

RESTORATION WORK OF THE CISTERN OF THE HEGOUMENEION OF BEIT JALA AND THE BROADENING OF THE MAIN STREET

In October 2021, under the technical supervision of the Patriarchate's Architect Mr Theodosios Mitropoulos and the Mayor Mr Nicola Hamis, that is the co-operation of the Patriarchate with the Municipality of Beit Jala, the cistern of the Hegoumeneion of Beit Jala was restored and carved a little. This was necessary due to the broadening of the main street to facilitate the traffic for the Beit Jala inhabitants. Details on the restoration work are in Mr Mitropoulos' article below:

"The historic cistern (Well) of the Abbeys residence of Beitzala

By Architect Dr Theo Mitropoulos

This cistern is located northeast of the Abbeys residence of Beitzala 1 * where it is adjacent to it, occupying the entire subterranean area of the garden while its mouth is located inside the garden. This cistern has a rectangular plan of dimensions (5X8X6M) and is carved in the rocky subsoil of the area while its vaulted roof is made of limestone and hydraulic mortar. This technique is also found in the cisterns of David located in Bethlehem, which are also made in the same style.²

* Internally, the cistern is lined with a thick layer of kurasani 10cm thick. to prevent water leakage. This cistern is very ancient, and historically, it must be related to the cisterns (wells) of David located in Bethlehem. The Abbeys residence of Beitzala will be built after 1862 (year of construction of the Church of Panagia in Beitzala) in this

historic site of this cistern. With the current configuration of the road around Abbays residence (Igoumenio), a large rocky mass of the cistern will be excavated (removed) and in its place, a stone wall over 4 m high will be constructed in order to hold the hydraulic pressures coming from its waters. Because the overflow port of the cistern was covered by the outer perimeter wall, this resulted in the water level rising very high inside the cistern resulting in increased pressures on the stone walls and the creation of vertical alarming faults. stone dome of the cistern. Today, the City Hall of Beitza, which is carrying out reinforcement work in collaboration with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in this cistern, is proceeding with the partial removal of the existing cracked stone structure and its reconstruction from reinforced concrete with concrete and stone. With this intervention of the restoration of the cistern, its water supply should be stopped and this area should be utilized by the Patriarchate both archaeologically and for tourism (religious tourism) due to its great historical value.

1*. The construction of the Igoumenion dates back to 1862 during the patriarchate of Cyril II (1845-1872) and the abbot Christoforos, a monk of Cyprian. The 19th century. The 19th century is the period when there is a great upsurge in the construction and decoration of Orthodox churches in the Ottoman Empire where the conditions for Orthodoxy change and become more favourable after the Treaty of Adrianople in 1829 and especially after the Hati Serif of 1839 and the Hati Humayoun of 1856, where the change in the internal policy of the Ottoman state with the establishment of the equality of all its subjects can be seen. The construction of magnificent temples in Asia Minor, Smyrna, Constantinople, Cyprus and the Middle East began more systematically. 2* The cisterns in Bethlehem will stop being used for drinking water after 1200 when a Saracen woman fell into the well and drowned, since then the water has only been used for drinking, according to the travelogues of the time."

From Secretariat-General