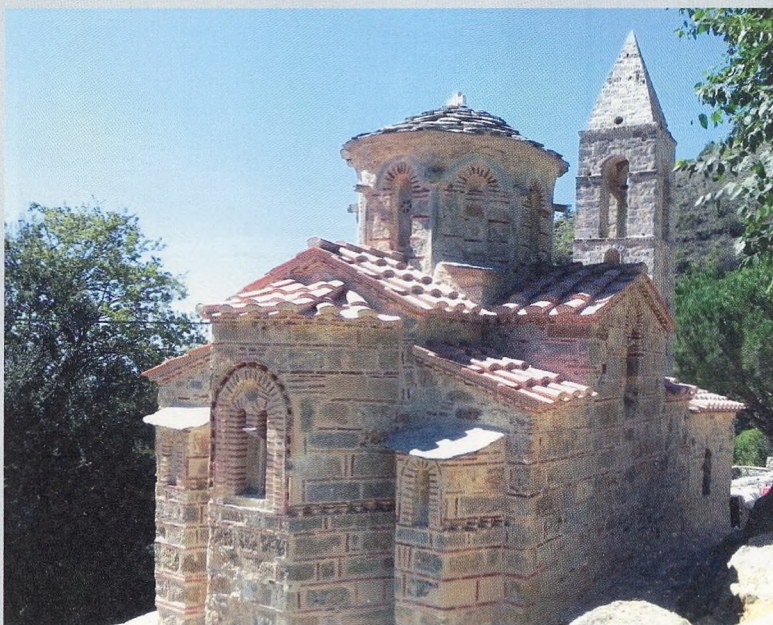


Church of Saint Peter

Kastania, Mani



ELLINIKI ETAIRIA
Society for the Environment
and Cultural Heritage



MINISTRY OF CULTURE
AND SPORTS

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The church of St. Peter, Agios Petros, the oldest of the ten Byzantine monuments at Megali Kastania, is the **most important example of the so-called Helladic school of Byzantine architecture in the Messinian / Exo Mani**. It is a *cross-in-square domed church of the four-column variant that dates back to the third quarter of the 12th century*. A narthex, in the form of a porti-

cus, was added to the west side of the monument in the mid-13th century; the impressive three-storey (castellated) bell tower was constructed in 1813, according to a carved inscription. *A substantial part of the sculptural decoration of the monument is almost intact, including the capitals of the four columns, the frame (doorway) of the western door and the marble iconostasis.*



The monument before, during and after the restoration interventions



The frescoes of the church before and after the conservation interventions

Four phases can be identified in the painted decoration of the church. *The first and second layers date back to the Byzantine period, while a third, post-Byzantine phase (18th c.) can be seen in the conch of the prothesis.* In the postwar years, part of the frescoes suffered a botched overpainting, most of which was removed during their recent conservation. *The second layer of paintings, preserved to a greater extent, represents the main phase of the wall decoration of the monument.* On the basis of stylistic and iconographic criteria, it can be *dated to the second half of the 14th century* and reflects the trends of monumental painting in the region of Mystra during the Late Palaiologan period. Three layers of wall paintings, all of the Byzantine period, were revealed in

the narthex during the recent conservation work.

In a poor state of conservation until 2012, the church faced serious structural and construction problems, while its narthex was in danger of immediate collapse. *In 2012, the study for the restoration of the monument and the conservation of its paintings was prepared by the scientific staff of the 26th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities.* **The church was restored in 2013-2014 thanks to the care of the Council of Architectural Heritage of ELLINIKI ETAIRIA - Society for the Environment and Cultural Heritage and the coordination of the Director of the 26th EBA, Evangelia Militsi-Kechagia.** Restoration work was carried out by **Mnimeiotekniki Ltd.,** under the



The monument during the restoration interventions

supervision of the architect Stavros Mamaloukos and the archaeologist Michalis Kappas. The conservation of the wall paintings was undertaken by the art conservator Giorgos Moustakis. The completion of the entire project, whose total cost was 447,400 €, was made possible thanks to the most generous donation by Thanassis and Marina Martinos.

The work performed included the consolidation of the walls and vaulting by injections of grout, the installation of a system of stainless-steel tie-beams, the limited reconstruction of damaged sections of the façades, the reconstruction of the roof with handmade tiles and slates, the consolidation of the door frames, the floor and the marble iconostasis, and

the restoration of the damaged marble partitions of the windows, incorporating their original existing fragments. Moreover, additional work was performed in the area surrounding the monument in order to ensure the best possible setting for it, and retaining works were carried out along the south side. Meticulous cleaning of the frescoes contributed to the discovery of many scenes that had been covered by a thick layer of limescale, highlighting the importance of this unique Palaiologan ensemble of paintings.



ELLINIKI ETAIRIA – Society for the Environment and Cultural Heritage,
a non-profit NGO, has since 1972 been active in the fight for the
preservation of the natural environment and the cultural heritage of
Greece.

During the last 40 years ELLINIKI ETAIRIA has fought many battles. Among
the major ones we must include the establishment of the Marine Park of
Alonissos, the saving of Plaka (a struggle that continues to this day), the
Delphi landscape, the Southern Saronic Gulf, Pylos, the Prespa lakes, part
of the Marathon area, and the protection of the Tatoi Estate, of traditional
villages such as Kastoria and Hydra and of many Aegean islands.

At the same time dozens of monuments have been saved from
demolition, decay and abandonment, throughout the country as well as
abroad, such as the ancient tower in Kea, the refectory of the Hosios Luke
Monastery (Boeotia), the Saviour in Alepochori (Attica), St. John in Lygourio
(Argolis), St. Nicholas in Kastania (Mani), St. Kyriaki in Apeiranthos (Naxos),
the bell tower of San Giorgio dei Greci in Venice and the Church
of St. Panteleimon (Kizil Kilise) in Cappadocia.

ELLINIKI ETAIRIA - Society for the Environment and Cultural Heritage is
in the forefront of efforts to achieve satisfactory legislation and proper
land use and coastal planning regulations as also proper treatment of
traditional architecture and forests, all of fundamental importance to the
future of Greece.

And all these thanks to the contributions and cooperation of sponsors,
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