



Francesca Zagari

Il monastero di Santa Marina a Delianuova (RC)

Abstract

Saint Marina is one of the first Italo-Greek monasteries that has been excavated. It was supposed to be a dependent monastery (*metochion*) built in the Eparchy of Saline, which was one of the main Italo-Greek monastic area between the end of the IXth and the Xth century. The monastery was probably mentioned (as the “old monastery of Saint Marina”) by written sources of the middle of the 11th century and it was definitely destroyed probably by the earthquake of 1783.

Its ruins are located on the top of a hill above the village (*chorion*) of Pedavoli in the present municipality of Delianuova (Southern Calabria). This *chorion* is cited in four donation acts to the Cathedral of Saint Agatha-Oppido of the middle of the 11th century. Saint Marina therefore confirms the proximity, mentioned by the written sources, between *metochia* and *choria*. It does not seem to have been close to the village, but rather near the *chorion's* estates.

The excavated buildings are: a church in the Eastern part of the hill; a probable tower or bell tower on the Southern side of the church façade; a long, narrow building that closes off the Southern hillside. At the center of the hilltop there was a kind of “cloister” or inner courtyard that seems to have been used for domestic and manufacturing activities even in later periods.

The lack of archaeological findings regarding monastic cells on the hilltop suggests that they should be caves or huts made of perishable material located in the surrounding area, outside the central core, according to what seems to have been a rather widespread typology in Italo-Greek and mostly in Calabro-Greek monasticism.

The small church has an expanded floor plan in longitudinal direction, a semicircular apse and three naves whose the central one was covered by a dome. It has a narthex, a room for different functions, which is often found in Italo-Greek churches. The dome interior was painted with frescoes that seem to represent iconoclastic subjects. The frescoes and the floor plan suggest for the church a date immediately after the Byzantine Reconquest of Southern Italy under the emperor Basil I.

Due to the pottery fragments found inside and due to its floor plan and position, the building on the Southern side should be interpreted as the monastic refectory. At the same time, it probably had a defensive function. Archaeological evidence, radiocarbon dating and anthracological analyses allow us to reconstruct the building layout and to date it to the second half of the 13th century.

Acquista/Buy