



Monastery of Agios Ioannis (Saint John) Lampadistis

CYPRUS TOURISM ORGANISATION

We do not have any information for the construction date of the Monastery; however it might be placed most probably in the mid-16th century. The church is the oldest building of the Monastery.

The Monastery is constituted by two separate two-storied buildings.

The south wing comprises the oven and the gyle of the Monastery. Here there was a porch that protected from rain and storminess. The main entrance of the Monastery was west of the bakery.

In the east wing of the Monastery there are 4 ground floor rooms; one of them was the wine press, and the other one was the olive press. We do not know much about the use of the other 2 rooms.

The west and east wing of the Monastery are two-storied buildings, erected in various periods. The rooms of the ground floor are half under the ground. One of the first floor rooms was used as a school.

The other rooms were used as the dining room of the Monastery, the cells, the consistory and the priory. The consistory and the priory are the only parts dated through an inscription to the 18th century, and more precisely to 1782.

The Katholikon (the main church)

The north wing of the Monastery consists of the Katholikon (the main church), which is the oldest building and the two adjacent chapels in the north wall of the main church.

The main church, that is to say the central Church, dedicated to Saint Heracleidius, is dated to the 11th century. This is a domed cross-in-square church, like many other churches in Cyprus of the 11th-12th century.

In the drum of the dome is depicted the Christ Pantocrator.

The four pillars together with the walls retain the vaults, on which the drum is supported.

The north wall of the church has almost been destroyed. The shape of the church has been changed in the effort of repairing it. In the place of the north wall, there is an arched opening. The door of the south wall was opened up resulting to the destruction of the lower part of the three-foiled window and its replacement with the current rectangular window. Originally, the church had 3 entrances, one on the south, one on the north and one on the west wall. The original entrance of the Church, the biggest in opening than the rest, was in the centre of the west wall.

It is estimated that the chapel of Saint John Lampadistis must have been added in the 12th century, and was very dark as it only had 4 small windows in the dome and a three foiled window above the south entrance. It seems that the chapel was destroyed in the 14th century, when the vault, the upper part of the walls, the eastern part with the apse, the north and west wall collapsed.

The main church was initially built without the narthex, which was added later when the chapel of Saint John Lampadistis was rebuilt. In the northern side of the chapel another vaulted chapel was added, which was called "Latin", and then the "Chapel of Akathyst Hymn", even though the Akathyst Hymn was never introduced in the Roman Catholic Mass.

The main church and the two chapels are covered with an additional timber roof with flat tiles at the higher level of their roof.

The painting decoration of the main church, from which only a very small part survives in the Holy Bema, was lost in the 12th century. The Katholikon was repainted, possibly in the beginning of the 12th century, and in the surviving part two monks kneeling in the position of supplication are depicted.

In the 13th century large sections of the Katholikon were repainted. Of these wall paintings survive only those in the drum, in the pendentives and on the west and east piers, on the western and southern vault and in the central part of the west wall.

As we mentioned before, the Christ Pantocrator is painted in the drum of the dome. In the zone surrounding him are :

- The preparation of the throne (the symbol of the Last Judgement), above the eastern window,
- A cherubim above the western window and
- Eight angels in prayer coming towards the "preparation of the Throne".

Between the windows of the dome, that is to say in the drum of the dome, are 2 prophets in groups of three on each mural as follows:

David, Solomon, Jeremiah, Elias, Aaron, Habakkuk, Elisha, Zachariah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Jonah and Isaiah.

In the 4 pendentives the four Evangelists, one on each: Matthew, Marc, Luke and John are depicted.

In the south half of the west vault is the Raising of Lazarus, and below the Sacrifice of Abraham, while in the north half is the Entry into Jerusalem.

In the bottom zone of the west wall the Crucifixion is pictured, and below is depicted the oversized Archangel Michael, north of the west entrance.

The south vault is painted with the Ascension of the Christ, of which the particular characteristic is the preparation of the Throne that symbolises the Future or the Last Judgement.

In the west side of the south-east pier are Christ and above a prophet.

In the west side of the north-east pier is the Mother of God in the supplication position towards the Christ in the lower part, and a prophet above the Mother of God. On the east side of the north-west pier is a prophet at the top and below is the Holy Mandylion, and further below are Saints Andronicus and Anastasia. On the south side of the same pier Saint Symeon Stylites is pictured above and further below Saint Heracleidius, to whom the church is

dedicated. On its west side Saint Paraskevi is represented with a medallion bearing the Utter Humiliation of the Christ, the personification of Good Friday.

On the east side of the south-west pier are the Deesis (Supplication), the Christ, the Mother of God and Saint John the Baptist.

On the north side of the south-west pier are Saint Marina and Saint Kyriaki, the personification of the day of Easter that is to say the Sunday of the Resurrection. On the west side of the same pillar is the Virgin Mary Hodegetria.

These wall paintings maintain elements of both the Comnenians and the vernacular. The colours are vivid.

At the beginning of the 15th century a large part of the Katholikon was repainted.

On the eastern vault are eight representations from the iconographic programme of the Christ: 1. The Annunciation of the Mother of God. 2. The Birth of Christ. 3. The Adoration of the Magi. 4. The Presentation of Christ in the Temple. 5. The disciples taking the ass to the Christ. 6. The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem. 7. Mary, the sister of Lazarus, welcomes the Christ. 8. The Raising of Lazarus. It is worth mentioning that the important representation of the Baptism is missing.

In the northern vault is the cycle of the Passion: 1. Christ before Annas and Caiaphas. 2. Christ before Pilate. 3. The Mocking. 4. The Via Crucis. 5. The Crucifixion. 6. The Entombment. 7. The Resurrection (the Descent into Hades). 8. The Three Myrrh Bearers.

In the vault of the south-western compartment scenes from the Passion are depicted: 1. The Last Supper. 2. The Washing of the Feet. 3. The Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. 4. The Betrayal. 5. The Denial of Peter. 6. Pilate washing his hands. 7. The High Priest Caiaphas.

At the top of the west wall of this compartment, we notice the Christ arriving before the High Priests for the second time.

On the vault of the north-west compartment are two appearances of Christ to the Apostles and the Doubting Thomas. On the west wall of the north-west compartment the Transfiguration of the Christ is depicted.

In the conch of the apse the Mother of God with the Christ in a medallion on her chest is pictured, flanked by the Archangels Gabriel and Michael. Below are 6 officiating Prelates.

In the north-eastern aisle is portrayed the Mother of God in the supplication position and below Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Basil.

On the arches and walls of the east compartment of the Katholikon, as well as on the east piers the figures of 70 Apostles and Prelates are represented.

West of the south entrance of the Katholikon, on the south wall of the south-west compartment are 3 monks depicted, while on the west wall are the 3 Prelates: Gregory, Chrysostom and Basil.

On the south side of the arch connecting the south-west compartment with the cross are the prophet Malachias and Saint Anastasia portrayed.

In the inner part of the arch David and Solomon are depicted, and on the west side of the south-west pier Saint Paraskevi is pictured.

On the north side of the Katholikon are remnants from the depictions of the Dormition of the Mother of God at the top, and lower remnants of the Supplication.

The Chapel of Agios Ioannis (Saint John) Lampadistis

On the east blind arch two layers of wall paintings of the 12th century style referring to the life of the Saint survived.

The Wall Paintings of the Narthex

We learn through the inscription over the south door that the painter was from Constantinople. On the south half of the east wall is the Last Judgement. At the top, the donor and his family are portrayed in the special frame. In the blind arch above the entrance of the narthex Saint Heracleidius is pictured to whom the Katholikon is dedicated. Above the blind arch is represented the Holy Mandylin and the Healing of the Blind man.

In the northern part of the east wall of the narthex there are three zones; on the two upper zones are the miracles of the Christ and Saints on the lower zone.

a) Upper zone: 1. Jesus and the Samaritan. 2. The Healing of the Paralytic. 3. The Healing of the Man who had the dropsy. 4. The Healing of the Blind man.

b) Middle zone: 1. Peter and John at the Empty Tomb. 2. Mary Magdalene. 3. The doubting Thomas. 4. The Miraculous Draught of fishes.

On the south wall above the south entrance the 3 Youths in the Furnace are pictured, and on the right is Daniel in the lions' den.

In the lower zone of the east wall of the narthex are Saints; among them is Saint Christopher carrying the young Christ on his shoulder and Saints Constantine and Helena holding the Cross.

On the north wall of the narthex the miracle at Cana, the Myrrh Bearers at the Empty Tomb, the Announcement of the Resurrection and below, Saint Onoufrius are represented.

The Wall Paintings in the Chapel of the Akathist Hymn

The style of its mural decoration is based on the Italian style of the 15th century, and there is an effort of attributing the third dimension. In the vault are the 12 Apostles painted in quatrefoils:

In the east half section of the vault the Apostles Matthew, John, Simon,

James, Luke and Marc and the cherubim are portrayed at the background. In the west half section the Apostles Peter, Paul, Philip, Bartholomew and Andrew are represented.

the inner part of the arch separates the vault in two segments are Saints in medallions, and lower are the Holy Mandylion and the Holy Tile.

At the top of the east wall the Hospitality of Abraham is represented, below is the Enthroned Mother of God and on either side are two scenes with Moses. The west wall depicts the famous Tree of Jesse.

The remaining wall paintings of the chapel are constituted by 24 pictures (stanzas of the Akathist Hymn) from the life of the Mother of God.

The Akathist Hymn was created in 626 A.D. after the salvation of Constantinople from the siege of the Avars and Persians. It owes its name to the fact that it was sung standing by the faithful. The Akathist Hymn was established to be sung in the Church per six "stanzas" on the first four Fridays during the period of the Long Lent of Forty Days, and wholly on the fifth Friday.

Iconostases and Portable Icons

On the iconostasis of the Katholikon of Saint Herakleidius (most probably of the 14th – 15th century), we have the icons of Saint Herakleidius with the donor in the lower left end and of the Archangel Michael, flanked by 6 Archangels.

The wood carved iconostasis of the Chapel of Saint John Lampadistis dates most probably from the 17th -18th century. At its top is the Cross with the symbols of the Evangelists. Below the Cross are the icons (the Lypera) of the Mother of God and Saint John the Theologian. On the iconostasis we have the icons of the Mother of God Hodegetria, of the Christ and of Saint John the Baptist. In the upper part is the icon of the three Prelates, and the icons of the Dodekaorton, the Annunciation, the Presentation of the Mother of God into the Temple, the Baptism, the Presentation of the Christ into the Temple, the Transfiguration, the Ascension of Christ, the Dormition of the Mother of God, the Pentecost and the Annunciation.

On the upper part of the royal door is the Christ giving his blessing, below is the Annunciation and underneath are Saints Gregory the Theologian and John the Chrysostom on the left, and Saints Basil and Nicholas are on the right.

On the special faldstool the icon of Saint John Lampadistis is positioned, dating from the 13th century. Within the frame of the original icon scenes from the life of the Saint are represented. At the top, in the centre of the frame is the Holy Trinity and below the Mother of God and Saint John the Baptist in the supplication position. Further below are the donors. Saint Spyridon and Epiphanius are at the ends

The relics of Saint John Lampadistis are in the reliquary at the point where the Chapel of Saint John Lampadistis is connected with the Chapel of the Akathistos Hymn. On the right front side is depicted the donor of the reliquary, the Archbishop of Cyprus Nicephorus and Saints Sabas and Anthony. At the top of the pyramid-like side is portrayed Saint John Lampadistis and to the right on the same side represents the Mother of God and the three Prelates.

On the back side are the enthroned Christ in a medallion, and Saints below. In the room housing the icons situated in a separate building (the old school) are kept icons dating from the 13th – 18th centuries originating from the various Churches of the village. The most important ones are: the Mother of God Hodegetria, Saint John Lampadistis, the Christ, the Mother of God in prayer, the Mother of God Glykofilousa, the Christ Pantocrator, the Archangel Michael, Saint John the Baptist, Saint Stephan, Saint Epiphanius and other.

Furthermore, of great importance are the epistyles of the Palaeologue art, which survived in very good condition in the entire space of the Byzantine civilisation.