* and that they were the *katholikon* of a monastery.
[41] Striker and Kuban, "Architecture," 73-75 and 87.

1929 is the incident marking the abandonment of the mosque until the excavation and restoration project between 1966 and 1978.[42]

1.2. Chapel of Saint Francis

The focus of this study is the fresco cycle of the life of Saint Francis which was discovered in one of the chapels added to the south of the bema between the tenth and twelfth centuries. This chapel, which preexisted the installation of the fresco cycle by the Latins in the thirteenth century, will be called the chapel of Saint Francis hereinafter. The *diaconicon*, where the chapel of Saint Francis is located, is a complex of rooms and chapels. Its structural history is very complex since it is formed by elements from various phases. After providing a brief overview of the chapel, this section focuses on the fresco cycle of Saint Francis. The description of the decorative program of the chapel is followed by brief iconographic and stylistic analyses of the frescoes.

1.2.1. Architectural History and Overview

The Saint Francis Chapel was attached to the apse in the later phases of the Bema Church. The chapel is identified as having been built as part of the annexed structures in the *diaconicon* between the tenth and twelfth centuries and retained during the construction of the subsequent church (Figs. 9-10). Thus, the chapel is dated earlier than the frescoes installed during the Latin occupation, and even earlier than the construction of the latest church, the Main Church, around the year 1200.[43]

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[42] Berger and Göyünç, "Historical Topography," 19.
[43] Striker and Kuban, "Architecture," 71.

The chapel of Saint Francis consists of a small-sized forebay and a small apse to the east of it. Four piers carrying arches define the 2.50 m square shaped forebay, which was originally covered by a fenestrated drum and dome on pendantives. The dome and most of the drum were demolished with the construction of the Ottoman barrel vault over the *diaconicon* east hall. Excavations revealed that the drum was a cylinder 2.30 m in interior diameter, which was lit by eight windows. The eastern arch opened into the apse of the chapel was also small in scale: 2.20 m at widest, 3.60 m high at the crown of its apse, and 2.20 m deep. Three windows, which were generously sized (80 cm wide and 1.60 m high) and set apart by mullions with capitals, lit the apse (Fig. 15).[44] Possibly before the construction of the Main Church, the apse was decorated with mosaic because a small fragment of mosaic was discovered under the plaster of the scenes of Saint Francis cycle upon the detachment of the frescoes remaining in situ.

Following the construction of the Saint Francis Chapel, the western room of the *diaconicon* was remodeled by creating a partition in the then unobstructed connection zone between church aisle and the chapel of Saint Francis. This partition corresponded with the modifications on the other side of the bema, to its north, when a wall was inserted between the surviving North Church apse and the Northeast Corridor creating another partition. These two partitions were introduced as facades flanking the bema. Striker and Kuban argue that the closing-off of these rooms on both sides of the bema can only be explained in terms of liturgical planning and the creation of distinct *pastophoria* for the first time in the Bema Church.[45] According to Striker and Kuban,

[44] Ibid., 82-83.
[45] Ibid., 79 and 84.

the apse of the North Church continued to be used as an annex room throughout the Main Church phase and possibly served a liturgical function.[46]

In the *diaconicon*, a second chapel was built next to the chapel of Saint Francis, presumably after the partition of the *pastophoria* and before the Main Church. The name given to this chapel by Striker and Kuban, the Melismos Chapel, refers to its later decoration program in the Palaeologan period although the chapel itself was constructed before the thirteenth century (Fig.17).[47] The bema and the adjoining annexes of North Corridor to the north and the *diaconicon* to the south, and the ground level of the narthexes to the west of the Bema Church were preserved in the construction of the Main Church around the year 1200, most probably, because of their vaulted structure.[48] The preexisting *diaconicon* structures including the chapel of Saint Francis remained essentially untouched during the building of the Main Church and were integrated in the new church by only a few structural modifications.[49] There were no structural changes in the *diaconicon* in the Latin period; the only modification was the new fresco program of the Saint Francis Chapel. Presumably in the following Palaeologan period, the apse of the Saint Francis Chapel was blocked by raising a wall across its front together with the windows of the Melismos chapel.

[46] Ibid., 58 and 81.
[47] Ibid., 85.
[48] Ibid., 59.
[49] Ibid., 85. The west room of the *diaconicon* took its definitive form with the cruciform plan of the Main Church, and subsequently, the closure of the door to the bema, which survived from the previous Bema church, blocked the early twelfth-century *Kyriotissa* fresco icon.

Figure 17: Interior view of diaconicon – domed forebay and walled apse of Saint Francis Chapel to the left and the Melismos Chapel to the right (June 2016 - Photo Kaan Dönbekci)

1.2.2. Description and Reconstruction of the Decorative Program

The remains of the fresco cycle were very fragmentary. Some fragments were dispatched from the situ and many pieces were excavated from the earth that filled the chapel for seven centuries. The twelve years long conservation, restoration and montage of the pieces recovered resulted in the final assembly of two-fifths of the original painted surface of the semidome of the chapel of Saint Francis (Fig. 18).[50] The frescoes are easily distinguishable by the distinctive religious habits of the Franciscan friars and the remains of the *Preaching to the Birds* scene in situ, which has become an attribute of Saint Francis, the founder of the Franciscan Order and the patron of the animals (Fig.

[50] Striker and Hawkins, "Mosaics and Frescoes," 129.

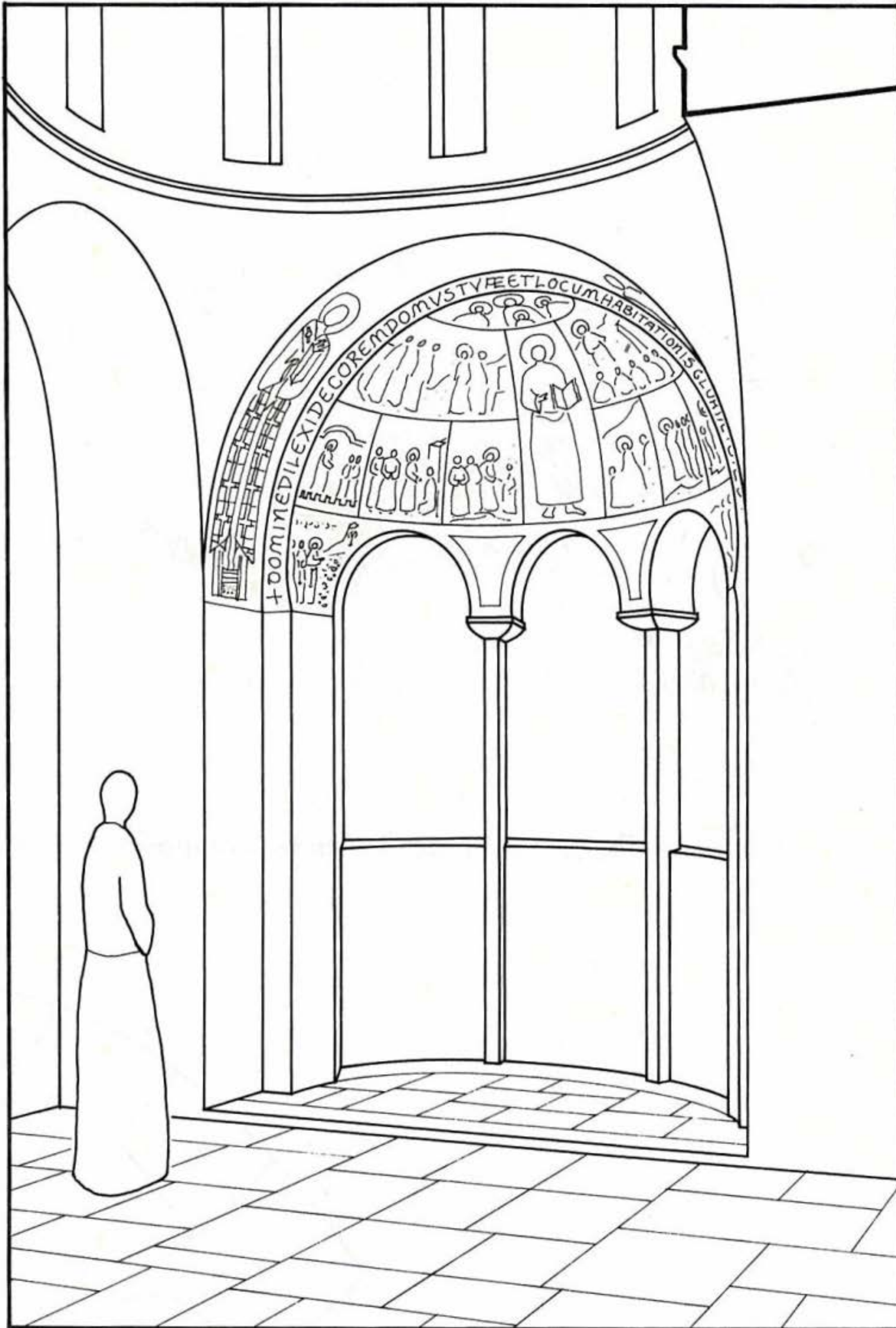

Figure 18: Reconstruction sketch of Saint Francis Chapel

(Striker and Kuban 1997, p. 129, Figure 70)

19). The fresco cycle of the life of Saint Francis of Assisi cycle is now exhibited at the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul.

Figure 19: Saint Francis frescoes in situ showing scenes 2, 3 and 5, inscription and Church Father (Photo O. Nelson)

(Striker and Kuban 1997, Plate 155)

The reconstructions of the program of the fresco cycle show that it consists of the figure of Saint Francis in the center flanked by scenes from his life (Fig. 20). The center of the semidome defining the apse of the chapel depicts a standing figure of Saint Francis,

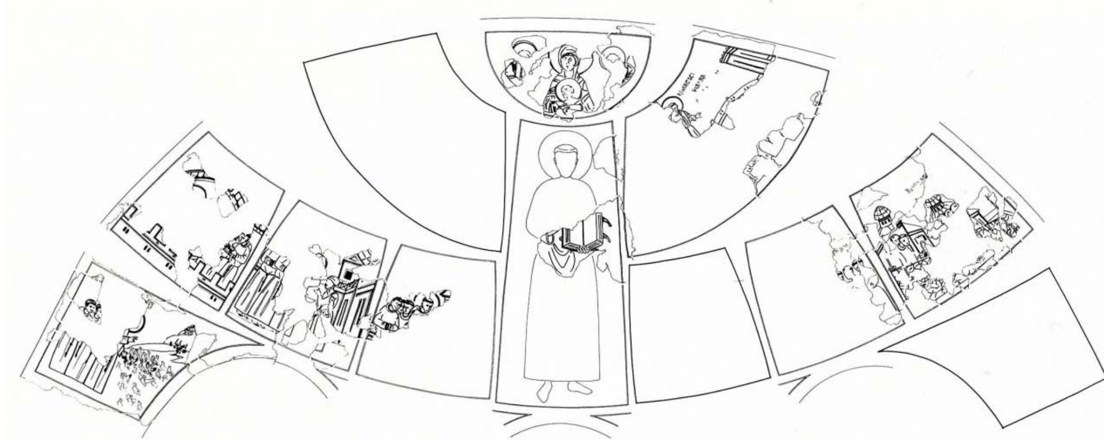

Figure 20: Saint Francis frescoes: composite reconstruction of preserved fragments (Striker and Kuban 1997, p. 130, Figure 71)

which is three times larger than the figures in the scenes on both sides of the central figure. Francis is represented with an open book in his left hand. There is a representation of the Virgin Mary and Christ-child flanked by angels in the vault above him. There are five scenes from Saint Francis's life on the right and left of his central figure, ten in total, but due to the fragmentary condition of the remains of some scenes, and absence of fragments in others, it is not possible to identify all of the ten scenes. Four scenes are identifiable with reasonable level of certainty. There are no fragments assigned to three scenes and the fragments assembled and assigned to the remaining three scenes are not sufficient to identify them confidently. There is an inscription from Psalm 26:8 on the face of the arch defining the semidome (Figs. 18-19). The arches on each side of the inscription depict standing figures of two Greek Church Fathers, almost double the scale of the central figure of St Francis. One of the Greek Church Fathers is

identified by the preserved fragments of its inscription as John Chrysostom.[51] The continuous painted surface attests that the face of the arch with the inscription and the Church Fathers and the cycle of Saint Francis were all painted at the same time.[52]

1.2.3. Iconography of the Program

The decorative program of the apse of the Saint Francis chapel has three main components: Virgin and Child on the crown of the semidome of the apse; the cycle of Saint Francis on the semidome; Greek Church Fathers and the psalm inscription on the arch leading to the semidome.

Virgin and Child with Angels

The Virgin and Child scene occupies the lunette-shaped panel on the crown of the semidome of the chapel (Fig. 21). The Christ-child, held by the Virgin in front of her, blesses with his right hand. Both figures are bust length and they stand against a soft blue background.[53] Two angels shown in profile are depicted at each side of the Virgin and the Christ-child with arms extended towards them.

Cycle of the Life of Saint Francis

The central figure of Saint Francis is standing and frontal, and is flanked on both sides with scenes from his life (Fig. 22). Only a few fragments of the fresco survive; they depict the waist of Saint Francis, the open book he holds with his left hand, and the blue background of the scene. The position and gesture of his right hand is not visible, and

[51] Ibid., 129-130.
[52] Ibid., 138.
[53] Ibid., 131.

Figure 21: Virgin and Child with angels

(Striker and Kuban 1997, Plate 156)

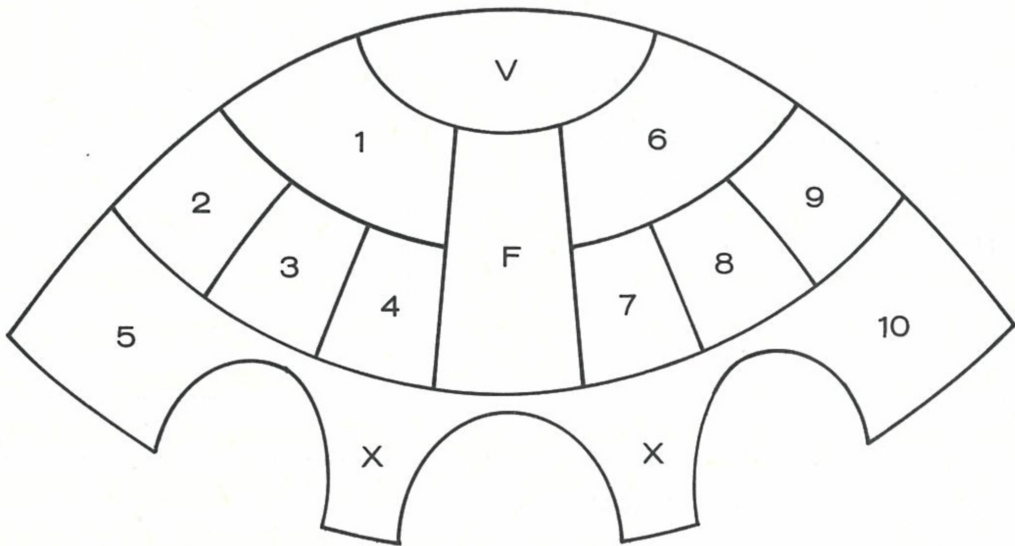

Figure 22: Saint Francis frescoes: diagram of program

(Striker and Kuban 1997, p. 130, Figure 72)

thus, whether his stigma was displayed is unknown (Fig. 20).[54] Of the ten scenes flanking the central figure of Saint Francis, Scenes 1, 7, and 10 are missing completely, Scenes 2, 6, and 8 are not securely identifiable, and Scenes 3, 4, 5 and 9 are deemed to be identified by Striker and Hawkins. One of the most easily recognizable scenes (Scene 5) is the *Preaching to the Birds* scene (Fig. 23). The scene depicts three-quarter figures of three friars standing on the left side of the scene, and facing to the right, and the profile figure of Saint Francis, also in three-quarter and facing to the right, at the center albeit his face is not preserved. On the right part of the scene, on a grass-green ground, twenty-five birds are depicted; most have them with open beaks, and some of them with of three friars standing on the left side of the scene, and facing to the right, and the profile figure of Saint Francis, also in three-quarter and facing to the right, at the center albeit his face is not preserved. On the right part of the scene, on a grass-green ground, twenty-five birds are depicted; most have them with open beaks, and some of them with spread wings, as specifically described by Thomas of Celano in the *Vita*.[55] Both hands of Saint Francis are extended towards the birds with a gesture of speaking. Neither of his hands shows stigmata, which is chronologically correct in terms of the sequence of the events.[56] Striker and Hawkins argue that four features of the *Preaching to the Birds* scene distinguish the various iconographical types of the early representations of the scene: whether Saint Francis stands to the left or right of the narrative scene; the position of his hands; whether the stigma is present; and the location of the birds in one or more

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[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 134.
[56] Rosalind B. Brooke, *The Image of St Francis: Responses to sainthood in the Thirteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006),, 21 and 44. The most discussed episode in Francis's life was his reception of the wounds of Christ, the stigmata, in 1224, two years before his death whereas his sermon to the birds is believed to have happened between 1215 and 1219.

Figure 23: Saint Francis frescoes in situ showing scene 5: Preaching to the Birds (Photo O. Nelson)

(Striker and Kuban 1997, Plate 159)

trees, on the ground, or both. The iconography of the Kalenderhane *Preaching to the Birds* diverts from all the early versions and resembles most closely the definitive version in the Upper Church of the Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi in which, as Kalenderhane, Saint Francis is at the left, the birds are on the ground, both hands are extended in identical gesture, and the stigmata are absent.

In two of the remaining identifiable scenes, Saint Francis performs miracles (Scenes 3 and 4), and the last one (Scene 9) is considered to represent the *Death of Saint Francis*.[57]

Greek Church Fathers and the Inscription on the Arch

Two standing Greek Church Fathers are depicted on the 60 cm wide arch that separates the semidome of the chapel from the forebay of the *diaconicon* (Figs. 17-19). Only the lower part of their vestments and several other fragments including one that depicts the forehead and eyes of one of the Church Fathers survive (Figs. 24-25). One of them is identified to represent Saint John Chrysostom by several fragments of an inscription.[58] The wrinkled forehead, thin nose, and closely placed, deep set eyes of the preserved fragment, according to Striker and Hawkins, resemble the traditional depiction of Saint John Chrysostom (Fig. 26). On the other hand, there is not enough archaeological evidence to identify the other Church Father.

The depiction of the Church Fathers with the correct representation of their detailed Greek liturgical vestments indicates the expertise of the artists who painted them. However, unlike the customary stance of the Church Fathers holding liturgical books or objects and gesticulating in their usual fashion, the arms of the father are depicted at rest under their *phelonia* diverting from the traditional iconography.[59] The size of the Greek Church Fathers, along with their prominent inclusion in the program of Saint Francis cycle, a Catholic saint, is also noteworthy since archaeological evidence leaves no doubt that they were painted at the same time with the remainder of the cycle.

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[57] Ibid., 35-36. See also Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 213-214 and Pantanella, "Francescani a Costantinopoli," 372 for the identification of the scene with the death of the saint.
[58] Striker and Hawkins, "Mosaics and Frescoes," 138.
[59] Ibid, 140.

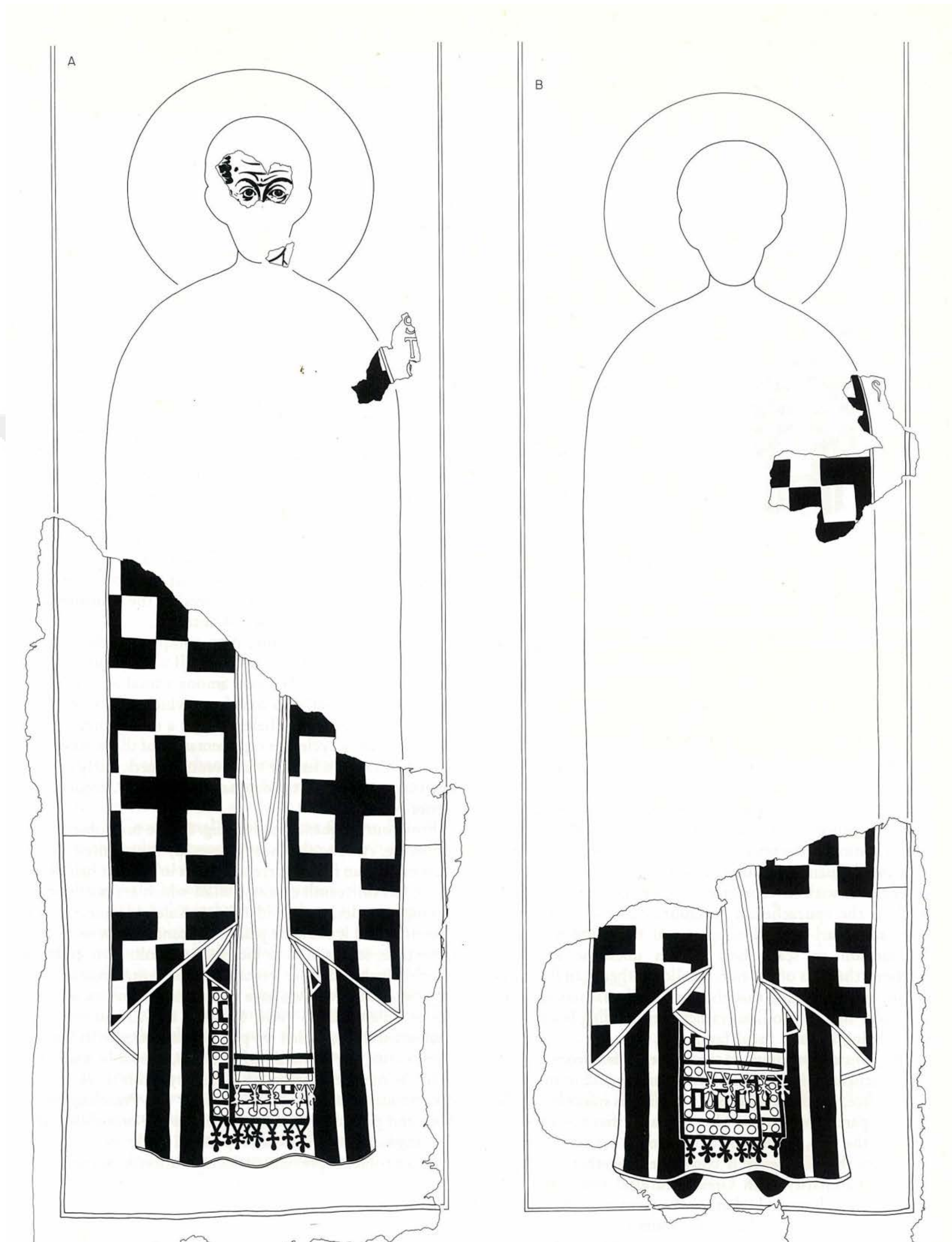

Figure 24: Reconstruction of Greek Church Fathers (A) south (B) north

(Striker and Kuban 1997, p. 139, Figure 84)

Figure 25: Greek Church Father (south) vestment

(Striker and Kuban 1997, Plate 165)

Figure 26: Greek Church Father head fragment

(Striker and Kuban 1997, Plate 164)

The vertical face of the arch leading to the semidome of the chapel is adorned by the ten word Latin inscription, DOMINE DILEXI DECOREM DOMU(s tuae et locum habitationis gloriae) TU Æ (O Lord, I love the habitation of thy house and the place where thy glory dwells) from Psalm 26:8.[60] Striker and Hawkins mention the presence of the same psalm inscription in the *diaconicon* of the Church of Hosios Lukas in Phocis describing this incidence as a mere coincidence.

1.2.4. Stylistic Analysis

One of the distinct features of the fresco cycle is its stylistic associations with the Paris Arsenal Bible (MS. 5211) which were first recognized by Hugo Buchthal.[61] Paris Arsenal Bible is described as "the crowning achievement of miniature painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem" by Buchthal. Its style and iconography are a distinctive

[60] Ibid, 138.
[61] Ibid, 142.

Crusader synthesis, or better to say hybridization, of Western and Byzantine elements. A striking example of the stylistic similarity between the Kalenderhane cycle and Paris Arsenal Bible is the fresco fragment of a woman in green and yellow striped garment which exhibits an instantaneously noted parallel with the figure of Judith in the frontpiece miniature of the Arsenal Bible in her blue and yellow garment (Figs. 27-28).[62]

Other similarities include such features as the modeling, gesture, and clothing of the figures, the color palette and the treatment of the landscape and the architectural background.

Figure 27: Green striped torso fragment

(Striker and Kuban 1997, Plate 167)

[62] Ibid, 137.

Figure 28: Paris Arsenal Bible, Judith frontpiece: Judith and Holofornes

(Bible de Saint-Jean d'Acre, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Ms-5211, fol.252r)

Jaroslav Folda, an eminent scholar of the history of the art of the Crusades, names this hybrid style as the Franco-Byzantine Crusader Style. Another example to this mutual style is the friar from the Kalenderhane cycle, which is similar in posture and style to the scribes accompanying Solomon in the proverbs frontpieces of the Paris Arsenal Bible (Figs. 29-30). However, according to Folda, the Franco-Byzantine Crusader style of the painter of the miniatures of a Missal now in the Capitular Library of Perugia (MS. 6), which is also very similar to the style of the Paris Arsenal Bible master, is the closest to that of the Saint Francis frescoes in Constantinople.[63] He suggests that the painterly style that emphasizes the three-dimensional figure of the Kalenderhane friar is very similar to the angels in the headpiece of the Perugia Missal (Figs. 30-31). The distinct facial types, in particular the prominent eyes and round heads that recur in the Paris Arsenal Bible and the Perugia Missal as well as another manuscript now in the Capitular Library of Padua (MS. 12), have a similar blend of Western and Byzantine characteristics. They point to Acre as the likely place of origin and to mid-thirteenth century as the likely period of production corresponding to the crusade of Louis IX.[64] To sum up, the Kalenderhane frescoes of Saint Francis, the Paris Arsenal Bible, the Perugia Missal, the biblical manuscript in Padua and also an icon of the Crucifixion now in the Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai, all exhibit a mature Franco-Byzantine Crusader style with very close formal characteristics. Although the information about the workshops in the Latin Levant and Constantinople is scarce to arrive to concrete conclusions, it is considered that these frescoes are the product of the same group of painters who were

[63] Folda, *Crusader Art: The Art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land, 1099-1291 (*Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2008), 112-113.
[64] Harry W Hazard., ed., *A History of the Crusades: The Art and Architecture of the Crusader States Vol. IV* Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), 131-133.

Figure 29: Paris Arsenal Bible, Solomon proverbs frontpiece: King Solomon and Holy Wisdom

(Bible de Saint-Jean d'Acre, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Ms-5211, fol.307r)

Figure 30: Detail of friar, Scene 2

(Striker and Kuban 1997, Plate 161)

Figure 31: Perugia Missal, (T)e igitur…, headpiece: Christ in a medallion between two worshipping angels

(Museo Capitolare di San Lorenzo, Ms-6, fol. 183r)

active in the Crusader Levant as well as Constantinople.[65]

On the other hand, the details of Greek liturgical vestments of the Church Fathers on the arch, the correct representation of the *phelonion*, the precise and fluid rendering of the details of the *sticharion* with its characteristic design, and the depiction of the *epitrachelion* with its jewel and pearl-studded fringes attest that their painter had a thorough understanding, and expertise in depicting, of Greek liturgical vestments (Figs. 24-25).[66] Striker and Hawkins suggest that it is likely that the painter of the Church Father was a Greek painter, who may have worked in collaboration with the Latin painter of the cycle of Saint Francis.

1.3. Scholarship on the Cycle of the Life of Saint Francis at the Kalenderhane Mosque

Existing scholarship mainly focuses on four aspects of the cycle: establishing its historical setting, patronage and dating; identifying the scenes in the cycle and their links to contemporary and later mural and panel paintings and cycles of Saint Francis; stylistic associations of the cycle with other works of art and, in particular, with a group of thirteenth-century Crusader manuscripts; and, lastly, the choice of Byzantine *vita* format for the fresco cycle.[67] Indeed, one of the most striking features of the fresco cycle of

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[65] Striker and Hawkins, "Mosaics and Frescoes," 142.
[66] Ibid., 140.
[67] Striker and Hawkins, "Mosaics and Frescoes," 128-142, Derbes and Neff, "Mendicant Orders," 449-461 and 463-464, Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 202-217, Cristina Pantanella, "I Francescani a Costantinopoli: gli affreschi con le storie di S. Francesco d'Assisi alla Kalenderhane Camii," *SOC Collectanea* XXIII (1990): 351-380, Jaroslav Folda, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land, from the Third Crusade to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 282-310, Folda, *Crusader Art 1099-1291*, 104-113, Paroma Chatterjee, *The Living Icon in Byzantium and Italy: The Vita Image, Eleventh to Thirteenth Centuries* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 207-215.

Kalenderhane is its similarity with the Byzantine *vita* icon format. Byzantine *vita* icon is considered a genre of visual hagiography as it depicts the life and the miracles of a saint. This narrative pictorial format became popular in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries in the Byzantine Empire.[68] It displayed the portrait of the saint together with scenes from his or her life placed on the sides surrounding the central portrait. The *vita* format also became popular in the Latin West. Of the surviving narrative cycles of the thirteenth century in the West, the most common cycles are the Passion of Christ and the narrative cycles of the lives of the saints, by far the largest number representing Saint Francis.[69] These cycles, painted in the format of the *vita* icon and placed on the altar, were initially considered to be a solution developed by the Franciscans until the discovery of Mount Sinai *vita* icons.[70] Derbes and Neff suggest that by deriving the Byzantine *vita* icon format, Franciscan friars "effectively inscribed Francis into a veritable lineage of holy men equating him with the saints of late antiquity and Byzantium."[71]

It is not surprising to see that the Byzantine vita icon format was appropriated by the Franciscans as they were very active in the Mediterranean East both pursuing missionary activity and also preaching the Crusades since the very beginning of the foundation of

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[68] Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, "Vita Icons and Decorated Icons of the Komnenian Period," in *Four Icons in the Menil Collection (*Houston: Menil Foundation, 1992), 57, "The Vita Icon and the Painter as Hagiographer," *Dumbarton Oak Papers*, 53 (1999): 150, Glenn Peers, *Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium* (University Park. Pennsylivania State University Press, 2004), 77, Chatterjee, *Living Icon*, 1.
[69] Anne Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy: Narrative Painting, Franciscan Ideologies, and the Levant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2 and 173, n.5.
[70] Demus, *Byzantine Art and the West*, 210-212.
[71] Derbes and Neff, "Mendicant Orders," 452.

their order, the Friars Minor.[72] The so-called mendicant order vowed poverty and was committed to convert non-Christians, including Orthodox and heterodox Christians, to the only true religion, the Roman Catholic Church. They used visual imagery creatively and extensively in the decoration of their churches to promote their mission both in Italy and elsewhere where they set up Franciscan establishments. As Derbes and Neff argue, on the one hand, the art of the Franciscans was affected by their interest and involvement in the Mediterranean East, and on the other hand, their presence and endeavors also affected the visual culture of the region.

The stylistic association of the frescoes with a group of thirteenth-century Crusader manuscripts, and in particular with the Paris Arsenal Bible, establishes the main evidence for the dating of the cycle.[73] Paris Arsenal Bible illustrates a distinctive Crusader hybrid of Western and Byzantine with its style and iconography. Based on the stylistic similarities between the Kalenderhane frescoes and the Arsenal Bible, it is suggested that they may have been contemporary to the commissioning of the manuscript by Saint Louis at Acre in the years 1250 to 1254 during his time in the Latin Kingdoms of the Levant.

The ensemble of various Eastern and Western components in the program, which is a less discussed and researched aspect of the cycle, is commonly considered to reflect the mid-thirteenth century climate of the ongoing negotiations for the union of the Greek Orthodox Church and Latin Catholic Church. The quite unusual importance attributed to

[72] Ibid., 449-450, Clifford Hugh Lawrence, *The Friars: The Impact of the Early Mendicant Movement on Western Society (*New York: Longman, 1994), 37, Christoph Maier, *Preaching the Crusades: Mendicant Friars and the Cross in the Thirteenth Century*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 8 and 32
[73] See Folda, *Crusader Art 1099-1291*, 112-113, Striker and Hawkins, "Mosaics and Frescoes," 142.

Greek Church Fathers, depicted twice the size of the central figure of Francis and in a prominent location framing the cycle, is generally interpreted as a reference to the identification of the common origins of the Latin Church and Greek Church and the parallels between Franciscan spirituality and Byzantine monasticism.[74]

Besides providing the reconstructions of the fresco program and descriptions of the scenes with their iconographic details, Striker and Hawkins also attempt to identify each scene of the cycle with the remains in situ or the fragments assigned to it. In order to search for supporting evidence for the scenes that cannot be confidently identified, and more importantly, to establish the link between the Kalenderhane cycle with other contemporary surviving cycles of Saint Francis, they present a frequency analysis of a total of sixty six scenes of Italian panel paintings from nine other cycles of the thirteenth century up to the definitive cycle of the Upper Church of Assisi. They, then, compare them with the scenes of the Kalenderhane Mosque arguing that the Kalenderhane program is an adaptation of the standard *duecento* altar panel, or dossal.[75] Thus, they base their comparative analysis on the notion of seeking an Italian model for the Kalenderhane cycle by comparing its scenes with Italian panel paintings of the thirteenth century.

Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, a scholar of Byzantine studies, in her seminal article *The Vita Icon and the Painter as Hagiographer*, draws attention to the similarity of the fresco cycle to the format of Byzantine *vita* icon. The Byzantine *vita* icon, a type of icon

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[74] Maria Raffaella Menna, "Byzantium, Rome, Crusader Kingdoms: Exchanges and Artistic Interactions in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century," *Opuscular Historiae Artirum* (2013): 50-52, Striker and Hawkins, “Mosaics and Frescoes,” 140, Derbes and Neff, “Mendicant Orders,” 452-453.

[75] Ibid., 140-141.

also known as “hagiographical”, “historiated”, “biographical”, or “narrative” icon, appeared and became popular in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries in the East.[76] The *vita* icon displays the portrait of the saint at the center flanked by scenes that depict the life and the miracles of the saint, which are often based on the saint’s literary *vita*, or hagiography, typically beginning with the saint’s nativity, and ending with his or her death or martyrdom. Similar to a *vita* icon, the center of the semidome defining the apse of the chapel at the Kalenderhane Mosque depicts a standing figure of Saint Francis which is significantly larger than the figures in the scenes on both sides of the central figure. As a matter of fact, Ševčenko argues that the Italian panel paintings of the life cycle of Saint Francis are a variant on the traditional Byzantine *vita* icon and she suggests that “the choice of format at the Kalenderhane cycle should be studied within the context of the function of the *vita* icon itself.”[77]

Given the stylistic similarities identified between the Kalenderhane cycle and the art works of the Levant, Ševčenko’s suggestion to study the format of the Kalenderhane cycle within the context of the function of the Byzantine *vita* icon has to be clearly extended to the study of its style within the context of the Byzantine and Crusader art. Ševčenko’s conclusion on the origin of the Byzantine *vita* icon also supports a Crusader model for the Kalenderhane cycle: Ševčenko argues that Sinai could be the center for the promotion and dissemination of this new format because of the evidence of intense production of *vita* icons. According to Ševčenko, the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual population of the region called for visual *C* rather than literary hagiography. The

[76] Ševčenko, "Vita Icons and Decorated Icons," 57 and "Vita Icon and Painter as Hagiographer," 150. Although the popularity of the *vita* icon surmounts in the late twelfth century, there are surviving icons with a hagiographical cycle which are dated earlier, see 36, n. 81.
[77] Ševčenko," Vita Icon and Painter as Hagiographer," 162, n. 56.

importance of the region as a pilgrimage center and the connections of Saint Catherine's monastery with its properties all over the Mediterranean may have been instrumental in the dissemination of the *vita* icons.[78] Thus, the option of a Crusader model needs to be considered alongside with an Italian model for the Kalenderhane cycle -a possibility not excluded by Striker and Hawkins.[79]

However, the most important conclusion of the abovementioned analysis of Striker and Hawkins is that the Kalenderhane cycle is more closely related to the definitive later cycle of the beginning of the fourteenth century at the Upper Church of Assisi, the particular iconography of *Preaching to the Birds* scene being a certain link (Fig. 32).[80]

Cristina Pantanella, an Italian art historian, argues, on the basis of iconographic and stylistic comparisons with Italian panel paintings, manuscript illuminations, and Crusader icons, that the artist of the cycle was probably a Latin artist of noteworthy quality, whose artistic formation was linked to the Franciscan Order's activities in central Italy.[81] Pantanella also suggests that the artist was sensible and open to experiences in both the Crusader and Byzantine realms and defines the Kalenderhane cycle as an important evidence and symbol of the "artistic and cultural bridge" between the East and West to which the Franciscans contributed.

Pantanella and the distinguished scholar of medieval history and early Franciscan studies, Rosalind B. Brooke, offer historical evidence for the existence of an established Franciscan house and presence of notable Franciscans in Constantinople during the Latin

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[78] Ibid., 165.
[79] Striker and Hawkins, "Mosaics and Frescoes," 141.
[80] Ibid., 134.
[81] Pantanella, "Francescani a Costantinopoli," 379-380.

Figure 32: Legend of Saint Francis, Preaching to the Birds, 1297-1300, Basilica of San Francesco, Upper Church, Assisi, Italy

occupation disagreeing Striker's suggestion that the Saint Francis chapel at Kalenderhane may have been part of a French Dominican house.[82] Another scholar, Paroma Chatterjee, a scholar of Byzantine art history who works on artistic networks between Byzantium and the Latin West from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, approaches the matter from another point of view focusing on the artistic activity of the Dominicans in *duecento* and concludes that the Kalenderhane cycle was not a Dominican establishment.[83] Chatterjee argues that the physical and material frame of the Kalenderhane cycle formed by the depiction of Greek Church Fathers on the arch and the *Theotokos* and Child on the semidome is Byzantine in contrast to the image it encloses, which is Franciscan in subject matter and iconography.[84]

A brief survey of the scholarship on the cycle of Saint Francis clearly emphasizes the hybrid nature of the frescoes as well as the inter-connectedness of the medieval Mediterranean.

1.4. Questions Raised by the Chapel of Saint Francis at the Kalenderhane Mosque

Although the fresco cycle was discovered almost half a century ago, there are still unanswered questions both due to the lack of sources providing information on its historical context and also the intriguing features of the frescoes. Some of the questions,

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[82] Berger and Göyünç, "Historical Topography," 17, Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 203-205, Pantanella, "Francescani a Costantinopoli," 355-356 and 380.
[83] Chatterjee, *Living Icon*, 210.
[84] Ibid., 212.

which this thesis seeks for answers to contextualize the fresco cycle by adopting the hybridological approach, are listed hereinafter.

Diversity of experiences, sensitivities, and competencies

- How did the perception of sainthood differ in the Latin (Italian) West and Byzantine East in the thirteenth century? Did the reception of the image of the saint differ among the viewers of the Orthodox and Latin rites? If such differences existed, were they reflected in the Kalenderhane cycle?

- How did the experience of the viewer of the *vita* format differ? What were the reasons for the adopting of this format in the East and the West? Why was this format chosen for the Kalenderhane frescoes of Saint Francis?

- What is the significance of Virgin Mary and Child scene for Franciscans? For Byzantines?

Relationships, encounters and power constellations

- What was the mission of the Franciscans? What were their activities in the Latin Empire of Constantinople and the Crusader kingdoms of the Levant? What part did the Franciscans take in the negotiations between the Greek Orthodox and Latin Catholic churches? How was the constellation of power among the parties involved?

- How did the mission, the activities and the role of the Franciscans in the East impact their art? Are these impacts visible at the Kalenderhane cycle? Do they resemble or differ from other examples in Italy or elsewhere?

Contexts and premises

- Who was the patron of the Kalenderhane cycle? When was it painted? Was there a Franciscan house in Constantinople during the Latin occupation? Was Kalenderhane used by the Franciscans in this period? Does the fact that Kalenderhane was the most recently and lavishly built church of the city have any significance?

- Why was the cycle painted in the chapel which was part of the diaconicon complex? Did it relate to the previous use of the chapel in the Byzantine period? Was it related to the icon of Virgin *Kyriotissa*, which might have been placed in this chapel built for its transferal to the church? Was it related to the dedication of the church to Virgin *Kyriotissa*? Does the location of the cycle relate to its supplementary chapels context in Byzantine churches or in Latin churches?

- Who were the artists who painted the frescoes? How did the Franco-Byzantine style emerge and spread in the Latin kingdoms? Did it reach anywhere else around the Mediterranean? What were the means of its transmittance?

- Why were the Virgin Mary and Child scene and the scenes from the life of Saint Francis depicted together in the program? Could it be related to the dedication of the church to Virgin *Kyriotissa*? What was the significance of this juxtaposition?

- What was the reason for the prominence of the Greek Church fathers in the program? Why did their iconography divert from their traditional iconography? Are there any other examples of a similar program and iconography elsewhere?

- What was the relevance of the Latin inscription leading to the semidome of the chapel? What is its source? What is its meaning and context for Franciscans/Latins? For Byzantines? Are there other examples of this inscription in other churches in the West or in the East?

- What was the purpose of the closure of the apse of the chapel decorated with the cycle of Saint Francis? Was it for practical purposes and convenience for the Paleologan decoration? Or was it an ostensible act of iconoclasm for religious and political motives, which in reality may have intended to protect it rather than annihilate?

- Does the Kalenderhane cycle resemble or differ from other depictions of Saint Francis? How is it linked with other cycles of saints and those of Saint Francis?

This list of questions, by no means, is a complete one. Nevertheless, this study alone does not have the capacity to answer them all, but yet it is an attempt to methodologically deal with the key research questions of the hybridological approach by acknowledging diversity, analyzing the relations and the encounters and, finally, exploring the contexts and the premises of the processes of hybridization. The final goal is to gain an understanding of the mutual negotiations of the interchange and decipher its outcome, the hybrid.

2. Cultural Encounters and Artistic Interchange in the Medieval Mediterranean

Scholarship on the visual cultures of ancient and medieval Mediterranean frequently deals with questions that exceed cultural and political boundaries; scholars who work on the arts and the cultures of the Mediterranean, Near East and Asia Minor often come across issues of cross-cultural interaction. The visual material in question requires a critical evaluation of the mobility and selective appropriation of themes, motifs, objects through means of trade, war and pilgrimage as well as the role of ritual and art in power negotiations.[85] This chapter focuses on three concurrent phenomena of the thirteenth century that were central to the creation of the Saint Francis cycle in Constantinople: the emergence of the Byzantine *vita* icon and its dissemination; the rapid growth of the order founded by Francis of Assisi; and the art of the Crusades. It aims to analyze the artistic interchange in the Medieval Mediterranean and shed light on the processes and backdrop that created the Kalenderhane cycle. The first two key research questions of the hybridological approach, (i) the diversity of the experiences and sensitivities of Byzantine East and Latin West on the perception of sainthood and reception of the *vita* icon and (ii) the relationships, encounters and power constellations between the Latins and the Byzantines, are tackled in order to interpret the hybridity of the Kalenderhane cycle.

The first section of this chapter examines the *vita* icon in the context of Eastern Christianity focusing on the Byzantine image theory. The order founded by Francis of

[85] Matthew P. Canepa, "Theorizing Cross-Cultural Interaction Among Ancient and Early Medieval Visual Cultures," *Ars Orientalis* (Freer Gallery of Art, The Smithsonian Institution and Department of the History of Art, University of Michigan) 38 (2010): 7.

Assisi and its activities in the East form the basis of the discussion of the role of the Franciscans in the artistic interchange between the East and the West in the second section. The last section provides a glimpse of the art of the Crusader states, and its extreme hybridity, through one of its utmost examples, the Melisende Psalter, in order to serve as a model for the Kalenderhane cycle of Saint Francis.

2.1. Byzantine *Vita* Icon

The similarity between its format and the Byzantine *vita* icon is a marked feature of the Kalenderhane cycle of Saint Francis. This genre appeared in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries in the East, yet there are a few earlier surviving examples. The earliest surviving icon with a hagiographical cycle was considered to be an eleventh century icon of Saint Nicholas on Mount Sinai, but a more recent discovery of a *vita* icon of Saint Marina dated perhaps as early as to seventh-eighth century ascertained that the genre may have existed even before then (Fig. 33).[86] The *vita* icon displayed the portrait of one of the most prominent saints in the Orthodox calendar, such as Nicholas, George, or John the Baptist at the center, sometimes in full length, and in other times only as the bust (Fig. 34). This central portrait was flanked by scenes that depicted the life and the miracles of the saint, which were often based on the saint's literary *vita*, or hagiography. They could also include stories from well-known hymns, which were the lyric poems sung in the religious service. Thus, the *vita* icon integrated literary and narrative elements to form a hagiographical cycle of scenes, usually beginning with the

[86] Ševčenko, "Vita Icons and Decorated Icons," 57, Ševčenko, "Vita Icon and Painter as Hagiographer," 150, Peers, *Sacred Shock*, 80 and 160, n. 8, , Titos Papamastorakis, "Pictorial lives. Narrative in Thirteenth-Century Vita Icons," *Mouseio Benaki* (2008): 61. Papamastorakis argues that on the basis of the stylistic characteristics, the Saint Marina *vita* icon can be dated to the second half of the eleventh century.

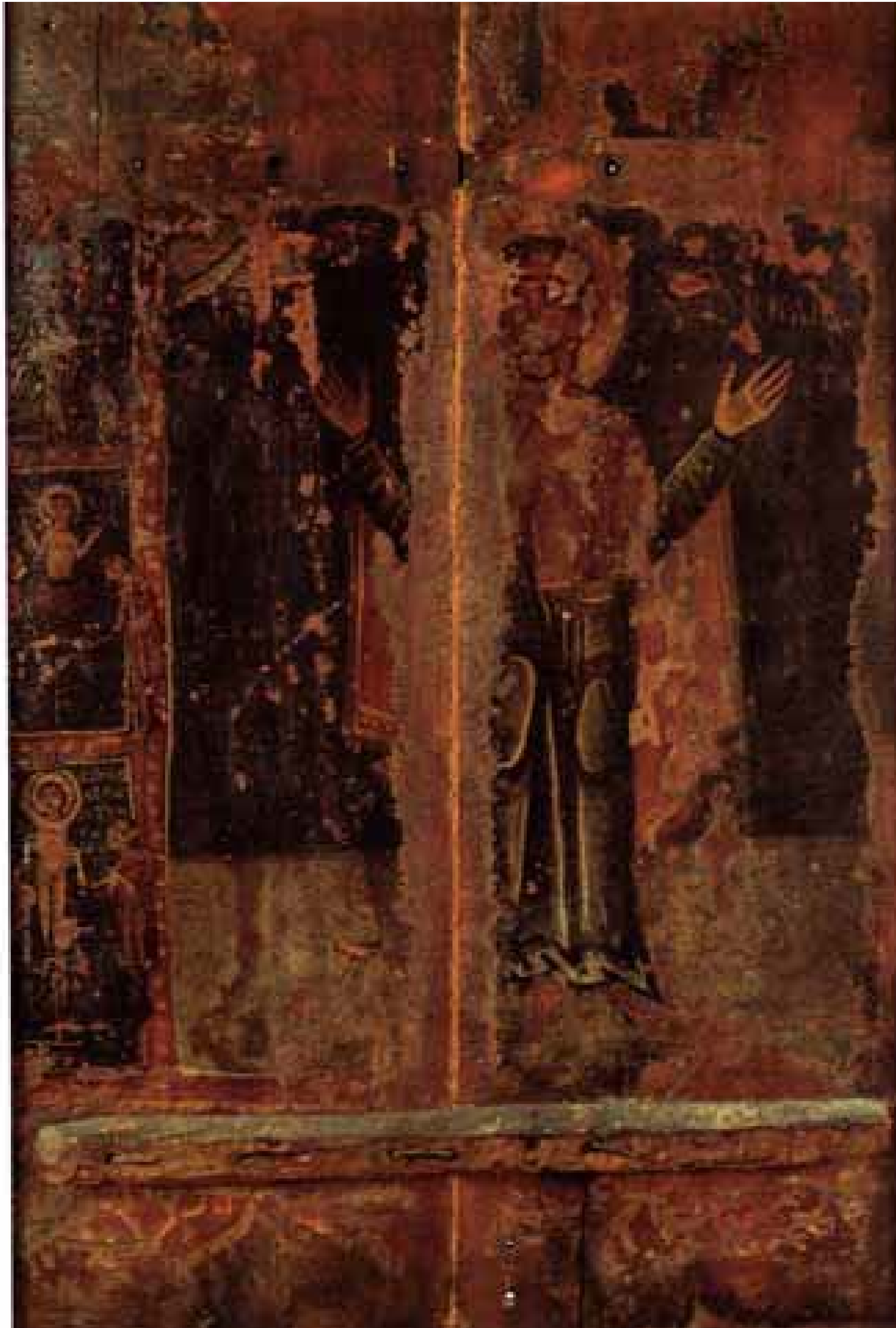

Figure 33: *Vita* icon of Saint Marina from the church of Agia Marina in Filousa, Byzantine Museum of Paphos Cathedra, Cyprus.

(Papamastorakis 2008, p. 61, Fig. 33)

Figure 34: *Vita* icon of Saint George, 13th century, Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt

saint's nativity, and ending with his or her death or martyrdom. The resultant icon was a historical and literary account that illustrated the saint's life in a way that was comprehensible even to the largely illiterate, multiethnic, and multilingual medieval society.[87] These icons, which were mostly painted on wooden panels, were more than just representations of the saints; they were "holy images," as Edwyn Bevan called them, that transcended time and place.[88]

The *vita* icon, evidently enabled by the clarity and efficiency of its format,[89] became popular in the Byzantine Empire spreading quickly to Italy, Cyprus, and Russia in the thirteenth century.[90] This pictorial format continued to enjoy its popularity in the post-Byzantine Greece, Balkans, and Russia.[91] The most frequent and creative use of the *vita* image in the West was adopted by the Franciscans in the first half of the thirteenth century for their then recently canonized founder, Saint Francis of Assisi.[92] This section reviews the history of the icon and focuses of the *vita* icon of the saint and its use in Byzantium to set the stage for the discussion of its appropriation by the Franciscans.

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[87] Ševčenko, "Vita Icon and Painter as Hagiographer," 165.
[88] Edwyn Bewan, *Holy images: an inquiry into idolatry and image-worship in ancient paganism and in Christianity* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1940) Bevan's survey on image-worship includes four essays and starts from the Paleolithic times. Following the discussions of the denounce of idolatry in the Old Testament and the Christian attack on pagan idolatry, Bevan examines the early Christian regulations and the views regarding the use of pictures. Bevan argues that there are three views and the Christian Church moved from first two positions to the third: (i) all images and making of pictures are wrong, which is the view shared by the Jews and the Muslims; (ii) they are permissible to instruct the sacred story to simple lay people, and thus they are useful didactic tools, but it is wrong to offer homage to them; and (iii) besides making pictures and images, it is also right to revere them religiously.
[89] Chatterjee, *Living Icon*, 1.
[90] Ševčenko, "Vita Icon and Painter as Hagiographer," 152.
[91] Ševčenko, "Vita Icons and Decorated Icons," 57.
[92] Saint Francis of Assisi (born 1181/1182 - died 1226) was canonized by Pope Gregory IX at Assisi in 1228.

2.1.1. The Holy Image and the History of the Icon

The power of images has led to controversies among different faiths, as well as among the devotees of the same faith since early times as Bevan's account of the holy image illustrates. However, Byzantium is unique in the history because of the religious and political divisions created by iconoclasm in the Byzantine society in the eighth and ninth centuries. According to Hans Belting, the role of religious images cannot be understood solely in terms of their theological content; the disagreement of the opposing parties in the controversy, in fact, is over a special kind of image, the icon, and a special use of image, its veneration.[93] It is the reverence for the images of the persons, which were kissed and for which candles were lit and incense was burned, in the feast ceremonies, processions, and pilgrimages that creates the controversy. As Gary Vikan points out, an icon was, and still is, "believed to be a *holy* image, one which literally shares in the sanctity of the figure whose likeness it bears." [94] The accepted Orthodox view was put forward by Saint Theodore the Studite, who was one of the last of the Early Greek Church Fathers and a tireless opponent of iconoclasm:

> *Every artificial image...exhibits in itself, by way of imitation, the form of its model... the model is in the image, the one in the other, except for the difference of the substance. Hence, he who reveres an image surely reveres the person whom the image shows; not the substance of the image... Nor does the singleness of his veneration separate the model from the image, since, by virtue of imitation, the image and the model are one...* [95]

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[93] Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 3.
[94] Gary Vikan, "Sacred Image, Sacred Power," in *Icon: Four Essays* (Washington, D.C.: The Trust for Museum Exhibitions, 1988), 6.
[95] Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire: 312-1453* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Sources and Documents in the History of Art Series, 1972), 173.

According to Belting, these cult images, or holy images, represented a local cult rather than universal beliefs, and mostly related to a legend about its origins, dream visions or of miracles.[96] The miracles stressed the transcending presence of the saints, who were capable of working wonders through their images even after their death proving that they were really still alive. The venerated icon possessed *dynamis*, or supernatural power, and was capable of action. Belting also argues that such images possessed charismatic powers and stood out of the hierarchy by their nature, and thus, protected minorities and became advocates of the people. They had the power to speak with a voice directly from the heaven and without the mediation of the church. They were venerated with bended knee, and supplicated; the image and the likeness intertwined since they were treated like persons. As Vikan states, many have called icons as "theology in colors" in Byzantium, and when a Byzantine Christian stood before an icon of Christ, "he believed himself to be standing face-to-face with his Saviour." [97]

Belting argues that the significance of the icon varied in each of the three stages of the Byzantine Empire, and in the earliest stage, the late antiquity, "it was nothing but a late classical panel picture that inherited the divine image, the imperial image, and the portrait of the dead."[98] The icon, a hybrid of different traditions and genres, became the focus of the controversy over the cult images or holy images. The early icon lacked a fully developed canon of images in the late antiquity, and borrowed its forms from other genres, and especially from Roman art, since the Christian cult image did not yet have

[96] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 3-6.
[97] Vikan, "Sacred Image, 8.
[98] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 26.

its own traditions. This period witnessed the same practices and dogmas in the East and the West.

The second age started in the ninth century after the end of iconoclasm and preceding the schism of the Eastern and Western churches. Having overcome the iconoclast period with a triumph, the icon, for the first time, was given an official role in the church and became an instrument of church doctrine.[99] Nevertheless, the now standardized iconic art set the tone in religious painting and had impact on other genres of art; its standard appearance was a symbol of the rigid concepts of the order of the church. The precise definition, which was reached by lines on the surface, replaced the open structure of painting of late antiquity. The canon that suited the church-controlled cult image reduced the diversity of the visual experience, and the face of the figures lost the natural spontaneity to become the stereotyped mask, which also served to isolate the viewer and the saint. However, from the eleventh century onwards, there was a shift to an animated painting that was developed to celebrate the ethical roles and ideals through the traditional icon, which also competed with the church poetry.[100] The emotions that were portrayed permitted a private access to the saints, who represented the dogma. Liturgical practices, too, unfolded new speech roles for the icon. The saint, who was portrayed as filling a both ethical and ecclesiastical role, now had an interchangeable facial type, although it was one of a limited range of formulas, and embodied the exemplary person. The icon changed radically in the late period yet again. While allowing a personal way of experiencing its meaning through affective means of mime, gesture, and color, it also

[99] Ibid., 27.
[100] Ibid., 28.

moved into an unattainable world. The use of the light that seemed to come from a world beyond fostered this effect and devalued the visible world. Belting argues that this dissonance and fragmentation destroyed the harmony of the figures and their setting in the icon, and thus, the image expressed a contradiction between the viewer's personal experience and the objective ideals of the faith urging a personal escape into another world, which was transcendental and intact.

Overall, the history of style of the icon cannot be separated from other genres of painting such as wall painting or book illumination since the same norms and traditions of religious painting applied to all of them since the iconoclasm. Nevertheless, as Belting emphasizes, the icon also cannot be defined simply as panel painting, or as a particular technique of painting. It is "a pictorial concept that lends itself to veneration" of the holy image.[101] Thus, the icon must be studied together with fresco painting and mosaics.

2.1.2. The *Vita* Icon of the Saint

Belting argues that the portrait, or *imago*, always ranked higher than the narrative image or *historia* in the pictorial history of the saints.[102] Saints were remembered not only through their virtuous lives and miraculous legends but also through their portraits. People could only venerate what was visibly before their eyes, which could only be a person, not a narrative that only existed in the history of the past. The saint was not only an ethical role model, but also a heavenly authority whose aid was pleaded.

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[101] Ibid., 28-29.
[102] Ibid., 10.

The pictorial depictions of scenes from his or her life, which surrounded the portrait of the saint in a *vita* icon, supplemented the "physical" portrait of the likeness and presence with the "ethical" portrait of the biography. These hagiographical scenes acted as a frame or a painted commentary, and the miracles illustrated attested the divinity of the saint. They enabled the viewer to read the icon, and celebrate the saint's merits and sacrifices.[103] People experienced the icon during its ceremonial display. It was exhibited on the saint's feast days and was accompanied with readings from his hagiography in the ceremony. The memorial feast provided the audience with the memory of the texts read during the ceremony and culminated in the memorial image, or the icon, of the saint. The small scenes that surrounded the portrait of the saint were merely an aid to memory since they assumed the knowledge of the texts that were read aloud. A ritual memory exercise accompanied the veneration of the image as part of an official occasion.[104]

Henry Maguire argues that the scenes from the life of the Christ and of the saints had different demands and, therefore, used different modes of representation. The biographical scenes of the saints, on the other hand, were echoed assurances of help in various mundane situations, and therefore a generic characterization was sufficient; the images did not require the dramatic details provided in their literary hagiography. In contrast, the illustrations of the life of Christ created a more participatory art and were even more detailed than the Gospel itself.[105] Literary and visual hagiography followed different rules of representation. On the feast day of the saint, his *vita* elaborated with drama and rhetoric would be read out together with a panegyrical sermon once a year.

[103] Ibid., 249.
[104] Ibid., 257.
[105] Henry Maguire, *The Icons of their Bodies : Saints and their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 185-186.

Visual hagiography, on the other hand, was potentially visible not on the feast day of the saint only, but all year around if it was depicted on the walls or when the icon was displayed if it was on a portable panel. The relative status of their subjects, the saints, vis-à-vis Christ or the Virgin was coded in their visual representations. Maguire argues that while the texts might have been rich of earthly incident and drama, the visual depiction of the stories narrated were not necessarily so.[106] Although the texts had the potential to provide the artists with the inspiration for detailed representations, the choice of whether or not to illustrate those specific details was both a theological and functional decision, which was dictated by the particular role played by the saint and the subject of the scene in manifesting the church doctrine as well as in satisfying the expectations of the viewer in terms of familiarity. The *vita* icon invited the viewer to contemplate exemplary life of the saint, or the model image of the church authority, in order to act in accordance with it.[107]

The *vita* icon of the saint presented some of the most creative and challenging propositions regarding its creation, description, and reception. Certain themes, sequences and episodes were often repeated in both literary descriptions and visual depictions of the saints. According to Leslie Ross, this fundamental characteristic of hagiography, in both written and pictorial forms, was a very powerful tool and served various purposes.[108] For instance, parallels drawn or implied between the *vitae* of the saints and the life of Christ served to reinforce and authorize selected themes. A sense of continuity and communion was created by the shared experiences. The themes and motifs repeated,

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[106] Ibid., 194.
[107] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 256.
[108] Leslie Ross, *Text, Image, Message: Saints in Medieval Manuscript Illuminations* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 134.

reused, and recycled in the depiction of the lives of the saints are often typologically correlated, besides the aforementioned Christ-like qualities, with themes and episodes in the Old Testament as models and types, moral examples, and prophetic fulfillments.[109] The repetition and renewal of “past” models, according to Ross, serves to reinforce a sense of sacred history where past, present, and future are far less meaningful concepts than God’s preexisting, everlasting omnipresence and omnipotence. The repeated imagery in the visual hagiography, on the one hand, is a reflection of the repetitiveness of the stories themselves, but on the other hand, it also serves to clarify, if not even broaden, the range of typological associations grasped by the viewer of the saintly biography. Motifs such as miraculous transformations, healings, exorcisms, encounters, trials, tortures, births, death and ascension scenes, are pictorial representations especially fraught with meanings and associations. The reuse of these motifs gains rather than decreases power with each repetition. The creation of pictorially-legible schemes of repeated types that were capable of being understood as typological references to essential traditions, according to Ross, is a common characteristic of both literary and visual hagiography.

Ross argues that each new hagiographic narrative cycle involves a subtle and purposeful refashioning of familiar themes rather than representing an exploration of the previously untried material. In contrast to Ross’s latter argument, Chatterjee suggests that the saint was the subject, on which concepts and practices concerning visual representation were tested and experimented. According to Chatterjee, this image type, the *vita* icon, was not only an agent of spiritual action through the portrait of the saint, or o didactic tool

[109] Ibid., 161-164.

propagating the life of the saint depicted in the flanked scenes, or a useful pictorial tool that accompanied the liturgical celebration of the holy person. It did indeed perform all these roles as discussed. Along with these roles, Chatterjee argues, it also offered a "pithily complex commentary on the possibilities and limits of visual mediation in the very definition of the saint." [110]

In her extensive analysis of the cycles of Saint Nicholas, Ševčenko resolves this controversy of familiarity and conservatism -via repetition and reuse- versus experimentation and innovation. She compares the iconography of each episode in the life of Saint Nicholas with the narrative in the textual sources. She concludes, in accordance with Maguire, that texts played but a minor role in the formation of the iconography of the cycles; the wealth of detail they contain was mostly ignored by the painters.[111] She points that, instead of the details offered by the textual sources, the painters relied on a pre-existent compositional formula, preferably a Biblical formula for the choice and arrangement of the figures in parallel to Ross's suggestion of familiarity of the themes of the scenes, not only of the viewers but also that of the painters. According to Ševčenko, the Byzantine artists who were trained in the use of compositional formulae such as those that depicted the life of Christ had to make only small adjustments in these compositions in order to adapt the formula to suit a new context. Ševčenko agrees with Ross that such conservatism fulfilled the purpose of illustrating the correlation of the events in the saint's life to those in the life of Christ. However, Ševčenko also soundly illustrates that as the iconography of the model

[110] Chatterjee, *Living Icon*, 2.
[111] Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, *The Life of Saint Nicholas in Byzantine Art.* (Torino: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1983), 155.

developed; new elements were added continuously in the formula on which the scene was based by directly tracing the innovations made by the artists. These new innovative elements were added to make the picture better suited to the story especially when there was no formula in the repertory suitable for illustrating an episode in the life of the saint. According to Ševčenko, new elements were introduced and many trials were done even for the scenes for which a pre-existent formula was used. In one case, she presents the evidence of borrowing from Western iconography for a solution to the problems of illustrating one particular episode. The liturgical scenes – the three consecrations of Saint Nicholas and his Death – are examples of this kind of contemporary influence as Ševčenko concludes that these compositions stemmed from actual church ceremonial but were not borrowed from the artistic formulae or from the *vitae* of the saint.[112] Thus, what seems at first sight a controversy can be interpreted as an attempt to translate the established norms to the new context of the saint by innovative experiments. The *vita* icons had to be recognizable and true to their subjects, but they also blended familiar elements to generate new messages.

2.1.3. The *Vita* Icon in the East

Ševčenko starts off *The Vita Icon and the Painter as Hagiographer*, which she dedicated to Cyril Mango, with a passage from the *vita* of Saint Nicholas:

> *If someone celebrates the memory of the saint with all his heart and soul, he will not go away disappointed. If someone builds a chapel in the saint's name, he will confound the devil as well as all his enemies, and God will increase his possessions, as He did for Job. If someone writes down the life and miracles of the saint, he will be granted release from sins on the Day of Judgment. And if*

[112] Ibid., 156

someone expounds the saint's life and miracles before other men, he will earn his reward in heaven and eternal life.[113]

The anonymous author of the *vita* of Saint Nicholas, composed around the thirteenth or fourteenth century, provides important insights into the importance of the veneration of the saints and the importance of hagiography in Byzantium. It can be concluded from this passage that honoring a saint in his name day, building a chapel in his name, and writing down his hagiography were all considered very important deeds in the medieval Byzantine, but expounding the saint's life and miracles publicly was the absolute winner promising a reward in the heaven and eternal life. The *vita* icon, displayed to the faithful in the church, must have been instrumental for winning such an unequaled reward.

The discussion of the significance and perception of the *vita* icon in Byzantium and the East requires an understanding of its emergence and functionality in the Middle Ages. Ševčenko reports that there are less than two dozen extant Byzantine examples of *vita* icons.[114] Although the number of surviving *vita* icons is not impressive at first sight, the influence of this genre was considerable as it will be discussed in more detail in the later sections. There are various hypotheses for the origins of the *vita* icon. The fragments of one of the earliest surviving *vita* icons of Saint Nicholas (0.37 m. high) were initially constructed as a triptych by Kurt Weitzmann with a total of twenty scenes.[115] This early icon, possibly made to be placed on top of an altar for private devotion, is unique with its particular arrangement. Later surviving *vita* icons are much larger and consist of one

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[113] Ševčenko, "Vita Icon and Painter as Hagiographer," 149, after *Hagios Nikolaos: Der heilige Nikolaos in der griechischen Kirche. Texte und Untersuchungen*, ed. G. Anrich.
[114] Ševčenko, "Vita Icon and Painter as Hagiographer," 150.
[115] Ševčenko, *Life of Saint Nicholas*, 162. Ševčenko differs from Weitzmann with regards to the number of scenes proposing six scenes on each wing with a total of twelve scenes, and presumably, the portrait of the saint on its central panel.

panel (ranging from ca.70 cm to 2 m in height) with the saint's portrait at the center and the narrative cycle either on four sides, three sides (lacking scenes at the bottom) and sometimes only on two sides, to the right and to the left. The number of scenes of Byzantine *vita* icons can vary between twelve and twenty.

The order of the episodes usually starts with a birth scene and ends with a death scene. These narrative cycles emphasize what the saint did with his life, rather than the wonders, or the miracles, he or she performed after his death, and Ševčenko considers them as ethical and didactic models for earthly behavior that will lead to a place in heaven. Ševčenko also argues that there is no attempt to follow a storyline through adjoining sequences of panels; the scenes in the *vita* icon may echo, but do not consistently follow, known written texts.[116] Later scholars, however, suggest that, as visual narratives, the *vita* icons depend primarily on texts and follow the plot of the narrative, which requires a sequential reading of the scenes around the central figure of the saint. Titos Papamastorakis, based on his analysis of nine *vita* icons that date to thirteenth century, argues that the hagiographical scenes on the *vita* icons are not randomly arranged, but are meant to be read in a sequence. According to Papamastorakis, there are two different ways in which the hagiographical scenes are arranged around the central figure of the saint.[117] In the first format, the cycle begins at the left-hand end of the top row, which is followed, first, with the right-hand side vertically from top to bottom and then with the left-hand side vertically from top to bottom. Finally, the bottom row is read from left to right. In the second format, the cycle

[116] Ševčenko, "Vita Icon and Painter as Hagiographer," 151.
[117] Papamastorakis, "Pictorial lives," 59.

begins once again at the left-hand end of the top row, but the scenes on the vertical sides are read in pairs from left to right and top to bottom forcing the viewer to move from the scene on the left to its pair on the right repeatedly. The cycle ends on the right-hand corner of the bottom row like the first format. Chatterjee rightly emphasizes that there is no evidence that the intended viewers performed such a sequential reading, but yet Papamastorakis's argument supports her view that the difference between the portrait and the narrative scenes is significant in the pictorial process of the viewer. The *vita* icon presents the recognizable, prototypical icon of the saint within a frame of narrative scenes, in which he or she changes position, gesture, posture, garments, location and state of being constantly. The portrait of the saint is "miniaturized, manipulated, repeated and maneuvered out of the shape" to depict his or her life in the smaller scenes with more restricted compositions compared to the portrait at the center.[118] The latter sequential reading of the *vita* icon suggested by Papamastorakis forces the viewer to alternate the gaze repeatedly between the reduced depictions of the saint in the hagiographic narratives on the frame and the magnified frontal portrait at the center. Chatterjee argues that this "aesthetic of interruption" matches with Ševčenko's suggestion that the twelfth century witnessed the rise of a new aesthetic "favoring juxtaposition, interaction, swift breaks in rhythm and genre, the interlacing of poetry and prose, of large devotional image with small boxed narrative."[119]

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[118] Chatterjee, *Living Icon*, 88-89.
[119] Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, "The Evertegis Synaxarion and the Celebration of a Saint in Twelfth Century Art and Liturgy," *Work and worship at the Theotokos Evergetis, 1050-1200: [papers of the fourth Belfast Byzantine International Colloquium, Portaferry, Co. Down, 14-17 September 1995]* (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, School of Greek, Roman and Semetic Studies, the Queen's University of Belfast, 1997), 398, Chatterjee, *Living Icon*, 90.

Ševčenko also argues that the format of these icons, the *vita* format, was not an innovation.[120] Similar arrangements of scenes were found in the Iliad tablets dated to 1st century AD. There are also later examples from the second and third centuries with representations of the *Twelve Labors of Hercules* flanking the central figure of Hercules and Omphale. It was a format which was popular in the pre-Christian period in stone relief, in mosaic and in fresco painting. It reappears in the early Christian ivory panels from the fifth and sixth centuries, especially on the so-called “five-part diptychs” depicting scenes of the life of Christ surrounding a central image. There are not any surviving examples from the period between the sixth century and the Middle Byzantine period, but the form reappears once again in the eleventh century. Ševčenko suggests that the antiquarian artists of the Macedonian Renaissance may have rediscovered the format or it may even have been reimported from the West, but at this stage it is a mere speculation.[121]

Another hypothesis is that the *vita* icons imitated epistyle cycles: the rows of scenes on a single wooden beam designed to be placed above the templon columns. Although epistyles usually depicted the Twelve Feasts, there is both artistic and textual evidence of the epistyles with scenes from the life of a saint.[122] Chatterjee argues that the most persuasive hypothesis on the origin of the *vita* icon is the epistyle cycles on the templon beams as they offer the same visual experience of an uninterrupted, serial depiction of figures.[123] Chatterjee points to both formal and temporal pictorial relations. The contemporary interest in hagiographical narrative is indeed reflected in both these

[120] Ševčenko, “Vita Icon and Painter as Hagiographer," 163.
[121] Ševčenko, *Life of Saint Nicholas*, 164.
[122] Ševčenko, "Vita Icons and Decorated Icons," 56.
[123] Chatterjee, *Living Icon*, 87.

examples of epistyles and the *vita* icons, but as Ševčenko rightly argues this common interest does not explain how such a strictly horizontal row of scenes was converted into a frame of scenes around a central image.[124] Given the sequential reading suggested by Papamastorakis, which required the viewer to move from the scene on the left edge to the counterpart on the right edge of the *vita* icon does not work in favor of this hypothesis.

As a matter of fact, Ševčenko's suggestion that the characteristics of the painted icons of the thirteenth century draw on a decorative repertory already established for the silver-gilt icon treasures of the eleventh and twelfth century is the most noteworthy.[125] The so-called "decorated" icons of the Komnenian period contained a holy figure surrounded by various smaller images like a frame. It is possible that the *vita* icon might have had its source in the precious frames of gold and silver that were being added to icons in the Komnenian period. However, Papamastorakis's analysis of the thirteenth-century *vita* icons also reveal the existence of earlier models, presumably preceding even those decorated icons of the Komnenian period, as he shows that the specific texts on which these cycles relied were not the *vitae* compiled in the mid-tenth century by Niketas David the Paphlagonian or later in the same century by Symeon Metaphrastes. Papamastorakis argues that the Metaphrastian Menologion was the basic hagiographical reference from the eleventh century onwards, and thus, if the thirteenth-century vita icons were the original creations of their period, they would have included episodes from the abovementioned hagiographical texts. On the other hand, the sources of the

[124] Ševčenko, "Vita Icons and Decorated Icons," 61.
[125] Ibid., 65.

pictorial cycles of the vita icons studied by Papamastorakis are unexpectedly earlier hagiographical texts, which were much less copied and spread by the thirteenth century. According to Papamastorakis, the explanation for not using the well-known canonical texts, but older versions, for these thirteenth-century *vita* icons is that they were copies of older, now lost, *vita* icons whose narratives were based on pre-Metaphrastic hagiographical texts. The fact that in some cases, the inscriptions accompanying the narrative scenes do not always correspond to the subject matter of the image reinforces this hypothesis; the painters of these icons may have had older models from which they copied, but presumably they were not always able to identify the narrative correctly, either because of the lack or illegibility of inscriptions on their models.[126] Based on this hypothesis, the first appearance of vita icons can be dated to the tenth century at the latest.

Whatever and wherever its origin was, the *vita* icon spread quickly. By the thirteenth century its variants were found in South and North Italy, Cyprus, Sinai, and Russia. Besides the various hypotheses for the origin of the format of the *vita* icon, it is equally important to understand the reason of its popularity in the Byzantine East. Ševčenko conducts a survey of the earliest surviving Byzantine examples for this purpose. She suggests, through an analysis of the size, the choice of saints, the character of the donors and the form of these *vita* icons, that the main drive for the development of the *vita* icon should be sought in the Eastern Mediterranean, perhaps on Mount Sinai where majority of the surviving examples are found.[127] Hence, she suggests considering them as a new

[126] Papamastorakis, "Pictorial lives," 61.
[127] Ševčenko, "Vita Icon and Painter as Hagiographer," 156-161.

form of visual *vitae*, as opposed to the literary or textual *vitae*, which was designed to be understood by the diverse groups that constituted this society in this particularly multilingual and multiethnic region, the Levant. Thus, the *vita* icon might have offered a fresh and versatile medium for a new form visual hagiography, and surpassed the literary hagiography, which was already in decline by the beginning of the thirteenth century, by using the one truly international language in which to tell the tale, namely, the language of art.[128] Chatterjee also agrees that while textual hagiography diminished, pictorial depictions of the saints expanded from the portrait to include the scenes from their lives in the twelfth century and suggests that this process is nascent in manuscript illuminations from the eleventh century although it attains its fullest and boldest expression in panel paintings, or *vita* icons, from the twelfth century onwards.[129]

The icon played, and still plays, a very specific role in the Orthodox Church, where its worship in the course of time became integrated into the celebration of liturgy. However, the scholarly views on the function of the *vita* icon in the Byzantine Empire are somehow varied. Ševčenko argues that the earliest surviving Byzantine *vita* icons of the early thirteenth century, which were large scale, were intended for public display, but did not apparently belong in the iconostasis or have a precise liturgical function.[130] According to Ševčenko, the fact that the donors of the most surviving examples from Mount Sinai were foreigners and the form chosen fits with the taste of the late twelfth century indicates that the *vita* cycles were being viewed as a form of donation to a particular image of the saint. But yet, the *vita* icons presumably functioned along with

[128] Ibid., 165.
[129] Chatterjee, *Living Icon*, 69.
[130] Ševčenko, “Vita Icon and Painter as Hagiographer," 161.

the literary vita during the liturgical commemoration of saints on their feast days. They also had a didactic role albeit it was subordinate to the icon's primary role as an object of veneration.[131]

Chatterjee proposes that the *vita* format was particularly attractive in a monastic context, as it has probably been the case at Saint Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai where Ševčenko suggests that the genre may have originated.[132] Chatterjee argues that the *vita* icon had specific features that made it an especially appropriate vehicle for the viewing practices of the monks. Her suggestion stems from the need to distinguish between varied states of being for monastic meditation. She argues that the distinction between the portrait and the narrative scenes is significant claiming that "it reinforces the saint's ontological status at various sites of the panel."[133] The alternating pictorial representations of the saint in the narrative scenes on the frame and the well-known and established central image of the saint forms a sequential reading and viewing process that urges the viewer into a consciousness of the variety of the roles the saint occupies. This capability of the *vita* icon is fitting for the monks, according to Chatterjee, as it connects a series of potential forms that a saint could assume, and hence the *vita* icon may have served as a visual aid to the monks to be on the alert not only to recognize those forms but also to be able to distinguish them from each other, and from their demonic counterparts.[134]

[131] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 258.
[132] Chatterjee, *Living Icon*, 124.
[133] Ibid., 88.
[134] Ibid., 124.

Chatterjee argues that the narrative format of *vita* icon dealt with some long-standing theological and philosophical issues in Byzantium, such as the similarities and differences between the words and images, between relics and icons, between a representation and its subject, and the very holy nature of holy presence and its problematic relationship with the image, or the icon. While the icon continued to be a subject of continuous reflection among Byzantines, the lives of the saints were crucial for testing new concepts and practices of visual representation. The *vita* image, besides the mostly attributed functions to it, offered a means of commentary on the possibilities and limits of visual representation using the life of the saints as the medium. In other words, it served as a tool for experimenting and developing the icon.

Despite the various hypotheses on its functions, and its attested popularity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the *vita* icon was short-lived in Byzantium. Ševčenko rightly states that it vanished without warning in the fourteenth century.[135] But why such a useful didactic medium and a companion of liturgy was abandoned all of a sudden after its popularity in the previous centuries remains as an unanswered question. Chatterjee suggests that the icon of the saint, along with the inscription naming him or her, was sufficient to establish and sustain a relationship between the icon and the prototype whereas the *vita* icon had the power to manipulate the set of established formal characteristics, modifying and even destroying it.[136] And therefore, the astonishing creativity and imaginative use of the *vita* icon might have become both its promoter and detractor. Even if the vita icon and the depiction of the saints came to an end within

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[135] Ševčenko, "Vita Icon and Painter as Hagiographer," 150.
[136] Chatterjee, *Living Icon*, 125-126.

Byzantium (but continued in the post-Byzantine era), it flourished in the Balkans and in Russia. However, the most persistent and imaginative use of the format is seen in the Latin West. The *vita* panel was used most vigorously and repeatedly in Italy in order to depict the lives of the saints and among all to depict one of the most powerful and charismatic personalities of the Roman Catholic Church and the medieval world: Saint Francis of Assisi.

2.2. Franciscan Order

2.2.1. Saint Francis of Assisi and the Foundation of the Order

Francis of Assisi

Saint Francis of Assisi (born 1181/82, Assisi - died October 3, 1226, Assisi) was a leader of the movement of evangelical poverty in the early thirteenth century and the founder of the Franciscan orders of the Friars Minor, the women's order of Saint Clare and the lay Third Order. His evangelical passion, dedication to poverty and personal charisma drew thousands of followers. He was a figure of foremost significance in the world history for his followers.[137]

Francis was born to a prosperous merchant family at Assisi in the region of Umbria, Italy. While he was living as a young and wealthy man of his period, at the age of twenty four, he had a mystical experience which led him to renounce his patrimony and leave the family home. He adopted a solitary life of prayer and penance in ruinous chapels and caves begging for his food. Some time after he lived as an impoverished hermit, he adopted the apostolic life of the disciples of Christ devoted to evangelizing

[137] Lawrence, *Friars,* 26.

the unconverted as it was depicted in the Gospels. Francis had a direct and uncomplicated vision unlike the clergy who had been through the schools; his understanding of the Bible was simple and literal. His renounce of personal property, including even books, was not just an ascetical discipline or a missionary expedient; he literally imitated the earthly life of Christ. His personal devotion to the humanity of Christ, his concern of his evangelical life and his compassionate identification with his sufferings marked a new religious sentiment. They communicated a form of direct religious experience which was not exclusive to the religious elite, but was made available to the ordinary secular Christian by Francis and his followers, who were an intimate fraternity of nomadic preachers moving from town to town and preaching in central Italy in the early years of the order.[138]

Recently, the new pope who was elected in 2013, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, chose the name Francis. His motivation in doing so was not solely the aspect of *poverello* and the romantic depictions associated with Saint Francis, but presumably the huge impact of this very influential "holy man" on Christianity, which still continues today. Peter Brown, in his seminal paper, discusses the question why the "holy man" came to play such an important role in society in the late antiquity during the fifth and sixth centuries.[139] He sees him as a figure who was set apart from the traditional social hierarchy by heroic asceticism and the strange acts of power, or miracles. He suggests that the holy man could provide a much needed focus of authority in a society which was prosperous but yet lacked natural or traditional leaders. Although Brown's argument

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[138] Ibid., 31-34.
[139] See Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80-101 for the discussion of the concept of "holy man" as the *locus* of the supernatural in late antiquity.

applied to the circumstances of late antiquity, Brooke argues that similarities existed with the early thirteen century society in Italy, which was calling for the needs and expectations that the ministry of Saint Francis catered.[140] These included, according to Brooks, the reverse sides of rising prosperity and economic growth such as exploitation and social dislocation experienced by the disproportionately increasing number of the poor and the disadvantaged in the society. Francis was a renouncer of power as his rejection of his affluent family's economic wealth attested. He was perceived as a mediator who could reconcile the violent tensions in the society. His heroic asceticism, however, did not mean advocacy of absolute poverty, but it was a means to an end in itself what he called *sine proprio*, or "living without anything of one's own," which was included in the opening line of the Rule of 1223.[141] It is the same vow Franciscans still profess today; that end was an unfettered relationship with God, with others and with the rest of creation. The core of his obsessive focus on evangelical poverty was his renunciation of power, and Francis desired to remove all barriers between himself and the others.

With regards to his relationship with the church, he was a reformer who loved the church. Saint Francis always and explicitly expressed his commitment to the church and never wished to step outside of communion with it. His obedience to the papacy was accentuated in the opening sentence of his rule.[142] This did not prevent the saint,

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[140] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 19.
[141] "Regula et vita Minorum Fratrum haec est, scilicet Domini nostri Jesu Christi sanctum Evangelium observare vivendo in obedientia, sine proprio et in castitate." "The Rule and Life of the Friars Minors is this: to keep the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without any property, and in chastity." Neslihan Şenocak, *The Poor and the Perfect: the rise of learning in the Franciscan order, 1209-1310.*(Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2012), 37.
[142] Ibid., 45.

however, from performing what might anachronistically be called acts of "ecclesiastical disobedience." Most famous of these acts was probably his peace mission to Sultan Malik al-Kamil during the Fifth Crusade which was performed, allegedly, against the instructions of the Pope Innocent III. He made history by engaging with the Muslim leader in what was remembered as a peaceful and fruitful dialogue.[143] Another example of these acts was against the social exclusions to avoid lepers and other marginal figures; Saint Francis and his friars made a commitment to live among all people, to minister to and to sincerely enter into relationship with them. At a time when clergy and religious were separated and lived apart from the rest of the community, Saint Francis saw the Gospel pattern of life calling him to be with his sisters and brothers. Saint Francis's refusal to conform to the expectations of his day, both ecclesiastical and social, came not from the outside, but from the very origins of the church. He was not afraid to follow the Gospel when it seemed that such an action might contradict the conventions of his time, but he was also not interested in breaking communion with the church.[144] For Saint Francis, to be authentically human and praise God meant to be a reconciler and a peacemaker, to forgive and to love, and thus he embraced this role not only during the Fifth Crusade while he negotiated peace with the Muslim leader, but also in the efforts of his order to reunite the Latin Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches.[145]

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[143] Lawrence, *Friars*, 10-11, Maier, *Preaching the Crusades*, 8-17.
[144] Daniel P. Horan, "What' in a Name?" *America*, April 29, 2013, 19-22, Lawrence, *Friars*, 35-36.
[145] Derbes, *Picturing the Passion*, 25.

One of the last episodes in Francis's life, and probably the most discussed, was his reception of the stigmata in 1224, two years before his death, making him the first recorded person to bear the wounds of Christ's Passion, or the *Alter Christus* (Fig. 35).[146]

Figure 35: Stigmatization of Saint Francis, Giotto, 1295-1300, Louvre, Paris

[146] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 21.

The "holy man" of the late antiquity came back in full force to the medieval times as the Second Christ. He was an earth-shattering figure in world history for his followers. Saint Bonaventure (born 1221 – died 1274), a scholastic theologian and philosopher who served as the seventh Minister General of the order of Friars Minor, identified Francis with the sixth angel named in the Apocalypse and ascribed his order a messianic role.[147] The belief in the celestial significance of Francis, coupled with the controversy of his call for absolute poverty and his stigmatization, which pushed the ethics of mimesis to the very limits, inspired a large body of hagiographical writing about the saint and the foundation of his order. The first hagiographic text of Francis, the *Vita Prima*, was written in 1228-29 by Thomas of Celano upon the order of Pope Gregory IX. Unlike the conventional practice of writing the *vita* before canonization to serve as evidence, Francis's life was written after he was canonized presumably because the to-be-saint was known very well by the pope.[148] Besides his own acquaintance with Francis as a first generation friar, Thomas of Celano made use of what was available to him including the saint's own writings as well as his deathbed testament to be without a binding force, of which copies were later ordered to be burned by the provincial ministers.[149] Thomas of Celano's work is criticized for its rhetoric of official hagiography and distorting his account of Francis in the interest of the papacy. However, according to Brooke, it presented an official image but not a polemical one. Nevertheless, as Clifford Hugh Lawrence emphasizes, it has two merits as a historical source. First, it was written shortly after the death of Francis in 1226 by a friar who had

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[147] Lawrence, *Friars*, 26.
[148] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 39.
[149] Ibid. 42-43, Lawrence, *Friars*, 26-27.

met him. Second, it was written before the outbreak of the internal controversy among the Franciscans. As his disciples and followers expanded into a world-wide organization, conflicts arose between the leaders of the order and the first generation friars who regarded the changes within the order as a betrayal to the ideals of Saint Francis.[150]

Celano was commissioned to write a second and fuller *vita* sixteen years later, this time by the Minister General of the Order, Crecentius of Iesi. The second text, the *Vita Secunda*, reflects changing official views on Francis in the decades following his death. Although a lot of fresh detail is included in the second *vita* compiled by the decree of Crescentius that asked all the friars who had memories of Francis to submit them in writing for the new book, there are also significant alterations especially over the deposition of Brother Elias and the absolute poverty that was claimed to be the founder's message by the strict friars who pontificated to be its authentic custodians.[151] Brother Elias was the successor chosen by Francis to govern the order, but he was later excommunicated because of his despotic regime. The third and definitive *vita* of Francis was commissioned to Saint Bonaventure in 1260 when he was the General Minister. Lawrence argues that, although it was based on the previous works of Celano, the preoccupation to reconcile conflicting views within the order marked Bonaventure's *vita* of Francis as a work of the official hagiographer. Brooke argues that one of the reasons for writing this new *vita*, besides the efforts to resolve the chronic controversy over Franciscan poverty, was liturgical because of the emerging need to unify the books used

[150] Ibid., 29.
[151] Ibid., 27-28.

for the Divine Office.[152] Saint Bonaventure's new *vita*, the *Legenda Maior*, was clearly defined and functional to meet the liturgical needs. It was planned to be read in the refectory during the feast of Saint Francis. A shorter version, the *Legenda Minor*, was produced contemporarily by Bonaventure for the lessons for the Divine Office.

The search for the historicity of Francis's life through the thicket of literary sources, which include not only his *vitae* but also his own writings, institutional sources of the order, sermons, liturgical songs, poems dedicated to him and compilations of anecdotes and memoirs, is illustrative of the challenges of his hagiographers and followers. On the one hand, the difficulty of depicting the perfect follower of Christ and, on the other hand, the struggle to translate this exceptional movement into traditional structures under the authority of the Church are reflected in the literature produced by the Franciscans in the decades following the death of the saint.[153] The stigmatization of Francis, a central paradox intrinsic to any depiction of the saint in text or image, was one of the major challenges of his hagiographers.[154] Chatterjee writes "the stigmata are signs that must be explicated, described, and justified as true, without ever being disclosed" underlining that his stigmatization was preserved as a secret during his lifetime, safeguarded fiercely according to the earlier biographies but revealed in degrees in the later ones. According to Chatterjee, "the stigmata themselves are transformed from text to text and decade to decade."[155] Her analysis of the associations and metaphors used in the texts about the "divine signing" illustrates this process of transformation for the stigmata. The most explicit depiction of the stigmata appears in the *Legenda Minor* of

[152] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 242-246.
[153] Chatterjee, *Living Icon*, 18, Lawrence, *Friars*, 29.
[154] Chatterjee, *Living Icon*, 128.
[155] Ibid., 130.

Bonaventure departing from all prior descriptions of the stigmata. Bonaventure juxtaposes the heavenly and humanly dimensions of the stigmata in his vivid description of the event: the stigmata drawn on Francis's body by the finger of God permit the bodily senses of sight, and even touch by asserting that a human finger could have easily put into them, according to the eyewitnesses. Although they were rendered as visible and firsthand phenomena by the widely diffused canonic text of *Legenda Minor*, even these relatively clearer accounts were not enough to remedy the ambivalences embedded in the *Alter Christus*'s body. [156]

The General Chapter held in 1266 decided to destroy the earlier *vitae* written by Thomas of Celano along with previous constitutions of the order and written or oral edicts and commands of the predecessor Minister Generals.[157] In summary, the changes in the official *vitae* of Francis illustrate both the progressive dilution and sandpapering of the original ideal of Francis by the Church to reconcile the conflicts within the order, especially that of his ideal of absolute poverty with the practical needs of pastoral mission of an expanding movement, as well as the challenges to construct his image as the *Alter Christus*.

Mendicant Orders and Friars Minor

The orders of mendicant friars that appeared in the early thirteen century exemplified a revolutionary religious life following their founders. According to Lawrence, they seemed to be a preordained response to a spiritual crisis that the Church found itself as a result of economic and social changes that had transformed Western Europe in the

[156] Ibid., 131-162.
[157] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 245.

course of the twelfth century. The established Church could not meet the religious needs of a newly arisen and secular culture. Besides the increasing popularity and spread of heresy of the Cathars, which claimed to be the Christians in the authentic apostolic tradition and rejected the Roman Catholic Church entirely, the spread of lay literacy and the scholastic movement, which culminated in the creation of the first universities, presented the Church with huge intellectual and social challenges. The intellectual leadership of the enclosed world of the monasteries was lost to the community of learning created by the rise of the universities. The rise of an urban laity in search of an inner spiritual life and critical of the intellectual and moral shortcomings of the clergy resulted in questioning the assumptions of the monastic spirituality.[158] The beginning of the thirteenth century witnessed the origination of the two first and greatest of the mendicant orders of friars, the Dominicans and the Franciscans, as a response to the challenges faced by the Church. While the Dominicans followed Augustinian cannon, but not a way of life imitating their founder Dominic, the Franciscans owed their origin to the vision of the layman they followed, Saint Francis of Assisi, and his ideals. Both mendicant Orders represented the impact of the Gospel message upon the new urban society.[159]

Francis's belief in absolute poverty of Christ, and his desire to make it, together with nomadic preaching, the model of their observance, distinguished Franciscans from the established traditions of monasticism. The early Franciscans, who sought for the ideal of voluntary poverty, were mostly the young affluent classes and clergy but not the poor by

[158] Lawrence, *Friars*, 1-19.
[159] Ibid., 25.

birth, who rather dreamed getting rich, although they had members from all social groups. The Friars Minor also attracted the students and the masters of the northern universities. Their voluntary destitution identifying them with the most depressed sections of the society, or the social egalitarianism of their fraternity, was a striking novelty of their fraternity.[160] Unlike the poorly educated clergy of the Church, the Franciscans and the Dominicans were the first religious orders that aimed at preaching, and their members were systematically trained as preachers.[161] They were organized in a strict hierarchy throughout Europe with provinces under a Minister General and governed by an annual General Chapter. Local divisions which were strictly obedient and a binding hierarchical structure were characteristics of these orders.

As noted before, the dilution of Francis's ideal subsequent to his death and the expansion of his order can be considered a necessity arising from the development of a permanent organization rather than a betrayal.[162] The efforts to comprise and institutionalize the ideal of absolute poverty, which was simply impracticable if literally understood, lasted a hundred years and drove the authentic practitioners of the evangelical life into schism by the demolition of the belief about the poverty of Christ and the Apostles by Pope John XXII in 1323.[163] However, despite the controversy within the order, the Friars Minor became a world-wide organization by the end of the thirteenth century during the early mendicant movement spreading all over Italy and Europe. One of the reasons of the abrupt and lasting impression made by the friars upon the turbulent and volatile urban societies of the thirteenth century was their superior

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[160] Ibid., 33-35
[161] Maier, *Preaching the Crusades*, 4.
[162] Lawrence, *Friars*, 29.
[163] Ibid., 43-64

pastoral skills as preachers and confessors; they were able to attract urban worshippers, promote lay clergy and channel religious enthusiasm by their sermons, which was a novelty for the laity. However, their impact owed much to the idealism of the friars. Their voluntary poverty and self-imposed destitution, which identified them with the lowest layers of the society in contrast to ostentation of the elite clergy and the wealth and exclusiveness of the monasteries, touched the morality and the generosity of affluent merchant communities.[164]

2.2.2. Franciscans in the East and their Role in the Crusades

Even before traveling to much of Europe, Franciscan missions reached the Crusader lands in the Levant. Although Francis himself attempted a trip to the Holy Land, the *locus sanctus* of his much beloved Christ, in 1211 for the first time, he could not accomplish his mission to find martyrdom for preaching Christ because of a storm which halted him in Dalmatia, and later forced him to return to Italy.[165] In his next attempt, probably in the fall of 1212 or winter of 1213, Francis again left Assisi to reach the lands of the unfaithful, but did not risk the sea travel. He set out for Andalusia through land route, intending then to go on to Morocco, where the Muslim leader had been defeated by the Christians suggesting that missionaries could now have access to these Muslim lands, but he got ill and returned home once again unsuccessfully.[166] Finally, his third attempt was successful and Francis, accompanied by a companion, arrived in Egypt during the Fifth Crusade, in 1219. His trip to Egypt was due to the missionary activities decided at the General Chapter that year. The crusader army was besieging Damietta

[164] Ibid., 119-126.
[165] Augustine Thompson, *Francis of Assisi: A New Biography* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2012), 45-46.
[166] Ibid., 149.

when Francis arrived and suffered a major defeat before the city walls shortly after. Francis soon asked permission to cross enemy ranks to enter the Muslim camp to meet Sultan Malik al-Kamil in order to preach him Christ. Although his request was repeatedly refused by the leader of the Crusades army because of the death penalty for those who attempted to convince Muslims to abandon their religion, Francis and his companion insisted on their requests and managed to get to the camp of the Sultan. Francis had lengthy discussions with Malik al-Kamil and his religious advisers there. He expressed his faith for Jesus Christ, who was also a prophet for the Muslims, and avoided ill-speaking of Muhammad or suggesting that his message was false. After conversations for several days, the Sultan ended the talks probably because he did not see an opening for the political negotiations that he wished for. He offered them to convert to Islam and stay at his court or leave; Francis and his companion utterly refused his offer repeating that that they had not come to convert but to preach Christ. Presumably because of the sincerity of his beliefs and willingness to die for them, Francis made a good impression on the Sultan, who was also astonished with Francis's explanation that their religion prohibited them to accept any precious gifts, money, or property, but they could only accept food for the day when Francis and his companion were offered gifts when leaving.[167]

Although Francis did not succeed in converting the Sultan, the impression he made on the clergy in Damietta and the Levant, who joined his ranks after his crossing the enemy lines, led to the rapid growth of Franciscan movement in the East together with the exponential growth that the fraternity experience following the start of the missions out

[167] Ibid., 66-69.

of Italy earlier. In 1215, Francis sent Brother Giles to the Holy Land, and in 1217, Brother Elias started the organization of a Franciscan province there.[168] By the time Francis himself arrived to Syria after he left Damietta following the conquest of the city by the Crusaders towards the end of 1219, Franciscan missionaries had already arrived there two years ago.[169] Francis's example set the tone for Franciscan missionary activities, and following his return to Italy, he wrote the Rule of 1221, in which he established the central role of the missionary activity for the order.[170]

Besides their missionary activities, Franciscans also preached and accompanied the Crusades to the Holy Land intensively throughout the most of the thirteenth century. When compared with other religious orders, the mobility of the mendicant friars, who were also the members of the first religious orders systematically trained as preachers, made them an ideal instrument to spread papal propaganda over vast geographical areas during the Crusades. Since they could make available resources of trained preachers almost anywhere in Europe, they were first employed by Pope Gregory IX in 1230.[171] Pope Gregory IX, then the Cardinal Ugolino of Ostia, was crucial in helping the Franciscan order to overcome its internal conflicts in the late 1210s. Following the spectacular growth of the order in the early 1220s as a result, the pope tested their reliability and loyalty successfully as papal negotiators and agents in Italy during his

[168] Derbes and Neff, "Mendicant Orders," 450.
[169] Thompson, *Francis of Assisi*, 70.
[170] Derbes and Neff, "Mendicant Orders," 450.
[171] Maier, *Preaching the Crusades*, 4-5.

disputes with Frederick II, and thus prepared the ground for the employment of the friars all over Europe for preaching the cross.[172]

The friars played important roles in various capacities at all levels of propaganda for the Crusades. Besides being personally assigned as preachers by the pope, they were also commissioned by their superiors within their orders as propagandists or appointed as preachers to support the local bishops. They were also employed as members of papal delegations.[173] The wide spread Franciscan houses in Europe and the nomadic preaching practice of the friars, which enabled them to cover peripheral and outlying regions as well as urban towns, ensured substantial propaganda for the Crusades. Thus, Pope Gregory IX and his successors continued to employ the mendicant orders as main preaching force alongside the local clergy throughout the thirteenth century. Besides preaching for all major campaigns to the Holy Land and recruiting crusaders, the friars also collected money for the crusade in the first decades of their employment. As they acted as papal financial agents, and because the money collected in this way did not belong to them, their task did not violate their vow of poverty. However, their reluctance to take commissions and the conflicts they had with the secular clergy refrained the papacy from involving them in the collection of crusade tax in the later half of the century.[174]

Besides the involvement of the Franciscans in the Crusades, that resulted in tens of thousands joining various campaigns, their zeal reached out to Latins crusaders,

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[172] Lawrence, *Friars*, 162.
[173] Maier, *Preaching the Crusade*, 32.
[174] Ibid., 165-166.

merchants, and settlers in the East by their missionary activity. Their efforts to convert the unfaithful, not only the Muslims but also the oriental Christians, by both peaceful missions and military campaigns in the name of Christ were complementary tactics, and enabled them to have a strong foothold in the Eastern Mediterranean. By the mid of the thirteenth century, Franciscan missionaries were to be found all over the Eastern Mediterranean. Following the organization of a new province by Brother Elias in the Levant, Franciscan establishments appeared in Constantinople, Antioch and Jerusalem starting from 1220, which were followed by those in Bethlehem, Nazareth, Tripoli, Beirut, Tyre, Sidon, Acre and Jaffa. Franciscans also established houses in Latin dominated Cyprus and Crete as well as mainland Greece by 1250, and reached contemporarily Georgia, Greater Armenia and the Cilician Kingdom of Armenia, the latter later than the others in 1279.[175] Franciscans were in such a strongly established position in the region that the order was declared the Custody of the Holy Land (*Custodia Terræ Sanctæ*) in 1342 by Pope Clement VI, when the Levant was entirely lost to the Muslims. The role of the Franciscans as the Custody of the Holy Land still continues today.

2.2.3. Franciscans in Constantinople during the Latin Occupation

The Crusades was transformed into a sophisticated institution and had become an immensely effective instrument of papal politics in the first half of the thirteenth century by the development of its aspects such as recruitment, finance, liturgy and the legal

[175] Robert Lee Wolff, "The Latin Empire of Constantinople and the Franciscans," *Traditio* 2 (1944): 213, Derbes and Neff, “Mendicant Orders,” 450.

rights of the Crusaders.[176] This powerful machine of crusader movement could now impose its force against all heretics and enemies of the papacy including the main rival of the Roman Catholic Church in Constantinople. The diversion of the Fourth Crusade against the Byzantine Empire, engineered by the Venetians, was followed by the foundation of the Latin Empire of Constantinople. When the Crusaders from the West sacked the imperial city in 1204 and crowned Baldwin I in Hagia Sophia, the long-standing breach between Rome and Constantinople had become almost irreparable. The plunder and destruction of the holy city was compounded in the eyes of the Byzantines by the attempts of the Pope Innocent III to take advantage of the situation to Latinize the Greek Orthodox Church and end the schism by forcing the Eastern Churches to submit to the authority of Rome.[177]

Franciscans, whose missionary activities were already in high gear only a few years after the foundation of the order, were already established in Constantinople by 1220 as the evidence of correspondence between the Pope Honorius III and the papal legate in Constantinople about a dispute involving a Franciscan friar illustrates.[178] Robert Lee Wolf argues that there is increasing evidence of the importance of the order in the Latin Empire from this date on, and that the order became influential at the imperial court and in the ecclesiastical affairs, especially with the reign of John of Brienne (r. 1229-1237), who became a Franciscan before he died.[179]

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[176] Maier, *Preaching the Crusade*, 1.
[177] Lawrence, *Friars*, 194-195.
[178] Wolff, "Latin Empire of Constantinople," 213-214.
[179] Later scholars agree with Wolff that John of Brienne was received to the Third Order. See Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 205, Derbes and Neff, “Mendicant Orders,” 450.

John of Brienne emerged on the historical scene as a member of the Fourth Crusade, but he was not rewarded for his participation in the siege of Constantinople. He married Maria, Queen of Jerusalem, in 1210 and reigned with her the Kingdom of Jerusalem until her death 1212. He continued to administer the kingdom as the regent of their daughter Isabelle II until 1225. John was a leader of the Fifth Crusade and led the armies at the siege of Damietta and ruled the town after it fell to the Crusaders in 1219, when Saint Francis was also there.[180] Following the fall of Damietta to the Muslims in 1221 and the betrayal of his son-in-law Frederick II, who married Isabelle II and ended John's rule despite their agreement for John's reign for life, he accepted to command the papal troops in Southern Italy. He was selected as the Emperor of the Latin Empire of Constantinople and the regent for young Baldwin II in 1229. He was crowned in Constantinople in 1231 and defended the Empire until his death in 1237.[181] Brook notes that John of Brienne was present at the canonization of Francis at Assisi in 1228 during his office as the commander of papal troops.[182] Although there are differing views on the last moments of John of Brienne, Wolff argues that, based on the information available, "it is difficult not to believe that he joined the Franciscan order" at his deathbed.[183] John had a Franciscan confessor, Benedict of Arezzo, who was the Franciscan Provincial Minister of Romania and a very important figure in the early history of the Franciscan

[180] Wolff, "Latin Empire of Constantinople," 231-232. Wolff argues that John was almost certainly in the Crusader camp in Damietta and aware of Francis's presence there. He suggests that it would have been unexpected if they had not met, but such a meeting can not be firmly proved by the information available in the sources.
[181] Ibid., 214-215, n.5.
[182] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 205. However, Wolff writes that although it is reasonable to presume that John was there as the commander of papal troops, and as a possible acquaintance of Francis from Damietta, it cannot be firmly proved with the evidence available. Wolff, "Latin Empire of Constantinople," 232-234.
[183] Ibid., 220-221, n. 33. Wolff argues that John of Brienne could not have entered the Order before 1234, and suggests that the dream stories in the sources that date John's initiation just before to his death seem to be reasonable.

missionary activity. The references in the sources point to Benedict of Arezzo as the Franciscan who initiated John. Thus, the increasing influence of the Franciscans at the imperial court of Constantinople appear to be related to a series of crossing events in the life of John of Brienne and Saint Francis, which culminated in John's becoming a Franciscan himself.

One of the clear evidences of the establishment of the Franciscans in Constantinople is the role they played in the negotiations between the Latin Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches. Although the relations between the Churches seemed to be irrevocably broken following the Latin occupation of Constantinople, the Byzantine emperor in exile, John Vatatzes, and his Patriarch Germanos II approached Pope Gregory IX in 1232 suggesting negotiations for the restoration of communion. The reasons behind such a turnaround were the increasing threat of the Seljuk Turks on the Byzantines, their desire to recover the capital and the threat posed on the Nicaean Empire by the ambitions of Charles of Anjou. The letter written by Patriarch Germanos II was taken to the pope by five Franciscan friars, who had enjoyed the hospitality of the Byzantines in Nicaea after fleeing from Turkish captivity and discussed with the patriarch the issue of healing the breach between the churches.[184] The plea of the patriarch initiated the negotiations at the very beginning of 1234, on 15 January, following the reply of the pope, albeit the tone of his letter endangered the success of the mission even before it started.[185] The papal delegation consisted of two French Dominicans and two Franciscans, Haymo of

[184] See Lawrence, *Friars,* 194-201 for an account of the role of the Franciscans in the relations between Rome and Constantinople.
[185] Ibid., 196. The reply of Gregory IX argues the papal doctrine of the Roman primacy and blames the Greeks for having broken away from the communion with Rome. In addition, the pope accuses the Greeks for refusing the primacy of Peter by submitting their church to the secular power and claiming that this was a divine judgment.

Faversham and Ralph of Rheims. Ralph of Rheims was the only member of the envoy who could speak Greek.[186] The first round of conversations took place in Nicaea, which lasted ten days, and was hosted jointly by the patriarch and John III Vatatzes, who attended the talks taking an active role. The main agenda of the discussions was the issue of *Filoloque* or whether the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father or Son or from the Father alone, as the Greeks argued.[187]

Patriarch Germanos II proposed to take an interval and suggested to convene in March to include other Eastern patriarchs of the Council because of the complexity of the issues discussed, but the friars denied to act beyond the mandate given to them by the pope and returned to Constantinople. Following the letters of the Greeks to both the friars themselves and two leading Franciscans in Constantinople, James of Russano and Benedict of Arezzo, who is known to have initiated John of Brienne, the papal embassy of friars attended the second part of the talks. With the addition of the patriarchs of Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria, the parties reassembled in Nymphaeum in March that year. Eucharist was at the center of the discussions that ended with mutual accusations of heresy despite the efforts of the emperor to save the situation.[188] When the talks clogged in a rather hostile way, the Latin envoys had to set out to Constantinople on foot leaving much of their baggage behind because of the Greek clerics who menaced their servants and stopped their transport. The role of the Franciscan friars in the negotiations, who encamped in Constantinople, the presence of noteworthy Franciscans in the city, the missionary activity of the order in the East and

[186] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 204.
[187] Lawrence, *Friars,* 196.
[188] Ibid., 197, Wolff, "Latin Empire of Constantinople," 225-228.

the reign of to-be-Franciscan John of Brienne support that there was surely a Franciscan house in the city by then.[189]

The influence of the Franciscans at the court of the Latin Empire continued after the death of John of Brienne. John's successor Baldwin II was also very close to Benedict of Arezzo, the famous Provincial Minister of the East, "whom he regarded as highly as a prophet."[190] Baldwin II spent most of his reign in Western Europe, and especially in France, seeking aid to sustain his empire. He sold an impressive collection of relics of the Passion of Christ to Louis IX of France between 1239 and 1241 through the agency of Franciscans friars, who also assisted Louis for the transferal of the relics he collected in Syria.[191] Besides their influence on the last two Latin Emperors of Constantinople, the Franciscan friars continued to play an important role in the relations between the Latin and Greek Churches. Following the defeat of the Turks in 1243, the increasing threat of the Mongols on the eastern borders of the Empire of Nicaea forced John Vatatzes to reconsider his relations with the West. As a result, in 1248, he initiated the resumption of the discussions with Rome, which had broken off in 1234. The agents chosen by the Byzantine emperor in Nicaea for his appeal to the pope were again two Greek-speaking Franciscans, one of whom was the lector to the Friars Minor in Constantinople, Thomas the Greek.[192] Lectors were Masters of Theology, who taught at Franciscan convents and were the only friars other than the Provincial Ministers and the Minister General

[189] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 204.
[190] Wolff, "Latin Empire of Constantinople," 221-222..
[191] The first party of the relics were received by King Louis IX, known also as Saint Louis, from Constantinople before the coronation of Baldwin II in 1239 from some Dominicans. In 1240, Louis got the possession of a piece of True Cross in Syria and sent two Franciscans to Constantinople to get safe-conduct from Baldwin to go to Syria and secure the relic. In 1241, two Franciscans managed to get from Baldwin an additional collection of notable relics.
[192] Lawrence, *Friars,* 198.

permitted to have their own private room. The presence of Lector Thomas in Constantinople is another evidence of a Franciscan house in the city.[193] Thomas the Greek managed to persuade Pope Innocent IV to resume the talks. The papal embassy, led by John of Parma, the Minister General of the Franciscans, arrived in Constantinople the following year for the new round of negotiations, which also ended unsuccessfully.

Lawrence argues that both popes, Gregory IX and Innocent IV, chose mendicant friars for these negotiations not only for their theological and dialectical expertise, but also for the skills they acquired during their missionary activity in the East and in their settlements in Constantinople. They were well-equipped to act as mediators between the Greek and Latin Churches both because of their understanding of the two cultures and Greek language skills.[194] The Franciscans also played an important role in the ecclesiastical life of Constantinople, especially in the troublesome years before the recapture of the city by the Byzantines in 1261. The Latin Emperor, the Latin Patriarch of Constantinople and Pope Alexander relied heavily on the Franciscans as the evidence from their correspondence attests.[195] Furthermore, the Franciscans were turned over all ecclesiastical affairs when the Latin Empire fell and the patriarch fled with Baldwin II. Although they were exiled from Constantinople in 1261, they returned to the city before the turn of the century and held a monastery there until 1307, when they were exiled again. Nevertheless, the Greek-speaking friars played an important role also in the

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[193] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 204.
[194] Lawrence, *Friars,* 198.
[195] Wolff, "Latin Empire of Constantinople," 223-225.

resumption of discussions between the churches in 1274.[196] Lawrence argues that the empathy of the friars for the spirituality of Orthodoxy, and its rites, won them the respect of the Greek clergy.[197] The chronicles of their missions shed light on their religious and cultural pursuits. For instance, besides being able to speak Greek at a level to engage in highly technical and theological discourses, the friars are reported to cite Greek Church Fathers only, but never Latin Church Fathers to refute the Greeks in the debates. This incident is a clear indicator of their knowledge of the doctrines of the Greek Orthodox Church. Indeed, the chronicles also refer to many books in Greek, *multitudo librorium grecoreum*, which they had with them during the negotiations of 1234 and presumably belonged to a monastery in Constantinople; they had to leave those books behind them on their way back to Constantinople from Nymphaeum on foot.[198]

In summary, the Franciscans were indeed very devoted to the union of the Greek and Latin Churches, on which the future of Christianity seemed to depend, and used Constantinople as a base during the Latin occupation of the city. They were also very influential in the city, both at the imperial courts of the last two emperors and in the ecclesiastical circles. Their presence and engagement in Constantinople led to a better understanding between the Latins and the Greeks besides leaving behind some of the rare sources, albeit by no means full, to evaluate the influence of the West in the latest-founded and the shortest-lived Crusader State.[199]

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[196] Lawrence, *Friars,* 199-201. Wolff, "Latin Empire of Constantinople," 230. One of the most important Franciscans in Constantinople was definitely Johannes of Barastro, who was influential in restarting the negotiations in 1274.
[197] Lawrence, *Friars,* 198.
[198] Wolff, "Latin Empire of Constantinople," 229-230. Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 215-216.
[199] Wolff, "Latin Empire of Constantinople," 231.

2.2.4. The *Vita* Icon in the West: Appropriation of Byzantine Imagery by the Franciscans

The Franciscan order was from the beginning an order of images developing new strategies and exploring the possibilities of visual representation to spread its ideas and anchor itself in the popular consciousness.[200] Brooke argues that images contributed to the spiritual development of Francis himself very significantly from the very beginning of his journey; the painted crucifix at the San Damiano Church spoke to him asking for the repair of the house of God and gave him direction at a crucial moment in his life.[201] His vivid imagination was not limited to images; he himself composed a number of holy songs praising God and encouraged the friars to use singing after preaching the sermons to stimulate the imagination of their audiences.[202] His best known performance is staging of the Nativity scene, which is the origin of the Christmas Nativity tradition, or *il Presepe*, a special exhibition of art objects representing the birth of Jesus particularly during the Christmas season. Saint Francis created the first Nativity scene in 1223 at Greccio, Italy, in an attempt to place the emphasis of Christmas upon the worship of his beloved Christ rather than earthly materialism and gift giving (Fig. 36). Staged in a cave, Saint Francis's Nativity was a living dramatic performance with humans and animals in Biblical roles. Such performances became very popular spreading throughout Italy, and finally, figurines replaced human and animal participants forming static scenes. This tradition, which still continues today and has grown into rich exhibitions with elegantly

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[200] Dieter Blume, "La pittura e la propaganda francescana alla fine del Duecento," in *Il Cantiere Pittorico della Chiesa Superiore di San Francesco at Assisi*, ed. Giuseppe Basile and P. Pasquale Magro (Casa Editrice Francescana, 2001), 123.

[201] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 16-17 and 160. This incident marked the start of Francis’s renounce of property. He started to live as a hermit and spent two years in solitary prayer caring for lepers and repairing San Damiano and other churches - laboring with his own hands and begging for the building material.

[202] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 16-17 for the vision of San Damiano and dramatic representations

Figure 36: Legend of Saint Francis, Institution of the Crib at Greccio, 1297-1300, Basilica of San Francesco, Upper Church, Assisi, Italy

robed figurines placed in elaborate landscape settings, has its roots in Saint Francis's imagination (Fig. 37).

Figure 37: *Il Presepe Napoletano*, Reggio di Caserta, Naples, Italy

Traditionally, there were three ways to commemorate a saint who was also the founder of an order: through his *vita*; through his order's rule and way of life; and through his relics.[203] Francis was remembered in both conventional and unconventional ways. Besides his *vita*, which was written several times, his own writings were also copied and circulated, but he was most importantly commemorated through his images. Untouched by the continuous debate of the vow for poverty, the order employed images, from the very early times of its foundation, in multiple ways to make known the figure of its founder and his special role in the history of salvation as the *Alter Christus*. For this

[203] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 3-4.

purpose, the Franciscans did not only use and adapt known figurative types but also developed new forms and possibilities for the use of images, which were adequate for their interests. According to Dieter Blume, in retrospect, it even seems that the Franciscans have systematically tested the different possibilities of the use of images. Blume argues that the *duecento* is characterized - with regards to the history of images but not the history of art - by a decisive and discontinuous development of different forms of image, and the Franciscans played an important role in this intensified use of images by their purposeful experimentation.[204] Visual arts was central to the early Franciscan movement because the images constituted the primary method, together with preaching sermons, through which the friars conveyed their message and explained the role of their order to the laity.[205] Franciscans were not the only order interested in images among the religious movements of the thirteenth century, but the intensity of their patronage differed very significantly; the dissemination of Franciscan narrative cycles in panel painting and in fresco had no comparison.[206]

In sum, Saint Francis and the Franciscan movement contributed to Christian art very significantly during the later Middle Ages especially with their interest in the potential of the narrative art, which has its origins at the Crib at Greccio. Extensive use of narrative cycles in the Franciscan churches is remarkable with the famous example of the Upper Church of the Basilica of Saint Francis at Assisi, which is decorated with 28 scenes from the life of Saint Francis, *the Legend of Saint Francis* (Fig. 38). The

[204] Blume, "Pittura e propaganda francescana," 123.
[205] Bradley R. Franco, "The Functions of Early Franciscan Art," in *The World of St. Francis of Assisi: Essays in Honor of William R. Cook,* ed. Bradley R. Franco and Beth A. Mulvaney, (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 19.
[206] Derbes, *Picturing the Passion*, 17, Blume, "Pittura e propaganda francescana," 123.

Figure 38: Saint Francis Legend, 1297-1300, Basilica of San Francesco, Upper Church, Assisi, Italy

commissioning of the Passion cycles by the Franciscans in the thirteenth century is traced convincingly by Derbes linking it to their activities in the East in her book *Picturing the Passion in the Late Medieval Italy: Narrative Paintings, Franciscan Ideologies, and the Levant*. Chatterjee explores the emergence and popularity of the *vita* icon, or the narrative icon, as a novel pictorial format in Byzantium and among the Franciscans in Italy in her book *The Living Icon in Byzantium and Italy: The Vita Image, Eleventh to Thirteenth Centuries*. As a matter of fact, Italian painting of *duecento* has traditionally been characterized as the *maniera greca* and "Italo-Byzantine" to cite the Byzantine influence, or the so-called "Byzantine Question."

There have been various explanations for the Italian appropriation of the Byzantine imagery. First, the pioneering Byzantinists like Otto Demus and Ernst Kitzinger attempted to correct the neglect of Byzantium in the formative period of Italian art, which had it roots in Giorgio Vasari's sixteenth century *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*. For the intensified Byzantine influence in *duecento*, Demus writes "An entirely new art was in the making, with new contents and new functional aims, with a new technique using new formats" describing it as a revolution stimulated by Byzantine art.[207] Demus also recognizes that Byzantine models were required to be transformed and adapted to meet the specifically Italian needs for the new kind of devotional images, the altar panels, which were unknown in Byzantium but emerged in the West at the end of the twelfth or in the beginning of the thirteenth century. Another scholar, James Stubblebine, on the one hand, reckons that "Italian artists did not merely initiate Byzantium in everything they did" and "there were areas in which the vastly influential Byzantine sphere could not touch or affect the Italian in the thirteenth century."[208] On the other hand, he argues for the presence of an "enormous and magnetic pull of Byzantium" until the end of *duecento*.[209] Belting approaches this irresistible fascination of Byzantium in *duecento* from a different point arguing that the resemblance of Italian images to Byzantine archetypes was because of the desire to "transfer the aura of the Eastern models to exact replicas," which were viewed like *quasi* relics.[210] Another possible explanation was the status and prestige gained by possessing the art of the envied empire. Following the sack of Constantinople in 1204, Byzantine

[207] Demus, *Byzantine Art and the West*, 208.
[208] James H. Stubblebine, "Byzantine Influence in Thirteenth-Century Italian Painting," *Dumbarton Oak Papers* (1966): 93.
[209] Ibid., 97.
[210] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 337.

artefacts were scattered all over Europe, Italy being the major destination, and thus, Byzantine imagery was well known to Italian patrons and artists. Thus, the influence of Byzantium could also be the ideological representation of conquest and colonization, and thus of political power.[211]

The scholarship on the “Byzantine Question” has now become more balanced suggesting a dialogue between the East and the West rather than hegemony.[212] The vehicles of cultural exchange between the East and the West were numerous: the ritual of exchanges of gifts by ambassadors from one court to another; trade activities of Western, but in particular, Italian merchants from Venice, Pisa and Genoa; the Crusades; the occupation of Constantinople by the Latins and the travelling artists and manuscripts. Although all these vehicles must all have contributed to the *maniera greca*, the two following questions posed by Derbes can not be answered by the mere existence of these vehicles and the above-mentioned justifications for the Byzantine influence and resemblance in Italian art of *duecento*. First is the unexpectedly inconsistent reception of the Byzantine imagery in Italy. Italian painters, while faithfully imitating one image, reworked others, and completely abandoned others. Second is the timing of the popularity of narrative cycles in Italy which corresponds to 1230s and afterwards. Although Byzantine art was presumably imported to Italy in great quantity right after the Latin occupation of Constantinople in 1204, as said, the appropriation of the cycles did not happen immediately afterwards. What were the reasons or criteria for the selection of the Byzantine imagery by the Italian artists and patrons? Why was there a time lag of

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[211] Derbes, *Picturing the Passion*, 15.
[212] Derbes and Neff, “Mendicant Orders,” 449, Robert S. Nelson, "Byzantium and the Rebrith of Art and Learning in Italy and France," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, ed. Helen C. Evans (Ainsworth: The Metropolitan Museum, 2004), 516.

three decades? As Derbes duly suggests, these questions require a turn from "the source of influence," Byzantium, to "the needs of the influenced," the mendicant orders, but particularly the Franciscans, who shaped the art of *duecento*.[213]

Satisfactory answers to both questions are provided by the activities of the mendicant orders in the East and the role they played in the patronage of art in Italy. Franciscan ideologies and the spread of Franciscan houses throughout Italy extending to France, Germany, Spain, and the Crusader states in the Holy Land and Constantinople were instrumental in the adoption and dissemination of the Byzantine *vita* imagery. Franciscans were not the only patrons to adopt Byzantine imagery, but they were the ones who especially favored the narrative cycles as the vast number of surviving *vita* panels of Saint Francis produced after the death of the saint attests. Franciscans used both the narratives of Christ's Passion and the *vita* cycles of their charismatic founder in their churches very extensively. The devotion to the Passion of Christ was central to Franciscan piety; it was the defining attribute of the stigmatized Francis, the *Alter Christus*, and the order he founded.[214] Thus, the *vita* imagery served both to the propagation of the image of their newly canonized founder and the juxtaposition of the Franciscan ideologies with the narratives of the Passion of Christ. The activities of the Franciscans in the East, extending as far as Mongolia but mainly concentrating in the Crusader states of the Levant and Constantinople, provided a direct link to Byzantine images. Their commitment to issues involving the Mediterranean East and the union of the Churches, and their many travels and settlements in the region helped to stimulate

[213] Derbes, *Picturing the Passion*, 16.
[214] Ibid., 17.

the creation of new forms of art both in the East and the West. Franciscans purposefully drew on the imagery of Byzantine art by adapting and modifying Eastern works as it was the case with the Byzantine *vita* icon and Franciscan altar panels depicting the life of their newly canonized founder.

The *vita* icon, besides being functional to narrate the life of Francis, and particularly his miracles and stigmatization, was also instrumental to associate the newly canonized saint with the ancient saints. Belting argues that the form of the image also had a memory value since "age was a quality to be read" in the general appearance of the image.[215] The *vita* icon had a fiction of age because of both its use for the well-established early saints of Christianity and its Byzantine origins linked to the antiquity and early Christianity. In other words, the Byzantine *vita* icon had archaic connotations, from which the cult of the newly canonized Francis could benefit. Indeed, as said before, Derbes and Neff argue that the *vita* icon was a useful device for the Franciscans at home to "inscribe Francis into a venerable lineage of holy men" besides "legitimizing the saint visually for Orthodox viewers, who were familiar with this type of images" in the Eastern Mediterranean, where their mission was to convert all infidels including Eastern Christians.[216]

In addition to its functional value to present their charismatic founder and its perceived antiquity and prestigious origins, Chatterjee argues that the Franciscans appropriated the *vita* icon format because of its ability to resolve the philosophical issues of

[215] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 14.
[216] Derbes and Neff, "Mendicant Orders," 452. Although I agree their argument of the legitimization of Saint Francis through the use of the Byzantine *vita* format, I disagree that the targeted audience were Orthodox viewers in the case of the cycle in Constantinople. I will further elaborate on this issue in the third chapter.

representation and sanctity. Francis was a saint of a new type besides being a contemporary one, and thus, he could not be represented by the established iconography of the saints.[217] Belting argues that the iconography of the central image of Francis did not only represent himself, but also portrayed the ideal of a Franciscan friar, just as the book of the Gospels Francis holds exemplifies. The book of Gospels, to which the friars devoted themselves by following an apostolic life, also represented the controversial right of lay monks to preach. With his rough cowl with the rope around the waist, Francis represented the absolute poverty his order vowed for. Nonetheless, due to the phenomenon of his stigmatization, the Franciscans were struggling with the challenge to describe the life of Francis and his physical being as the *Alter Christus*. The stigmatization of the saint, which was kept as a secret until his death, was met with disbelief even within the order after its announcement. Chatterjee argues that the juxtaposition of a central portrait and flanking narrative scenes permits a discontinuous visual and tactile access to the saint that reverberates the concealment and revelation of the stigmata during his lifetime, and beyond, so that the viewer could gradually apprehend the unfolding secrets of the *Alter Christus*.[218]

Thus, before Francis, the historical person fulfilled a preexisting ideal of the saint, but since the person of Francis did not meet the traditional ideal, a need emerged to formulate the ideal embodied by this unconventional and charismatic person.[219] While his official ideal was still disputed and his *vitae* were rewritten and corrected continuously, the Byzantine *vita* icon provided the means to characterize this new "holy

[217] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 381.
[218] Chatterjee, *Living Icon*, 168.
[219] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 13.

man," who had become a mimesis of Christ in a surprisingly concrete and shocking way. It had the capacity to offer proof and convince the viewer as well as to serve as an instructive tool that the Order required especially in its early phases. It also provided a unique and distinguished format, with connotations of firm roots to early Christianity, for the propagation of a new "person-ideal."

Another important question arises when the *vita* imagery on the Western altar panel, or frescoes, and the Byzantine icon are considered: Were they both perceived in the same manner in the East and the West? Similar questions are also asked by Robin Cormack: "Was the panel not an icon for the Western artist, patron, and the viewer?" or "Did the panel paintings in the Western church play different roles in religious perceptions and activities, so that it would be inappropriate to describe them as icons?" [220] Cormack suggests that Western panels might be seen to have more didactic, less devotional functions with a greater interest in visualizing the narrative.[221] Kurt Weitzmann, in fact, starts his book *The Icon* by underlining this difference: "In the Latin West, where Eastern icons were copied with varying degrees of faithfulness, some images enjoyed special veneration, particularly those supposedly endowed with miraculous powers. Yet, on the whole, holy images in the Latin West did not attain the same exalted position which they occupied in the life of the Orthodox believer."[222] However, the central image in these *vita* panels, which depicted the saint frontally, clearly served a devotional purpose. In fact, Francis's own experience at San Damiano proves that images had

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[220] Robin Cormack, "Icons in the Life of Byzantium," in *Icon: Four Essays* (Washington D.C.: The Trust for Museum Exhibitions, 1988), 20.
[221] Ibid., 22.
[222] Kurt Weitzmann, *The Icon: Holy Images - Sixth to Fourteenth Century* (New York: George Braziller, 1978), 7.

supernatural power, just like the icons that possessed *dynamis*, and that not only the holy saints, the usual intermediaries, but also Christ himself was present within them.[223] On the other hand, the accompanying scenes depicting the scenes from the life of the saint, and especially those illustrating his or her miracles, helped the viewers to unfold the mysteries of sanctity and conceive the divine more concretely. As Belting describes the "physical portrait" of the saint is complemented with his "ethical portrait" depicted by scenes from his exemplary life and with "divine approbation" proved by the miracles portrayed.[224]

Belting also argues that the earliest altarpieces of the mendicant orders were displayed on the feast day of the founder rather than being permanently placed on the altar.[225] Nonetheless, they could not be displayed on the high altar on the feasts of Christ or the Virgin since they were dedicated to the founder saint exclusively. Belting describes these *vita* panels as "portable feast images" to distinguish them from stationary and permanent altarpieces. Like the Byzantine *vita* icons, they had a liturgical function in the commemoration of the saints and aided the memory of hagiographical texts.[226] It has also been argued that these panels were hung as devotional icons on the columns of the Franciscan churches, and they may have been used in processions or hung in convents.[227] Franciscan *vita* panels illustrates the birth of a new type Western imagery, which took down the Byzantine icon hung from the iconostasis down and placed on top of an altar, and perhaps, traveled with the friars in their mission to propagate their order.

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[223] Franco, "Functions of Early Franciscan Art," 20.
[224] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 380.
[225] Ibid., 377.
[226] Ibid., 257.
[227] William R. Cook, *Images of St Francis of Assisi* (Firenze: Leo S Olschki Editore (with University of Western Australia), 1999), 21.

The diversity of the scenes among the earliest surviving thirteenth-century panel paintings indicate that the order did not exercise a strictly centralized control over this type of imagery, at least in the first decades that followed the death of Saint Francis. Bradley R. Franco argues that there was not a wide-spread agreement among the Italian city states as the evidence of wide variations among the surviving thirteenth-century vita panels illustrate. A closer look at these panels, mostly dated to the second and third quarter of the century, demonstrates a period marked with experimentation and innovation, presumably because of lack of significant central control over local religious communities and friars in this formative period of the cult of Saint Francis.[228] This period also corresponds to a period in which the biography of the saint was rewritten continuously, and the ideological discussions within the order were ongoing. Hence, in this early period when there was not yet an established official iconography centrally dictated, it is not surprising to attest the creativity of the friars and artists with different levels of exposure to the Byzantine imagery.

There are eight preserved thirteenth-century *vita* panels of Saint Francis:[229]

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[228] Franco, "Functions of Early Franciscan Art," 21.

[229] In their analysis of thirteenth-century cycles of Saint Francis, Striker and Hawkins include nine cycles, all of which are panel paintings. See Striker and Hawkins, "Mosaics and Frescoes," 141. On the other hand, Franco reports eight surviving thirteenth-century altarpieces depicting at least four scenes. See Franco, "Functions of Early Franciscan Art," 19, n. 3. All the cycles included in the matrix of Striker and Hawkins have four or more cycles, and thus, there is no difference in the selection criteria, but there is a discrepancy in the number of cycles. When the cycles in both lists are matched one by one, there remains one cycle located at Assisi in the list of Striker and Hawkins. Among the nine cycles of Striker and Hawkins, there are two at Assisi, one located at the "San Francesco Sacristy" (dated 1250) and the other located at "San Francesco Museo" (dated 1265-1275). Both cycles have four scenes in the frequency matrix, and they are the same scenes. In Franco's list, there is only one cycle at Assisi (dated 1255) and reported to be located at "Tesoro," which translates into "Treasury." In my research I have always come across with only one four-scenes panel of Saint Francis at Assisi (Fig. 43), which led me to think that there may have been a double entry of the same panel in the list of Striker and Hawkins, presumably because of the different proposed dates. Nonetheless, all the three locations seem to point the same place. It is not my purpose in this study to explain this discrepancy but I would like to make a note of it.

(i) Bonaventura Berlinghieri, *Altarpiece of Saint Francis of Assisi and Stories from His Life,* 1235, San Francesco, Pescia (Fig. 39)

(ii) Master of Bardi Saint Francis, *Saint Francis with Scenes from His Life*, c. 1245, Santa Croce, Florence (Fig. 40)

(iii) Unknown Florentine artist, *Saint Francis and Eight Stories from His Life*, c. 1250, Museo Civico, Pistoia (Fig. 41)

(iv) Attributed to Giunta Pisano, *Saint Francis and Six Miracles*, c. 1250, Pinacoteca, Pisa (Fig. 42)

(v) Anonymous Umbrian Master, *Saint Francis with Four Scenes of Miracles*, c. 1255, San Francesco, Tesoro, Assisi (Fig. 43)

(vi) Giunta Pisano workshop, *Saint Francis of Assisi and Four Scenes from His Life*, before 1260, Vatican Museum, Rome (Fig. 44)

(vii) Anonymous, *Saint Francis of Assisi*, c.1260, Museo Diocesano, Orte (Fig. 45)

(viii) Guido di Graziano, *Saint Francis and Eight Scenes from His Life*, c. 1275, Pinacoteca, Siena (Fig. 46)

The dates indicated above are based on William Cook's work, but several of these panels are dated to slightly later by some other scholars.[230] However, this disagreement, in the order of a decade or less in most incidents, does not interfere with the general observations on the early Franciscan *vita* panels discussed in this study. Four of these panels, those in Pescia, Santa Croce, Pistoia and Pisa, are dated to and before 1250, the year in which Saint Louis commissioned the Arsenal Bible in Acre. As a matter of fact, all the abovementioned panels, except for the Siena panel, which is definitely dated after the reconquest of Constantinople, may have been contemporary to the Kalenderhane cycle as they have been painted during the Latin occupation of the city between 1204 and 1261.

[230] Franco, "Functions of Early Franciscan Art," 19-20, n.3, Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 168-192 and Striker and Hawkins, "Mosaics and Frescoes," 141.

Figure 39: Bonaventura Berlinghieri, *Altarpiece of Saint Francis of Assisi and Stories from His Life,* 1235, San Francesco, Pescia

Figure 40: Master of Bardi Saint Francis, *Saint Francis with Scenes from His Life*, c. 1245, Santa Croce, Florence

Figure 41: Unknown Florentine artist, *Saint Francis and Eight Stories from His Life*, c. 1250, Museo Civico, Pistoia

Figure 42: Attributed to Giunta Pisano, *Saint Francis and Six Miracles*, c. 1250, Pinacoteca, Pisa

Figure 43: Anonymous Umbrian Master, *Saint Francis with Four Scenes of Miracles*, c. 1255, San Francesco, Tesoro, Assisi

Figure 44: Giunta Pisano workshop, *Saint Francis of Assisi and Four Scenes from His Life*, before 1260, Vatican Museum, Rome

Figure 45: Anonymous, *Saint Francis of Assisi*, c.1260, Museo Diocesano, Orte

Figure 46: Guido di Graziano, *Saint Francis and Eight Scenes from His Life*, c. 1275, Pinacoteca, Siena

The number of scenes flanking the central portrait of the saint in these panels varies between four and twenty, but the Bardi panel in Santa Croce with twenty scenes is clearly an outlier among all the surviving *vita* cycles on panels. In fact, it is closely linked to Byzantine prototypes than the earlier Franciscan *vita* panels like the Pescia panel.[231] The number of scenes ranges between four and eight when the Bardi panel is excluded. On the other hand, the number of scenes in the surviving Byzantine *vita* icons range significantly higher between twelve and twenty.[232] The analysis of the scenes of the thirteenth century Franciscan panels by Striker and Hawkins demonstrates that a total of thirty distinct events are depicted on these panels.[233] Thus, the reason for considerably less scenes in Franciscan panels compared to Byzantine *vita* icons could not be the lack of episodes in the life of Francis. Moreover, unlike the Byzantine *vita* icons which rarely included posthumous miracles, Franciscan panels also included the miracles after the death of the saint. In fact, the most frequently depicted scenes seen on these panels are the posthumous miracles. The earliest panel, the Pescia panel by Bonaventura Berlinghieri, for instance, has only two out of the six scenes from the saint's life: *Stigmatization* and *Preaching to the Birds*. These two scenes were crucial to convey the two principal messages of the central portrait: (i) Francis, a holy man whose love for Christ and sufferance for his Passion was so unequalled that he was rewarded with the sacred marks of Christ and (ii) Francis was a person who dedicated his life to preach Christ and spread the faith to all of the creatures of God.[234] The ideals of the Franciscan movement were explicit in these two scenes, which represented both the

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[231] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 176.
[232] Ševčenko, "Vita Icon and Painter as Hagiographer," 150.
[233] Striker and Hawkins, "Mosaics and Frescoes," 141.
[234] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 169-171, Franco, "Functions of Early Franciscan Art," 23-24.

ideals of the order and what the friars strived for. While these two stories unique to Francis helped the friars to propagate their role as preachers in the service of Christ, the remaining four posthumous miracles were proof of the sanctity of Francis. These posthumous miracles, which included the healing of cripples and lepers and an exorcism, reminded the miracles of Jesus Christ and his apostles. Franco argues that the abundance of the posthumous miracles in the early Franciscan panels indicate the concern of the friars in demonstrating Francis's active role as a miracle-worker, who still had an active presence in the world. Francis's intercessor role between the heaven and the earth and his miracles that took place near the tomb of the saint were instrumental in drawing pilgrims to the tomb of the saint at Assisi, which emerged as an important new Christian center.[235] Ševčenko also argues that the early Franciscan panels diverge from the Byzantine *vita* icons by their concentration on posthumous miracles, especially on those at the tomb of Francis. However, according to Ševčenko, there has been a change in the type of episodes included in the Saint Francis cycles in the mid of the century, and the content of the cycles started to stress the exemplary events in the life of Francis, or his "ethical portrait" besides his assimilation to Christ instead of posthumous miracles.[236]

The visual depictions of the stigmata on Francis's body and the portrayal of the phenomenal event of stigmatization helped the Franciscans advance the idea that their founder was the *Alter Christus*, but yet they was still a heated debate about the stigmata posing challenges on the representation of the saint. Presumably because of the delicacy

[235] Franco, "Functions of Early Franciscan Art," 25.
[236] Ševčenko, "Vita Icon and Painter as Hagiographer," 154.

of the issue, the stigmata were not mentioned in the papal decree announcing the canonization of Francis.[237] But yet, the same pope who canonized Francis in 1228, Pope Gregory IX, threatened those who denied the miracle with excommunication and defended the friars' rights to depict Francis with the stigmata in paintings.[238] Saint Francis is depicted with the stigmata at the center in all of these eight surviving panels and the scene of stigmatization is present in five of them. The spread of this much unexpected miracle, which was visually proven by its depiction in the Franciscan panels, played a very important role in the spread of the cult of Saint Francis.

The scene of *Preaching to the Birds*, like that of stigmatization, was crucial for the spread of the Franciscan movement. It comprised multiple layers of meaning: it connected Francis to the early saints of the church like Saint Anthony, who performed similar miracles and had control over animals; it helped the friars to propagate Francis as an outdoor preacher of the Gospel to all creatures like the apostles; and it represented the order's central mission of spreading the Gospel to all God's creation without any social or religious discrimination.[239] The stigmatization scene is depicted on all the four panels where the *Preaching to the Birds* story is present demonstrating that these two scenes were both integral and complementary for the message of the Franciscan movement at its earliest phases. Only on the Pistoia panel, the stigmatization appears without the *Preaching to the Birds* scene, but the reverse does not occur; there is always the

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[237] Andre Vauchez, *Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint*, trans. Michael Cusato (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 143-144.
[238] Andre Vauchez, "Les stigmates de saint François et leurs detracteurs dans les derniers siecles du moyen age," *melanges d'archeologie et d'histoire* 80 (1968): 595-625.
[239] Franco, "Functions of Early Franciscan Art," 24.

Stigmatization scene when there is the *Preaching to the Birds* scene in the surviving panels.

The surviving eight Franciscan panels of the thirteenth century also have some common formal characteristics. They are mostly gable shaped with the exception of the panels at Assisi and Vatican that are rectangular shaped like the Byzantine *vita* icons. These two rectangular shaped panels also have another distinct feature: the central figure of Saint Francis is holding an open book similar to the Kalenderhane cycle, whereas the book he holds is closed in the other panels. Saint Francis is always depicted displaying the stigmata in all the surviving thirteenth-century panels. He is accompanied with angels in four of the eight panels. Mostly two angels are present except for the Siena panel that also has a small figure of Christ accompanied by four angels on each side. Lastly, the panels have narrative scenes on the two sides of the panel to the left and to the right but not at the top or the bottom except for Bardi panel with twenty scenes, which has two registers of scenes below the figure of Saint Francis. These digressions from the format of the Byzantine *vita* icon, the gable shape, reduced number of scenes on the lateral sides and the inclusion of angels, are considered to be the intend of the Franciscans to link the Franciscan *vita* panels with historiated crosses and further reinforce the Christ-like qualities of their founder.[240]

The Franciscans played a key role in the formation period of Western art by their patronage and appropriation of Byzantine imagery, and the *vita* icon was one of the critical links in the artistic interchange around the Mediterranean in the thirteenth

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[240] Derbes and Neff, "Mendicant Orders," 452.

century. The Saint Francis panels, although derived from the Byzantine *vita* icons, were distinct from their Eastern antecedents as the form was used to commemorate and develop the cult of the unconventional new saint, whose official *vita* was still in the process of being written. Ševčenko writes "In a period in which differing written versions of these events began to proliferate, the work of art apparently offered the 'truth,' showing what the saint actually looked like and establishing what had really happened. The scenes thus became the authoritative version of the life, rivaling the written *vita* as an authenticating document."[241]

2.3. The Crusades

2.3.1. The Crusader States

One of the fascinating aspects of historical and anthropological research is the study of a foreign society transplanted into entirely novel environments. From the end of the eleventh century, besides their numerous military campaigns, Western Christians also founded Christian states in the Levant. The first four Crusader states were established immediately after the First Crusade: the County of Edessa in March 1098, the Principality of Antioch in June 1098, the Kingdom of Jerusalem, which also had many vassals, in July 1099 and the County of Tripoli in 1102. The principalities of Antioch, Tripoli and Edessa were in essence dependencies of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, but they often acted independently. One of the consequences of the Third Crusade was the occupation of Cyprus in 1191, and Constantinople became a Latin possession during the Fourth Crusade, but the Latin Empire of Constantinople short-lived because of the

[241] Ševčenko, "Vita Icon and Painter as Hagiographer," 155.

reconquest of the Byzantines in 1261. The collapse of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and of the principalities towards the end of the thirteenth century brought to an end nearly two hundred years of Crusader rule in the Levant. Only Cyprus remained under Christian rule as an independent monarchy until it was invaded by the Egyptians in 1426.[242] These Crusader states shared many similarities with their Western counterparts, but were also quite different in many ways. As Adrian J. Boas writes, “the kingdoms of Jerusalem and Cyprus and the Latin principalities in Syria were very much products of the soil in which they took root, hybrids that resulted from meeting of quite different cultures.”[243] The Crusader states reflected a blending of Eastern and Western cultures.

The Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, which had its origins before the Crusades, also played an important role in the period of Crusader states. The Cilician Armenians were aware of the implications of the encroachment of the recently founded Crusader states on Byzantium, and thus, aligned themselves with the Latins. The systematic intermarriages with the Latin ruling families –like that of Morphia of Melitene, mother of Queen Melisende, with Baldwin II, the king of Jerusalem– and the alignment of the Cilician Church with the Latin Church bore fruit when Baron Levon II of Cilicia was crowned as the king of Armenia in 1198 recognizing the Catholic pope as the head of the Armenian church.[244] Thus, by the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Levantine triad of Christian powers was shaped as Armenians, Byzantines, and Crusaders.

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[242]Adrian J. Boas, *Crusader Archaeology : The Material Culture of the Latin East* (London: Routledge, 1999), 4-6.
[243] Ibid., xii.
[244] Sirarpie Der Nersessian, *The Armenians* (Thames and Hudson, 1969), 47, T. S. R. Boase, "The History of the Kingdom," in *The Cilician Kingdom of Armenia* (Edinburgh: Scottish Acedemic Press, 1978), 17-19.

2.3.2. The Art of the Crusades

The study of cross-cultural interaction in the medieval Mediterranean, Near East and Asia Minor cuts across conventional scholarly boundaries and the art of the Crusades emerges as a remarkable phenomenon in this realm. The Crusaders encountered ancient and rich artistic traditions in the lands they conquered. Byzantine and Islamic art were dominant in the Crusader states, but Syrians and Armenians also had their own distinct artistic styles. The artistic traditions of these local cultures were unified with the styles brought by the Crusaders from their homelands in Europe, which were themselves highly varied and included France, Italy, Germany, and England. The architecture often followed Romanesque or Gothic styles, but also carried characteristics from Byzantine, Arab Christian and Muslim sources. Figural arts were creative in their imagery and iconography and multicultural in their content. Their color and ornament were often striking.[245]

Crusader art played a significant role in transmitting the Byzantinizing tradition of the *maniera greca* to Italy and Europe up until the end of the thirteenth century. Folda argues that Western artists chose to pursue different artistic interests and goals from the fourteenth century on and diverged from the Byzantine art although Byzantine art continued and even flourished in the fourteenth century and beyond.[246] Folda's explanation for this divergence is the discontinuity of Crusader art, the mechanism for transmission, following the fall of the Crusader states at the end of the thirteenth century. Although, in my opinion, this argument needs to be refined in the light of the

[245] Folda, *Crusader Art 1099-1291*, 11.
[246] Ibid., 164-169.

continued activities of the mendicant orders in the region as well as the growing influence and dominance of Italian maritime republics in the Eastern Mediterranean, it certainly leads to the conclusion that Crusader art had an influence on the artistic developments leading up to the early stages of the Italian Renaissance.

The most important aspect of a Crusader artist is the way he unifies Byzantine, Western European, and local Levantine formal and pictorial elements into a distinctive overall style.[247] However, the scholarly views on the Crusader workshops and Crusader style vary. Weitzmann's proposition for Crusader style in icon painting was the notion that the artists were Italian and French artists who came to the East to the Crusader states, worked side by side apparently having models from both countries and gradually developed the Crusader style and iconography by combining Byzantine elements into it.[248] Folda, on the other hand suggests that most Crusader artists were born in the East of Crusader settlers, possibly with European, that is, French, Italian, German, or English ancestry, and then trained there as a Crusader painter. Thus, there were not "Italian and French artists working side by side", but "Crusader artists working side by side" in a Crusader workshop. Folda argues that the idea that an artist who came from the West, already mature and fully formed as a painter, would suddenly, or even gradually, become a Crusader artist working in a fully developed Crusader style is problematic.[249] In fact, the notion of Crusader artist must have been developmental. Weitzmann's proposition seems to be a phenomenon of the earliest phases of the Crusader art,

[247] Jaroslav Folda, "The Figural Arts in Crusader Syria and Palestine, 1187-1291: Some New Realities," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 320.
[248] Kurt Weitzmann, "Thirteenth Century Crusader Icons on Mount Sinai," *The Art Bulletin* 45 (1963): 182.
[249] Folda, "Figural Arts in Crusader Syria and Palestine," 321.

immediately after the First Crusade and conquest of the Holy Land. Folda's suggestion, on the other hand, seem to be the case at later phases when there were already established workshops and artists in the Crusader states. In both cases, Crusader artists reflected different artistic traditions in their backgrounds and training and they also worked with local eastern Christian artists as well. Thus, Crusader art can be considered as an extreme case of hybridity indeed.

The Melisende Psalter, which is part of the Egerton Collection in the British Library, is an outstanding example of Crusader art, and it unifies the artistic styles of Roman Catholic Europe, the Eastern Orthodox Byzantine Empire and the art of the Armenian illuminated manuscripts. A brief examination of this manuscript reveals insight on the processes of its formation as a hybrid work of art as well as its complexity. Although her name does not appear in the manuscript, scholars agree that Queen Melisende of Jerusalem (reigned 1131-1161) was the recipient of this royal manuscript. Queen Melisende, daughter of King Baldwin II (died 1131) and the Armenian princess Morphia, married Fulk V Count of Anjou in 1129, with whom he ruled the Kingdom of Jerusalem after the death of her father. The psalter is dated to the period between 1131 and 1143 based on the entries of its calendar.[250] Although the Psalter of Queen Melisende is a relatively small personal-sized psalter (21.6 x 14 cm), most probably used for private reading, prayer, reading and meditation, it is yet a codex *de grand luxe* with twenty-four full page New Testament illuminations at the beginning of the book, followed by a calendar with twelve zodiac-sign medallions, eight full page initials on

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[250] Vrej Nersessian, *Treasures from the Ark: 1700 Years of Armenian Christan Art* (London: Brtish Library, 2001), 198.

gold ground with the *incipits* also in gold for the liturgical divisions of the psalms. Its text is completely decorated with gold, and it is binded in silk and ivory.[251] It also includes nine portraits of the saints in the headpiece panels for the prayers.

Seven scribes and illuminators, working in the scriptorium built by the Crusaders in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, are believed to be involved in the creation of the psalter.[252] Although its specific source has not yet been identified, it is likely that the scriber used an English calendar since a remarkable number of English saints appear in the calendar, and surprisingly no saints from Jerusalem are given special attention.[253] This otherwise inexplicable English feature of the calendar is explained by the patronage of Fulk, the husband of Queen Melisende.[254] Indeed, the program of the decoration of this manuscript reflects the multicultural interests of the Queen Melisende and her eastern Orthodox ancestry as well as the family heritage of the patron, his husband Fulk, and the Crusader context. A northern French scriber wrote the texts. The calendar was decorated with handsome roundels by a French Romanesque Crusader painter. The book of psalms with eight full page initials (Fig. 47) on gold ground with the *incipits* shows parallels with French and English psalters. The headpieces are done by an Italo-Byzantine Crusader painter, whose ornament also reflects Anglo-Saxon decorated initials combined remarkably with Islamic geometric sophistication.[255]

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[251] Jaroslav Folda, *The Art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land, 1098-1187* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 137.
[252] Nersessian, *Treasures from the Ark*, 198.
[253] Folda, *Crusader Art, 1098-1187*, 151.
[254] Ibid., 154. Fulk's son Geoffrey married Mathilda, the daughter of Henry I of England who was the lawful heir to the English throne. Folda suggests that, due to his family ties, Fulk possessed the resources to provide exquisite examples for the gift of his wife, and thus, combine Western and Eastern elements.
[255] Folda, *Crusader Art 1099-1291*, 33.

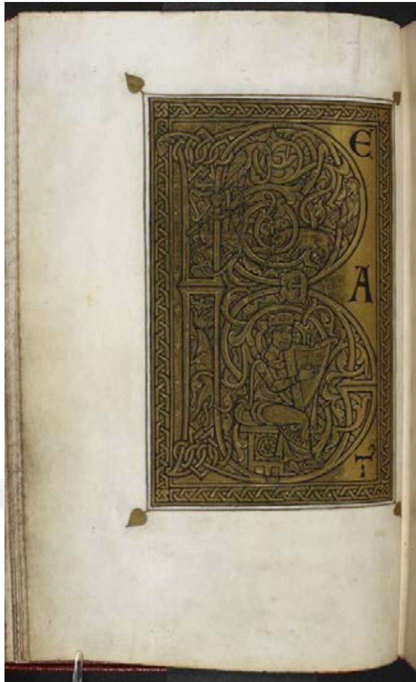

Figure 47: Historiated Initial ‘B’(eatus vir) of David Harping, Folio 23v, Melisende Psalter

(Egerton Collection, British Library)

Figure 48: Deesis, Folio 12v, Melisende Psalter

(Egerton Collection, British Library)

The illustrations of the manuscript also provide exceptional insights into Crusader art. Although the idea for the series of twenty four introductory miniatures was first introduced in England shortly before the Psalter of Melisende, the selection of the scenes was heavily influenced by the Byzantine festival cycle.[256] Of the painters who worked on the Melisende Psalter, Basil was the most important artist. He painted the twenty four New Testament illustrations and signed his name on the last of these miniatures, the Deesis (Fig. 48) in Latin 'BASILIUS ME FECIT' (Basilius made me). The images are very strongly Byzantinizing in style suggesting that Basil may have well studied in a Greek workshop. The second set of images, the group of nine rectangular headpieces with selected saints introducing prayers, are also Byzantinizing, but their artist combines his Romanesque style with the Byzantine iconography.

The ivory carved bookcovers of the psalter also reflect its Crusader context. They have textile-inspired, Byzantino-Muslim type framed medallion format with two pictorial programs. The life of King David, ancestor of Christ and the Crusader kings, surrounded by a western-inspired set of virtues and vices battling for supremacy is depicted on the front cover (Fig. 49).[257] On the back, there are images of the Christian works of mercy being carried out by the Crusader king in the name of Christ, which is most probably a veiled reference to Fulk (Fig. 50). The king is depicted wearing varied and interesting costumes including Byzantine-looking regalia.[258]

[256] Folda, *Crusader Art, 1098-1187*, 155.
[257] Folda, *Crusader Art 1099-1291*, 34.
[258] Folda, *Crusader Art, 1098-1187*, 158.

Figure 49: Ivory Plaque from the Upper Binding, with Scenes from the Life of David, Melisende Psalter

(Egerton Collection, British Library)

Figure 50: Ivory Plaque from the Lower Binding, of the Six Vices and Six Works of Charity (Matthew 25:35-36), Melisende Psalter

(Egerton Collection, British Library)

This rich and very sophisticated *mélange* of East and West is characteristic of Crusader art, of which this manuscript is the finest twelfth-century example. Its interpretation requires an in-depth understanding of its context besides a detailed analysis of its complex stylistic and iconographic features created by a multitude of artists of different artistic backgrounds. As discussed in the first chapter, the Kalenderhane cycle of Saint Francis has stylistic associations with a group of thirteenth-century Crusader manuscripts and has many similarities in terms of its hybridity with the Melisende Psalter. Nevertheless, in my opinion, the chapel with the frescoes depicting the life of Saint Francis also has some veiled references to the ambitions of the order he founded.

3. Contextualizing the Cycle of Life of Saint Francis at the Kalenderhane Mosque

Following the discussion of the three phenomena of the thirteenth century that had considerable impact on the creation of the Kalenderhane cycle of Saint Francis, this last chapter focuses on its context and premises as well as the processes of its creation to arrive to an alternative interpretation. It starts with a discussion of its patronage, artists and dating, and an examination of the annexed chapel context of the cycle follows. The use of the *vita* icon on mural decoration is explored in the subsequent section together with a brief discussion of the scenes. The hybridity of the program of the chapel, on which a different commentary than the previous studies is built, is discussed in the fourth section. Finally following this new interpretation, the suppression of the chapel is questioned briefly.

3.1. Patronage, Artists and Dating

A question still under discussion is the patronage of the fresco cycle which also relates to its dating and the artists who produced it. The frescoes must have been painted between the canonization of Saint Francis, as he is shown with a halo (Fig. 23), in 1228, and the reconquest of the city in 1261. On the one hand, Striker and Hawkins state that although the cycle may belong to the earliest phase of Franciscan cycles, and thus date to 1230s or 1240s, they argue that it is more likely that it is contemporary with the Paris Arsenal Bible painted in the early 1250s.[259] This suggestion is, however, based on the stylistic similarities between the Kalenderhane cycle and the Arsenal Bible, but not on

[259] Striker and Hawkins, "Mosaics and Frescoes," 142.

archaeological evidence or textual sources. Nevertheless, they are cautious to assume that there was a Franciscan house at the site of Kalenderhane because they argue that there is no evidence of the presence of a Franciscan monastery in the city during the Latin occupation. Based on the common French stylistic features of the Kalenderhane cycle and the Paris Arsenal Bible, they argue that the site may have been the anonymously mentioned Dominican establishment instead.[260]

According to Brooke, on the other hand, the dating of Saint Francis cycle can be moved forward. As noted previously, the activities of the Franciscans in Constantinople is attested in the sources as early as in 1220, and there was most probably a Franciscan house during the negotiations of 1234 that also contained a substantial library. The friars who attended the talks with the Orthodox patriarchs in Nicaea and Nymphaeum had brought many books in Greek with them, which they had most probably taken from that library but had to leave at Nymphaeum on their return to Constantinople on foot at the end of the talks. Nonetheless, the vast knowledge of the Franciscans of the doctrines of the Greek Orthodox Church recorded in the chronicles and their ability to communicate in Greek suggest that their exposure to Byzantium, both linguistic and theological, must have had a history of establishment in the capital of the to-be-Franciscan emperor. Brooke suggests that the library in question was part of the monastery dedicated to Virgin *Kyriotissa* and located at the Kalenderhane site.[261] Since the Main Church was a newly built and elaborately decorated church when the Latins occupied Constantinople, its acquisition by the Franciscan Order must have required generous imperial support. It

[260] Berger and Göyünç, "Historical Topography," 16-17.
[261] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 204-205.

is, therefore, likely that the Franciscans were given the monastery by John of Brienne, the emperor of the Latin Empire of Constantinople, who probably met Saint Francis in Damietta in 1219 during the Fifth Crusade and attended his canonization ceremony at Assisi in 1228, only three years before he entered to the city he reigned until his death as a Franciscan in 1237. In my opinion, Brooke's suggestion for an earlier date for the cycle, based on these two premises that there was a Franciscan establishment in Constantinople at Kalenderhane by the 1230s, and John of Brienne was its benefactor, is supported by certain stylistic and iconographic features of the cycle of Saint Francis that I will discuss in more detail shortly.

Chatterjee supports Brooke's arguments for a Franciscan house in Constantinople and the Franciscan patronage of the Kalenderhane cycle by arguing against the Dominican establishment at the site, and thus, the Dominican patronage of the frescoes. First, and foremost, either wall or panel painting was received with little enthusiasm among the Dominicans, and even the Dominican saints were virtually never commemorated on the walls of the churches of the order in the thirteenth and early fourteenth century whereas the images of the founder of the Franciscan order started to appear even before his death.[262] Besides, the *vita* format was never adopted for the representations of Saint Dominic as it was the case for Saint Francis altar panels.[263]

Although the historical evidence offered by Brooke and Chatterjee's argument against the Dominican patrons favors the possession of the Kalenderhane site by the

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[262] Joanna Louise Cannon, "Dominican Patronage of the Arts of Central Italy: The Provincia Romana, c.1220-1320" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1980), 148-149.
[263] Chatterjee, *Living Icon*, 209.

Franciscans, its dating is still a point of discussion. Although Brooke posits the possibility of an earlier dating to 1230s, Striker and Hawkins suggest a dating to around 1250s, contemporary to the commissioning of the Arsenal Bible by Louis IX in the years 1250 to 1254 during his time in the Latin Kingdoms of the Levant in the course of the Seventh Crusade. This suggestion is based on the stylistic similarities with the Paris Arsenal Bible discussed in the first chapter.[264] Folda argues that besides the Paris Arsenal Bible, Kalenderhane cycle of Saint Francis shares very close formal characteristics with other Crusader paintings including the Perugia Missal, a biblical manuscript now in Padua, an icon of the Crucifixion now in the Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai, which all exhibit a fully-developed Franco-Byzantine Crusader style. Folda argues that even though they may be all works done by different artists, these artists must have worked in the same workshop at an earlier stage of their career. And he suggests that the origins of that style may well have been Constantinople where a Crusader artist may have worked in the 1230s and 40s and become exposed to the new French Gothic style since Constantinople was in direct contact with Paris in that period.[265] As noted before, Baldwin II, who succeeded John of Brienne in 1237, had close connections with King Louis IX of France, to whom he sold the relics of the Passion of Christ in the years 1239 and 1241 by the agency of Franciscan friars.

According to Folda, these mature and high-quality Crusader painters from Constantinople, who also integrated the new French Gothic style into their work, may have been recruited by Louis IX for the workshops that produced the Arsenal Bible and

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[264] Striker and Hawkins, “Mosaics and Frescoes,” 142.
[265] Folda, *Crusader Art 1099-1291*, 112.

those other lavishly and elegantly painted major works that suddenly appeared at Acre following his arrival there in the period between 1250 and 1255.[266] This proposition impacts the dating of the Kalenderhane cycle of Saint Francis by placing it to the first half of the thirteenth century, to 1240s, and perhaps one decade or more earlier than the date proposed by Striker and Hawkins. Although the information on the workshops of Constantinople and the Crusader Levant of the mid-thirteenth century is very scarce to arrive to concrete conclusions, the cycle of Saint Francis in Constantinople, currently the main evidence for Crusader Art in situ in this period, provides an important clue on how the Franco-Byzantine style may have emerged and spread in the Crusader Levant. Nonetheless, I will argue in the later sections that besides the stylistic precedence of Kalenderhane cycle of Saint Francis in Constantinople proposed by Folda, and supported by the historical evidence presented by Brooke, certain iconographical features of the cycle and its hybrid program may indicate to an earlier date than the 1250s.

As said, it is also important to note that certain iconographic and stylistic features of the pictorial program of the Kalenderhane cycle of Saint Francis, such as the *Theotokos* and Child and the Greek Church Fathers, indicate to the employment of a Byzantine workshop by the Latin patrons. Albeit later, another example of a similar case is the Church of Saint Domenico, present day Arap Camii. It was built between 1325 and 1337 close to the shore of Golden Horn in Galata, an independent Genoese colony at the

[266] Folda, *Crusader Art 1187-1291*, 309-310. Folda argues that the dating of the cycle between 1228, the canonization of Saint Francis, and 1261 is on purely historical grounds. He argues that the Franco-Byzantine Crusader style of the Kalenderhane frescoes is slightly earlier than the Arsenal Bible and the Perugia Missal, and thus date them to 1240s. He suggests that the Crusader artists of the frescoes in Constantinople, or other members of the workshop that produced them, may have gone to Acre in the late 1240s but not later than 1250 to work under the patronage of King Louise IX.

time.[267] The church was part of a monastery that belonged to the Dominicans, one of the foremost medieval mendicant orders discussed in the previous chapter. The Dominican patrons must have employed Byzantine workshops both for the construction and decoration of their church dedicated to Saint Domenico, the patron saint of the order. The fourteenth-century three-aisled basilica is built in the Italian Gothic style following the Italian mendicant model with a squared off-apse, adjacent chapels and lacking a narthex. The forms of the windows also follow Italian models. However, the construction technique is purely Byzantine.[268] Based on the comparison of the composition, iconography and style of the frescoes with the contemporary Byzantine churches, Engin Akyürek proposes "that Church of Saint Domenico was decorated by the same Byzantine workshop or a workshop that contained artisans who had worked at the Kariye; at the very least, it was a Constantinopolitan workshop sharing the common taste".[269] However, certain unusual features of the program such as the Mary's splendid bed set in the middle of the pasture in the *Nativity* scene, which resembles more to the bed in the *Nativity of the Virgin* scene in the Byzantine iconography rather than its humble counterparts mostly depicted as a pallet in front of the cave, and the presence of Saint Ambrose, a saint venerated only by the Catholics, point to the involvement of the Dominican patrons in the pictorial program of the church decorated by Byzantine artists. Another evidence of this involvement is the inscriptions in Latin that resemble in style with the Latin inscriptions in the Kalenderhane chapel of Saint Francis.[270] Akyürek

[267] Engin Akyürek, "Dominican Painting in Palaiologan Constantinople: The Frescoes of the Arap Camii (Church of S. Domenico) in Galata," in The Kariye Camii Reconsidered, ed. Holger A. Klein, Robert G. Ousterhout and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Istanbul Research Institute, 2011), 330.
[268] Ibid., 341.
[269] Ibid., 340.
[270] Ibid., 333-334.

writes “Neither the presence of Ambrose nor Latin should be considered as an evidence that the patrons hired Italian artists. The ‘signature’ of the artists (or of the workshop) is better sought in the aspects of style than in unusual iconographic features.”[271] He, then, suggests that it is more likely that a Constantinopolitan workshop that worked under the supervision of an Italian overseer decorated the church since such a solution would have also been more feasible economically. This Italian overseer, presumably a Dominican friar, must have defined the context of the pictorial program and decided on its particular iconographic details, which were at times unusual for the artists who produced them, in order to meet the needs of the mendicant order. I will argue for a very similar case for the Kalenderhane cycle of saint Francis in the following sections.

3.2. Annexed Chapel Context

As discussed in the architectural history and overview, the Saint Francis Chapel was built as part of the annexed structures in the *diaconicon* between the tenth and twelfth centuries and retained during the construction of the Main Church at the turn of the thirteenth century (Figs. 9-10). Striker and Kuban note that they call the complex of rooms and chapels, to which the chapel of Saint Francis belongs to, as the *diaconicon* primarily because of its location to the south of bema albeit there is no evidence on its definite function.[272] Although the contemporary partitions to the north and south of the bema support their designation as the *diaconicon*, their suggestion that the complex may well have been used for different purposes is also valid because its structural history indicates numerous changes. However, the closing-off of these rooms on both sides of

[271] Ibid., 341.
[272] Striker and Kuban, "Architecture," 81.

the bema can be best explained in terms of liturgical planning and the creation of distinct *pastophoria* for the first time in the Bema Church.[273] These structures continued to be used throughout the Main Church phase and possibly resumed to serve a liturgical function.[274] It is also important to note that the construction of the chapel long before the installation of the fresco cycle of Saint Francis also precedes the partition of the *pastophoria*. The fact that the chapel was constructed independently and before the partition of the *diaconicon*, in my opinion, supports Berger's argument that it may have been built for a specific purpose and possibly for the miracle-working icon of the Mother of God following the dedication of the church as *ta Kyrou*.[275]

The presence of two annexes to the south and north of the apse, the *diaconicon* and the apse of the North Church, recalls Slobodan Ćurčić's discussion of satellite arrangement of paired subsidiary chapels in the Middle Byzantine churches.[276] Ćurčić argues that the subsidiary chapels had a major role in the development of Middle Byzantine church architecture because they produced a wide variety of architectural solutions to needs arose during this period, when only a few new church types emerged and mostly old basic church types continued. The study of the cycle of Saint Francis, in my opinion, also requires taking into consideration the subsidiary chapel context of the annexed structure where it is located.

The liturgical function and iconographic program of subsidiary chapels are discussed by Gordana Babić in detail in her book *Les chapelles annexes des églises byzantines;*

[273] Ibid., 79 and 84.
[274] Ibid., 58 and 81.
[275] Berger and Göyünç, "Historical Topography," 8.
[276] Slobodan Ćurčić, "Architectural Significance of Subsidiary Chapels in Middle Byzantine Churches," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 36, no. 2 (May 1977): 96.

fonction liturgique et programmes iconographiques. The annexation of subsidiary chapels to the main church building stemmed from certain liturgical needs; only one Eucharistic rite could take place on the altar on a given day. Therefore, additional liturgical services such as commemorations for the deceased, funerary services and litanies would have required additional spaces.[277] Thus, Babić defines the function of many Early Byzantine subsidiary chapels as the commemoration of saints, deceased monks, and deceased founders and suggests that these early examples may have led to the development of hagiographic themes dedicated to cults of various saints in the annexed chapels of the sanctuary in the later periods. From the thirteenth century onwards, although the liturgical functions of the annexed chapels influenced their iconographic program by introducing new related themes, the continuing traditional hagiographic scenes exhibited archaic qualities compared to the contemporary iconography in the main church buildings. Thirteenth-century Serbian examples of annexed chapels, which preserve a wealth of frescoes, are noteworthy in this respect. The iconography of these chapels played an important role in the introduction of the cults of the two utmost national saints, Saints Simeon and Sava, respectively the founder of the Nemanjić dynasty what would eventually evolve into the Serbian Empire and the founder of the autonomous Serbian Church. The development of this cult in Serbian painting fuelled the propaganda generated by the ambitious Serbian rulers. In the fourteenth century, the last phase of the evolution of annexed chapels, certain

[277] Gordana Babić, *Chapelles annexes des églises byzantines* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1969), 175-176.

commemorative functions were transferred to the narthex eliminating the need for some subsidiary chapels while burial chapels continued to be built.[278]

As Striker and Hawkins duly stated there is no evidence of the liturgical function of the chapel. The find of the Latin altar table sized 203 x 115 x 17 cm (Fig. 14) must have been used in the main church building rather than the 220 cm deep and 220 cm wide apse of the small chapel. Besides its small size, the location of the chapel in the profundity of the irregular complex of the *diaconicon* suggests that its audience was limited to a small number of clergy, presumably the Franciscan friars settled or encamping in Constantinople. In my opinion, the importance of the pictorial program of the chapel of Saint Francis at Kalenderhane, lies in its propaganda value for the introduction and development of the cults of new saints as exemplified in the thirteenth century Serbian examples. However, in my opinion, this propaganda was not aimed at the Orthodox viewers but at the Franciscans themselves who were engaged with what the order considered as the foremost mission in Constantinople: the union of the Churches. The ongoing power negotiations found their place in the cycle while the search for the representation of the ideals of their founder continued, and perhaps became even bolder with the ever-increasing ambitions of the order in their activities in the East. Brooke's argument that the friars in the papal delegate used the books that were part of the Virgin *Kyriotissa* monastery, and certain particularities of the pictorial program of the cycle deserve to be revisited in order to decipher the content and the audience of the propaganda intended in this tiny chapel in Constantinople.

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[278] Slobodan Ćurčić, review of *Les Chapelles annexes des eglises byzantines* by Gordana Babić, *The Art Bulletin*, September 1973: 449-450.

3.3. The *Vita* Icon Format

Although narrative cycles are widely used in the churches, and occasionally in the illuminated manuscripts, the *vita* format with the portrait of the saint at the center is mostly used in the so-called *vita* icons in Byzantium and *vita* panels in the West, and particularly in Italy.[279] In my research, apart from the Kalenderhane cycle of Saint Francis, I have come across only two other examples mural fresco cycles in the form of the *vita* icon. They are both in the Puglia region in South Italy and belong to Saint Nicholas, whose cult was widespread in the region following the transfer of his relics to Bari in 1087.[280] One of them survives in the Church of Santa Maria Amalfitana in Monopoli in the province of Bari in South Italy. The half-length central figure of Saint Nicholas, depicted in a frontal position wearing the *phelonion* and the *omophorion* with great black crosses, is flanked by six episodes from the life of the saint, three scenes on both sides.[281] The vestment of Saint Nicholas in the tradition of the Greek Orthodox Church and the *vita* icon format points to a Byzantine iconographic heritage, to which Western styles of the Angevin-Neapolitan reign of the region were added. Basilian monks were already using the cave as a place of worship before the rupestrian church was erected in the twelfth century. Thirteenth-century *vita* icons derived from the lost originals of the Basilian monks survive in the Pinacoteca di Bari (Fig. 51).[282] These icons must have served as models for the mural decoration of the churches in the region.

[279] Ševčenko, *Life of Saint Nicholas*, 159-162 and 165-171.
[280] Luigi Michele de Palma, "Origini medievali di un santuario Mariano. L'inventio di Santa Maria dei Miracoli in Andria," *Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia* (Gennaio-Giugno 2009): 88.
[281] It has not been possible to access a photo of the mural cycle of St. Nicholas in Monopoli. There may be more cycles in the *vita* format other than the two mentioned in this study. I am indebted to Professors Nancy P. Sevcenko and Valentino Pace for bringing the Monopoli cycle to my attention.
[282] Valentino Pace, "Recensione di: N. Lavermicocca, Gli insediamenti rupestri del territorio di Monopoli, Bari, Ist. di storia dell'Arte. Università degli studi, 1977," *Studi Medievali* (1980): 980.

The other example from the crypt of Santa Maria dei Miracoli in Andria slightly differs from the traditional *vita* icon. The scenes from the life of the saint, six of them, are placed only on one side of the full-size central portrait, which is almost identical to icon in the Pinacoteca di Bari (Fig. 52).

These two other surviving mural decorations in the format of the *vita* icon come from the crypts of the rupestrian churches of Puglia suggesting this format was not favored for mural decoration in Byzantium. In addition, these two Puglian examples on the walls of the crypts do not function as altarpieces like the early Franciscan *vita* panels that stood on top of an altar in the apse. In this respect, I think that the context of the Kalenderhane cycle on the semidome of the apse of the chapel relates more to the Franciscan *vita* panels derived from Byzantine *vita* icons than the mural *vita* cycles of Puglian churches of the same origin. The Franciscans appropriated the Byzantine *vita* icon and used it successfully to narrate the unconventional episodes from the life of their founder and associate the newly canonized saint with ancient saints of Byzantium linking him to the origins of Christianity. The *vita* icon format provided them with the means to develop a new iconography for a new type of saint and resolve the issues of sanctity and representation they faced. In my opinion, the Saint Francis Chapel at Kalenderhane seems to be an experimentation of mural *vita* imagery on the apse. It was one of the

Figure 51: *Vita* icon of Saint Nicholas, 13th century, Pinacoteca Provinciale, Bari

Figure 52: Mural cycle of Saint Nicholas, 13th century, crypt of Santa Maria dei Miracoli, Andria, Italy

possibilities of visual representation the Franciscans tested systematically in *duecento*, as Blume argues, but yet it did not prove to be successful and was abandoned as a result.[283] It must have been difficult to arrange the partitions for the scenes around the central portrait of the saint on the curved surface as we see the irregular shapes of some scenes at Kalenderhane. Nonetheless, the format does not lend itself well to large scale mural decorations, where the disparity between the size of the central figure of the saint and the surrounding scenes would result in an immensely huge representation of the saint at the center of the arrangement.[284] In fact, Belting writes "The Franciscan icon well illustrates the genesis of a Western icon that did not hang from an iconostasis but stood on top of an altar. Its invention proved to be of such success that the Franciscans also used it in occupied Constantinople. In the church they owned there, they filled the apse of a small chapel with the tripartite schema of the Western panel, **which did not suit the site at all**."[285] However, in my opinion, besides such aesthetic concerns, the depiction of Saint Francis as the central motif in the apse permanently, unlike the panels that could be moved away, may have been a too bold statement even for the Franciscans who claimed Francis the *Alter Christus*.

As said before, when the Bardi panel is excluded, the number of the scenes of the early Franciscan panels of the thirteenth century varies between four and eight scenes. The surviving Byzantine *vita* icons, on the other hand, have between twelve and twenty scenes. There seems to be a deliberate decision of the Franciscans to include fewer scenes and thus concentrate on the main messages of the sanctity of Francis and the

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[283] Blume, "Pittura e propaganda francescana," 123.
[284] I am indebted to Professor Henry Maguire for drawing my attention to this issue.
[285] Belting, Likeness and Presence, 384.

Franciscan ideals. The Kalenderhane cycle with ten scenes around the central portrait of Saint Francis falls in neither ranges suggesting an interim rather than a conclusive experiment. Only the later mural cycles of Francis, like the one on the walls of the nave in the Upper Church with twenty eight scenes, narrate plentiful episodes from the life and miracles of the saint. However, the location of the cycle on the lower walls of the nave presents an entirely different case than the semidome of the apse of the tiny chapel.

Although there are no recognizable remains, I think that the *Stigmatization* scene was very likely present in the Kalenderhane cycle as the *Preaching to the Birds* scene is part of it. That is the case for all the four surviving thirteenth-century Franciscan panels with the *Preaching to the Birds* scene. Also, in my opinion, there is no reason to think that the stigma was not present in the central figure of Francis. It must have been visible on the right hand, and perhaps on the feet, of the saint since his mysterious secret was revealed after his death, and its depiction was encouraged by the pope. Nonetheless, these two scenes and the stigmata must have been more, if not equally, crucial to convey the ideals of the order away from their home in Constantinople.

The identification of the scenes of the Kalenderhane cycle of Saint Francis is an extremely challenging task due to its fragmentary condition and missing parts. Nonetheless, it is a very specialized topic that requires a wealth of knowledge of Franciscan art and textual sources.[286] For this reason, the identification of the scenes in the cycle is not included in the scope of this study. However, in my opinion, the Kalenderhane cycle seems may be a mixture of events that took place both during his

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[286] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 205-214, Pantanella, “Francescani a Costantinopoli,” 366-374, Striker and Hawkins, “Mosaics and Frescoes,” 132-137.

lifetime and after his death, but those happened when he was alive dominate the cycle, similar to Byzantine *vita* icons that depict the episodes from the life of the saint but not the posthumous events. Thu, instead of attempting to identify the scenes of the cycle, I will focus on some of my observations that also relate to the Byzantine *vita* icon.

As said before, besides the *Preaching to the Birds* scene, the *Stigmatization* scene was in all likelihood present in the cycle as they are always depicted together in all the surviving *vita* panels. On the other hand, Scene 3, the middle scene of the second partite to the right of the saint, which is identified as a healing miracle, shows Saint Francis performing the miracle (Fig. 20 and 22). Its unique iconography with no resemblance to other cycles of Francis and the difficulty to determine the infirmity of the woman healed makes it difficult to identify the scene precisely.[287] Striker and Hawkins suggest that it can be one of the many healing miracles narrated in the *vitae* of Thomas of Celano with no surviving counterpart in the early Franciscan cycles. Nonetheless, they argue that it is not even possible to determine if it is a miracle performed during his lifetime or after his death because there are also scenes in which Saint Francis appears and performs a posthumous healing although the posthumous miracles often take place at the tomb and without the presence of the saint. Another scene of a miracle, Scene 4, is not identifiable with any more precision than Scene 3, but it also probably represents Saint Francis performing a miracle. There are also some other unidentified scenes (Scene 2 is another example) and some fragments that could not be placed in specific scenes, the so-called non-contextualized fragments, which indicate to more miracles taking place in the cycle although it can not be ascertained whether they were performed either during his lifetime

[287] Striker and Hawkins, “Mosaics and Frescoes,” 133.

or after his death. As Saint Francis himself appears at least in four of them, Scenes 2, 3 and 4 and a non-contextualized fragment, and perhaps even more if some other unidentified scenes in which he appears are also scenes of miracles, I suggest that some of these scenes may be the miracles performed during his lifetime.[288]

There are two reasons behind my suggestion. First, as discussed earlier, is the tendency of the order to depict the posthumous miracles at the tomb of the saint to publicize Assisi as a pilgrimage center.[289] As an example, three out of the four posthumous miracles in the Pescia panel take place at the tomb (Fig. 39). Second, the sequential order to read the cycles on the *vita* panels suggests that at least the abovementioned miracle scenes (Scenes 2, 3 and 4) that come before Scene 5, which represents the *Preaching to the Birds* from the life of the saint, can not be posthumous. I have come across two different patterns of reading the Franciscan *vita* panels in my research, and they show some similarities with the reading of Byzantine *vita* icon suggested by Papamastorakis. The Pescia chapel depicts the two episodes from the life of the saint, the *Stigmatization* and *Preaching to the Birds*, the two most crucial events in his life, placed on the first two scenes to the left of the saint.[290] Following these episodes are the four posthumous miracles arranged chronologically to be read beginning on the left-hand and from top to bottom. Then, the right-hand that also reads from top to bottom follows. Besides a chronological order, albeit disturbed by the scene of *Stigmatization* coming before the *Preaching to the Birds* scene, the episodes from the life of the saint

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[288] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 211. Brooke also posits the probability that some of the scenes in the cycle where Saint Francis is present may be posthumous miracles, in which the saint is depicted, or may relate to miracles performed during his lifetime.
[289] Franco, "Functions of Early Franciscan Art," 25.
[290] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 169.

and after his death are clearly grouped. The swapping of the first two scenes of his life can be attributed to their relative importance to reinforce the message of the central image: Francis bears in his body the marks of Christ and has the authority to preach.

The Bardi chapel not only differentiates itself with its twenty scenes but also with the fourteen scenes from the life of the saint, which outweigh the posthumous scenes, and its particular arrangement with two rows of scenes below the central figure of the saint (Fig. 40). The lifetime scenes are depicted on the left-hand side of the panel and on the two bottom rows. They are to be read chronologically from top to down starting with the top-left scene and across the scenes on the bottom rows exhibiting a meander pattern and reaching to his deathbed scene depicted on the lower right-hand side and above the bottom rows with lifetime scenes.[291] The posthumous scenes are located above the deathbed scene on the right-hand side of the panel and are read from bottom to top. Brooke argues that there are some misplacements among these posthumous scenes with regards to their chronology, but for the case of Kalenderhane cycle it is important that there is a clear grouping of lifetime and posthumous events, and his deathbed scene separates the two.

The identification of Scene 9 in the Kalenderhane cycle as the deathbed scene of the saint by Striker and Hawkins is agreed by both Brooke and Pantanella.[292] If the death scene of Francis is taken as a cornerstone, in a reading like the Pescia panel, it would be the penultimate scene of the cycle. In that case, the only scene depicting an episode after

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[291] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 181.
[292] Striker and Hawkins, “Mosaics and Frescoes,” 135-136, Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 213-214, Pantanella, “Francescani a Costantinopoli,” 372.

his death, Scene 10, may have been a scene such as the *Canonization* or the *Dream of Pope Gregory IX* to reinforce the message of the authenticity of his sainthood, and of course his stigmata. In an anticlockwise reading like the Bardi panel, on the other hand, the deathbed scene would set the frontier between the episodes from his lifetime, those marked as Scenes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 10 on the schema of Striker and Hawkins, and the posthumous ones, which would be located at Scenes 8, 7 and 6 in a chronological order. In this case, I suggest that the *Stigmatization* could have been depicted at the missing Scene 10, in a symmetrical position to the *Preaching to the Birds* scene to the right-hand of the cycle. Brooke argues that if the *Stigmatization* was included, it must have been in one of the blank scenes, Scene 1, 7 or 10, and she writes "It may have been Scene 7, or 10; though Scene 10 is an awkward shape for it, it would balance the *Preaching to the Birds*."[293] Given the fact that one of the most crucial episodes of Francis's life central to the ideals of the order, the *Preaching to the Birds*, was depicted on the opposing "awkwardly shaped" scene, I argue that, based on both the chronological reading point I made and the compositional arrangement of the cycle, it is very probable that the *Stigmatization* was depicted in Scene 10.

As said before, the identification of the scenes of the Kalenderhane cycle is a very challenging task, but also very tempting. However, given the depth of its discussion and the expertise required, I will limit myself with the abovementioned observations based on the sequential reading of Byzantine *vita* icons. In sum, if the deathbed scene distinguishes the two types of episodes as I suggest, it is likely that there was only one posthumous event depicted in the first type of reading like that of the Pescia panel, and

[293] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, 207.

three in the second type of reading like that of the Bardi panel. The compositional arrangement of the cycle, in my opinion, does not allow a vertically paired reading of the scenes on the left and right like some of the Byzantine *vita* icons because of the middle register with three scenes on both sides. Thus, based on the high probability that the episodes from the life of Francis outweighed in the cycle in Constantinople, either nine to one or seven to three, I suggest that the cycle in Constantinople differs from the early Franciscan *vita* panels dominated by posthumous miracles. This suggestion reminds me the following sentences of Ševčenko:

> *The early St. Francis panels concentrate on miracles, especially miracles at the tomb of the saint, a theme foreign to the Byzantine vita icon tradition. However,* ***around the year 1250 the content of St. Francis cycles changes and a new genre of cycle is introduced, one that stresses the biography of Francis,*** *his ethical behavior, his assimilation to Christ, and the triumph of his now solidly institutionalized order.*[294]

The date of the shift towards a more biographical cycle coincides with the dating of the Kalenderhane cycle of Saint Francis. Nonetheless, Striker and Hawkins argue that the particular iconography of the *Preaching to the Birds* scene and the likely presence of the *Ecstasy* and the *Apparition at Arles* scenes link the cycle more closely to the definitive cycle at the Upper Church at Assisi.[295] In fact, the definitive cycle in the Upper Church at Assisi, the *Legend of Saint Francis*, has only four posthumous miracles among its twenty eight scenes. Taking into consideration its unprecented artistic media of mural decoration and permanent location on the apse; the dominance of the scenes from the life of the saint in the cycle and the coincidence of its dating with the introduction of a

[294] Ševčenko, "Vita Icon and Painter as Hagiographer," 154.
[295] Striker and Hawkins, "Mosaics and Frescoes," 141.

new genre of Franciscan panels that focuses on the biography; and the apparent links with the later cycles rather than the earlier ones, I suggest that the creators of the cycle at Kalenderhane were in search of new themes and concepts for the visual representation of their founder and the cycle was an experimental one abound with new ideas, some of which caught on while others were abandoned. Besides exceling their knowledge of Greek language and Orthodox theology, the learning environment in which the Franciscan friars found themselves in Constantinople must have prompted them to further explore and understand the Byzantine art in order to develop new ideas for their own art, which included some exquisitely Byzantine components as a result.

3.4. Byzantine Components of the Program of the Saint Francis Chapel

Archeological evidence of a continued painted surface proves that the program of the Saint Francis Chapel constituted of the *vita* format cycle of Francis, the Virgin and Child with the Angels scene above it and the Greek Church Fathers and the Latin psalm inscription on the arch leading to the chapel. The fresco cycle was positioned on the semidome right behind and above the altar, and thus, functioned as a permanent altarpiece unlike the *vita* panels of Saint Francis that Belting called "portable feast images." Chatterjee writes that the cycle is "framed by the arches leading into the chapel depicting the fathers of the Greek Orthodox Church and by the depiction of *Theotokos* and Child on the vault right above it."[296] This material frame, she argues, is Byzantine, whereas the image it encloses is Franciscan both in terms of subject matter and iconography in contrast. She suggests that this contrast is further accentuated by the

[296] Chatterjee, *Living Icon*, 212-213.

psalm inscription, which says, “O Lord, I love the habitation of thy house and the place where thy glory dwells” because this citation differs from the didactic messages of the Franciscans inscribed on *vita* panels.[297] Maria Raffaella Menna agrees with Striker and Hawkins that this inscription is not associated with the Franciscan Order, but it is found in antiphon 13 of the Gospel of the first night of dedication of a church.[298] The same psalm is found, in Greek letters, on the arch of the *diaconicon* of the Katholikon of Hosios Lukas. While Striker and Hawkins suggest that this incident is a “mere coincidence,” Menna argues that the psalm inscription is one of the “exquisitely Byzantine components” of the program of the Saint Francis Chapel although she does not elaborate on its significance at Kalenderhane.

In sum, the program of the chapel has three distinct Byzantine components: *Theotokos* and Child with the Angels at the center of the semidome of the apse; two Greek Church Fathers; and the psalm inscription on the arch. These Byzantine components add to the hybridity to the frescoes that exhibit the properties of the Byzantine *vita* icon format and a distinctive Franco-Byzantine Crusader style. On the other hand, its specifically Franciscan identity is spelling out through a multitude of signifiers such as the garments of the friars, the stories narrated, and possibly the stigmata of the central figure of Saint Francis. This informed and discretionary hybridity of the pictorial program of the chapel must have served a deliberate purpose. Jaś Elsner argues that “the imaginative space offered by images-perhaps because of their very ambivalence and richness of possible meaning-offers the potential to incorporate and even encourage self-affirmations that

[297] See Ibid., 163-206 for Chatterjee’s analysis of the inscriptions on the *vita* panels of Francis.
[298] Striker and Hawkins, “Mosaics and Frescoes,” 138-140, Menna, "Byzantium, Rome, Crusader Kingdoms,” 49.

may in their different ways challenge the different levels of domination and power in a society."[299] In my opinion, the hybrid program of the Saint Francis Chapel in Constantinople intended to create the kind of imaginative space Elsner describes, a space which incorporates the self-affirmation of the Franciscan ideals while challenging the power constellations of the thirteenth-century Christian world. Nonetheless, the fresco cycle inhabits the chapel permanently unlike a panel painting that can be moved.[300] The envisioned messages, then, must have been definitive, or one that was profoundly believed, and intended to last. The following sections will focus on the three Byzantine components of the fresco program to analyze their contribution to the cycle and contextualize their significance.

3.4.1. *Theotokos* and Child

None of the surviving thirteenth-century Italian panel paintings of Saint Francis in the *vita* format include the depiction of Virgin Mary and Christ-child.[301] There are angels in some of these panels, mostly two of them, just like the ones accompanying Virgin and Child in the Kalenderhane cycle, and in one panel, the Siena panel, a small figure of

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[299] Jaś Elsner, "Cultural Resistance and the Visual Image: The Case of Dura Europos." *Classical Philology* 96 (July 2001): 269.
[300] Chatterjee, *Living Icon*, 213.
[301] Pantanella, "Francescani a Costantinopoli," 363 makes the same observation but does not offer a specific explanation on its significance other than the devotion to the Virgin. She writes "Riguardo all'inserimento di tale raffigurazione nell'ambito di una composizione francescana, notiamo che mentre gli angeli appaiono spesso ai lati del Santo, sia nei cicli che nelle rappresentazioni isolate, le figure della Vergine col Figlio associate a S. Francesco non ricorrono in nessun caso. In mancanza di riferimenti documentari diretti che aiutino a spiegare il significato di tali figure in rapport al Santo, possiamo solo ricordare la devozione sua, ma anche dei francescani, per la Madre di Dio, devozione d'altra parte ha caratterizzato da sempre la stessa Constantinopoli cristiana." Which translates into "Regarding the introduction of such representation as part of a Franciscan composition, we note that while the angels often appear at the sides of the saint, both in cycles and in isolated representations, the figures of the Virgin with Child associated with St. Francis do not recur in any case. In the absence of direct documentary references that help to explain the significance of these figures in rapport to the saint, we can only remember his devotion, but also of the Franciscans, for the Mother of God, the devotion, on the other hand, that has always characterized the same Christian Constantinople."

Christ is placed above the central figure of Francis and between the two groups of angels approaching him from both sides (Figs. 39, 40, 42 and 46). Then, why was *Theotokos* part of the program of the Saint Francis cycle in Constantinople? Some possible answers are the customary depiction of the Virgin on the conch of the main apse of the Middle Byzantine church programs, the dedication of the church to Virgin *Kyriotissa* by the Byzantines and the cult of Virgin Mary in Constantinople.[302] It is possible that the story of the chapel to have hosted the miracle-working icon of the Mother of God may have been known to the Franciscans. For this reason, they may have considered to include her in the program of the cycle. The importance of the cult of the *Theotokos* in Constantinople may also have been a contributing factor in this decision. However, I will focus more on the significance of the representation of Virgin Mary in the church decoration in Byzantium to investigate its inclusion into the cycle as I believe that this decision was also a trial of a new concept for the depiction of the unusual saint.

The image theory of Byzantium is based on the dogma of the Incarnation. As Bissera V. Pentcheva writes "Once the virginal body of Mary received and gave flesh to the divine Word, it offered relative holiness to the matter, validated the circumscription of the divine in a human form, and legitimized the production and veneration of images."[303] The representations of Virgin Mary frontally presenting the Christ-child for the salvation of the world emerged in the sixth century after her central role as an intercessor for mankind solidified and the narrative images depicting her role in the biblical stories lost

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[302] Otto Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium* (Boston: Boston Book & Art Shop, 1964), 21.
[303] Bissera V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 1.

their importance and popularity.[304] Her representations holding Christ-child gave recognition to her title *Theotokos* and her official place in the church doctrine.[305] Ioli Kalavrezou notes that these representations are not depictions from literary sources, but are “the so-called symbolic or abstract images of church authority and dogma.”[306] The bringing together of the *Theotokos* and the child in her arms in one image was revolutionary as the union of these two figures represented Christ’s Incarnation and became the visual symbol of the most incomprehensible mystery of Christianity. After the tenth century, the depictions of Mary started to track the literary traditions and became highly impressive representations of *Theotokos* as a holy human being and a compassionate mediator for mankind. From the late eleventh century onwards, *Theotokos* is increasingly associated with the Passion of Christ. Her representations express her love for her son, her resignation towards his unescapable future and her deep sorrow at his suffering and death on the cross.[307] This brief history of the image of the *Theotokos* and Christ-child explains its depiction of on the conch of the main apse of the Byzantine church, where the Eucharistic rite takes place and the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is, and will be, commemorated until the Second Incarnation of Christ.

In my opinion, the inclusion of *Theotokos* and Child in the program of the Saint Francis Chapel is related to the curious nature of Francis’s stigmatization, which also has connotations with the Eucharist because the Eucharistic rite is inextricably tied up with

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[304] Ioli Kalavrezou, "Exchanging embrace. The body of salvation" in *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed. MariaVassilaki (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 103-105.
[305] Mary’s statue as the *Theotokos* was recognized in the Council of Ephesus in 431.
[306] Kalavrezou, "Exchanging embrace, 104.
[307] Sharon E. Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries: Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary* (Seattle: College Art Association, 1999), 10.

the Incarnation and the Passion of Christ. The promotion of Eucharistic devotion by the Franciscans in their early history is well known. Francis himself and his followers were involved in the debates on the nature of Eucharist in the twelfth and thirteenth century. Derbes has shown that one of the consequences of these debates was the augmented concern with Christ's physical presence on the altar and the visual experience of that physical attendance, which in turn, had implications for the narratives of Christ's Passion.[308] Christocentric piety was an integral part of the thirteenth-century spirituality, which saw the development of the imagery of painted crosses and altarpieces. Although devotion to Christ's Passion was not exclusive to the Franciscans; the order held a unique position in that only they had a founder whose experience of the suffering Christ was so powerful that he was marked with the stigmata. Indeed, most of the surviving fresco cycles of the Passion in Italy from the *duecento* were commissioned by the Franciscans. The importance of the Passion of Christ for the Franciscan ideology is visible in their attachment to this theme in their mother church at Assisi. The Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi, which consists of the aforementioned Upper Church, the Lower Church, the crypt and the monastery, is adorned by monumental frescoes of the Crucifixion as well as two fresco cycles of the Passion of Christ. The earlier cycle in the nave of the Lower Church, dated to c. 1260, illustrates the claim of the Franciscans to the Passion very clearly: five scenes depicting the life of Francis on the left side are juxtaposed with five scenes of the Passion, the most dramatic moments of the life of Christ, on the right. The location of the cycle on the approach to the tomb of the saint beneath the high altar, which has become a pilgrimage center right after its transfer in

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[308] Derbes, *Picturing the Passion*, 16-20.

1230, further accentuates the intention of the Franciscans: to herald Francis as the *Alter Christus* or the Second Christ.[309] The typological parallels between Christ and Francis stand out in all the pictorial programs of the Upper Church and the Lower Church reflecting the Franciscan ideology. As Derbes writes "No other Franciscan house is more pointed than the mother church at Assisi in asserting that the Passion is the special province of the Order."[310]

In the cycle of Saint Francis in Constantinople, dated at least a decade earlier than the Passion cycle of the Lower Church at Assisi, *Theotokos* and Child is placed above the central figure of Francis, which is flanked by the scenes from his life (Figs. 20-21). I suggest that, the inclusion of *Theotokos* and Child, an expression of the Incarnation of Christ and the Eucharist, above the cycle of Francis may also have been an attempt to herald Francis as the *Alter Christus* similar to the juxtaposition of the Passion scenes with scenes from his life at Assisi. This feature of the program of the cycle has not been discussed in the existing studies to the best of my knowledge. In my opinion, Franciscan patrons of the Kalenderhane cycle, who were also challenged by the representation of Francis as the *Alter Christus*, may have tried to achieve their mission by juxtaposing the life of Saint Francis with the Byzantine *Theotokos* and Child, now that they were in Constantinople and in close contact with Byzantium and the Greek Orthodox Church. Besides the connotations of Christ's Incarnation and the Eucharist with the stigmata of Francis and the Franciscan claim for the *Alter Christus*, it is also possible to interpret the scene of *Theotokos* and Child above the central portrait of the saint as the Virgin's care

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[309] *The Grove Encyclopedia of Medieval Art and Architecture*, ed. Colum P. Hourihane, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012, s. 170.
[310] Derbes, *Picturing the Passion*, 20.

for Francis taking him under her wings as her second son. The accompanying angels also join her in declaring Francis the *Alter Christus* and praise him while presenting this new saint. I believe that this introduction may also have a veiled reference to the power negotiations between the churches, in which the order had a special role, as it will be discussed in the next section.

3.4.2. Greek Church Fathers

The joint presence of the inscription that recalls a Byzantine formulation and the Greek Church Fathers on the arch leading to the cycle of Saint Francis is generally explained by the cultural climate of the unionistic politics between the Greek Orthodox Church and Latin Catholic Church. The negotiations between the two churches initially started in 1234 and resumed once again in 1249 before coming to a failed close in 1254, although they hade been predestined to a deadlock ever since the death of Frederick II, the Holy Roman Emperor, in 1250. Thus, the timeline of the talks for the restoration of the communion between the churches corresponds to the possible dating range of the Kalenderhane cycle between 1230s and early 1250s. As said, the Franciscans, who were present in the East since the early days of the foundation of their order pursuing missionary activities, played an essential role in the diplomatic relations and negotiations in this period. In 1254, John of Parma, General Minister of the Order, who was part of the papal delegate in 1249, included Eastern saints in the Franciscan calendar.[311] Thus, the quite unusual importance attributed to Greek Church Fathers at Kalenderhane, depicted twice the size of the central image of Francis and at a prominent position, is generally interpreted as a reference to the identification of the common

[311] Derbes and Neff, "Mendicant Orders," 452.

origins between the Latin Catholic Church and Greek Orthodox Church against a backdrop of the ongoing negotiations (Figs. 18 and 53). In addition, certain features of Franciscan spirituality, such as the advocacy for an evangelical life, the vow of poverty and its distinct mysticism, appear to be similar to Byzantine monasticism. This kinship is neither dependency nor derivation Menna argues, but "rather reference to the same evangelical sources of the origins."[312] The Franciscans had a particular interest in Greek Church Fathers, which was also attested in the chronicles of the negotiations with their citations of Greek Fathers, and their interest in Greek texts dedicated to monastic life.

Figure 53: Relative sizes of figures

(Striker and Kuban 1997, p. 140, Figure 85)

[312] Menna, "Byzantium, Rome, Crusader Kingdoms," 51.

Besides drawing attention to the common origins of the churches, and similar to the use of Byzantine *vita* icon format, it is argued that the Franciscans aimed at emphasizing the similarities between Francis and the founding fathers of the church, the ancient saints of Byzantium, to legitimize their founder, the newly canonized saint.[313] One of the Greek Church Fathers at Kalenderhane is identified as Saint John Chrysostom by the surviving fragments of its inscriptions. Saint John Chrysostom (born 349 - died 407) is one of the most important Church Fathers, who was renowned for his rhetorical skills and preaching in the cities and towns.[314] His devotion to the reform of the society and the clergy in the face of the degeneration caused by the increasing gap between the rich and the poor led to a conflict with the emperor and resulted in his exile from Constantinople while he was the patriarch of the imperial capital. One of the recurring themes of his homilies is his call upon the rich to abandon their conspicuous consumption and help the poor.[315] Chrysostom was also known for his efforts to ensure the union with the church in Rome, and probably for this reason, he was declared the patron saint of the Latin Empire of Constantinople in 1204. His relics were sent to Rome the same year and remained there until 2004, when they were returned by Pope John Paul II following the request made by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew I. Some scholars also argue that the depiction of Saint Francis's face in the Kalenderhane cycle as well as some of his representations on Italian panel paintings show similarity to John Chrysostom's gaunt face (Figs. 26 and 54).[316]

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[313] Derbes and Neff, "Mendicant Orders," 452.
[314] His epithet *Χρυσόστομος* means "golden-mouthed" in Greek and refers to his distinguished eloquence.
[315] J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops: Army, Church, and State in the age of Arcadius and Chrysostom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 175–176.
[316] Menna, "Byzantium, Rome, Crusader Kingdoms," 52, Derbes and Neff, "Mendicant Orders," 452-453.

Figure 54: Detail of Saint Francis, Scene 4

(Striker and Kuban 1997, Plate 162)

In the light of the affinity between Franciscan spirituality and Byzantine monasticism, it has been argued that the other Greek Church Father depicted at Kalenderhane alongside with Saint John Chrysostom is Basil the Great.[317] Basil (born 329 - died 379) is one of the founding fathers of Eastern monasticism known for his ascetic life and social and charitable work. Akin Chrysostom, Basil also condemned excessive wealth and

[317] Menna, "Byzantium, Rome, Crusader Kingdoms," 51-52.

encouraged sharing it with the needy. He is also known for his strong belief in the union with the Church of Rome. Thus, the shared vision of Franciscan spirituality and Byzantine monastic life and their care for the unity of the church are considered to be the reasons for the inclusion of these two very important Early Church Fathers, Saints John Chrysostom and Basil, to the Saint Francis cycle at Kalenderhane.

Nonetheless, Saints John Chrysostom and Basil are the founders of the Byzantine liturgy and authors of the Divine Liturgy, which is the Eucharistic service of the Byzantine rite, and for this reason, they are usually depicted together.[318] Sharon Gerstel writes in her book *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries: Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary*, although the selection of the bishops for the pictorial program varied widely, "Basil and Chrysostom were included in all programs to recognize their authorship of the two major liturgies used in the Byzantine Church."[319]

So, it is very likely the Greek Church Father included in the program of the cycle were John Chrysostom and Basil the Great. However, there is one detail, which has been overlooked by the existing studies on the cycle, which may change the consensus on the expression of the common origins, harmony and union between the Greek Orthodox and Latin Catholic Churches in the overall program of the frescoes. And it is about the iconography of the Greek Church Fathers, about which Striker and Hawkins write:

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[318] See Engin Akyürek, *Bizans'ta Sanat ve Ritüel* (Kabalcı Yayınevi, İstanbul, 1996), 141 for the program of the parecclesion of Chora Monastery in Constantinople and the location of Saints Basil and John Chrysostom, the two major authors of the Byzantine liturgy, at the center of the lower wall of the apse. See Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 29-31 for the inventory of the liturgies of Saints Basil and John Chrysostom in the medieval churches and their depictions on wall paintings and manuscript illuminations.

[319] Ibid., 24.

> *The painter of the Greek fathers understood exactly the details of Greek liturgical vestments. In addition to the correct representation of the phelonion, he rendered accurately and with rapid fluency the details of the sticharion, or long under-tunic, with its characteristic carmine vertical stripes or clavi; the epitrachelion or embroidered stola with its jewel and pearl-studded fringes; and the bottom of the omophorion or the scarf, here shown uncharacteristically overlying the ends of the epitrachelion rather than flying in the air, and* ***suggesting that the arms of the fathers were at rest under their phelonions rather than holding books or gesticulating in their usual fashion****.*[320]

As it has been noted by Striker and Hawkins, the stillness of their garments strongly suggests that the Church Fathers were depicted empty handed and with their arms at rest under their *polystavrion*, the type of *phelonion* with a pattern of multiple crosses that was worn by the bishops. The increased popularity of *polystavrion* in the late Byzantine period is reflected in its proliferated representation in monumental painting from the twelfth century onwards.[321] The comparison of the reconstructions of the frescoes of the Church Fathers and the surviving fragments of their vestments (Figs. 24-25) with a frontal depiction of another Church Father, Saint Ignatius Theophorus, from the Church of the Taxiarchis of the Metropolis in Kastoria (Fig. 55) illustrates that the garments of the Kalenderhane bishops lack the asymmetry and motion of those of Saint Ignatius, who is holding a book. The fresco from Kastoria, which dates to 1359-1360, is circa one century older than the Kalenderhane cycle, but provides a good comparison because of its frontality and the similarity of the *polystavrion* worn by the saints.[322]

[320] Striker and Hawkins, "Mosaics and Frescoes," 140.
[321] Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 26.
[322] I am most grateful to Professor Henry Maguire for sharing with me his opinion on the distinct iconography of the Kalenderhane Church Fathers and making me aware of the fresco of Saint Ignatius in Kastoria for comparison.

Figure 55: Saint Ignatius Theophorus, Church of the Taxiarchis of the Metropolis, Kastoria

(Maguire 2000, Figure 47)

Besides the lower parts of the vestments of the two Greek Church Fathers, there are also two fragments of their shoulder areas among the surviving ones. These fragments distinguished by the pattern of the *polystavrion* are placed in the graphic reconstruction of the Church Fathers (Fig. 24). The fragment assigned to the northern Church Father is noteworthy because it provides further evidence for the position of the arms. It definitely belongs to the left part of the upper torso of the bishop as the curve of the shoulder indicates. Its straight contour provides no indication of a bended elbow, which is required for holding the book on the chest with the left arm. In addition, the 110 cm high fragment of the south Church Father, which is preserved to the level of the waist, depicts the *phelonion* descending straight down, and thus shows no indication of an upraised right hand (Fig. 25).[323] Given the limited space on the soffit of the 60 cm. arch, it is not realistic to expect bold curvatures on the upper torso of the Church Fathers at Kalenderhane like that of Saint Ignatius Theophorus in Kastoria. In the fresco depictions of Saints Basil and John Chrysostom in the late-twelfth-century Zoodochos Pege Church in Messenia, the saints hold their books in front of them on their chests, but their upper torsos look quite slender and straight not giving a clear sight of a bended elbow (Fig. 56). The *polystavria* worn by the saints have a very similar pattern with those worn by the Kalenderhane Church Fathers, but they have a clearly visible cut on them, which allows the bishops get their hands out to hold the books. This is the only example I have come across, in which the contours of the upper body of the saints are depicted in a more straight way similar to those at Kalenderhane although there seems to be some sign of the position of the hands on the lower parts of the *polystavrion* of John Chrysostom.

[323] Striker and Hawkins, “Mosaics and Frescoes,” 138.

Figure 56: Saints Basil and John Chrysostom, Zoodochos Pege, Samari, Messenia (Gerstel 1999, Figure 64)

However, such a depiction would require the elbow to be almost fully bended, and thus the book has to be held on the upper part of the body and towards the shoulder similar to the depictions of the saints in Zoodochos Pege. As said, due their curvature, Striker and Hawkins argue that the two fragments of the upper bodies of the Kalenderhane saints "come from the left shoulder areas of the two."[324] In my opinion, the larger fragment of the left shoulder of the Greek Church Father, which illustrates the central lateral part of the upper torso, must have included at least some part of the book he holds, particularly if his hands were in such a upright position and if there was a book.

There are two types of episcopal portraiture used in Byzantine monumental decoration, frontal and three-quarter. Gerstel names the frontally depicted bishop "the iconic bishop," and the bishop depicted in three-quarter pose "the painted celebrant." [325] The depiction of frontal bishops started in the beginning of the eleventh century and followed the already established iconography of their depiction in the medieval manuscripts of ninth and tenth centuries; they hold the same attribute, a closed codex, with their left hand and raise their right hand in a common gesture of benediction. Following the shift in stance from frontal to three-quarter in the twelfth century, the bishops, or "the painted celebrants," are depicted standing nearly in profile facing the center of the apse and holding open liturgical scrolls instead of closed codices.[326] These two types of episcopal iconography may also coexist in the program of the church decoration.[327] The Church Fathers at Kalenderhane are frontal depictions and are expected to comply with the

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[324] Ibid.
[325] Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 17-18.
[326] Ibid., 21.
[327] Ibid., 22-23.

iconography of the frontal bishops holding a closed book with the left hand and gesticulating with the other one. In some cases, as in the case of John Chrysostom in Zoodochos Pege Church in Messenia, they may also hold a cross or other liturgical objects instead of gesticulating, but the closed book held by their left hand is a definite attribute of the depiction of these "iconic bishops" who stand apart from the ceremony in the sanctuary unlike the three-quarter "painted celebrants" who attend the liturgical celebration with their open scrolls.

I strongly agree with Striker and Hawkins that the depiction of the Kalenderhane Church Fathers diverges from their traditional iconography with their arms at rest when I take into consideration the motionless ends of their vestments in perfect symmetry, their straight upper torsos with no clear sign of a bent elbow and the invisibility of any part of the book in the larger surviving fragment of the left upper body. I compared their vestments and posture with many examples of the depictions of bishops in various medieval media during my research to arrive to this conclusion. In sum, there appears to be a radical divergence in the depiction of the Church Fathers that are included in the program of the Saint Francis in Constantinople because the closed holy book is the quintessential attribute of a bishop saint depicted frontally. In an earlier example, Saints John Chrysostom and Ignatius Theophorus are depicted in mosaic on the north wall of the tympanum of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople (Figs. 57-58). In these ninth or tenth century depictions, they hold their closed books and gesticulate in their usual fashion, and their clothing reflects the position of their hands. The mid-twelfth-century mosaics from the Cefalù Cathedral, Italy, also depict Saints Basil, John Chrysostom and Gregory

Figure 57: Saint John Chrysostom, Haghia Sophia, Constantinople

Figure 58: Saint Ignatius Theophorus, Haghia Sophia, Constantinople

of Nazienzus, known as the Three Hierarchs, in their traditional iconography, in which all the three Church Fathers are holding closed books and gesticulating (Fig. 59). While John Chrysostom is wearing a *polystavrion*, the other two hierarchs are wearing plain *phelonia*, of which the skirts are uplift because of their raised arms and hands holding books and gesticulating. Another example of frontal bishops in fresco is found in the parecclesion of Chora Monastery in Constantinople (Fig. 60). In this fourteenth-century example too, the cross and check patterned *phelonia* reflect the positioning of their arms upraised.

These are only a few well-known examples, however, in my extensive research I have not come across a single depiction of John Chrysostom or Basil the Great not holding a book within the realm of Byzantium. Church Fathers have been always depicted holding books or scrolls since the end of iconoclasm. The uniformity in the depiction of frontal bishops, according to Gerstel, "signals the unity and stability of the Church across time and space."[328] *The Hermeneia of the Art of Painting*, or with its better known name *The Painter's Manual of Dionysius of Fourna*, is an eighteenth-century narrative pattern book of Byzantine artistic traditions and practices structured as a series of instructions for painters and students. [329] It fits into the tradition of artists' texts, the existence of which in the Middle Ages is well known, and illustrates how the iconographical material was circulated in the Byzantine realm and transmitted to the next generations. These guidelines described the rules to be observed in the portrayal of religious scenes and

[328] Ibid., 17.
[329] Paul Hetherington, trans., *The Painter's Manual of Dionysius of Fourna* (London: The Sagittarius Press, 1981), I-V.

Figure 59: Saints Basil, John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nazienzus, Cefalù Cathedral, Sicily

Figure 60: Saints Basil, Gregory the Theologian and Cyril of Alexandria, Chora Monastery, Constantinople

saints in detail and ensured the uniformity of their visual representation. Through the use of these manuals for the artists, the same iconography was used in the mosaics, frescoes, icons and manuscript illuminations all across the vast territories of the Byzantine Empire throughout the centuries as well as in the post-Byzantine period. Violating these strict rules and stepping out the defined formulae was unthinkable for a Byzantine painter. Nonetheless it was an unforgiveable sin. Thus, in my opinion, if the artist of the Kalenderhane Church Fathers was Byzantine, he would not have dared to break the tradition at his own discretion.

As seen in the example of the Cefalù Cathedral, the depiction of Saints John Chrysostom and Basil in the West also conforms to the well-established Eastern iconography of the bishops holding a book or a scroll. In one of George Kaftal's magisterial works, *Iconography of the Saints in Central and South Italian Schools of Painting,* Saint John Chrysostom's representation is described as "a middle-aged with a very short beard, holding a book" while Saint Basil is described as "a middle-aged Eastern archbishop with a dark beard, holding a book.[330] Even if the artist at Kalenderhane was a Latin artist, he must have used the kind of manuals and pattern books compiled by Dionysius of Fourna, of either Eastern or Western iconographic traditions, to be able to depict the bishop saints in such an accurate way with correct details.[331] Whether the artist was

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[330] George Kaftal, *Iconography of the Saints in Central and South Italian Schools of Painting* (Florence: Sansoni, 1965), St Basil 47, John Chrysostom 200.

[331] See Anthony Charles Ormond McGrath, "Books in Art: The meaning and significance of images of books in Italian Religious Painting 1250-1400" (PhD dissertation, University of Sussex, 2012), 45-46 for the discussion of the images of books in twelfth and thirteenth century artist's pattern books: One example is a single bifolio sheet in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana dated to around 1200. A second example of a drawing of a book is found in a parchment roll in the S. Eusebia Archivio Capitolare in Vercelli which dates to the early thirteenth century.

Byzantine or Latin, his familiarity with the vestments of the Church Fathers and the common iconography of the saints both in the Eastern and the Western makes it difficult to imagine that this divergence from the traditional iconography of the bishops was an unintended inaccuracy or the artist's own freedom of choice. This exceptional iconography of the Church Fathers in the Saint Francis Chapel must have been the deliberate decision, and enforcement, of the Franciscan patrons exactly like those of the Dominican patrons in the fourteenth-century Saint Domenico Church in Galata mentioned earlier. Nonetheless, the central figure of Saint Francis on the semidome of the apse of the chapel holds a book, an open book unlike the contemporary Franciscan panels in which Francis holds a closed book.[332]

The images of the books meant more than an attribute of a saint to medieval people; the Bible and other liturgical books played a fundamental role in the celebration of liturgy and evidenced the authority and wisdom of the Church and the clergy. Anthony Charles Ormond McGrath, in his PhD thesis, argues "that books were signs of office and hence authority and that this authority came from God through the popes and bishops."[333] The book displaced the *rotulus*, or scroll, and became the major attribute of Virgin Mary in the scenes of Annunciation in Italian art in the last decades of the thirteenth century. But before then, it became a key attribute of the mendicant orders. The love of the Franciscans for the Gospel has already been mentioned as well as the importance of

[332] The only two *vita* panels in which Francis holds an open book are the Assisi and Vatican panels that are dated to the second half of the thirteenth century , to 1255 and 1260 respectively. They are also the only surviving rectangular-shaped Franciscan panels.
[333] See McGrath, "Books in Art," 88 for a detailed analysis and discussion of the image of the book in Italian paintings of the thirteenth and fourteenth century: Annunciation case studies Chapter 6 and *vita* panels and altarpieces Chapter 5

education, and thus books, for the friars. Yet, the possession of books had been one of the divisive issues in the early periods of the Franciscan movement because of the paradox of poverty, which excluded all possessions including even books until papal intervention.[334] The *vita* panels of Saint Francis, from the very beginning, included images of books which became part of the iconography of the new cult. McGrath argues that, although the depiction of the saints holding books also existed before, the use and perception of the images of books altered in the thirteenth century by the choices of the most prolific patrons of art, the Franciscans.[335] As discussed earlier, the central figure of Francis in early *vita* panels served as a means of establishing the iconography of the saint who was different from the previous saints, and thus, required a new iconography. The book Francis holds in his depictions in *vita* panels is linked to the ideals of the order such as the devotion of the friars to apostolic life and the controversial right of lay monks to preach, but its significance lies in its role as a visual intermediary and "an additional means of association between Saint Francis and Christ" besides his stigmata.[336] McGrath suggests that the book Francis holds further accentuates his identification as the *Alter Christus* because it provides another reference to Christ through the image of Christ the Redeemer holding a book. I agree with McGrath's suggestion and argue that, in the case of Kalenderhane, this reference to the *Alter Christus* is even more evident because the book he holds is open. Cook argues that the Louvre panel of Saint Francis, not a cycle but an isolated representation of the saint, dated to c. 1272, which represents him holding an open book displaying the text from

[334] Lawrence, *Friars,* 39.
[335] McGrath, "Books in Art," 104.
[336] Ibid., 108.

Luke 14:18-19, intended to place the saint in the prophetic tradition and as the *Alter Christus*.[337] It is not possible to determine if a text was displayed at Kalenderhane, but yet it is certain that Saint Francis holds an open book in Constantinople.

All told, I agree with Striker and Hawkins that the Greek Church Fathers at Kalenderhane were depicted without their books and suggest that the reason for the deviation of their representation from the traditional iconography was the imposition of the Franciscan patrons. I also agree with the scholars who suggest that the other Church Father who accompanied John Chrysostom was Basil, but not based only on the ascetic and spiritual values the hierarchs shared with Francis. The reason for their inclusion in the program, in my opinion, is their authorship of the two major liturgies used in the Byzantine Church. One of the underlying disputes of the schism between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches was the difference in the liturgical practices. In the schism of 1054, the Latin use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist celebration was condemned by the Byzantines, who argued that the Holy Scripture ruled the Byzantine use of unleavened bread. Nonetheless, the Roman claims to primacy and papal authority dominated the theological discussions in the negotiations for the union of the churches of the first half of the thirteenth century.[338]

So, besides questioning why the Greek Church Fathers were included in the program of the chapel at Kalenderhane in such a prominent way, it must also be questioned why they were deprived of their books while Francis was depicted with an open book.

[337] Cook, *Images of St Francis*, 153.
[338] Jonathan Shepard, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire c. 500-1492* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 601 and 746.

3.4.3. Psalm Inscription on the Arch

"O Lord, I love the habitation of thy house and the place where thy glory dwells."

As said, the psalm inscription on the arch is found in antiphon 13 of the Gospel of the first night of dedication of a church.[339] It is datable to the mid of the thirteenth century based on its style.[340] Pantanella rightly argues that, since the inscription is part of the liturgy for the dedication of the churches, it is possibly a celebratory reference to the inauguration of the chapel. A second possibility, she suggests, may be an association with Francis himself: his choice of life was the Church "O Lord, I love the habitation of thy house" and his place after his sanctification was definitely "the place where thy glory dwells." Pantanella also suggests that the "habitation of the Lord" can be understood as an attribute of the Virgin on the conch of the apse. In fact, she cites that Saint Francis uses a similar definition in one of his praises composed in the honor of the Mother of God: "…I salute you, your (of God) palace. I salute you, your tent. I salute you, your house."

Chatterjee, on the other hand, argues that the terms "I" and thou" in the psalm inscription may well refer to the contents of the chapel itself, but not to the worshipper praying in front of the chapel, and thus be applied to the fresco cycle of Saint Francis that occupies the chapel, the "house" (the place where thy [God's] glory dwells).[341] In my opinion, the suggestions of both scholars are valid, but yet the inscription has to be contextualized together with the other components of the cycle.

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[339] Striker and Hawkins, "Mosaics and Frescoes," 138-140, Menna, "Byzantium, Rome, Crusader Kingdoms," 49.
[340] Pantanella, "Francescani a Costantinopoli," 362.
[341] Chatterjee, *Living Icon*, 212-213.

3.5. An Alternative Interpretation

Constantinople was severely depopulated in the aftermath of 1204. A large fraction of the city was already swept away by the fires set by the Latins during the siege of the city in 1203-1204. One-third of the population of the city was left homeless even before the sack of the city as a result of the destruction caused by three extensive fires in the course of thirteen months.[342] Latin soldiers looted the city for days following the fall of the city on 13 April. Alice-Mary Talbot writes that substantial number of Greeks, particularly the elite, left the city without any opposition of the Latin authorities.[343] Thomas F. Madden maintains that those who had lost their homes during the siege of the city, and thus forced to live in tents, must have fled the city as well.[344] Despite the substantial loss of the city's Greek residents, the Latin population who settled in Constantinople was not big either. The army that occupied the city was a relatively modest one with twenty thousand Crusaders. Nonetheless, most of them left the city for the lands conquered in Greece after plundering it for days.[345]

Besides the Virgin *Kyriotissa* monastery inhabited by the Franciscans , at least twenty churches and thirteen monasteries are known to be taken over by the Latins, among which there were French canons, Benedictines and Knights Templar.[346] Thus, the Latins seem to have been in control of quite a substantial number of churches and monasteries

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[342] Madden, "Fires of the Fourth Crusade," 89. This estimation of loss of primary residences is based on the assumption of a total population of 400 thousand people living in the city before the siege started in 1203.
[343] Alice-Mary Talbot, "The restoration of Constantinople under Michael VIII," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993): 245-246.
[344] Madden, "Fires of the Fourth Crusade," 88.
[345] Talbot, "Restoration of Constantinople," 245.
[346] Ibid., 246.

in Constantinople for their relatively small community. Given the location of the Saint Francis cycle in the depth of the *diaconicon* complex of the Virgin *Kyriotissa* monastery, it is more likely that access to the chapel was limited to the Franciscan friars in Constantinople and to selected Latins connected to the Franciscan movement, including certain members of the imperial court of the occupied Constantinople. This study aims to reveal what may have been manifested to the principal audience of the cycle.

3.5.1. A ceremony is underway in Constantinople

A ceremony is underway in Constantinople, in the Church of Virgin Kyriotissa. It is the vision of an inauguration ceremony.

It is the unveiling of the triumphal success of the Franciscans in Constantinople, who have been working very hard over the decades to reconcile the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church and restore the communion.

It is the inauguration of the chapel envisioned as the desired model of the New Church, unified under Francis of Assisi, the Alter Christus, and under the primacy of the papacy.

Theotokos and Child manifest the Incarnation of Christ in the flesh of Saint Francis marked with the stigmata. Saint Francis is under the protection of Theotokos, who presents and praises the saint declaring him her second son.

Not only the open book Francis holds and his stigmata, but also the scenes depicting his life and his miracles prove his sanctity and Christ-like qualities.

Francis has the authority that came from God and holds the open book. Theotokos affirms his authority.

Saint Francis, the victor of the restoration of the Church and the communion, is no less than the ancient saints of the antiquity. The Early Church Fathers, Basil the Great and John Chrysostom, the two pillars of Orthodox liturgy, also salute Saint Francis, and the new Church he restored.

Basil and John Chrysostom have submitted to Francis and his God-given authority abandoning their own books. The surrender of the Greek Orthodox Church to the authority of the Roman Catholic Church is manifest.

A ceremony is underway in Constantinople, in the Church of Virgin Kyriotissa. It is the vision of an inauguration ceremony, one that is intended to become true and last.

3.5.2. Commentary

This study suggests that the program of the chapel of Saint Francis in Constantinople may have been created by the Franciscan friars who took part in the negotiations for the reunification of the churches. I propose that the Franciscan friars, who were settled in Constantinople and interacted with Byzantium and the Orthodox Church intensely, may have envisioned this chapel as the representation of the new and unified church they strived for. I suggest that the inscription on the arch was intended, indeed, for the inauguration of this new church, which was shaped by the Franciscan ideology and represented in the pictorial program of the chapel. The dating of the decoration of the

chapel must have been late 1230s or 1240s, when there was imperial support and the union of the churches was an ongoing discourse.

The Franciscans seem to have used the new concepts and themes they encountered in Byzantine art to convey their intended messages. Besides legitimizing the sainthood of their recently canonized founder by using the Byzantine *vita* icon format and linking him with the saints of late antiquity and Byzantium, and accentuating his kinship with the two most important figures of the Byzantine Church by including them into the program as if they were introducing Francis, they also seem to have envisioned to express the superiority of Francis over the two pillars of Greek Orthodox liturgy, who have submitted to the supremacy of Saint Francis and the Catholic liturgical practices deprived of their own liturgical books. The Franciscan patrons may have intended to herald the stigmatized Francis as the *Alter Christus* by juxtaposing scenes of his life with the image of *Theotokos* and Child, the most important representation of the Incarnation in Byzantine art.

The choice of mural decoration as the media and the apse as the location of the cycle are in line with the boldness of the messages. However, it is an annexed chapel in the depth of the *diaconicon* with limited access in the occupied Constantinople. Presumably only those who shared this vision and worked for it could access this hidden space decorated with images offering many possible meanings. In my opinion, the hybrid program of the chapel intended to create the kind of imaginative space that combines the self-affirmation of Franciscan ideals with new ways of visual representation while

challenging the power negotiations of its time and restructuring them as desired by the order.

It is experimental, though not only in the artistic sense but also conceptually, and unusually bold. It is not only the mural *vita* cycle trial in the format of Byzantine *vita* icon that did not catch on, but also the long-sought communion did not take place either. Recently, during his visit to Istanbul in November 2014, Pope Francis made what appears to be the strongest call yet from a Catholic pope for unity in an address upon the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy celebrated by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I at the Orthodox Church of Saint George:

> *I want to assure each one of you here that, to reach the desired goal of full unity, the Catholic Church does not intend to impose any conditions except that of the shared profession of faith. Further, I would add that we are ready to seek together, in light of Scriptural teaching and the experience of the first millennium, the ways in which we can guarantee the needed unity of the Church in the present circumstances. The one thing that the Catholic Church desires, and that I seek as Bishop of Rome, "the Church which presides in charity", is communion with the Orthodox Churches.*[347]

This was not exactly what the Franciscan friars in Constantinople dreamed of in the mid-thirteenth century.

3.6. Suppression of the Saint Francis Chapel

Why the apse of the chapel decorated with the cycle of Saint Francis was suppressed after the city and the church returned to Byzantine hands remains as one of the questions not yet answered. Striker and Kuban note that the purpose for blocking the apse of the

[347] https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20141130_divina-liturgia-turchia.html

chapel of Saint Francis remains unclear suggesting that it may have been closed to create an uninterrupted wall surface for the new fresco program throughout the *diaconicon*.[348] They also suggest that the preservation of the chapel would have required a more complicated solution since the frescoes of Saint Francis had to be suppressed and replaced.

The extensiveness of the Paleologan fresco program which redecorated the entire complex of the *diaconicon* and the asymmetry caused by blocking the apse of the chapel of Saint Francis while keeping that of the smaller Melismos Chapel, in my opinion, are the factors that weaken the suggestion for a continuous surface for the new fresco program. Two other arguments propounded by Striker and Kuban, nevertheless, further complicate the issue. First, Striker and Kuban suggest that the Latin decoration program of the Saint Francis Chapel probably also extended beyond the chapel to include its dome-covered forebay which was included in the later Paleologan fresco program.[349] Thus, the suppression and replacement of the Latin frescoes must have been undertaken at least for the forebay of the chapel. This, in turn, overshadows their suggestion that the apse of Saint Francis Chapel with generously-sized windows was excluded from the new redecoration program to refrain from the replacement of the Latin frescoes. The apse decorated with Latin frescoes could have been significantly enlarged by closing the windows, as it was done in the Melismos Chapel, and included in the Paleologan program with its bigger size and better location after their suppression as it was presumably done in its forebay.

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[348] Striker and Kuban, "Architecture," 87.
[349] Striker and Hawkins, “Mosaics and Frescoes,” 144.

Second, if the replacement of the Latin frescoes had not been the reason for the exclusion of the apse of the chapel, one could suggest that the apse of the chapel, which was built prior to the Main Church and perhaps up to three centuries before the Paleologan redecoration, may not have been in good condition to be used at the time. But, Striker and Kuban clearly state that the cracks in its semidome, given the small size and robust construction of the chapel, were most likely caused by the weight of earth fill that only in later periods repressed its exterior.[350] The apse of the chapel must have been in good condition during the Latin occupation.

Although I agree with Striker and Kuban on the ambiguity of the closure of the apse of the chapel of Saint Francis, I do not agree that creating a continuous surface for the new decoration program appears to be a likely reason because of the abovementioned justifications. On the other hand, assuming that the wall was built as part of the Paleologan decoration, Chatterjee writes:

> *By erecting the wall, the Paleologan workers also, ironically, pushed the Franciscan fresco within a more acutely Byzantine sacred infrastructure, one concealed by a screen (the wall frescoed with Byzantine imagery) and dominating the intimate space of a former chapel. In other words, the fresco found itself in the same position as that of the Byzantine vita panels, some of which might also have been located within a chapel behind the sanctuary screen in a Byzantine church. An act of iconoclasm, thus, also has two sides. In this case, it (perhaps) rebounded on the unwitting perpetrators by transforming intended difference into a startling version of similarity.*[351]

I suggest to reread Chatterjee's sentences changing the subject from "the Paleologan workers" to "the Franciscan friars" because I propose that the wall that suppressed the chapel may have been built by the Franciscan friars themselves either when their dream

[350] Striker and Kuban, "Architecture," 87.
[351] Chatterjee, *Living Icon*, 214-215.

of the union of the churches faded away at the face of the failed negotiations or when the city was recaptured by the Byzantines in 1261. It is also possible that this very bold statement of Franciscan ideologies, created by the Constantinopolitan friars, was not approved by the central authority of the order and had to be suppressed as a result. As discussed in the second chapter, Franciscan imagery was not yet governed by an established official and centrally dictated iconography in the thirteenth century. As a result, it allowed for the creativity of the friars and artists. The cycle in Constantinople is unique in the way it combines Byzantine components with the Franciscan subject matter conveying some very provoking messages, particularly for the Byzantines. It is also possible that it may have been condemned by the central administration of the order for this reason when they happened to see the cycle or were informed about it. One instance of a possible encounter is the arrival of John of Parma, the Minister General of the Franciscans, in Constantinople in 1249 leading the papal delegation for the new round of negotiations.

In sum, in my opinion, it may have been the intention of the friars to hide or protect the frescoes on the face of certain circumstances now unknown to us. It may have been an act of concealment in anticipation of another round of talks or another future opportunity to associate the union of the churches with Franciscan ideologies. Otherwise, it may have been a defensive act of camouflage the unusually bold decoration of the chapel, which conveyed some very daring messages, either when the central administration of the order reacted against it or when the city was recaptured by the Byzantines in 1261. The Franciscans remained in Constantinople and took over all the ecclesiastical affairs

when the Latin Empire fell and the emperor and patriarch fled. Although they were exiled later, on the basis of the good relations and the mutual trust they built with the Nicaean emperor and patriarch, and perhaps with the hope they could further remain and keep their convent in Constantinople, they may have chosen to hide the chapel from the Byzantines eyes rather than destroying what appears to be their envisioned dream of the future.[352]

Thus, I suggest that the suppression of the chapel may have been an ostensible act of iconoclasm of the Franciscans for religious and political motives, which in reality intended to protect the cycle rather than annihilate it. Whatever the reason may have been, the chapel remained sealed and impregnable by this blockage until its discovery in 1967. In other words, the wall that suppressed the apse of the chapel preserved the Latin frescoes depicting the life of Saint Francis throughout the centuries rather than wiping them off eternally.

[352] I discussed this hypothesis with Cecil Lee Striker. Striker argued against my suggestion that the wall closing off the chapel was built by the Latins on the basis that there was no surface rendering under the Paleologan frescoes. He suggested that a raw wall surface blocking the chapel would have been very strange. I agree with Striker that under ordinary circumstances such a raw wall is not an expected situation, but under extraordinary circumstances, such as the capture of the by the Byzantines, the major concern of the Latins would have been to black out the frescoes but not the nakedness of the wall they built to conceal them. On the other hand, the correspondence between the Latin Patriarch of Constantinople, the Pope and the Provincial Minister of the Franciscans reveals the financial difficulties the church faced in the decade before the recapture of the city by the Byzantines. See Wolff, "Latin Empire of Constantinople," 223-224 for the details of the correspondence. Thus, the unavailability of the sources may have resulted in the unexpected raw wall as well. In my opinion, the archeological evidence of a raw wall does not necessarily work against my hypothesis, which intrinsically assumes extraordinary circumstances.

Conclusion

The creation of this hybrid cycle, which fuses together the Byzantine *vita* format, Franciscan themes and Crusader style is neither simply an imitation, nor an illustration of the creativity of the Latins; it is an instance, and perhaps one of the pioneer ones, of the long-lasting interchange between the Greek Orthodox and Latin Catholic artistic practices that took place in the Mediterranean following the establishment of the Crusader states. The cycle clearly exhibits the interaction between various components of Byzantine, Latin and other Mediterranean cultures; the role of Constantinople as a hub of interaction and experimentation as well as dissemination; the introduction of new artistic practices to Latin Catholic repository; and the role of the mendicant orders, and Franciscans in particular, in this artistic interchange.

I think that it is possible to draw three main conclusions on the fresco cycle of Saint Francis in Constantinople based on this study. The first is that talking about "an accident of history" for the discovery of Kalenderhane cycle in Constantinople, thousands of kilometers away from Assisi, is somewhat misleading. We need a larger framework to explain why the Byzantine *vita* format became so popular in Italian panel painting of the thirteenth century or how the *Preaching to the Birds Scene* appeared with the same iconography in Constantinople more than half a century earlier than the definitive cycle of the Upper Church of the Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi. The links of the Constantinopolitan cycle with the later ones rather than earlier ones, in my opinion, illustrates its experimental and pioneering nature. An interesting feature of this hybrid work of art is definitely its production process by a combination of local (Byzantine) and Crusader or Western artists under the patronage of Franciscan friars. We see a similar

process a century later once again in Constantinople; this time in the Dominican church in Galata. In all likelihood, Western artists were not involved in the Church of Saint Domenico, but a Byzantine workshop seems to have been commissioned by the Dominican friars. It is not surprising to see similar peculiarities and unusual iconographic features that reflect the specific choices and intentions of the patrons in both examples of the art of the mendicant orders in Constantinople. However, although certain aspects of the Kalenderhane cycle of Saint Francis, such as its links with the scenes of later cycles, *vita* format and patronage patterns, are encountered both in the art of the *duecento* and *trecento*, the cycle overall seems to be a unique example, untried before and unrepeated afterwards. For instance, the mural application of the Byzantine *vita* format in the apse did not become popular as did their versions in gable pointed altar panels. Nor *Theotokos* became part of the iconography of the most charismatic saint of the Middle Ages. There is no other surviving example which resembles closely to the cycle of Saint Francis discovered at the Kalenderhane Mosque, neither in the East nor in the West.

The second is that the idea of unity or the reciprocal comprehension of the Latin Catholic Churches and Greek Orthodox, which seems to be the obvious explanation for the inclusion of the Greek Church Fathers in the program of the Kalenderhane cycle, needs to be re-evaluated within the context of ongoing negotiations of power and religious ideology in the post-Crusades Mediterranean. It is true that the commitment of the Franciscans to the union of the Latin Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches, their missionary activity in the East, and the ascetic and spiritual ideals shared by John Chrysostom, Basil and Francis work in favor of a balanced interpretation of their

depiction in the same program, but I argue that there has also been a reluctance to look beyond the most blatant and visible. A closer look at the iconography of the Greek Church Fathers reveals a completely different picture of subjugation of Orthodox liturgy to the Catholic rite and acceptance of the primacy of the papacy in Rome by the Byzantines. In my opinion, this picture would not have changed even if the Greek Church Fathers were not deprived of their books. I think their inclusion in the program, even if they were depicted according to their traditional iconography and with their closed books, would have given a veiled reference to the superiority of Francis with the open book, thus, with the authority that is given to him by God and heralded as the *Alter Christus* by *Theotokos*.

Given the hybrid nature of the Kalenderhane cycle and the processes that enabled its creation, a third conclusion seems inescapable; what brings together Assisi, Constantinople, and Acre are the networks that move merchants, sailors, soldiers, but also artists and craftsmen. Perhaps as important as the mobility of the people is the movement of books, icons, illuminated manuscripts and sketches to circulate ideas. These networks of communications and the connectivity brought along by them, both in terms of geography and culture, brings us back to where we started from; a Mediterranean with fuzzy boundaries, both politically and culturally, where the *corrupting sea* left no pure culture by mixing up cultures heavily.

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APPENDIX

Glossary

apse: from Greek ἀψίς apsis "arch"; in architecture, a semicircular bay covered with a semicircular vault or semidome; in Byzantine church architecture, semicircular or polygonal eastern end of the main building where the altar is.

basilica: derived from Greek βασιλικὴ στοά "the tribunal chamber of a king"; originally used to describe Roman public buildings used for judicial, commercial, military and ritualistic purposes, rectangular shaped hall internally divided by two or four rows of columns; later applied to churches of the same form with a central nave, aisles, and terminated with the chancel and apse.

bema: in a Byzantine church, the area of the church that contains the altar table in front of the apse at the east end of the naos, which is enclosed by the templon and accesible only to the members of the clergy celebrating the liturgy there.

Bema Church: the second church built at the site of Kalenderhane in the seventh century taking this name from the almost completely preserved superstructure of its bema.

cruciform: in Byzantine church architecture, the basic ground plan of a Greek cross, with arms of equal length.

diaconicon: in a Byzantine church, one of the two smaller chambers flanking the bema which is located on the south side of the central apse of the church; used as a sacristy to

keep the vestments and books that are used in the divine services. The sacred vessels are kept in the *prothesis*, which is the other chamber on the north side of the apse.

epitrachelion: from Greek ἐπιτραχήλιον meaning "around the neck"; is a liturgical vestment worn around the neck with the two ends hanging down equally in front by priests and bishops of the Eastern Christian tradition as the symbol of their priesthood.

esonarthex: in a Byzantine church, the inner narthex when the narthex is divided in two distinct parts.

hagiography: from Greek ἅγιοςγραφία "holy writing", a literary genre in early Christian church describing the lives and the veneration of the saints.

katholikon: in Eastern Orthodoxy, the major church building of a monastery.

Kyriotissa: the depiction of Virgin Mary, Mother of God, enthroned and seated with Christ, the holy child, on her lap.

Main Church: the third, and the last, church built at the site of Kalenderhane around 1200 which was converted into a mosque in the Ottoman period.

Melismos Chapel: a small chapel in the *diaconicon* complex to the south of the chapel of Saint Francis Chapel which was built in the later phases of the Bema Church and named after the *melismos* scene of the Paleologan decoration program which depicts Christ as a naked baby on the altar.

naos: in Byzantine architecture, the space where the liturgy took place; the main body or nave of a church.

narthex: in Byzantine church structure, a bounded passage between the main entrance and the nave of a church which is located at the west end of the building, opposite the church's main altar; traditionally a place of penitence to allow those who were not eligible to be admitted to the general congregation to hear and attend the service.

North Church: the first church built at the site of Kalenderhane in the sixth century taking this name from its situation to the north of its two successors, the Bema and the Main Churches.

omophorion: from Greek ὠμοφόριον meaning "borne on the shoulders"; the term is used for the distinguishing scarf of a bishop and the symbol of his spiritual and ecclesiastical authority; by symbolizing the lost sheep that is found and carried on the Good Shepherd's shoulders, it signifies the bishop's pastoral role as the icon of Christ.

opus sectile: a Roman technique of cutting and inlaying materials such as marble, mother of pearl, and glass into walls and floors to make a picture or pattern which was used in Byzantine churches, predominantly in floor designs.

pastophoria: plural of the Greek word παστοφόριον “pastophorium”, a term used to describe two liturgical chambers usually found in an early Christian churches at either side of the apse or the *diaconicon* and *prothesis* in Byzantine church.

phelonion: from Greek φαιλόνιον, a term used for the liturgical vestment worn over other vestments by a priest of the Eastern Christian tradition.

Saint Francis Chapel: one of the chapels in the *diaconicon* immediately to the south of the present bema which was built in the later phases of the Bema Church, and named so because of the life cycle of Saint Francis of Assisi depicted during the Latin occupation of Constantinople on its semidome.

sticharion: from Greek στιχάριον is term used for the liturgical vestment worn as the undermost vestment by a priest of the Eastern Christian tradition The sticharion is derived from the chiton, a long, sleeved garment which reached to the ground and was worn in ancient times by both men and women.

stigmata: plural of the Greek word στίγμα stigma "mark", a term used to describe wounds on a person's hands, wrists, feet, forehead, and back similar to the crucifixion wounds of Jesus Christ.

templon: from Greek τέμπλον meaning "temple", in Byzantine churches a barrier separating the naos from the bema which is replaced by iconostasis, a wall of icons and religious paintings, in later churches.

Theotokos: from Greek Θεοτόκος, the title of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ used especially in Eastern Orthodoxy; literal translations into English correspond to "God-bearer", "Birth-Giver of God" and "the one who gives birth to God."

tympanum: in architecture, the semicircular or triangular wall surface over an entrance; often decorated with imagery, sculpture, or other ornaments.

Valens Aqueduct: the major water system of the city of Constantinople which was completed by Emperor Valens in the late fourth century AD and used by the Byzantines and the Ottomans.

vita: from Latin and Italian for "life", a biography, often that of a saint; a hagiography.