


The enduring embodiment of Byzantine culture and symbolism in the Eastern Orthodox Church

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Abstract: The architectural style of the Eastern Orthodox Church temples in the twentieth century, in most countries that were once part of the Byzantine Empire, has had minor changes since the fall of the Empire. Orthodoxy is traditional for several reasons, one of which is that it is founded on Tradition. Between the Byzantine Rite and the elements- mostly architectural- there is no simple, clear, and direct correspondence.

It is quite impossible to understand the rationale behind the liturgy, arts, and architecture, without a historical context of the Church. Both liturgy and architecture have “an internal logic”, and their development is at different rates. The relationship between the Byzantine Rite and architecture goes through the Orthodox Church along with the meaning of the Byzantine Empire for the Church. The Byzantine architectural style of the churches is dynamic and had a lot of development during the time of the Empire. The use of this style by the Orthodox Church in the twentieth century is related to a complex matrix that starts with Tradition and goes through the prosperity that the Empire gave the Church in the first centuries.

Keywords: Byzantine architecture, Orthodox Church, Liturgy.

A durabilidade da cultura bizantina e do simbolismo na Igreja Ortodoxa Oriental

Resumo: A linguagem e tipologia arquitetónicas da Igreja Ortodoxa Calcedoniana no século XX, na maioria dos países que faziam parte do Império Bizantino, sofreram apenas pequenas mudanças, desde a queda do Império. Várias razões concorrem para este fenómeno, nomeadamente o facto da ortodoxia possuir um forte sentido da Tradição que acentua a continuidade nas suas opções doutrinárias (incluindo o Rito Bizantino) e arquitetónicas.

A correspondência estilística, isto é, “a lógica interna” que liga os elementos – sobretudo arquitetónicos – não é imediatamente perceptível sem recorrer a uma contextualização dos fatores históricos, especialmente os relacionados com o Império Bizantino. Por exemplo, a liturgia e a arquitetura estão intimamente ligadas, mas desenvolveram-se a ritmos diferentes. Ora, a adoção desse estilo pela Igreja Ortodoxa em pleno século XX pode ser apreciada como indexada a uma matriz complexa da Tradição com fortes influências dos momentos altos da cultura bizantina na vida primitiva desta Igreja.

Palavras-chave: Arquitetura bizantina, Igreja Ortodoxa, Liturgia.

1. Introduction

When talking about churches for Eastern Orthodox Christianity, one style quickly comes to mind, “the Byzantine Style”. In a simplified approach, Eastern Orthodox Christianity is an integrated theological and liturgical system. All components are interwoven in this system: theology is founded on liturgical experience, and the fundamental characteristics of church art (e.g. iconography, architecture) are formed by theology and the liturgy. The architecture of the church buildings and the purpose of the Church -which is bringing the believers closer to God are now more than two parallel paths, they become an image of each other.

A glance at Eastern Orthodox Christianity, church architecture from the beginning of Christianity going through the Byzantine Empire, and what happened after the fall of the Empire gives a revealing glimpse of the development of this architecture, and its relationship with liturgy and theology.

2. Spiritual feature of a church

Before explaining the historical approach to building a church, and all the changes and development that occurred, there is a theological part or a spiritual part behind building a church that needs to be explained. Although there exist theological notions behind many aspects of its church architecture, the Orthodox Church nevertheless does not have a comprehensive “theology of architecture”¹.

Based on the New Man Theology, where the fallen human nature is not denied, the church becomes an image of the cosmos as well as an image of man. Saint Maximus the Confessor revealed it as follows:

«God’s holy Church is a symbol of man; its soul is the sanctuary; the sacred altar, the mind; and its body is the nave. A church is thus the image and likeness of God. The nave is used as the body should be used, for exemplifying practical moral philosophy; from the sanctuary, the Church leads the way to natural contemplation spiritually as man does with his soul; and she embarks on mystical theology through the sacred altar»².

Christianity is a mystical religion, for this reason, and more, symbolism is an important aspect of a Christian’s life. In the theology and beliefs of Christianity, Church represents both worlds, the seen world (the people) and the unseen world (the angels and saints). The classical phrase that has been used often to describe the Byzantine Rite since used in 987 for the first time is “*heaven on earth*”. «The church is heaven on earth,

1 MANGO, Cyril – *Byzantine architecture*. New York: Electa / Rizzoli, 1985, p. 198.

2 Maximus the Confessor, “The Mystagogia”, cited in ALFEYEV, Metropolitan Hilarion. *Orthodox Christianity – The architecture, icons, and music of the Orthodox Church*. Vol. III. New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press Yonkers, 2008, p. 26.

where the God of heaven dwells and moves»³ is the whole phrase of Saint Germanus I (Patriarch of Constantinople). Moreover, Saint Ambrose⁴ in Milan when he built the Apostles' church, explains the plan as follows: «The form of the cross is a temple, the temple of Christ's victory. The sacred, triumphal symbol marks the place»⁵.

Often the design of an Orthodox church combines both the architectural part and the theological part. The axis from west to east expresses the path of the faithful (pilgrimage on earth) starting from the falling world which resembles "the darkness of the world" (west) towards the east where the sunrise, as written in the psalm in the Old Testament "For the Lord God is a sun (PS84:11)". Furthermore, the icons and details of the interior put the faithful in the presence of God and the saints (i.e. in heaven). Thus, pilgrimage and immanence are merged into one experience inside the church to bring the faithful closer to God for them to become a god⁶.

The Bishop of Caesarea and Metropolitan Bishop of Palestine Eusebius preached at the cathedral of Tyre (Lebanon) in 318 by addressing the clergy and Bishop Paulinus, who paid for the building: «Friends of God, and priests clothed with the sacred vestment and the heavenly crown of glory, the divine unction and priestly garments of the Holy Spirit»⁷. Clergy, vestments, the stones themselves, and everything else is connected: «Shall I call you a new Bezalel, the master builder of a divine tabernacle, or a Solomon, king of a new and far nobler Jerusalem, or a new Zerubbabel, who adorned the temple with the glory that was far greater than the old?»⁸. He added that the churches, and how they are filled with all the votive offerings, is a testament to the power of the 'King of Heaven', and it is crucial to be able to identify their meaning, the bishop reminds the congregation, «when He looks at the live temple consisting of us all and views the house of living and immovable stones, well and securely based on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone». He described more the architectural elements and their meanings, and how the theology of the offering are parallel of the one in heaven:

«In no respect is he inferior to the Bezalel whom God Himself filled with a spirit of wisdom and understanding and with technical and scientific knowledge, and close to the architect of the temples that symbolized the heavenly types. In the same way this man, having the whole Christ, the Word, the Wisdom, the Light, impressed upon his soul, has built this magnificent shrine for God Most High, resembling in its essence the patterns of the better one as the visible resembles the invisible»⁹.

3 USPENSKY, Leonid – *The Orthodox Church, studies in orthodoxy*. Vol.1. Oxford: Holywell Presse, 1964, p. 160.

4 Bishop of Milan in the late 4th century.

5 WARD-PERKINS, J.B. – Memoria, martyr's tomb and martyr's church. *Journal of Theological Studies*. 17: 1 (1966) 386–403.

6 "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God". *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Burns & Oates, 2011, CCC460. It's a famous saying by saint Athanasius (Bishop of Alexandria-4th century).

7 DOIG, Allan – *Liturgy and architecture – from the early church to the Middle Ages*. New York: Routledge, 2016, p. 27.

8 DOIG – *Liturgy and architecture*, p. 27.

9 WILLIAMSON, G. A. translation – *Eusebius: The history of the Church from Christ to Constantine*. London: Penguin, 1965, p. 331.

3. The Byzantine Rite

Using a temple to worship is not something new, but the design and the way of worship change with each religion as each act of worship needs different settings. It is common to pray in a summer camp, a prison, a parish church, or a cathedral, nevertheless, some settings are essential. In each location, the settings could be reduced or intensified depending on what is needed or who is performing the service. Thus, all the gestures, the texts, and the movements of the clergy illustrate the rite for the participant each time and in any particular time or place¹⁰.

What is called the "Byzantine Rite" is the liturgical structure that was evolved in the Patriarchate of Constantinople and adopted by the other Orthodox Patriarchates (Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem). The Byzantine Rite includes the "Divine Liturgy", the other sacred mysteries of marriage, baptism, chrismation, unction (holy oil ointment), confession, and ordination, the daily prayers of matins, vespers, vigils, etc.

The growth in the number of believers brought a permanent change in architecture as in practice and forced architecture and Liturgy to adapt¹¹. Each time the rite changes, it affects the architecture.

There was no fixed liturgy nor fixed architecture at first. In the 1st century, an order of the liturgy was maintained which pressured the existence of a fixed architectural ordering. In 95 when the bishop of Rome Clement participated in the Liturgy, it had already a clear order and different responsibilities for the clergy and the lay. He wrote to the Corinthians:

«We are bound to perform in due order all that the master bade us accomplish at their proper seasons. ... He ordered that the offerings and services should be performed at their appointed times and seasons, not at random and without order; and also by his own supreme will he himself appointed the place and the ministers of their performance. ... To the high priest are given his special ministrations, a special place is reserved for the priests, and special duties are imposed upon the Levites, while the layman is bound by the ordinances concerning the laity....

Let each of you, brethren, in his own order give thanks to God with a good conscience, not transgressing the appointed rule of his service. For it is not in every place, brethren, that the perpetual sacrifices are offered, or the freewill offerings, the sin offerings, and the guilt offerings, but in Jerusalem only; and even there the offering is not made in every place, but before the sanctuary at the altar»¹².

10 The rite has his own history, and reflects on the spiritual path of the people, and the act of salvation.

11 See KRAUTHEIMER (1986), p. 27; WHITE (1996–97), vol. II, p. 25–6, and WHITE (2000), p. 711.

12 Translated in BETTENSON (1943), p. 62–63.

Architecture and liturgy continue to develop in parallel, with transferring the experience of the Holy Land to most provinces in the Empire, which contributes to the uniformity of the liturgy and architecture, to the extent of having “Christendom” to strengthening the universality of the Church and the union of the provinces of the Empire. Egeria¹³ gave us good evidence of how the liturgy is somehow fixed and universal in the fourth century, regardless of some local changes.

The Byzantine Rite was always articulated by spiritual, religious, and political dimensions, as the Emperors were an essential part of the Church. Robert Taft in his book *The Byzantine Rite, a short history* divided the history of the Byzantine liturgy¹⁴ into five phases:

- 1) The Paleo-Byzantine or pre-Constantinian era;
- 2) The imperial phase, during the late antiquity, from 527 to 1261. (it overlaps with phases 3 and 4);
- 3) The dark ages from 610 to 850;
- 4) The Studite era from 800 to 1204;
- 5) The neo-Sabaitic, after the Latin conquest (1204-1261)¹⁵.

Robert Taft made this division not just on scriptures but also on the archeological evidence that shows that churches in the different regions had different architecture despite being under the same political domination. To emphasize this complex relationship between different dimensions Taft wrote:

«This dry, material description of the Byzantine Rite fails to manifest its poetic richness, its intensity, or its tightly-woven unity of ritual celebration, ritual setting, and ritual interpretation. Byzantine liturgy and its theology – within the native concept of Byzantine church architecture, church decoration, and liturgical disposition which enfold the ritual like its natural womb- join to forge... a **symbolic matrix**».

Having explained some notion of how theology affects the architecture of a church, in the next part an explanation of the historical development of the architecture of the Orthodox churches is described, noting that the Byzantine rite did not have any development after the 13th century, and it is still practiced as it was centuries ago.

13 She is a Western European Christian woman, widely known to be the author of a detailed account of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land about 381/2–386. And the book is known by the name *The Pilgrimage of Egeria*.

14 It is worth saying that the Byzantine rite is the same around all the churches of the Eastern Orthodox Church in the world, with no improvising from priests or bishops. What changes sometimes is the melody (tone) of the hymns, but with keeping the text and the division as it is all over the world.

15 TAFT, Robert – *The byzantine rite: a short history*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992, p. 18-19.

4. The earliest Christian worship

In the beginning, Christianity grew unnoticeably. The church architecture was not important, and the early believers had no interest in evolving such architecture. Christians used to assemble according to the needs and circumstances they encounter: on the riverside¹⁶, at the synagogue, or in the Ancient Agora (the Marketplace)¹⁷. Later on, private houses were used to host their meetings. The most important meeting they gathered for is “the Divine Liturgy” which differs drastically from any other worship at that time. The service was held in the dining room because a meal was the core of it, also it was the largest room in the house. The Christian community grew in size, they started to convert the entire house into a “*Domus ecclesiae*” (house-church). Some archeological evidence shows the transformation of a house in Dura-Europos on the Euphrates River.

Dura-Europos is a city that had a strategic position on the river and encompassed different temples: temples of Artemis, Zeus, Bel (etc.), a synagogue, and a house-church. Of all the temples, the house-church was the most modest, and smallest, and was probably converted to a church around 231¹⁸. No changes in the appearance of the house were made to not bring any unnecessary attention, after all, Christians were a small minority and not considered “friendly”, but some changes were made to the interior to assemble more people. The entrance of the house-church in Dura-Europos was designed to screen views into the house. The largest rectangular room was opposite the entrance through impressive doorways, which are used for the assembly of 50 or 60 people. No paintings on the walls¹⁹, the only permanent fixture was the “bema”²⁰ at the eastern end. The focus in the room was on the clergy and the readings, the latter gave the clergy more authority with their teaching²¹. Next to the hall, there is a smaller room that is probably for the catechumens as a school and another one linked to it that has fresco all around the walls, which might be the baptistery²² (fig. 1).

Until around 250 A.D. Christians were mostly from the lower classes. The use of domestic architecture was the normal solution since Christian architecture did not exist yet. The architecture for temples continued to be Greek and Roman.

16 Acts 16:13: “And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.” *The Holy Bible. New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982.

17 Acts 17:17: “Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.” *The Holy Bible. New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982.

18 KRAUTHEIMER, Richard – *Early Christian and Byzantine architecture*. Yale University Press, 1984, p. 6.

19 “perhaps so that there could be no charge of idolatry”.

20 It is worth noting that, the same structure is also found in a military command building. The bema is founded to set the speaker apart from the congregation and to convey authority.

21 In 250 when bishop Cyprian ordained a reader, he placed him “upon the iconostasis, that is upon the tribunal of the church”.

22 This rite seems to start in the assembly hall with readings, then entering the catechumens’ room (maybe to change clothes) then entering the baptistery from the right door.

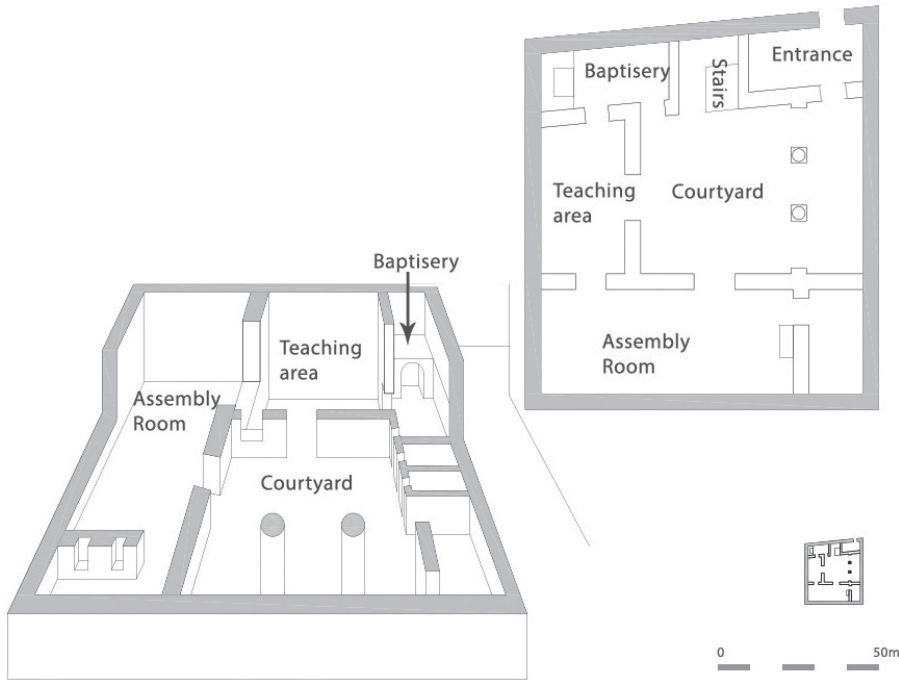


Fig. 1 – Dura-Europos (Plan 1: Plan of the House-Church after alteration. without scale; Plan 2: Plan of the House-Church after alteration with scale)

However, the change in architecture was imminent. The program of the Liturgy was new so it demanded new plans with new functions. Various rooms were occupied and created for new purposes: a dining room for the meal (*agapai*) after the Liturgy which was an important tradition, and a room for the clergy to store the altar vessels among different things (*Skevophylakion*). These rooms were all connected with easy access since they were used at the time of service. Meanwhile, different auxiliary rooms were also presented but not necessary at the time of Liturgy: for the baptism, for the classes for instructions (catechism). Different areas were needed: a place for the clergy, believers, and catechumens²³. In the same space that gathers all the categories of people, one of them -the clergy- should be separated from the others; a low wooden rail²⁴ was used for this function. The regular service was attended by faithful and catechumens, but in the second part of the service, the catechumens withdraw to the outside.

This division of the house became the official division of the church henceforth. The entrance becomes the narthex, the courtyard becomes the nave, and the raised dining room becomes the altar that included the Holy Table.

²³ Believers under instruction but not yet baptized.

²⁴ Later on, it developed to be the Iconostasis.

5. The 4th century: stability and transformation

The 4th century and especially the reign of Constantine the Great was a turning point from the old Roman Empire to its new Byzantine period. All the changes that will be made under Constantine had nothing to do with the Church's hidden nature, nor the rising of the Church out of poverty, but the fact that the Church was about to emerge into the imperial domain, adopting an official and imperial form in its architecture and performance in terms of its liturgy. Under Constantine, the Church would create impressive public architecture as its social circumstances and official position evolved.

Many new phenomena emerged in that century that characterized the Byzantine Empire, the most important is the arising of a new society, totally different from the one before, by favoring Christianity which later became the official religion of the Empire. In 311 a decree issued by Galerius that favored Christianity gave pardon to Christians and announced their legal right to exist.

From the beginning of the Byzantine Empire with Constantine the Great, Christians were protected by the Emperor as a conclusion of the Edict of Milan (313). The important significance of it, is not only the acceptance of Christianity but its placement under the protection of the government, with a new policy and new rules in the Empire for this purpose. Church and Empire were intertwined at that time. Emperors involved themselves directly in church affairs.

After the conversion of Constantine to Christianity, he wanted the churches to be as majestic as the imperial and public buildings and worthy of the donations of the Emperor, so he put his influence and taste into their design, and started to be on the path of constructing new churches. In his palace at Trier, Constantine built a hall without aisles, in it, he usually sat on his throne located in the apse to receive visitors. This hall was converted to a church, and it is considered one of the first Christian basilicas (fig. 2).

Christianity distinguishes itself as the opposite of paganism. Christians refused to use the pagan temples, at first, for theological and functional reasons. Pagan temples did not present themselves as a good architectural solution. But eventually, they were accepted in the late 4th century in the East and around the 6th century in the West.

Under Constantine's reign, Christianity tried to find new architecture «of a higher order, public in character, resplendent in materials, and spacious in layout»²⁵. The ecclesiastical architecture in this new phase took into consideration the new official character and the hierarchy of the Church which led to a new vocabulary.

25 KRAUTHEIMER – *Early Christian and Byzantine architecture*, p. 19.



Fig. 2 – Trier church – photograph source: Pudelek, Marcin Szala, 2013. Plan: Trier church with scale

The newly constructed churches were of the same significance as the public buildings, palaces, and temples and are usually raised above the ordinary buildings. The imperial element influenced all the aspects and details of the Church, the decoration, the forms of the ecclesiastical architecture, the ceremonies, and the vestments of the clergy. Constantine, in 318, began the integration of the clergy into the structure of the Empire (legal, civic, and social) by giving the bishop authority over legal cases.

Christianity introduced new functions and different programs for a temple. The clergy, the faithful and the catechumens stand in different places, in the same space, as each one of the three has a different path and different role in the participation of the service. The catechumens are required to withdraw from the liturgy at the start of the Liturgy of the faithful, as they should listen to that part but not participate in it. So, they depart to different places: entrance, atrium, a room attached to the church, or a different area nearby. On the other hand, the clergy needs different spaces to move along the Liturgy to serve.

In the search to find an architecture that shows its legislation and its worship of the King (Jesus Christ), the basilica was chosen as the new shape of the church building, since this form has already played a similar role. But what does basilica mean? What we call a meeting hall now was called a basilica in Roman speech. This term was not related to the function but more to the design (shape/volume) of the building²⁶. The basilica whether it was a market or serving any public functions, had the image of the Emperor in the apse or on the sidewall, oaths under the image were religiously accepted, which made the basilica a religious building by virtue. At the

26 KRAUTHEIMER – *Early Christian and Byzantine architecture*, p. 30.

beginning of the 4th century, the basilica was a hall without aisles with timber roofs, it usually ends with a raised apse. On each side, large windows in single or double rows lit the interior. According to this, the Christian basilica was viewed as a public building or a meeting hall with a new religious function.

The Liturgy in the various cities of the Empire was different in detail, but uniform in its general lines, for this reason, the detailed plan of the Christian basilica differs from one place to the other, e.g. Catechumens withdraw to different places, the altar could be placed in the apse or the nave, etc. As a result, there was no identical plan for the Christian basilica of Constantinian churches, it was altered to liturgical requirements, patrons' demands, and building practices, and it is always in relation to the financial and social status of the patron who could be poor or the Emperor himself.

The new Religion – Christianity – led to some changes in people's behavior like the increasing veneration of the martyrs²⁷. Funeral architecture was increasingly important than church architecture during Constantine's reign. At that time, they built halls next to the tombs as the place in itself was small for the huge, expected gathering for services, and with no places enough for the hundreds that want to be buried next to the martyr. Through time these "cemeteries" (*coemeteria subteglata*) were functioning as regular churches in the suburbs of the cities. The newly built space was a fusion between a basilica and an ambulatory²⁸.

6. The 4th century: development of architecture

In the 4th century and in the late reign of Constantine, new types of church plans have been noticed due to the complexity of the ecclesiastical services and the close link between the Church and the Empire. The limitation of the basilica as a church was the division of the inner space into 3 or 5 divisions which makes the congregation divided in the space and only united in the center axis of the church. One of the solutions developed was the replacement of the rectangular shape with a central one with no columns²⁹.

The first area that started to use the new design was, within the boundaries of the Imperial palace where tetraconch and octaconch churches emerged. In 330, after Constantinople became the capital of the Empire, Constantine constructed the first church/martyrium as a cross shape, for the Holy Apostles (cross-shaped with the relics in the center). This shape was a major change from the basilica and it

27 Since life after death is more important to the Christians than the current life they are living.

28 A feature known in pagan mausoleum but never on a large scale nor infused with a basilica.

29 The idea was taken from the martyrium as it has numerous plan types (cross-shaped, oval, circular, etc.) and it started to be built independently and not attached to the basilica church plan.

spreads in the late 4th and early 5th centuries, not just in Constantinople but also in Milan, Ravenna, Antioch, etc.

The function and the plan of a building are always connected to each other, for this reason, there was no one plan for the churches. The homogeneity of the different church plans does not prevent the differences in layout, which is directly related to the Liturgy, as the Liturgy varied locally but was similar in general guidelines. The ritual of the service and the local ritual determine the position of different elements in the church. The ritual of the service determines the shape of the chancel (presbytery), the pastophories, and the martyrium. The local ritual dictates the position of the seats of the clergy, the apse, the altar, the position of the entrance and the number of entrance doors, and the presence or absence of transepts or aisles. In the main cities, like Constantinople, Milan, Antioch, and Rome, the changes in the plans were determined by the necessity of finding solutions to the new liturgical customs. In these cities, churches shared the concept of “imperial art”. In other provinces, the ideas and concepts of the churches were similar but in a simpler form. Within three regions of the Empire, the decline in the variation of planning is countered by an increase in styles. The regions differed in architecture as in politics.

On the Syrian coast, the cathedral of Tyre (south Lebanon) represents a different approach, built around 318. It was a luxurious church with its four colonnaded porticoes and its raised aloft entrance. Tyre’s basilica was similar to the imperial palace in architecture, especially with the high nave filled with light. Architects naturally transferred some architectural elements from “the Emperor’s Divine Majesty” to the churches they built.

In the west, Milan competed with Constantinople, the main capital. Ambrose was the Bishop of Milan, he built a church that is similar to the Apostles’ church of Constantinople, the relics of some of the apostles (John, Andrew, and Thomas) were a gift from the Eastern Emperor in 386. The gift has a political meaning besides the religious one. At that time Ambrose had a problem with Valentinian (the Western Emperor) and his heretical Arian clergy over the use of one of Ambrose’s churches. To defend the church building, Ambrose gathered the congregation and blockaded his church³⁰. Ambrose won the confrontation with the Emperor, and his improvisation was a success and became a distinguishing mark in the liturgy: «This round of sung services became a characteristic of the Milanese liturgy»³¹.

After he won over the Emperor and strengthened his position, he finished the church “Basilica Ambrosiana”. He was building this church to be buried in it

30 To help the morale of the congregation and to pass time, he divided them into two choirs and start chanting the psalms. The short vigil and the one that lasts all night originated in the course of the confrontation with the Emperor.

31 HOMES, Dudden, F. – *The life and times of St Ambrose*. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935, p. 442.

under the altar. By using architecture for the second time he was making a political statement and trying to make the Church independent from the Empire, as even for Constantine, burial near or under the altar was not appropriate, but an archbishop can be buried there.

The church had a centralized altar but for a congregational church, it was not convenient. In 395 when they found the relics of a new martyr, Ambrose built a higher altar at the east end to put them there.

The Basilica Apostolorum (fig. 3) was a landmark at that time because of its multi-layer function: It had the first encounter with the archbishop and the Emperor, it also had a political function, with the relics from the Eastern Emperor to a church replica of Constantine's church. It made Milan the capital of the West and equivalent to Constantinople. This church-type plan was repeated in the 4th century in different cities in the West (Ravenna, Verona, etc).

The 4th century was a time when Christians traveled to other regions of the world considerably more than they had before, and as a result, they became more aware of alternative forms of worship than they had previously been. There were pilgrims to the Holy Land who not only saw what was done at that liturgical center and reported back but also came into contact with the liturgical practices of other Christians arriving from all parts of the world, as well as those whose territories they went through on the journey. One could argue that Jerusalem became a significant hub of the liturgical import-export trade, a clearinghouse for appealing ideas and practices.

Jerusalem offered the believers who wanted to trace the footsteps of Christ a concrete reality in the scriptures, and these places were important for the pilgrims,

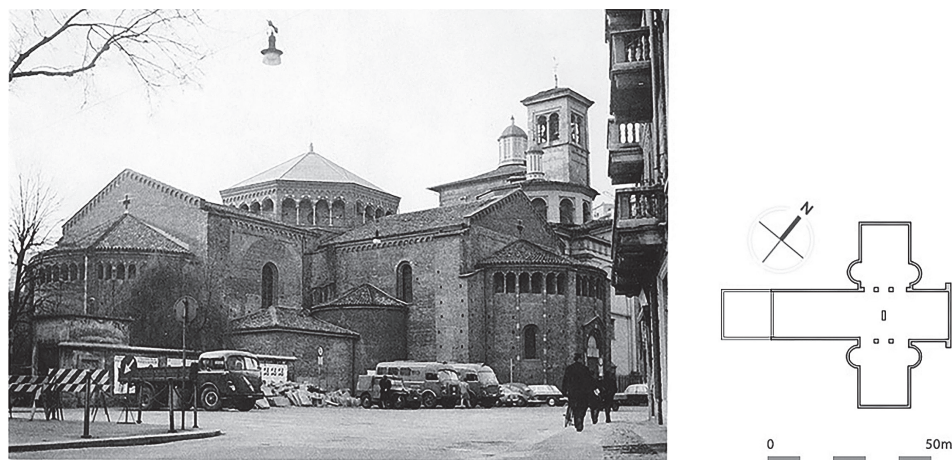


Fig. 3 – Basilica Apostolorum, Milan, San Nazaro, exterior from northeast Source: Manzoni- <https://www.jstor.org/stable/988506> (Plan of the church with scale)

especially under Constantine's rule. Tangible connections were found between believers and events of salvation, theology was more visual, and authority was shown within the hierarchical architectural structure. «Architecture was a powerful tool; after all, it shaped the spaces where heaven and earth met»³². Architecture and liturgy were developed in Palestine more than in any other place, and they will exercise a strong influence when the pilgrims return to their cities.

The development of the architecture of the church started with Constantine with the Golgotha church. It was the first church that served as a martyrion and the official church of the congregation of Jerusalem, with a baptistery and a Skevophylakion.

In Palestine, specifically Gaza, the cross-plan church was built in 401, which resembles the Holy Apostles church. Some churches are built like the one in Constantinople as a typical basilica with aisles, galleries, and a polygonal apse on the exterior with a colonnaded narthex and an atrium to enter the colonnaded nave.

The first churches in the Holy Land were exceptional because they were related directly to Christ, the ***Church of Nativity*** in Bethlehem, and the

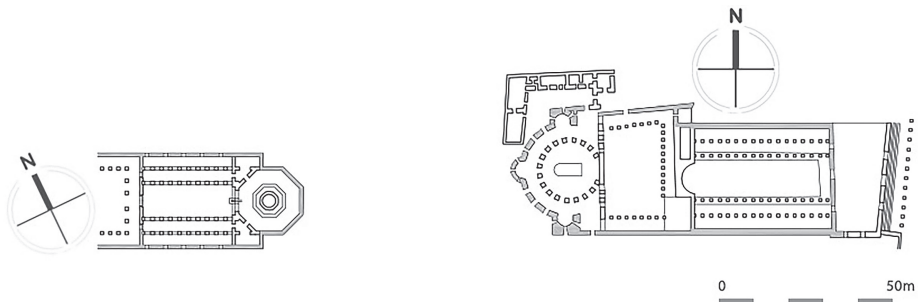


Fig. 4 – Nativity church (at left: plan with scale) and the Resurrection church (at right: plan with scale)

Resurrection church in Golgotha in Jerusalem (fig. 4).

By tracing the development of the churches, we can notice different kinds of plans in Syria, and most of these architectural changes are in relation to the different liturgical customs. Some Northern Syrian churches have two entrances³³ at the southern side, the apse is semi-circular from inside and outside, and bounded by two chambers, frequently an exedra is present in the middle of the nave. In the south of Syria, the churches are built on the concept of a rectangular shape with a stone slab as the ceiling, that rests on a series of diaphragm arches. As a rule, churches were aisleless with the presence of an apse, before 400.

32 DOIG – *Liturgy and architecture*, p. 30.

33 Syrian custom, demanded the separation of men and women, hence the need of two entrances.

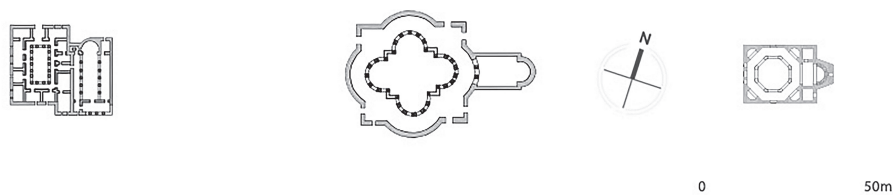


Fig. 5 – Plan Saint George Ezra (at left: with scale), Seleucia – Pieria church (at center: with scale) and Umm-es-Surab Church (at right: with scale)

At the end of the 5th century, colonnaded basilicas and basilicas with galleries are found, like the **Umm-es-Surab** (fig. 5) church built around 489. The quatrefoil church is also found at **Seleucia-Pieria** (fig. 5) of the late 5th century, which resembles Saint Lorenzo church in Milan.

The central churches are rare as the one at Ezra (ancient name Zorava), **Saint George church** (fig. 5). The church is an octagon with ambulatory and niches corners since the exterior shape is square. Over the center space is an egg-shaped dome.

(The death of Constantine)

After Constantine's death (337), there were minor changes in the Roman Empire. However, his successors still ruled a united Empire with an increasing number of Christians. The status of the capital changed in relation to the Emperor, alongside Constantinople new influential cities appeared. The architectural language of the church and palace were similar to Constantine's time as the power was linked between religion and politics, and kept its similarity all around the Empire, with a minor differentiation as a result of the local construction tradition.

With the growth of theology and the growth in the Liturgy, new problems in church architecture have occurred that were not there during Constantine's rule. In the late 4th century, the architectural exchange between provinces started and continued till around the 6th century all over the Empire. At the same time, the quest for finding new architectural styles ended, and Constantine's church plans fell into disuse, and the simple standard basilica was the most common church plan type for the parish churches.

7. Justinian reign

In 527, the reign of Justinian started. This period is considered the Golden Age of the Byzantine period, and Emperor Justinian was one of the distinguished personalities. He had one target, which is to reunite the Empire between East and West. To impress people, inside and outside the Empire, Justinian used "buildings" as a method.

Justinian's name is still associated with the reconquest of the West and the reconstruction of the church of Hagia Sophia, the most iconic church he built. Church construction, literature, and art flourished during his reign, he built and rebuilt more than 30 churches in Constantinople. This is one of the reasons that makes Justinian's period a turning point in architecture, especially the ecclesiastical one. Most churches before Justinian were a basilica model, both in East and West. The Emperor changed the traditional architecture in the East. He developed the vaulted central plan for the church with a central dome. This type of church has been used rarely since the 4th century but with Justinian, it became more mature. This type with a dome became the rule in the main cities, regardless of whether it is for a special function or not. What also helped the change of architecture is the growth of the Liturgy at that time.

The "bold" churches in Constantinople from the Justinian period did not find any followers. Constructors and architects preferred the simplest solutions with an easily understandable relation with the building part, a clear relation between the spatial units and their boundaries with the use of vaults and pendentive domes.

At the time of Justinian, the doctrine was introduced surprisingly into the services, especially with the celebration of the Liturgy, and the new architecture followed the Liturgy in its growth. The most essential change in architecture was the increase of the centralized church plan type.

In Asia Minor more frequently than in any other province, architects tried to combine different church plan types. The result was a basilica with a dome (a domed basilica). There is a lot of variation in this plan, especially with the vaults and the distribution of the nave, transept, etc.

In Constantinople, Hagia Sophia (fig. 6) is the apogee of Byzantine architecture. The church is like any other Byzantine church with a colonnaded forecourt and a fountain at the center (it is destroyed now). It leads to the outer narthex which has five doors to enter the inner narthex, to find the nave after this. The most important element in the nave is the enormous dome with no drums,

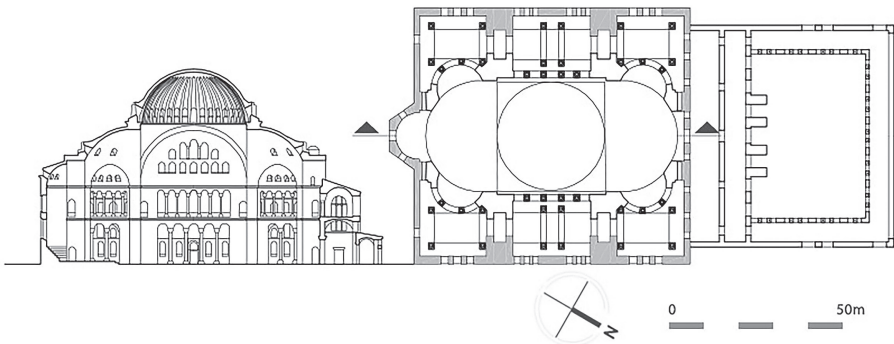


Fig. 6 – Hagia Sophia: plan and section

resting on pendentives and large arches supported by four massive corner piers. The pendentives were an innovation at the time. The rectangular shape of the basilica is created by the small domes that surrounded the central one. The two aisles are separated by arcades from the nave, with galleries in a U shape. The south gallery is closed to create a private space for the Emperor. The apse in the bema has a seven-step synthronon for the clergy.

The first church in the cruciform type was the *Holy Apostles church* (fig. 7) of Constantinople. The Holy Apostles church was built by Constantine, and later on rebuilt by Justinian. It was the most influential model of a church, as it was copied all over the Empire. In the 4th century, it was a mausoleum for Constantine, an imperial tomb surrounded by monuments devoted to the 12 apostles. Through time, this mausoleum became the burial place of numerous Byzantine Emperors³⁴.

The church is in a cross form; it is not certain so far if it is a form of a Greek or Latin cross. At the crossing, there was a place for the relics of the apostles, and this was a new beginning in architecture to have the relics inside a church, not a volume added to the building.

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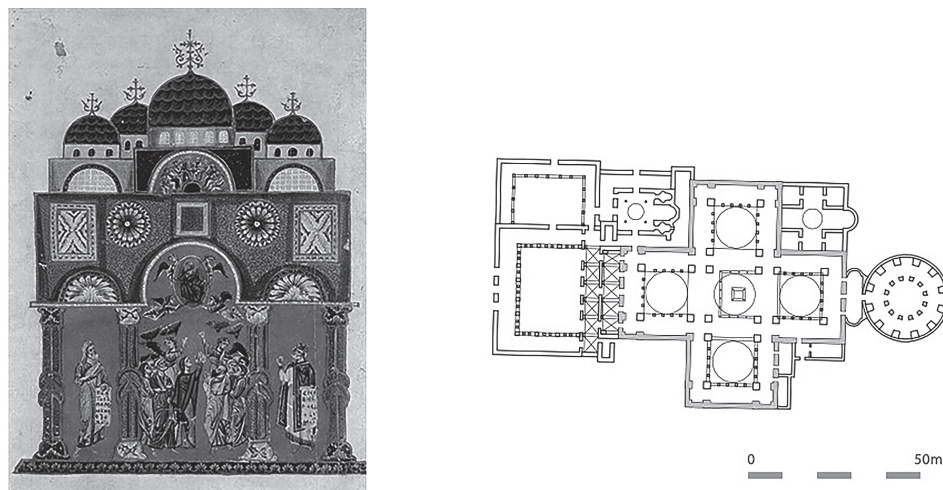


Fig. 7 – Representation of an icon believed to be the Church of the Holy Apostles. Constantinople (at right: Plan of the church with scale). Source of the image: <https://www.thebyzantinelegacy.com/holy-apostles>

³⁴ From around the 10th century onwards, the Emperors were buried in the basement of the chapel – a practice not allowed at the time of Constantine.

In the Byzantine provinces, a distinctively local architectural characteristic had emerged, in Moesia (present-day Bulgaria). The first church built in Bulgaria was around the 6th or 7th century. At that time the most widespread church type was the triple nave basilica with a semicircular apse. The most characteristic traits of the architecture were: towers on the western elevation, annexes from the east and west, side coverings, a courtyard on the south side, the presence of “pastophoria”, and the joining of different naves under one roof³⁵.

In Cyprus, the Byzantine style produced huge, magnificent, and elegant timber-roofed basilicas from the 4th through the 7th centuries. It could be one, three, or five-aisled basilica churches³⁶.

The ‘basilica’ was abandoned in the 7th century due to concern of destructive assaults, and a new Byzantine style and type was adopted. The style resulted in solid buildings that were smaller and in height, with squat proportions. It purposefully generated low-key churches. Different types of churches were recognized in this period: the vaulted basilica, the vaulted basilica with a dome, and the cross in square with multiple domes³⁷. The church outline and other structural parts are characterized by being simple, square, and with rectangular shapes and forms.

The only openings in the churches’ interiors were a couple (2-4) small windows on the dome’s drums and a single window on the altar apse wall. That made the church dark.

8. Iconoclasm

In 726, another problem emerged, that affected the whole Empire; the “Iconoclasm” lasted until around 843³⁸. This movement did not just affect the art and in particular, the art related to the Church, but also state politics as well. According to Byzantine traditions, the Emperors were chosen by God. By supporting the Iconoclastic movement, the Emperors had a conflict with the Church, and their authority was questioned.

Under its impact, the church buildings have changed in design, not only with the disappearance of the icons and the figures. But the important change was inside the church and the space that the clergy occupies. It has become larger and become the focus of the church. At this time the tendency of building a dome continues. The most widespread type of church in the 8th and 9th centuries was the cross domed church.

35 ALFEYEV – *The architecture, icons and music*, p. 34.

36 Unfortunately, almost all of them were destroyed during the Arab assaults of 649-965.

37 The dome was “calotte-shaped” supported by low, cylindrical drums and barrel vaults. The number of domes in the church differs, it was frequent to see one, three, or even five domes.

38 After years from the Second Council of Nicaea (Seventh Ecumenical Council) that was held in 787 to restore the use and veneration of icons.

9. Middle Byzantine Age

The Middle Byzantine Age started, with the Church still agitated with the Iconoclasm, and the beginning of the schism between the Patriarch of Constantinople (East) and the one of Rome (West), as Saint Photios³⁹ did not accept the supremacy of the Roman See.

Ecclesiastical, theological, and political conflicts continued escalating between West and East until the Great Schism in 1054. This schism divided Christians into Orthodox Church in the East (“Greek”) and the Catholic church in the West (“Latin”).

The conflict between East and West reached a high point in 1204 when the Fourth Crusade sacked Constantinople. After this, Byzantium was reduced to smaller, rump entities.

The Middle Byzantine Age⁴⁰, when the Macedonian dynasty ruled after the end of Iconoclasm, lasted from the 9th century to the end of the 12th century. New types of churches have emerged; some types are created; the others are renovated. The revived type was the basilica and the crossdomed church continued. The builders of that period adopted: The cross plan, the octagon domed church, the cross in square (quincunx plan), and the cross octagon. Regardless of their type, the churches of the Middle Byzantine Age are remarkably small⁴¹. And more and more Eastern rituals favored small architecture⁴².

Nevertheless, a new style appeared *the Athonite* style, which is a type of church created in the 10th century. It is a cross in square plan with two additions. The arms of the cross are covered with a barrel vault that ends in a semi-domed apse, to form the well-known form “tri-conch”. Moreover, there is the addition of a second narthex in front of the entrance compared to the single narthex in all other types of churches. The central space always has a dome with a high drum penetrated by windows, with small domes covering the corners. This type has a different category of users as the Athonite churches are built for the monks in the monasteries of Mount Athos-Greece.

After 965 AD, Cyprus was returned to the protection of the Byzantine Empire, and its ties to Constantinople became stronger⁴³. The construction of churches and monasteries flourished throughout this period. Construction activity

39 He was the Ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople from 858 to 867 and from 877 to 886. He is recognized in the Eastern Orthodox Church as Saint Photios the Great.

40 As it called in art, but some scholars called it “the Macedonian Renaissance”.

41 An example of this change is Panagia Chalkeon, built in 1028.

42 TAFT – *The byzantine rite*, p. 72-75.

43 Due to the impending threat of the Crusades and their loss of Asia Minor in 1071, the island was built as a military outpost for the Byzantines beginning at the end of the 11th century.

surged between the 11th and the end of the 12th centuries. Under the influence of Constantinople, the middle Byzantine Architecture of the 10th and 12th centuries in Cyprus evolved. A new Byzantine style, as well as a few new architectural forms, were introduced and spread across the island. In comparison to prior buildings. This new design created churches that were greater in size and scale, with slender rather than squat proportions. The churches are no longer humble, but rather spectacular, with axial symmetry and geometry as their defining features.

At the end of the 12th century, the barrel vaults and arches grew slightly pointed. The most important influence of Constantinople was the use of brick at the end of the 11th century. The number of windows increased which allowed more light to enter the church. Another influence was the fanlight, the semi-circular shape window above the main door. The narthex was reinstated, either because of the change in liturgy or because of the influence of Constantinople.

In 1191 the king of England captured the island. The Gothic style was introduced in 1200 after Guy of Lusignan⁴⁴ brought to the island craftsmen and painters capable of building and decorating castles, palaces, and churches. The construction of the Byzantine style was in decline. But at the end of the century, it got revived in the mountains of Troodos (fig. 8), with the timber-roofed style churches.



Fig. 8 – Panagia tou Araka church – Troodos’ mountains (at left: outside view; at center: inside view; at right: plan of the church with scale). Source: Petros Monogios – 2018

10. The end of the empire

Michael VIII Paleologos retook Constantinople in 1261 and undertook the construction of monasteries, markets, baths (etc.) while the Empire was dealing with earthquakes, wars, and religious conflicts. Despite that, under the Paleologos

44 Guy was a French knight, king of Jerusalem and was compensated for the loss of his kingdom by purchasing Cyprus in 1192.

dynasty, there was a comeback in arts, culture, and literature. More translations of Greek texts to Latin were made, Roman/Greek scholars, architects, and painters arrived in the West and facilitated the Renaissance. Even Western elements found their way to the Byzantine Empire⁴⁵.

After Michael VIII (1282), the Empire began to decline, and in the early hours of Tuesday, 29 May 1453, the last Ottoman attack began and in the late afternoon, the Sultan entered the city of Constantinople.

11. Development of architecture during the Empire

To summarize, Church architecture has gone through many developments. Different types of churches appeared in every era. The changes in the church plans, volumes, and decorations were experimental and one of the reasons is to seek the ultimate design of the “House of God”.

Hagia Sophia church was unique, and no other church competed with it ever, but its different details and characteristics are used till our time. From using the basilica, the “trend” shifted to centralized churches with a dome and vaults. The synthronon ceased to be visible and the clergy stayed at the apse. At the east end, the bema housed the altar, but in time there will be two apses: the diakonikon to the south and the prothesis to the north: the first one is used for the vestments and books, and the other is used to preserve the communion vessels and where the preparation of bread and wine for communion is done. Their function is related to the Little and Great Entrance which were reduced in scale around the 10th century and the change was parallel with the change in architecture which was more centralized. The screen had developed into iconostasis and separated the apse from the body of the church. The altar was protected from view and, as said, the icons on the iconostasis made the interior more heavenly⁴⁶ until the 14th century when the iconostasis became totally closed except for the three doors it has. Two more characteristics also disappeared: the solea and ambo. The readers will stand below the dome, and from the left door of the iconostasis emerged the processions to return by the Royal central door. This was a response to a tendency for a more centralized liturgy and architectural forms, to emphasize and reflect the cross-in-square shape. The outside of the building was an outward display of the function, the order, and the arrangement of the interior.

Constantine's era is the one with the most different shapes and forms for the church plan. In New Rome, he built many churches and after him, there was Justinian who built, renovated, and rebuilt the churches in Constantinople; therefore, different types of churches are found in the city.

45 For example, the bell tower started to appear in churches as an Italian influence.

46 DOIG – *Liturgy and architecture*, p. 80.

On the contrary, the churches in Rome are mostly basilicas except three⁴⁷. A lot of halls were converted to churches, especially after the Edict of Milan. And a large number of churches as a basilica type are built over a mausoleum or palace. In the second half of the 4th century, the number of believers increased, especially among the upper-class members who donated money and gifts to the Church. After the Vandals, in the second half of the 5th century, the churches were smaller and more modest than the ones before.

The city of Milan was considered the capital of the West since 350. The churches were monumental in design, and splendor in volume, with sharp walls, dwarf galleries, and blind arcades. The cover is either vaults or timber roofs. Approximately all types exist in Milan: tetraconch, cross plan, aisleless, or with aisles basilica with an apse.

Syria was a flourishing province in the Roman Empire, its architecture is similar to the one in the Aegean coastlands. The basilica churches at that time have a wide nave, with a colonnaded narthex preceded by an atrium, and the apse is closed from the outside in a polygonal shape (three sides). The basilicas with galleries appear in minor cities.

Before the fall of Constantinople (the last two centuries), the Byzantine culture is remarkably far spread. In architecture, the builders created new alterations, by modifying the stylistic concepts of Middle Byzantine architecture. They worked on new effects on the outer walls (mosaic, sculptural decoration, etc.), and enhanced the decorative patterns. The final design was developed with delicacy, finesse, and elegance. This observation is mainly for Constantinople and Thessaloniki. Outside these two cities, the architecture is interesting but not of high quality, and it is an insignificant amount in comparison with the previous centuries.

The Late Byzantine architecture is an epilogue for architects and historians. It is never monumental nor great and rarely subtle. The buildings in the different regions are either basic and overladen or refined and artistic. Church planning continues in the same traditions: cross in square, triconch, tetraconch, with the existence of the small, vaulted basilicas.

A new type emerged by fusing two types of plans: the cross in square and the barrel-vaulted nave of a basilica, with a dome in it, and with the transverse barrel vault taller than the nave (e.g. Porta Panaghia in Pyli-Greece). A new variant in the cross in square church is the insertion of triple arcades between the piers on the two sides of the perpendicular axis of the entrance toward the apse. This merge resembles Hagia Irene (4th century) in Constantinople. In the Late Byzantine architecture whether the church plans are traditional, revived, remodeled, or newly

47 PATRICIOS, Nicholas, – *The sacred architecture of Byzantium*. I.B. Tauris, 2014, p. 88.

invented, their exterior walls were clad with decoration and are more enriched than in the Middle Byzantine architecture, since the general interest went to painting. The plans remain the same, but the proportions changed. For example, Theotokos Pammakaristos church was built around 1315 in Constantinople and the proportion between the horizontal and vertical dimensions is much greater than the usual.

The best example of architecture in the late Byzantine era is the town of Mystras-Greece. Mystras was founded in the 13th century. Its architecture is influenced by different styles. In addition to the Byzantine style, Elements of Romanesque and Gothic art are also present. This town is a good example of how Western architecture found its way to be part of Byzantine architecture.

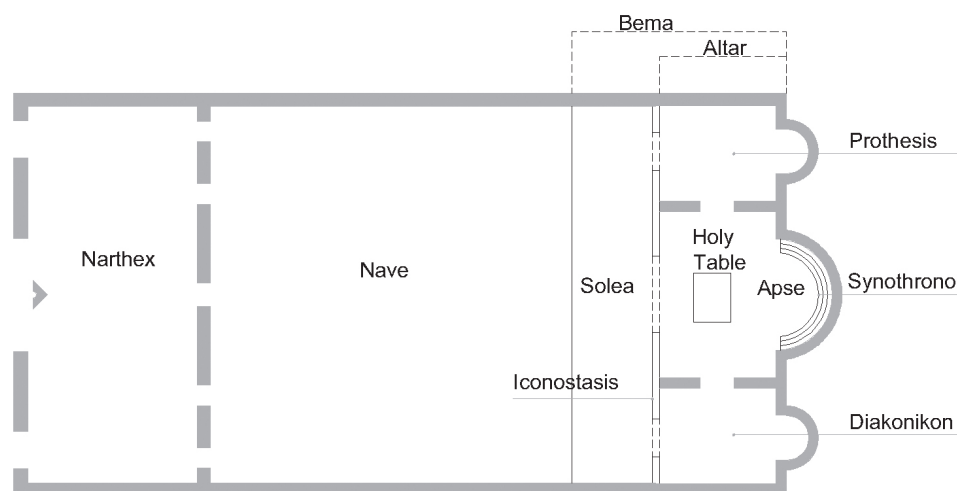


Fig. 9 – Organigram of one of the first model of a church

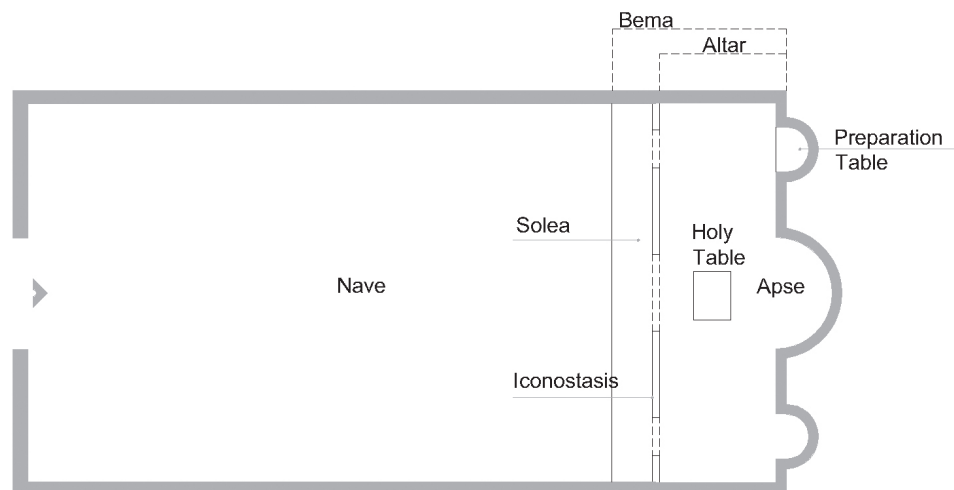


Fig. 10 – Organigram of one of the last model of a church

12. Development of architecture after the Empire

When the Byzantine Empire ended in 1453, her culture did not end with this date. Byzantine architectural style developed and established a strong national character throughout the Byzantine Empire's border regions, as well as beyond its borders, where Orthodox Christianity was spreading. Balkan architecture, in particular, kept a link to Byzantine origins.

In Serbia, there are a lot of churches of Byzantine architecture. The church of the Decani monastery built in 1334 is an example of the Rascian⁴⁸ architecture style. The church is a cross in square type but combines different styles in it (Serbian, Byzantine, and Romano-Gothic). It is rich with sculptures and bas-reliefs of angels, nature, and people. The foundation of the drum is cubic, with a double-pitched roof⁴⁹.

After the collapse of the Serbian Kingdom in 1371, and the battle of Kosovo, Serbia faced a decline in culture and church architecture. In 1459 a part of Serbia was under the Ottoman Empire, as a result, no significant new churches were built, and many old ones were in ruins.

In the 18th century, a part of Serbia was under the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The circumstances allowed for church construction once again. However, the churches of Austro-Hungary followed mostly the western style⁵⁰. After the liberation from the Ottomans in the 19th century, the Byzantine style appeared again, and it was a tool for depicting the national traditions of the Serbs. By the late 19th century when Serbia got its full independence, Byzantine architecture as a model returned.

Saint Sava Cathedral (fig. 11) in Belgrade is a fine example of how the contemporary churches in Serbia aim to resemble Byzantine architecture. Moreover,



Fig. 11 – Saint Sava Cathedral, Serbia (at left. Source: Bouchra Tohme – 2022) and Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Bulgaria (at right. Source: Pudelek: Marcin Szala – 2013)

48 Named after the state of Rascia, southwestern part of Serbia. The earliest Rascian style of church architecture, is a single nave domed basilica, the church of the Theotokos Euergetes, built-in 1183 at Studenica monastery.

49 KRAUTHEIMER – *Early Christian and Byzantine architecture*, p. 300-303.

50 From the outside, the churches were similar to the Catholic ones at the time.

when building the Cathedral, Hagia Sophia was taken as a model, and now it is considered the largest Orthodox church in Europe.

In Bulgaria in the 11th century, in the period of the Byzantine Empire, and from the 12th till 14th century, in the second Bulgarian kingdom, the cross in square church type was the most widespread. This type continues to spread until the middle of the 18th century when the basilica church type took over. Then in the middle of the 19th century, the domed basilica became dominant.

A golden age of church architecture was observed after the liberation of Bulgaria in 1878 from the Turkish yoke. In 1912 the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral (fig. 11) in Sofia opened. It is a cross in square church in Byzantine architectural style, with impressive dimensions, as it is built for around 5000 people with the height of the dome being 45 meters.

In Cyprus, in the 13th and 14th centuries, a decline in the construction of the Byzantine style was noticed but it flourished in the second half of the 14th century, as the Greek nobles were permitted to construct Orthodox churches in towns. Around 1370, the Greeks constructed the first Franco-Byzantine style church, the church of Saint Georges of the Greeks⁵¹. The church has two different styles, the Byzantine and the Gothic. It is a three-aisled basilica type with three semi-circular altar apses with pointed conches and a Byzantine dome, with ribbed vaults and ashlar stone⁵² for the construction. The Franco-Byzantine churches have the characteristic of the Gothic churches with a slender proportion. The churches are higher than the previous ones, especially with the pointed arched vaults that increased the height by around two times. The churches constructed during the 14th and 15th centuries are taller, wider, and longer than those built during the 12th century.

The Turks permitted only the presence of the Orthodox Church, which was allowed to reestablish itself. There has also been a significant increase in the number of new churches built since 1974. But the Orthodox churches were still mainly built in the neo-Byzantine style as Costas Georghiou said in his book *Architecture of the Cypriots during British Rule 1878-1960*.

In Romania, the historical development of Romania and its geopolitical situation influenced the architecture of the churches. Romania was a meeting place of different cultures since it is a crossing between eastern and western civilizations, as a result, Byzantine architecture coexisted with some western influence in the architecture of Romanian churches. Most plans were cross in square and basilica type churches, with spherical domes and sharp-pointed, spired peaks⁵³.

51 This church was constructed close to the Medieval-Gothic Cathedral of Saint Nicholas of the Latins.

52 It is usually used in construction for Gothic buildings.

53 ALFEYEV – *The architecture, icons and music*, p. 37.

The Golden Age of church architecture in Romania was between the 15th and 17th centuries. The painted churches in the monastery of Bucovina were built in this period. The interesting thing about them is that all the outer walls are covered with frescos (icons for the saints).

These churches are rectangular and stretched along the east-west axis, with three altar conchs. «The building is crowned with a double-sloped roof and a sharp-topped dome in the shape of a spire on top of a high drum»⁵⁴.

In the late 17th century, a new architectural style was developed in South Romania by Saint and Prince Constantine Brâncoveanu. Brâncovenesc style churches are a mix between Byzantine, Ottoman, late Renaissance, and Baroque architecture, with a plan that is similar to the Athonite style.

Most of the Romanian churches have a unique style, the predominant shape is the triconch churches with a different proportion than the Byzantine. The triconch church of the Descent the Holy Spirit at Dragomirna monastery, has a length that is equal to its height which is 42 meters with a hat-shaped dome and a tall drum. Later Romanian architecture was influenced by Classical, Baroque, and Gothic architecture. In the 20th century, there was a comeback to Byzantine architecture, the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Sibiu (fig.12) was built around 1902, by taking Hagia Sofia as a model, and adding two towers on the western elevation as per the tradition in Transylvanian baroque architecture.

In the 4th century, Lebanon was part of the Roman Empire as it is located along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. The Abbasid Empire and then the Fatimids occupied the area until the 11th century with the crusaders. After the Crusaders and before the independence in 1943, the country was occupied sequentially by the Mamelukes, Ottomans, and finally the French mandate.

There are eighteen registered religious denominations in the country and each one has its own different traditions, identity, and collective memory, furthermore, each religious denomination (e.g., Shiite, Sunni, Druze, Maronite, Catholic⁵⁵, Orthodox) has played a political role in the country. To show their presence and power each one uses architecture as a tool that differs from that of the others.

The modern history of Lebanon is marked by religious and political conflicts, which led to a civil war in 1975. After the war, with the reconstruction of the cities, more churches were built. The style of most of the Orthodox churches was Byzantine. The most common plan type is the domed basilica but always taking into consideration the grandiose church Hagia Sophia with the proportion, the

54 ALFEYEV – *The architecture, icons and music*, p. 37.

55 Although Greek Catholic and Maronite church have the same dogmas and just differ in rituals and traditions, but in the country they are treated differently from a political perspective and a religious one.



Fig. 12 – Holy Trinity Cathedral, Romania, Sibui (at left: Source: Scott Eastman, 2011) and Saint Jacob Cathedral, Lebanon, Shadra (at right: Source: Wassim Abboud, 2020)

arches, and the details. Many churches are good examples from all over the country like Saint Nicholas in Beirut and Saint Jacob in Shadra (North Lebanon) (fig. 12).

After the fall of the Byzantine Empire and being under the Ottoman Empire, most of the countries achieved their independence in different years. Regardless of that factor, we can notice that the churches built after the independence were influenced by Byzantine architecture, especially Hagia Sophia. It is also important to note that the majority of the citizens in most countries are Orthodox.

13. Conclusion

Orthodoxy is traditional, and more accurately, it is conservative, meaning that it has great respect for the Church Tradition. Its current life is rooted in its heritage, historical experience, and tradition. The development of the church architecture shows the relation between the Byzantine Rite and the elements, mostly architectural. This relation is not simple, neither clear nor direct correspondence. Both liturgy and architecture have “an internal logic”, and their development is at different rates.

For many centuries the Church carried out the heritage of the Byzantine Empire more than its nobles. In the 20th century, it is always the churches that are built in the Byzantine style, more than other buildings that are related to the civil authorities. The Eastern Orthodox Church did not renovate its Rite. This conservative attitude was maintained even in architecture, by following the Byzantine style. The use of this style by the Orthodox Church in the twentieth century is related to a complex matrix that starts with Tradition and goes through the prosperity that the Empire gave the Church in the first centuries.