

## DOCUMENTS ON EARLY CHRISTIAN AND BYZANTINE ARCHITECTURE

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**Abstract.** *There are many models in the entire history of architecture which have travelled across the world, from one to another part of the big world. For various reasons, very frequently not at all scientific or professional, in our part of the world, be it Serbian or Yugoslav, or south Slav, some like to remain silent, when it comes to the transition of a Byzantine model, which by nature is rooted in the Orthodox Christian faith at the south east of Europe and the outmost west of Asia, to their areas, pervaded to a great extent by the Roman Catholic Christian belief, or Islam. There are numerous evidences of the transition of a model, one of many which found their new home on the west-European soil after the fall of Byzantium, mostly after the Crusades, when looters, but also scientists and artists in Italy, came by new wealth, and new knowledge, in the capital of the fallen Empire, observing its magnificent edifices, and taking its parts to their boats and shipping them to Venice and other cities in Italy and placing them on their buildings and squares, as they have done with the columns of the Augusteion of Constantinople, the square dedicated to Justinian's mother Augusta, which now decorate the square near the famous Venetian church of Saint Marco. Some other, also numerous accounts, explain how the Ottoman Turkish architecture in almost the same way, adopted its mosque construction model at the same place, in the same manner, retaining the actual structures but changing the religious insignia, or by copying this Byzantine model in building the new mosques.*

**Key words:** *Early Christianity, Byzantium, documents, theory of architecture.*

The study of philosophical foundations of Byzantine architecture is not quite an easy task. There are two fairly old publications, with the same but puzzling title: Sources of Byzantine art (Quellen der byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte), by F. W. Unger, 1878)<sup>1</sup>, and

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<sup>1</sup> Unger, Friedrich Wilhelm, *Quellen zur byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte*, Wien 1878.

by J. P. Richter, 1897<sup>2</sup>. Both are, however, dealing with the history of monuments of Constantinople. A newer collection of sources, also in such a wide domain such as the entire history of art, compiled by the Greek scientist K. D. Kalokyres did not prove particularly useful. Certain periods in development of Byzantine thought in architecture, such as those about the early Fathers of the Church: Epiphanius, Gregorius Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Vassilios (Basileus) Cappadocian, Athanasius of Alexandria, Amphilochius of Iconium, Theodotus of Ancyra and Eusebius, then about emperor Justinian, about the iconoclasm, and some special topics, such as the Christ iconography, were presented here owing to the texts dealing with the history of art. Other periods, particularly Byzantine High and Late Medieval times and Byzantine Renaissance, have not been satisfactorily researched, in this perspective. For this reason this treatise about documents, that is, theory of architecture in early Christian period and Byzantium relies to a certain degree on the authors own insights acquired through literature and discussions with colleagues.

A great difficulty is posed by the language of the source texts, which is a fact that can be truly appreciated only by those who read the original Byzantine authors. On one hand, there are oratories, strangely oblique, extraordinarily beautiful, opaque and imprecise. On the other hand, there are certain humble documents, such as census, whose technical vocabulary cannot be entirely clarified, not even with the aid of any existing lexicon. For this reason an attempt is made to be as accurate as possible, to the detriment of the attractiveness of expression. The scope of this text, however, does not allow discussing in detail all the sections with unclear meaning.

The documents and sources are Greek, Latin and Slavic in the most part. Some of them are Syrian and Arabic. To the extent it is possible to differ between the documents and sources, it is noteworthy that the former category is very poorly represented in written material about the Byzantine art, and thus architecture. It includes numerous imperial and ecclesiastic laws and decrees, as well as several inventory lists, mostly from monasteries. Other types of documents, which came to be known in the western Europe in a much later period, such as guild registers, financial reports, contracts, letters of recommendation or wills of the artists are completely missing.

The main body of our material about the philosophical foundations of Byzantine architecture could freely be considered a literary one, and it was extracted from the diverse sources: narratives, chronicles, Saints' lives, theological tractates, as well as travelers' accounts. Particularly important is one literary genre, and that is an oral description of a work of art. This genre is a literary form of architectural comments, which was most likely fostered according to the Hellenistic and Roman models dedicated to the painting art: Flavius Josephus, Statius, Pliny, Lucian, and it reached its pinnacle with Justinian and ekphrasis.

The Ekphrasis could be a prose or verse (epic hexameter in the case of Paul the Silent, and in iamb in the case of Constantine of Rhodes). It can constitute a small independent form - opusculum or be a part of a bigger volume, such as a history book or even sermon book. The Procopius' famous work about the Emperor Justinian edifices *De aedificiis* is entirely composed of a number of ekphrasis. As for this genre, one should bear in mind that it became a favorite in the period of imperial Rome, and it was determined by a sys-

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<sup>2</sup> Richter, Jean Paul, *Quellen zur byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte*, Wien 1897.

tem of conventions applicable to the standards of naturalistic pagan art and understandable to the public acquainted with the science and Greek mythology. Later on, it was used for Christianity topics (and it was used since the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), but its language, its imagination and clichés were not adapted essentially. This resulted in a painful artificiality, further aggravated by the unwillingness to term anything by its vulgar – vernacular technical name. A church could not be termed a church - ekklesia: it had to be a temple or sanctuary (naos or even better, neos), except if it was described by a poetical word for a house or a hall (metathron). A bishop (episkopos) became archimustes or mustipolos, as if he was presiding the Eleusinian Mysteries. A cask-like vault became a cylinder bound by hoops and so forth. This phenomenon is not characteristic of ekphrasis solely: in fact it is present in all the high-flown Byzantine literature written in the classic, primarily Greek Attica language, a language not spoken by anyone at the time. One consequence of such aspiration is notable: the vocabulary was imprecise. In the medieval Greece, a dome was called troullos, but in the fine literature, it may appear as a ball, sphere or hemisphere, circle, crown, peak, crest or helmet. Or: an arch, termed eilema, by the simple people was usually referred to as apsis, and sometimes as antux, which is a Homeric word for the rim of a circular shield, used also for other curved elements. The term stoa also can stand for a number of various things.

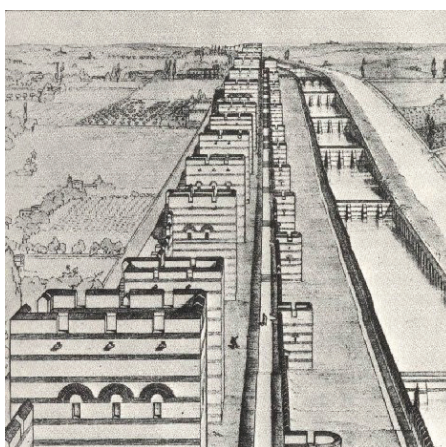


Fig. 1 City walls, Constantinople (reconstruction according to F. Kruschen)

Together with ekphrasis, epigram was flourishing, which is also classic literary genre determined by its own rules. As epigram was usually a short poem intended for engraving or incision in a basis of a statue, an edifice, frame of an icon or used of a sarcophagus, it seldom contained a description of a structure it should accompany. Its value of theoreticians and historians of art and architecture often lies in the lemma, that is, its title containing attribution to this or that monument.

In choosing the contents of this review, an attempt was made to establish equilibrium between various sources, because no genre can be represented thoroughly due to the limited space. Many of the known documents are included, but there is some material which might be unfamiliar, even to the specialists. Yet, it was not possible to avoid **collection** of

testimonies regarding certain geographical centers such as Constantinopolis and Gaza, or certain famous monuments such as Hagia Sophia or the Church of the Holy Apostles as well as certain periods such as the rules of Constantine the Great, Justinian and Vassileos I.

Numerous sources were also included, that belong to the papers such as this one. Among them is the book *About Ceremonies* (*De cerimoniis*) by Constantin Porphyrogenitus, which was, undoubtedly, a document of extreme importance for the study of the monuments of Constantinopolis, especially those of the Imperial palace. Unfortunately, the book is not consistently descriptive: the information it offers must be derived and compiled from the separate descriptions of various ceremonies and receptions. For instance, it does not provide a description of the famous Golden Hall (*Chrysotriklinos*) in the palace: it does claim, occasionally and in separate chapters, that the hall had eight arches and conch turned towards east, a dome with sixteen windows, a cornice, silver doors etc<sup>3</sup>. The category of art instruction books, was entirely omitted. The medieval ones originate from the west, so even when they contain material referring to Byzantine sources, such as the *Light Compositions* (*Compositiones Lucenses*), *Mappae clavicula*, *Theophilus' Notes* (*Schedula*) and *Heraclius's instruction-book About colors* (*De coloribus*). The earliest Slavic instruction-book, ascribed to bishop Nectarius, goes back to the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the famous *Art guidebook* (*Hermeneia*) by the Dionysios Fournensis is from 18<sup>th</sup> century. One should be aware, that the latter, in all technical and iconographic divisions, very often repeat the original Byzantine practice. But differentiation of byzantine elements from the later additions is a fairly complex task.

The central tradition of byzantine art and architecture can undoubtedly be placed in Constantinople, but determination of its periphery is a tricky business. The Italian city of Ravenna, for instance, in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century, was closely connected with its eastern capital, and its monuments are crucial for anyone studying not only byzantine, but also west European art and architecture. The activity of byzantine artists and architects in the west Europe, was not omitted, and it is a very complex problem. The area which has not been covered here, except in the case of the Eusebius' description of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, is the Holy Land. There is, indeed, a great multitude of materials, mostly the pilgrimage accounts, related to the Palestinian sacraments, and it should not be denied that these monuments played an important role in the development of byzantine art and architecture. A representative choice of that material, would require more space than is available here.

Regarding the geographical distribution of our original material, there is a notable difference between the period of Christian Roman Empire (in other words, to the mid 7<sup>th</sup> century) and the later byzantine period. The first period is marked by a considerable number of urban centers where the literature or other documents were created. This holds for some of the most interesting texts here, considering Gaza. We have a considerable knowledge of the monuments of Antioch, and we also have the descriptions of the churches in Tyre, Nazianzus, Nyssa, Edessa, and others. There is surprisingly little preserved material on the Christian monuments of Alexandria. In the period after the 7<sup>th</sup> century and after dissolution of the Orthodox Byzantine Empire effected primarily by the Roman Catholic

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<sup>3</sup> Many books have been dealing with the Constantine Porphyrogenitus' work *About Ceremonies*. The fundamental one among them, is: J. Ebersolt, *Le Grand Palais de Constantinople et le Livre des Ceremonies*, Paris 1910.

Crusaders, the state of affairs was radically changed: there was only one city of culture, namely Constantinople, and practically all the literary activity was concentrated inside its walls. The same holds for the readership. For this reason our text information has been almost completely limited to the monuments of Constantinople. We now nigh on nothing about the provinces.

The reign of the Emperor Constantine ended in 337. The era that began then, and which was finished by the beginning of the rule of the emperor Justinian (527), was historically marked by incessant waves of Germanic invasions, and by the fall of the Western Roman Empire. In terms of theology, this same era was marked by a crystallization of the still unified Christian thinking by the Church Fathers – Cappadocians, Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Cyril of Alexandria – as well as by the monophysite controversies about the Christian purity, advocated by, among others, Phyloxenus, Xenaia of Mabbug in Euphratesia and Severus of Antioch. In terms of art, it was marked by an entirely complete elaboration of the specifically Christian art.

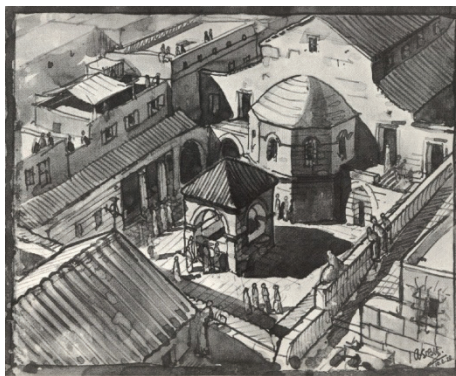


Fig. 2 Table Church (right), around 400 and martyrrium of St. Theodore (on the left), 494-6, Gerasa, Palestine

In the church construction, basilicas remained the prevailing type, that was standardized in the course of time. Nowadays, there is a tendency to observe basilicas as a building separated from other structures, but it was not like that, by far: in fact, it used to be in focus of a huge complex of structures. Archeological research of early Christian sites in numerous parts of Roman Empire threw a lot light on the nature of those complexes<sup>4</sup>. In the Apostolic Constitutions II (*Constitutiones apostolorum II*) (chapter 57, p. 3 and on), which is a collection of church orders believed to date back to 375 AD and to have been partly founded on the Apostolic Instructions (*Didascalia apostolorum*), a 3<sup>rd</sup> century book<sup>5</sup>, there is the following statement about an ideal church:

<sup>4</sup> See: J. Lassus, *Les edifices du culte autour de la basilique*, Atti del VI Congresso Internazionale di Archeologia Cristiana, Ravenna 1962, published 1965, 581-610.

<sup>5</sup> Izd. F. X. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones apostolorum*, I, Paderborn, 1905, 159 and on. The corresponding chapter of Apostolic instructions is less specific. It may be found in English translation in: R. H. Connolly, *Didascalia apostolorum*, Oxford, 1929, 119-20.

3. First, let the church (oikos) be elongated (inasmuch as it resembles a ship), turned to the east, and let it have pastophoria on either side, towards the east. 4. The bishop's throne is to be placed in the middle, and on both sides of him the presbyters should sit, while the deacons stand by, trimly dressed, without any superfluous clothing, since they are like seamen and boatswains. It shall be their concern of the latter that the laity is seated in the other part (of the church) in a quiet and orderly fashion, the women sitting apart and observing silence. 5. The lector shall stand in the middle, on an eminence, and read the books of Moses and Joshua, son of Nave, of the Judges and the Kings... 10. The janitors shall stand guard at the entrances (reserved) for men, and the deacons at those (reserved) for women, in the guise of ship's stewards: indeed, the same order is observed at the Tabernacle of Witness (lat.: tabernaculum, gazebo with the chest of Old Jews – author's note)... 12. The church is likened not only to a ship, but also a sheepfold (mandra)...

The document then proceeds to claim that, exactly as the animals in a fold are separated, the congregation should be divided, not only according to sex, but to age groups, too.

The codes contained in the *Testamentum Domini nostri Jesu Christi I* (chapter 19)<sup>6</sup>, the Syrian text dating back to the fifth century, gives us a certain idea on the multitude of added buildings around the Bishop church. The following is said about an ideal church:

I will tell you, then, how a sanctuary (lat.: sanctorium, area around the main altar – author's note) ought to be; then I will make known unto you the holy canon of the priests of the Church.

Let a church then be thus: with three entries in type of the Trinity. And let the diakonikon be to the right of the right hand entry, to the purpose that the Eucharists, or offerings that are offered, may be seen. Let there be a forecourt, with a portico running round, to this diakonikon. And within a forecourt let there be a house for a baptistery, with its length 21 cubits for a type of the total number of the prophets, and its breadth 12 cubits for a type of those who were appointed to preach the Gospel; one entry; three exist.

Let the church have a house for the catechumens, which shall also be a house of exorcists, but let it not be separated from the church, so that when they enter and are in it they may hear the readings and spiritual doxologies and psalms.

Then let there be the throne towards the east; to the right and to left places of the presbyters, so that on the right those who are more exalted and more honored may be seated, and those who toil in the word, but those of moderate stature on the left side. And let this place of the throne be raised three steps up, for the altar also ought to be there.

Now let this house have two porticoes<sup>7</sup> to right and to left, for men and for women.

And let all the places be lit, both for a type and for reading.

Let the altar have a veil of pure linen, because it is without spot.

Let the baptistery also in like manner be under a veil.

And as for the Commemoration let a place be built so that a priest may sit, and the archdeacon with readers, and write the names of those who are offering oblations, or of those on whose behalf they offer, so that when the holy things are being offered by the

<sup>6</sup> Published. Rahmani, 22 and further. With several changes, the Serbian translation was made, on the basis of the English one: Rev. D. J. Chitty *iz Gerasa, City of the Decapolis*, ed. C. H. Kraaeling, New Haven, 1938, 175-76.

<sup>7</sup> Lateral aisles.

bishop, a reader or the archdeacon may name them in this commemoration which priests and people offer with supplication on their behalf. For this type is also in the heavens.

And let the place of the priests be within a veil near the place of commemoration. Let the House of Oblation (chorbanas) and treasury all be near the diakonikon. And let the place of reading<sup>8</sup> be a little outside the altar. And let the house of the bishop be near the place that is called the forecourt Also that of those widows who are called first in standing. That of the priests and deacons also behind the baptistery. And let the deaconesses remain by the door of the Lord's house. And let the church have a hostel near by, where the archdeacon may be receiving strangers.

Apart from the basilica, there was also the martyrion, a place dedicated to the martyrdom of a member of the church, which was originally considered a place of a **testimony**, which gradually assumed a meaning of a church dedicated to martyrdom. A growing significance of the cult of relics, lead in the fourth century<sup>9</sup> to the habit of their transfer from one to another location. For instance, in 356 and 357 to Constantinople were brought the relics of the apostles Timothy, Andrew and Luke and displayed in the Holy Apostles Church. Even though the home town of an apostle, or the town of his martyrdom, naturally had a precedence for possessing martyrions, the transfer of relics made possible construction of martyrions at localities which had not links with the lives of the saints. Particularly important is the case of Constantinople, which at the time of its founding had not earlier Christian communities, but which, in the course of time, gathered the greatest collection of relics in the entire Christian world.

In the architectonic terms, a martyrion comprised a centralized form (circular, polygonal, square or cruciform). And excellent example is the tomb in Chalcedon, a part of Constantinople on the far side of Propontis, the present day Bosphorus, and which was described by Evagrius, a lawyer living in Constantinople in 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. It was a basilica used for congregations, preceded with the oblong atrium, and with an expansion of a circular martyrion of Saint Euphemia, with her sarcophagus exuding a miraculous stream of blood. The exact time of their construction is not known, but it is certain that the church existed in the second half of the fourth century. In *Historia ecclesiastica* II (chapter 3) about the martyrion and the St. Euphemia Church in Chalcedon<sup>10</sup>, Evagrius wrote:

Her church faces Constantinople and is beautified by the view of so great a city. It consists of three enormous structures. The first is open to the sky and is distinguished by an oblong court having columns all round; the second is nearly similar to the first with regard to width, length and columns, and is differentiated only by being covered with a roof<sup>11</sup>. On the north side of the latter, towards the rising sun<sup>12</sup>, is a circular building like a *tholos*, ringed inside with artfully made columns, all of same material and size. Upon these, yet under the same roof, is raised a gallery so that one can, from there, too, pray to the Martyr and witness the service. Inside the tholos, to the east, is a beautiful sanctuary

<sup>8</sup> Ambo.

<sup>9</sup> Thus the relics of the apostles Timothy, Andrew and Luke were transferred in 356 and 357 to Constantinople and deposited in the St. Apostles Church.

<sup>10</sup> The exact date of construction is unknown, but the church certainly existed in the late fourth century. See: R. Janin, *Echoess d'Orient*, XXI, 1922, 379 and further.

<sup>11</sup> Evagrius refers to a basilica preceded by an oblong atrium.

<sup>12</sup> I.e. at the north-east corner of the basilica.

(sekos) wherein the Martyr's sacred relics are deposited in an oblong tomb-some call this a sarcophagus (makra) – cunningly made of silver... On the left side of this tomb is a small aperture secured by little doors through which they insert in the direction of the sacred relics a long iron rod having a sponge attached to it, and after rotating the sponge, they pull it back on the rod, full of blood and clots. When the people see this, they straightaway offer adoration to God...

St. Gregory (335-395) of Nyssa, describes certain details of his project of construction of a cruciform martyrium which should have an octagonal central area, covered by a conical wall top. He also provided some valuable data about usage of workforce in the central Asia Minor. This martyrium in Nyssa, in the Gregory's Epistle XXV to Amphilochius, bishop of Iconium<sup>13</sup>, has been described as follows:

...The extent of the whole work may become known to Your Perfection by means of reckoning; for which reason I shall attempt to explain to you in writing the entire construction.

The church is in the form of a cross and naturally consists of four bays, one each side. These bays come into contact with one another in a manner that is inherent in the cruciform shape. Inscribed in the cross is a circle cut by eight angles. I have called the octagonal shape a circle because it is rounded in such a way that the four sides of the octagon that are opposite one another on the main axes (ek diametron) connect by means of arches the central circle to the four adjoining bays. The other four sides of the octagon, which lie between the rectangular bays, do not extend in an even line towards the bays, but each one of them will encompass a semicircle having at the top a conch-like form leaning on an arch; so that, all together, there will be eight arches by means of which the squares and semicircles will parallel-wise be conjoined to the central space. Next to the inner side of the diagonal piers will be placed an equal number of columns for the sake of both adornment and strength, and these, too, will uphold arches constructed in the same manner as the outer ones. Above these eight arches the octagonal structure will be raised for cubits for the due proportion of the superimposed windows. From this point upward there will be a conical top. The [interior] width of each of the rectangular bays will be eight cubits and their length greater by one half; as for the height, it will be proportioned to the width. Hte same will hold true of the semicircles, namely that the distance between the piers will amount to eight cubits, and the depth will be obtained by fixing the point of a compass in the center of the side and describing an arc through end thereof. As for the height, here, too, it will be proportioned to the width. The thickness of the wall enclosing the entire structure will be three feet, i.e. in addition to the [above] internal measurements.

...Please take special care that some of them (masons – author's note) should be expert in uncentered vaulting, for I have been informed that this is more stable than the kind that rests on supports. The scarcity of wood leads us to the idea of roofing the entire building with masonry because no roofing timer is available in these parts... However, we have no (source of) stone, so that the material of construction will be clay brick as well as whatever stones happen to come our way; consequently, there will be no need for them to spend their time on dressing the face of the stones so that they fit one to another. Besides,

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<sup>13</sup> Ed. G. Paskvali (G. Pasquali), pp. 79 ff. Cf.: J. Strzygowski: *Kleinasion*, Leipzig, 1903, pp. 71 ff. (contribution by B. Keil).



I know that the men of your parts are more expert and easier to please with regard to their wages than our local men who are taking advantage of our need. As for the task of the stone-carvers, this will concern not only the eight columns which are in need of adornment; it also requires altar-shaped pedestals<sup>14</sup> and sculpted capitals of the Corinthian order, as well as an entrance door of suitably decorated marble and the superimposed lintel (*thuromata*), beautified on the projecting cornice (*geision*) with the customary delineations (*graphai*).<sup>15</sup> ... In addition, there are the columns of the peristyle – not fewer than forty of them – which are surely stone-carvers' work...

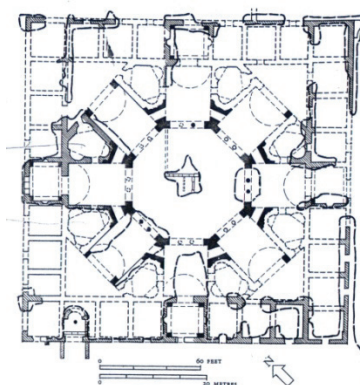


Fig. 3 Octagon, Hierapolis (Pamukale), Asia Minor, early 5<sup>th</sup> century (?)

And in Hebdomon, outskirts of Constantinople<sup>16</sup>, there is an early example of martyrrium erected for the imported relic, head of Saint John the Baptist. In the *Patria Constantinopoleos* (§ 145), a collection gathered around 995, which is a guide of a kind about the monuments of this city<sup>17</sup> based partly upon *Parastaseis syntomoi chronikai*, which was a popular guide of the same kind composed 741-775<sup>18</sup>, is stated about the martyrrium: The round-roofed church that has conches was called Prodomos, and was built by the Theodosius<sup>19</sup>, because in his days the sacred head of the Forerunner was brought over, and the emperor, together with the patriarch Nectarius<sup>20</sup>, received it at the Hebdomon and deposited it in the church of (St John) the Evangelist. Rufinus<sup>21</sup> the magister prevailed on the emperor to build a church of the Forerunner so as to place in it his sacred head.

The difference between the elongated edifice for congregations and the **centralized** martyrrium should not be, however, excessively emphasized. There is no evidence to confirm that the Constantine's octagonal church in Antioch was a martyrrium. The same holds

<sup>14</sup> For the columns, St. Gregory refers to the kind of high pedestal that resembled an ancient altar (*bomos*).

<sup>15</sup> I.e. carving.

<sup>16</sup> The suburbs of Constantinople, Turkish Bakirkoey.

<sup>17</sup> Ed. Preger, pp. 260.

<sup>18</sup> Ed. Preger, *Scriptores originum* ... II, 1907.

<sup>19</sup> Theodosius I (379-95).

<sup>20</sup> Patriarch of Constantinople (381-97).

<sup>21</sup> Flavius Rufinus, magister officiorum under Theodosius I, promoted to Prætorian Prefect in 392, murdered in 395.

for the octagonal church in Nazianzus, covered by a dome, that had windows all around, and which according to a medieval scholastic was in its center open to the sky, similar to the Roman Pantheon, and it had two concentric perambulatories. According to the same scholastic, the similar churches to it were the St. John Church in Alexandria and Theotokos in Tyre, and it had three-storeyed porticoes (stoai), as the St. Dionysius Church in Alexandria. In the same vein, as an obvious successor of the octagonal church in Nazianzus, there is the chapel of the French sovereign Charlemagne (around 800) in the German city of Aachen, whose architect was Odo von Metz, an edifice which is considered as one of the corner stones of architecture of that part of the continent. It is modeled on the San Vitale church San Vitale (522-547.), built in Ravenna, Italy, by a Byzantine Emperor Justinian.

In his *Oratoria XVIII* (chapter 39)<sup>22</sup> Gregory Nazianzus (329-389/90) described this structure:

It is a work that does not deserve to be passed over in silence, being bigger than many others and more beautiful than almost all (other churches); made of eight straight sides of equal length, and rising aloft by means of two stories of beautiful columns and porticoes, while the figures (plasmata) placed above them are true to nature<sup>23</sup>. At the top is a gleaming heaven<sup>24</sup> that illuminates the eye all round with abundant founts of light - truly a place wherein light dwells. It is surrounded on all sides with passages lying at equal angles<sup>25</sup>, made of splendid material, which enclose a vast central space, and it shines forth with the beauty of its doors and vestibules which greet the visitor from afar. I need not describe the exterior adornment, the beauty and size of the squared stones fitted together to a hair's breadth, the marble pedestals and capitals which occupy the corners<sup>26</sup>, and the local (stone) which does not yield (in quality) to the imported<sup>27</sup>; nor the bands carved with various forms that extend from base to pinnacle where the spectator's view is, to his distress, cut short<sup>28</sup>.

The table church in Gaza (402-407.) was cruciform. The chapter describing its construction is especially interesting. It states that initially there was a conflict about what architectonic form should be selected, and that it was resolved by the already laid out cruciform plan designed in Constantinople, sent from the Imperial Court. The writer describes in a vivid manner how on the spot where previously the temple of Zeus Marnas had stood,

<sup>22</sup> J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, 35,1037.

<sup>23</sup> It is not clear whether these were carvings or paintings or both. In any case, they were not statues as some scholars have supposed on the strength of the Latin translation in Migne's (J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*).

<sup>24</sup> I.e. a dome having windows all round. A medieval scholion found in Cod. Vatic. Urbinas 15 (11<sup>th</sup> century) and published by A. Birnbaum (A. Birnbaum: *Repertorium fuer Kunstwissenschaft*, XXXVI, 1913, 192) states that the center of the ceiling was open to the sky, but that is probably a mistaken interpretation.

<sup>25</sup> I.e. perambulatory, Birnbaum, pp. 193, 195, reconstructs two concentric perambulatories, but such an arrangement is not borne out by the text.

<sup>26</sup> Gregory is referring to columns or pilasters placed against the exterior corners of the octagon. Only their capitals and pedestals were made of imported marble.

<sup>27</sup> Local stone was evidently used for the shafts of the exterior columns as well as for the walls of the church.

<sup>28</sup> The scholiast referred to in note 22 contributes the following interesting information: "The form of the church is octagonal, such as we see today in the church of St. John at Alexandria. Such also is the church of the Theotokos at Tyre". And further down with reference to the two-storeyed porticoes (stoai): "There also exist three-storeyed stoai, as in the church of Dionysius at Alexandria."

tutulary god of Gaza, the layout of walls was traced with chalk, and how the Bishop raised his workforce, how the empress Eudoxia a year later sent the columns of precious marble and how the people dashed to the sea to unload them from an extraordinary wide ship called *plate*, designed for transport of big columns, that shipped the columns over<sup>29</sup>. Marcus diaconus, the follower of Porphyrius, bishop of Gaza (420), in *Vita Porphyrii* (chapter 75 and further) wrote the following about the church:

75. After the Marneion had been completely burnt down and the city been pacified, the blessed Bishop<sup>30</sup> together with the holy clergy and Christian people determined to build a church on the burnt site in accordance with the revelation he had had while he was at Constantinople: it was for this purpose that he had received money from the most pious empress Eudoxia... Some persons urged that it should be built on the plan (thesis) of the burnt temple. The latter had been a circular building encompassed by the two concentric porticoes, while its middle part consisted of an inflated dome (kiborion), reaching up to a (great) height; and it had some other features suitable for idols and adapted to the foul and illicit rites of idolaters. Some persons, then, said that the holy church should be built according to this plan, while others contradicted them saying that the very memory of such a plan ought to be blotted out... As for the holy Bishop, he said, *Let us leave this, too, to the will of God*. And while the site was being cleared, there arrived a magistrianos<sup>31</sup> with imperial letters of Eudoxia of eternal memory. These letters contained greetings and a request for prayers on behalf of herself and the of the Emperors, her husband and her son. On another sheet enclosed in the letter was the plan (skariphos) of the holy church in the form of a cross, such as it appears today by the help of God; and the letter contained instructions that the holy church be built according to this plan. The Holy Man rejoiced when he had read the letter and seen the plan... Furthermore, the letter announced the despatch of costly columns and marbles.

76. When the ashes had been dug out and all the abominations removed, the holy Bishop ordered that the remaining debris from the marble revetment of the Marneion – these they said, were sacred and pertained to a place into which access was forbidden, especially to women - would be used for paving the open space in front of the church so that they might be trodden on not only by men, but also by women, and dogs, and pigs, and cattle...

78. The holy Bishop has engaged the architect Rufinus from Antioch, a dependable and expert man, and it was he who completed the entire construction. He took some chalk and marked the outline (thesis) of the holy church according to the form of the plan (skariphos) that had been sent by the most-pious Eudoxia. And as for the holy Bishop, he made a prayer and a genuflexion, and commanded the people to dig. Straightaway all of them, in unison of spirit and zeal, began to dig crying out, *Christ has won!...* And so in a few days all the places of the foundations were dug out and cleared...

84. The following year the empress Eudoxia despatched the columns that she had promised – thirty-two big and admirable columns of Carystos marble<sup>32</sup>, which now shine

<sup>29</sup> There was a special kind of a wide ship, called *plate*, which was designed to transport large columns. A ship of this kind was built, but was evidently so heavy, that it could not be launched until the local bishop managed to move it by virtue of a supernatural power (around 432 AD). Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VII, 37, PG 67, 824 B.

<sup>30</sup> Purple.

<sup>31</sup> A member of the corps of the *agentes in rebus* who were supervised by the *magister officiorum* (hence their name *magisteriani*), who acted as special couriers and secret agents.

<sup>32</sup> From the southern tip of Euboea. This marble comes in several shades of green and was extensively exported to Italy during the Roman Imperial Period. On the ancient quarries see: I. Papageorgakis in: *Praktika tes Akademias Athenon*, XXXIX, 1964, 262-84.

in the holy church like emeralds. As these arrived by sea...everyone, upon hearing the news rushed to the shore.... They brought carts and, after loading the columns one by one, pulled them along and deposited them in the open space of the church...

92. After a lapse of five years, the construction of the holy great church was completed, and it was named Eudoxiana after the most pious Eudoxia. The most reverend Porphyry celebrated the dedication with great pomp on holy Easter, the day of the Resurrection... Strangers came from all quarters to view the beauty and size of the said holy church, for it was said to be bigger than any other church of that time...

The church of St. Symeon the Elder Stylite (around 476-490.) was composed of four basilica edifices which radiated from the central octagon, as from a inner yard earlier covered by a timber structure. In the Evgarius' *Historia ecclesiastica* I (chapter 14)<sup>33</sup> it was described as follows:

The structure of the church comprises four arms<sup>34</sup> in the form of a cross and is adorned with porticoes (stoai)<sup>35</sup>. The porticoes have rows of columns of carved stone, beautifully made, which raise the roof to a considerable height. In the center is a court, open to the sky,<sup>36</sup> decorated with great skill. It is there that stands the pillar of forty cubits upon which he who was an incarnate angel on earth led his heavenly life. Near the roof of the said porticoes are small openings (some call them windows) which respond both to the aforementioned open court and to the porticoes.



Fig. 4 St. Demetrius church, Thessaloniki, late fifth century

<sup>33</sup> On St. Symeon see: D. Krencker, *Die Wallfahrtskirche des Simeon Stylites in Kal'at Sim'an*, Berlin, 1939; J. Lassus, *Sanctuaires chrétiens de Syrie*, Paris, 1947, 129 and on; G. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du nord*, I, Paris, 1953, 223 and on.

<sup>34</sup> Literally: »sides«.

<sup>35</sup> Referring to the four basilicas that radiate from the central octagon.

<sup>36</sup> The octagonal court was meant to be covered with a timber roof which was probably built and later collapsed because of some natural calamity. See discussion in: Tchalenko, pp. 271 ff.

On the left-hand side of the column I saw in one of those very openings (as did also the assembled crowd of peasants that surged round the column) an enormous shining star that travelled across the entire opening, not once or twice or three times, but repeatedly, often vanishing and then, suddenly, appearing again – something that occurs only at the memorial of this holy man.

Triumph arcs and pillars, like those of Theodosius I and Arcadius, continued to be erected, particularly in Constantinople, as well as other great public monuments, such as the monumental weathervane and Anemodoulion.

About the former, the monumental weathervane of Constantinople as one of the seven wonders of the city<sup>37</sup>, Constantinus Rhodius, in the article 178 of his notes and further said the following: Let the fifth place among those incomparable marvels that soar to a great height<sup>38</sup> be assigned in our discourse to that brazen pedestal, as it were, the shape of a towering pyramid or the complex crest of a Persian tiara. This exceptional work of sculpture, a four –legged marvel compacted of four bronze flanks, adorned on all sides with moulded forms (zoa)<sup>39</sup> filled with tendrils, fruit and pomegranates, was erected by the elder Theodosius<sup>40</sup>. Naked Erotes, embroiled in the vine, stand there smiling sweetly and making fun from on high on those that walk below; while other youths, squatting down, blow upon the winds through brazen trumpets, one to the west, another to the south. Upon the summit, a brazen marvel with brazen wings is blown all round: it represents the shrill blasts of the winds that breathe upon the City...

And about the latter, Anemodoulionu, Nicetas Choniata in his *About Signs*, De signis 4 (p. 856 and further) wrote the following: And that four sided bronze construction that soars into the air and almost vies in height with the great columns that rise in many parts of the City – who has not marveled at the variety of its adornment once he has set his eyes upon it? Every kind of singing bird was represented there, warbling its vernal song; the labors of farmers were also depicted, their pipes and buckets, bleating sheep and gambolling lambs; underneath the sea was spread out and one could see schools of fish, some being caught, while others overcame the nets and freely fled back into the deep. In groups of two and three, unclothed Erotes were engaged in mutual combat, pelting each other with apples and shaking with sweet laughter. This four-sided (monument) terminated in a sharp point after the manner of a pyramid, upon which was set a female statue that revolved at the slightest gust of the wind; for this reason it is called Anemodoulion. And yet this beautiful monument, too, was consigned by them<sup>41</sup> ...

There are innumerable Byzantine, and Constantinople churches, which have been converted to mosques in Turkey and Istanbul, of unblemished or blemished beauty. On

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<sup>37</sup> This was commonly known as the Anemodoulion, i.e. the Servant of the Winds. A shorter prose description, derived from that of Constantinus Rhodius, may be found in Cedrenus I (565-66). The fatherland (Patria, § 114) (ed. Preger, II, 253) attributes the erection of this monument to Leo III (717-41), which is highly unlikely in view of its decoration. The same source says that it bore the figures of the twelve winds and that the *four big bronze sculptures* (the four sides of the pyramid?) had been brought from Dyrrhachium. The Emperor Andronicus I (1183-1185) conceived the strange idea of placing his own statue on top of the Anemodoulion.

<sup>38</sup> As a prelude to his description of the church of the Holy Apostles, Constantine gives an account of the seven Wonders of Constantinople.

<sup>39</sup> Referring presumably to a scroll filled with fruit.

<sup>40</sup> (Theodosius I) (379-95).

<sup>41</sup> The Roman Catholic Crusaders in 1204.

them, in them and around them, the precursors of Italian early Renaissance used to study, such as Leon Battista Alberti and Filippo Brunelleschi. The former was a member of the Papal negotiation party for decades, at the meetings concerned with reconciliation of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic confessions, that were organized alternately in Italy and Constantinople. All his churches and palaces in Florence and elsewhere by their appearance copy those from Constantinople and other byzantine cities. Many other Italians, such as Antonio Averlino Filarete, until the fall of Constantinople went to the study trips, and education in Constantinople, as it was the center of a learned world, and returned from there in a fashion similar to the way the architects go on their pilgrimages around the planet in the modern times, to acquire knowledge of architecture. Documents corroborating this are numerous, but it is rightfully considered that many of them need to be studied yet.

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**SPISI O RANOHRISĆANSKOJ I VIZANTIJSKOJ ARHITEKTURI****Predrag Milošević**

*Mnogo je obrazaca koji su u celokupnoj povesti arhitekture prelazili sa jedne na drugu stranu, iz jednog u drugi deo velikog nam sveta. Iz različitih razloga, vrlo često nimalo naučnih i stručnih, u našem delu sveta, srpskom ili jugoslovenskom, ili južnoslovenskom, ponegde neki jako vole da čute kada se radi o prenosu jednog, vizantijskog obrasca, po njegovoj prirodi utemeljenog u pravoslavnoj hrišćanskoj veri na jugoistoku Evrope i krajwem zapadu Azije, a ka danas njihovim predelima, natopqenim u velikoj meri rimokatoličkom hrišćanskom verom, odnosno islamom. Mnogo je dokaza o prenosu jednog obrasca, jednog od mnogih koji su posle Vizantije svoje novo tle pronašli na evropskom zapadu, uglavnom po završetku Krstaških ratova, kada su pljačkaši, ali i naučnici i umetnici u Italiji, došli do novih blaga i do novih spoznaja, na licu mesta, uglavnom u glavnom gradu tog Carstva, posmatrajući njegove veleepne grđevine, uzimajući čak njihove delove na svoje brodove kako bi ih prevezli do Venecije i drugih italijanskih gradova i tamo postavili na svoja zdanja i trgove, kao što su uradili sa stubovima konstantinopoljskog Avgustejona, trga posvećenog Justinijanovoj majci Avgusti, stubovima koji sada krase trg uz poznatu venecijansku crkvu Svetog Marka. Neke druge priče, kojih takođe mnogo ima, lako objašnjavaju kako je, recimo, osmanska turska arhitektura svoj obrazac u gradnji džamija preuzela na istom mestu, na gotovo isti način, zadržavajući same grđevine i samo im menjajući verska određenja, ili pak gradeći nove, ali u potpunosti po istom ovom vizantijskom obrascu.*

Ključne reči: rano hrišćanstvo, Vizantija, spisi, teorija arhitekture