

SUMMARY

Angeliki Strati, *Liturgical Hymns in the Makrynariki in the Catholicon of the Monastery of John the Baptist, Serres.*

On the south and east walls of the south portico in the catholicon of the Monastery of John the Baptist at Serres —a part of the church commonly known as the *makrynariki*— there are two large iconographical compositions above the row of standing, full-length saints and ascetics. They represent the Sticheron of Christmas and the Ainoi and belong to the last phase of the painted decoration of the *makrynariki* (1630).

The composition known as the Sticheron of Christmas takes its inspiration from the hymn «What we offer you, Christ», which is sung at Vespers on Christmas Day and on the Feast of the Theotokos at Vlacherna (Constantinople) on 26 December.

The painting has been damaged and is not completely intact. The scene follows the traditional rendering of the subject, as seen in monuments of the late thirteenth century (the Peribleptos at Ohrid and the Panagia Vlachernas at Arta), the fourteenth century (the Church of the Twelve Apostles at Thessaloniki, Zica Monastery), and as it subsequently developed in the post-Byzantine period (on Mount Athos).

Most of the south wall and the whole of the east wall are decorated with Psalms 148, 149 and 150, which are better known as the Ainoi. They are sung during the orthros service and usually decorate the outer narthex of a church or the *liti* of a monastery catholicon, chiefly in the post-Byzantine period. The present frescoes closely follow the iconographical tradition, according to which the Ainoi are depicted, in either a condensed or an extensive form, in the narthex or in supplementary areas that replace it, from the fourteenth century to the end of the Byzantine period.

Thus, in the *makrynariki* of the Monastery of John the Baptist, the iconographical tradition is closely followed even in this close association of the Ainoi and the Christmas Sticheron, and is directly linked with the glorification of God and thanksgiving to the Theotokos.