RELEVANCE AND IRRELEVANCE OF SPACE IN BYZANTINE ECCLESIASTICAL ARCHITECTURE

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Byzantine church architecture became a subject of intensive studies a little more than a century ago. Beginnings of modern historiography on Byzantine architecture grew side-by-side with developments in Modern architecture. Ideas and methods of looking at and judging Byzantine architecture at the time —not surprisingly— were profoundly influenced by the theoretical preoccupations of modern architectural thinkers. Richard Krautheimer, for example, on occasion reminded his students that he and his contemporaries were a generation of scholars educated in the spirit of the Bauhaus and of Le Corbusier. It was the generation of modern architects and thinkers that, on the coattails of the Industrial Revolution, developed a new 'heroic' vision of space as a pre-eminent aspect of architecture. Educated at the end of the era of Modernism, I too was profoundly affected by these ideas. As a student of architecture in the early 1960s, I belong to a generation that was nurtured on such theoretical texts as Siegfried Gideon's *Space, Time, and Architecture*, and Bruno Zevi's *Architecture as Space*, works in which the 'heroic' notion of space in architecture as practiced by the pioneer-modernists, was given —retroactively— enduring theoretical underpinnings.[1] 'Space' in this ideological context acquired significance of mythical dimensions, reinforced by another concept of similar weight and mythical import – 'function'.[2]

Our understanding of Byzantine architecture today, and particularly the role of space in it, we must reckon, has been substantially shaped by the mentioned modernist ideological trend. To be able to assess the meaning of space from the Byzantine point of view, we must first clarify the state of scholarship on some of the key relevant issues. Today we are in the position to claim that the previous two, and possibly three generations of scholars have labored under the false assumption that 'space' in Byzantine architecture carried a similar kind of significance as it does in architecture of our own times. I recall the first lectures on Byzantine architecture that I heard as a student. The emphasis was placed squarely on the unique qualities of Byzantine church architecture; paramount among these being its 'distinctive **spatial** character'. Byzantine churches were described as "centralized", in contrast to the "longitudinal" churches in the Medieval West.[3] This —I now understand— was a major misconception. The first part of this misconception has to do with the idea of 'centralization' being generated by functional considerations. According to this theoretical model, to put it in simple terms, using the altar as a generating point of the design scheme would insure that an 'ideal' architectural solution would result. The problem —of course— is that no Byzantine church fits this description, the liturgical focus always being on the east side of the church, and definitely not in its center. Thus, a typical Byzantine church always has a pronounced longitudinal axis, even when its square or polygonal naos is dominated by a centrally placed dome. The next question that arises from a strictly formal point of view is: can the form of the naos actually make a church "centralized"? A number of Byzantine churches,

1. Sigfried Gideon, *Space, Time, and Architecture*, 3rd ed., Cambridge MA 1954; Bruno Zevi, *Architecture as Space*, Horizon Press, New York 1957.

2. The role of 'function' in the shaping of form may have been articulated as early as 1852 by the sculptor and art theorist Horatio Greenough, in a work republished under the title *Form and Function. Remarks on Art, Design, and Architecture*, ed. H. A. Small, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1947, followed by multiple editions. According to most architectural historians credit for the introduction of the idea relating function and form in architecture must go to Louis Sullivan – Louis Sullivan, "Form and Function Artistically Considered," *The Craftsman* 8 (July 1905), 453-58. The slogan "form follows function" was later embraced by Mies van der Rohe, along with most architects of the Modern Movement. For a sharp retrospective criticism, see Peter Blake, *Form Follows Fiasco. Why Modern Architecture Hasn't Worked*, Little Brown & Co, Boston and Toronto 1974.

3. André Grabar, "From the Martyrium to the Church. Christian Architecture, East and West," *Archaeology* 2, no. 2 (Summer 1949), 95-104.

whose naos plans are square, are covered by wooden roofs. Almost invariably, such churches are identified as 'basilicas', and therefore, should fall into the category of the 'longitudinal' type. This further implies that the definition of 'centrality' would have to rests exclusively on the presence of a dome in the architecture of a building. There are, however, also numerous examples of Byzantine churches with distinctly elongated naos plans that include domes in their architecture. Needless to say, they, too, cannot be classified as being 'centralized'; in most cases, they are labeled as 'domed basilicas'. Ultimately, we must conclude that the perception regarding 'centralized planning' of Byzantine churches is essentially a problematic concept, and that it should be used with considerable reservation, if at all.

Before leaving this issue, we must reflect on the question how the concept of centralized church planning in Byzantine architecture was conceived in the first place. It seems that that the notion of "centralization" of Byzantine churches was indirectly driven by the concept of the "ideal church plan" introduced in Italian Renaissance architecture.[4] By promoting the idea of placing the altar in the precise geometric center of a church, directly under its dome, the Renaissance architects claimed to have found the 'ideal' solution in a fully "centralized" church scheme, from the point of view of its functional layout, its spatial and formal articulation, and —above all— its symbolism.[5] As attractive as the idea may have been from the formalist point of view, in reality it proved non-functional, and was rejected soon after the first attempts of implementing it. The history of the new church of St. Peter in Rome, serves as the key reminder of inherent problems with its dramatic design modifications and changes that took place over approximately a century-and-a-half, before it finally acquired its present elongated form. To the early western historians studying these developments, Byzantine architecture must have appeared as a 'natural' forerunner of Renaissance "ideal church planning" and —perhaps retroactively— it may have been perceived as the ultimate culprit of 'mistaken thinking' that was ultimately suppressed. Whatever may have been the patterns of thought among historians of architecture, the conceptual juxtaposition of the two traditions still lives in the realm terminology – above all in the assumed distinction between the so-called "Greek" and "Latin" cross forms underlying the two distinctive church plan paradigms.[6]

According to the still widely accepted point of view, the 'Greek Cross' is characterized by its four arms of identical length, as opposed to the 'Latin Cross', distinguished by its bottom arm being longer than the other three. These definitions are grossly misleading —the cross in the Eastern Christian world from the very beginning had the same proportional characteristics as the so-called 'Latin Cross'. The so-called 'Greek Cross', on the other hand, appeared in both spheres, but relatively very rarely. Thus, the interpretation of the 'Greek-Cross scheme' as the fundamental distinction of the so-called 'ideal church plans', at best, was a reflection of the lack of information about real Byzantine churches. At worst, it may have been employed at the height of the Counterreformation as an ideological argument for the rejection of this planning scheme, in favor of the more appropriate, so-called 'Latin Cross' plan. This problem is deserving of more detailed investigation that cannot be pursued here.

As a corollary, modern historiography of Byzantine architecture has produced another misconceived generalized hypothesis that has become entrenched in scholarship. According to this hypothesis, after Justinian I, the 'centralized' domed church became the predominant, if not the exclusive church type in Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture, eliminating the basilica in the process.[7] Despite the fact that extensive research

4. Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, W.W. Norton & Co, New York 1971, Pt. I ("The Centrally Planned Church and the Renaissance").

5. Ibid; see also Staale Sinding Larsen, "Some Functional and Iconographical Aspects of the Centralized Church in the Italian Renaissance," *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia* 2 (1965), 203-52.

6. Heinrich Wölflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, Cornell U.P. Ithaca NY 1966, Pt. III, *I* ("The Church"), regarding changes from Renaissance to Baroque typology.

7. The concept is used almost universally. For a succinct, influential formulation cf. R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, Penguin Books, Baltimore 1965; and four subsequent eds., Pt. IV, Ch. 8.

during the second half of the twentieth century has repeatedly demonstrated that the basilica, a longitudinal, dome-less church type never actually died out in the East —as was previously maintained— old postulates have nonetheless remained firmly in place. The problem has been compounded in part by a highly influential work by Otto Demus, in which the notion of the "classical system of Middle Byzantine church decoration" was articulated as having been inseparably linked with the "centralized, domed church type", the perceived Byzantine architectural paradigm.[8] In recent years Demus' hypothesis has undergone considerable degree of criticism among historians of Byzantine art, and one might say that it has been largely rejected —however— not on account of its associations with the so-called "centralized, domed church type", it's most serious flaw.

Turning to Byzantine literary evidence, one finds that the notion of 'space', not to mention 'building typology', are never articulated in a manner that could be understood in a sense that we think of them today. Reading the oft-quoted 'description' of a church interior, from the *Historia mystagogica,* attributed to Patriarch Germanos I (715-30), for example, it is impossible to discern what building type is actually being described, nor is one provided with any sense of spatial characteristics of the building in question.[9] It is only by virtue of the absence of an explicitly mentioned dome, that one senses a possibility that the building may actually be a basilica. Of primary concern to Patriarch Germanos, of course, was the symbolic meaning of the building. According to him, the church is a place "prefigured by the Patriarchs, foretold by the Prophets, founded by the Apostles, and adorned by the Hierarchs," where God "dwells and walks".[10] As a symbol, the church is eternal, spanning as it does the traditions of the Old and the New Testaments. It also lacks physical properties, including dimensions. Appropriate to the notion of the "House of God", the church has no definite shape, nor does it have dimensions —it is a symbolic "container of the uncontainable".

Nor is the church interior visually graspable. Unlike the Renaissance 'ideal Church' that was meant to be perceived in its totality by a single glance, from the 'ideal' central location, the Byzantine church denies the faithful that opportunity. Grasping the entire interior with all its contents, in the Byzantine way of thinking, would be paramount to the possibility of grasping and comprehending God himself, and **that** was theologically impossible. Consequently, neither the space of a Byzantine church interior, nor its decorative program can be interpreted as having had the kind of meaning scholars have been inclined to ascribe them. Together, they are but a window into the Heavenly sphere, whose reality remains beyond human grasp.

Writers of Byzantine *ekphraseis* from the sixth century on, dwell on the issue of incomprehensibility of church interiors. Thus, Prokopios in his description of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, written on the occasion of its dedication in 537, speaks of the extraordinary harmony of its interior, but underscores the fact that a spectator is unable to grasp its totality. His "vision shifts constantly," says Prokopios, and therefore he is "utterly unable to select which particular detail he should admire."[11] Inevitably, a spectator always leaves the building "overwhelmed by the bewildering sight." According to Prokopios, and to the principles of Byzantine aesthetics, Hagia Sophia's interior is a remarkable sum of parts, but whose totality is beyond human comprehension. Modern efforts to grasp the totality of its interior in a single photograph, in a way, perhaps ironically, illustrate our own limitations. Frustrations which this can cause, invariably lead us to the architects of the Age of Enlightenment and their nineteenth-century followers, whose renditions of the great building reveal their own confidence that the task of capturing the great interior in a single view **was** possible

8. Otto Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration. Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium*, Boston Book & Art Shop, Boston 1955.

9. Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs N.Y. 1972, 141-43.

10. Ibid., 141-42.

11. Ibid., 75; for an elaboration of this perception cf. Slobodan Ćurčić, "Architecture as Icon", *Architecture as Icon. Perception and Representation of Architecture in Byzantine Art*, eds. S. Ćurčić and E. Hadjitryphonos, Princeton 2010, 23-24. I am using this reference that at the time of this writing was not yet published, though the article itself was already in the making.

Fig. 1. "Trinity" fresco (ca. 1425) in the nave of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, Masaccio

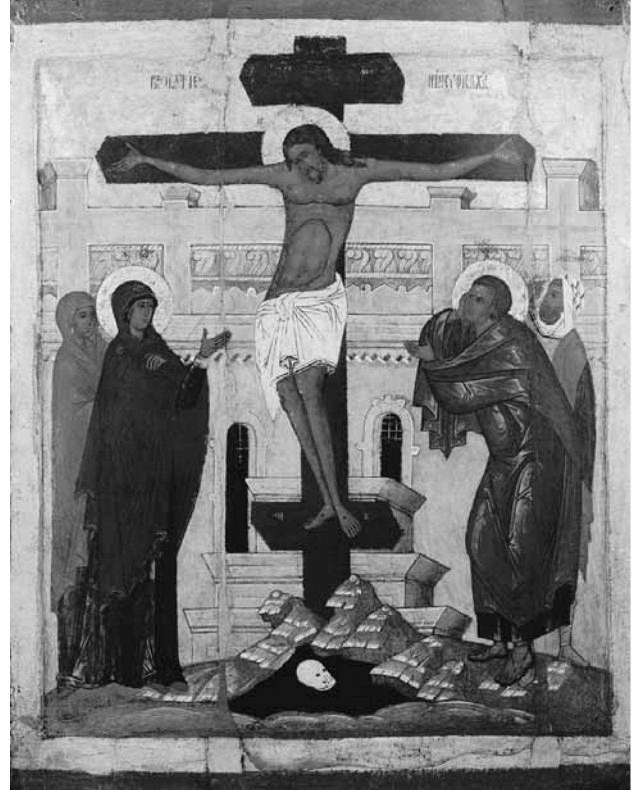

Fig. 2. Crucifixion, seventeenth-century Russian icon, Musée du Louvre, Paris

(cf. Sir John Soane and the Fossati brothers).[12] The phenomenon is worth further analysis, though this would take us beyond the scope of this presentation.

The approach used by the pre-modern architects, relies on inventions of the Renaissance, notably on the one-point perspective and the method of space 'containment' which it afforded the Renaissance architects. In order to enable us to understand the difference of approaches between Renaissance and Byzantine perceptions and representations of space, I will turn to two paintings. The first is the famous "Trinity" fresco, painted by the Florentine painter Masaccio in ca. 1425 in the nave of Santa Maria Novella in Florence (**fig. 1**); the second is an essentially unknown seventeenth-century Russian icon, now in the Musée du Louvre in Paris (**fig. 2**).[13]

Although the main subject matter in both is identical and, even their compositional structures very similar, the two 'representations' could not be more different. Visually speaking, the main difference concerns the manner of rendering space. Masaccio treats the Crucifixion as an event that takes place *within* an interior vaulted space. The space, shown in one-point perspective, *frames and contains* the main event witnessed by

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12. Rowland J. Mainstone, *Hagia Sophia. Architecture, Structure and Liturgy of Justinian's Great Church*, Thames & Hudson, London 1988, figs. 9 and 10 (two interior views of H. Sophia by the Fosatti brothers). For Soane, see M. Richardson and M.A. Stevens, eds., *John Soane Architect*, London 1999, 66, and fig. 78. Eventhough he never saw the building, he referred to it in his Royal Academy Lecture no. 6 ("…the entire dome………. seems rather suspended in the air than supported by the piers"), and illustrated its interior, presumably copying the image from an older image made by someone else; cf. David Watkin, ed., *Sir John Soane, The Royal Academy Lectures* (Cambridge, 2000), 141. In his Lecture no. 5, however, Soane revealed a characteristically unsympathetic, 'Gibbonian' attitude toward Hagia Sophia (Sta Sophia): "…erected by Justinian about the middle of the sixth century, is another striking example of rapid decline of architecture and the arts connected therewith"; ibid., 116.

13. Ćurčić, "Architecture as Icon", 24-26.

the standing figures of Virgin Mary and St. John. Outside the main space, but slightly below are depicted the donors, a man and his wife, kneeling in prayer, essentially as 'eye-witnesses' of the main event. The floor on which the donors are kneeling is depicted on the eye level of the actual living perceiver standing on the real floor of the church. Because of the illusionistic pictorial effect of the one-point perspective, the 'ideal' way for viewing the painting is for the beholder to stand directly in front, and in the center of the painting. Thus, he or she also becomes an 'eyewitness of the event', his or her eyes aligned directly with the tip of a rock with a human scull, symbolizing Golgotha and the Adam's Tomb at the base of the Cross. To make maters even more startling, the figure of God the Father, looming high, above the Cross, is depicted as though holding up the entire Crucifix with His outstretched hands. It is of interest that His figure is the only one within the space contained by the semi-cylindrical vault symbolizing the Heavenly sphere, while the Crucifix, Virgin Mary and St. John, all appear to be within the rectilinear part of the space, alluding to the Earthly realm, situated directly below the 'vault of Heaven'.

The Russian Crucifixion icon, by contrast, displays a very different approach to the rendition of 'space'. Here the event is placed in an outdoor setting, and seems to display an interest in 'historical accuracy' by placing Golgotha with the Cross bearing the crucified Christ just outside the city walls of Jerusalem. While this could be a plausible way of 'reading' what is depicted, one must take note of the fact that the wall is shown without any indication of buildings behind it that would have constituted a standard manner of depicting cities in Byzantine art. Taking this into account, it seems more plausible that the wall alludes not to the Earthly, but to the Heavenly Jerusalem, against which the Crucifixion is symbolically rendered. Thus, in contrast to Masaccio's literal depiction of God the Father within the Heavenly sphere rendered as a semi-cylindrical vault, the Russian artist, following Byzantine principles, delivers a comparable message without resorting to 'realistic' clichés. The wall in the his icon, in some sense, has the same function as the imaginary horizontal plane dividing the vaulted compartment from the cubical room in Masaccio's fresco; it, too, separates the 'earthly' from the 'heavenly' realms, but does so symbolically rather than pictorially. The symbolically rendered 'infinite space' in the Russian icon provided access to the 'heavenly realm' only to those capable of 'spiritual seeing', while Masaccio's 'literal' approach, not only demonstrates the intent to 'capture' and 'represent' the event in 'real' time and space, by involving every beholder, even those incapable of 'spiritual seeing'. The Byzantine approach, consistent with the Orthodox theological tenets, relied on implications of 'timelessness', and spatial 'infinity' as hallmarks of the divine, therefore 'uncontainable', visually inaccessible presence.

The role of the wall in the Russian icon, in my opinion has yet another important dimension —it is relatable to the iconostasis screens in Orthodox churches. From their modest beginnings as *templa* in Middle Byzantine churches (cf. Hosios Loukas Katholikon), iconostasis screens grew in height and complexity with the passage of times.[14] Symbolically, as dividers between the Earthly and the Heavenly realms, they provided the members of the congregation with the visual focus during Liturgy. Like a single icon in private worship, the iconostasis was a spiritual window into the other world. But iconostases, as was the case with later Russian examples (cf. Iconostasis of the Cathedral of the Annunciation in the Moscow Kremlin) became, I would argue, also something else —they were veritable church interiors 'made two-dimensional' (**fig. 3**).[15] Containing multiple tiers of icons with representations of the Dodekaorton, the Last Judgment, Archangels, Prophets, Apostles and Saints, iconostases contained a program of sacred imagery normally found also on walls and vaults of a church interior. Such a role of the iconostasis, we might say, negates the relevance of

14. Ćurčić, "Architecture as Icon", 26-29.

15. Alexei Lidov, "The Iconostasis. The Current State of Research," *The Iconostasis. Origins, Evolution, Symbolism*," A. Lidov, ed., Moscow 2000, 11-29 (in Russian, with English sum.); also L. Schennikova, "The Russian High Iconostasis at the Turn of the 15th Century: Results and Prospects of Research.", ibid, 392-410 (in Russian, with English sum.).

Fig. 3. Iconostasis of the Cathedral of the Annunciation in the Moscow Kremlin (photo V. Seregin and V. Overchenko)

space, as we perceive it in the modern world.

The issue is best summed up by the icon of Apostles Peter and Paul in the Galleria del' Academia di Belle Arti, in Florence (**fig. 4**). Unsigned, the icon has been attributed by some to the Cretan painter Nikolaos Ritzos, active during the second half of the fifteenth century.[16] Of central importance in this presentation is the model of a church held by the two apostles. The church model unmistakably points to western artistic links by virtue of its reliance on one-point perspective and stylistic features typical of Early Renaissance architecture. At the same time, other aspects of the depicted church unmistakably point in the direction of Byzantine aesthetics. Shown in one point perspective, the first impression is that of a Renaissance "ideal church", featuring a centralized (hexagonal) plan with a dome rising over the central space. The church,

16. Ćurčić, "Architecture as Icon," 30, note 75 with older literature.

Fig. 4. Icon of Saints Peter and Paul, Cretan-venetian, 14th-15th centuries, tempera on wood, Galleria dell; Accademia di Belle Arti
Fig. 5. Detail of the icon of Saints Peter and Paul (fig. 4) representing the Church

however, is open through three large arches on its facades, revealing it interior. The interior displays no unity of space typical of Renaissance architecture. It is cut into half by an iconostasis. Through its 'Royal gates' one observes an altar with Eucharistic vessels upon it (**fig. 5**). The iconostasis screen displays icons of Christ and the Mother of God, as well as two Cherubim. A tiny bit of the dome is visible internally, painted blue with white stars, symbolizing the heavenly sphere. The dominant element in this composition —unmistakably— is the iconostasis itself, framed as it is by the 'deconstructed' church. It is strictly through the two-dimensional presence of the iconostasis that the beholder experiences 'spiritual space' of the church interior, while the 'real space' of the Renaissance variety is completely negated. Space then, has a very different meaning in this context, consistent with Byzantine aesthetics and theological teachings. Unlike the 'heroic space' of the modern era, it **lacks definition and size**, thereby symbolizing God's eternal, invisible and uncontainable abode, "where He dwells and walks", and where He can be 'seen' through the agency —not of the senses— but of the spirit alone.

The proposed notion of space in Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture that I have presented leaves us with a nagging question —if not for the sake of 'space' as we know it, why did the Byzantine patrons and builders engage in building churches in the first place? The making of three-dimensional structures was not only widespread in the Byzantine world but, theologically speaking, **was** highly relevant. While God and his abode remained invisible to human eyes, they could be spiritually experienced with the help of the church building. A church, in other words, could be understood as a **three-dimensional icon** in its function of aiding the believers in their 'spiritual seeing' God Himself.[17]

17. The meaning of three-dimensionality in its restricted use in Byzantine art is a subject requiring deeper further investigation.

Ε. ΧΑΤΖΗΤΡΥΦΩΝΟΣ: Ευχαριστούμε πάρα πολύ τον κύριο Ćurčić. Μας είπε πολλά πράγματα που είναι ενδιαφέροντα για το ακροατήριό μας και θα ήθελα να σας παρακαλέσω, αν έχετε σκεφτεί ή καταγράψει κάποια ζητήματα, είτε αν έχετε κάποιες ερωτήσεις, να τις κάνετε τώρα. Παρακαλώ.

Β. ΤΕΝΤΟΚΑΛΗ: Thank you for the marvelous presentation. You mentioned space as a symbolic container of the uncontainable. I will use a rather controversial term, the term of "unbuilt" which has many rich connotations linguistically, architecturally, theologically. Does it have something to do, the term "unbuilt", with the space as a symbolic container of the uncontainable?

S. ĆURČIĆ: I would say no.

Β. ΤΕΝΤΟΚΑΛΗ: No?

S. ĆURČIĆ: But "unbuilt", I would say, reflects the human attempt or need to contain and I think the problem lies in the fact that, at least from a theological point of view, that which is being represented cannot be contained. So we are dealing with a paradox of allowing ourselves to depict something which cannot be depicted or to build or to contain something that cannot be contained and then, deny this as a possibility. So, "unbuilt", I still think falls into that category of human creations.

Ε. ΧΑΤΖΗΤΡΥΦΩΝΟΣ: Προφανώς γίνεται λόγος για το «κτιστό-άκτιστο». Με αυτή την έννοια «unbuilt», έτσι δεν είναι; (...) Παρακαλώ κα Σαράντη.

Ε. ΣΑΡΑΝΤΗ: Thank you, Professor Ćurčić, for this superb presentation. I have two questions to ask you. The first question addresses the issue of the plan of the Byzantine church and of the literary evidence. There are architectural elements of the church which are described in the texts according to the Roman literary tradition, namely the columns, the dome and apse. The praise of these elements and of their qualities is maintained in descriptions of Byzantine churches. But in the Byzantine texts they were perceived and described with a new spirituality, they acquired a new significance. In the texts there is great emphasis on spiritual interpretations of these architectural parts of the Byzantine church. However, there are also texts, for example, the first book of Procopios *On Buildings*, where there is great emphasis on the architectural planning of various churches in Constantinople and in its suburbs. Thus, Procopios focuses on the plan of the churches and expressively states their length and width – that many meters, that many times longer than the other church, that many times longer than the width of the same church, and so on. What is the purpose of this type of description? This is a very realistic approach to describing a church. As an art historian and especially as an architect, what would you make of this emphasis of Procopios in church planning? This is my first question.

My second question refers to the spectator who was, in Byzantine time, and still is unable to grasp the totality of the complex plan and decoration of the Byzantine church, but only parts of it. My question is whether you think that this is related to the issue of variety, "varietas", "ποικιλία" in Greek. Variety is a characteristic of the nature in literary descriptions of nature from antiquity and Byzantium. In Christian theological thought "variety" is also a characteristic of God, who manifests himself in the various forms of nature. Could we suggest that the issue of the spectator being unable to grasp at once the whole of the church is related to this philosophical and theological idea of the "variety" of nature and of God?

S. ĆURČIĆ: Well, this is could easily become another lecture but I will try to be brief in response to the questions as posed. Perhaps in my enthusiasm I exaggerated in saying that the idea of the plan is never mentioned. If I said that, this was perhaps stated too strongly but the point is that this was never carried through as a full architectural description of a building the way one would hope to get it; there is not a single description, I would argue that allows for a full reconstruction of a Byzantine church. But these are simply, I think, ekphrastic tools which serve some other purpose. I am not sure that I know why he uses proportions when he does. This is of course a matter of maybe a numerical analysis in understanding what he has in mind by choosing to do that. But as you know yourself — and Professor Saranti is certainly somebody who knows the sources from the point of view of architecture, very very well — that the sources from our point of view are largely useless and we are easily frustrated by them. We hope to get information from them that they don't give us and so we turn our frustrations onto the sources by saying "they did not know how to do it, they were incapable of presenting the relevant information". These are, I think, false expectations. I think Procopios and this is true, I am quite amazed, of Byzantine "*ekphraseis*" well into the middle Byzantine period that they talk about inabilities of humans to grasp what they are actually looking at. And this brings me to the final point you made about God. God, of course, is everywhere. God, as even we would say, "is in details". And if you accept that, and I think that any Byzantine person would, that looking around at the endless number of wonderful vistas, grasping the totality of the interior of Haghia Sophia would have resulted in a vain attempt on the part of any beholder. But he could see Him in thousand details and he still does so in His entirety. And this, I think, is the point. I think that God is not inaccessible. He is not even totally invisible, yet He he cannot be fully apprehended.

Κ. ΠΡΩΙΜΟΣ: I would also like to thank you for your presentation and take this opportunity to ask you the following: it seems to me that you are introducing a problem which is not unique in the study of Byzantine historiography of art history, namely to what extent are we allowed to apply to the past issues and problems pertinent to the present time. This said, is it possible to completely avoid this attitude of rereading the past from the point of view of the present? Now in your talk is it possible to reconstitute the purely Byzantine point of view? If human scale is indeed irrelevant as you argued in your conclusion then what is it that distinguishes one Byzantine church from another?

S. ĆURČIĆ: Well, I think in principle I completely agree with you that one cannot ignore the point in time of one's own writing of history, and neither can I. I am saying that and basically that was my principle point in saying that we must not forget also those who we are talking about. They are not here to speak their point of view. We have to have a way of understanding them as well. And I think the tendency in the study of Byzantine architecture, has been to impose too much of the architectural issues that were relevant at the very time when the field of Byzantine art history was born. I am not saying that this was avoidable or that necessarily should have been totally avoided, but it did became dominant, imposing, I think, typological and spatial concepts on the study of Byzantine architecture. And I am not advocating that we should simply close our eyes and not look at anything around us, and live in a world that simulates the Byzantine world; that should never be done anyway, but I do think that it is helpful to occasionally step outside ourselves in order to percieve something else.

Κ. ΠΡΩΙΜΟΣ: If we stand today in the interior of a byzantine space what can we say about its size?

S. ĆURČIĆ: Yeah, yeah; that's the part two, yes, thank you. I think, with regard to size, I am absolutely convinced that the smallest Byzantine church in terms of its meaning had the same importance and the same symbolic significance as Haghia Sophia. And so, this simply implies the relevance of size in communicating something particular. The Byzantines, once they had build Haghia Sophia, never attempted another building like that. So it became a paramount symbol of sorts which was, for the first time emulated again, only a thousand years after its original creation under the Ottomans who did not understand it it in terms of why it was created the way it was created in the first place. But this, I think, is an indicator of a different meaning of what size meant and I think, Haghia Sophia was of course not only the religious,symbol which it was, but it also had considerable implications with regard to the Byzantine state. So, it was an exception. I will try to sum up in two sentences. Three-dimensionality was extremely relevant, but in a very specific way in Byzantine architecture and art. The Byzantines knew perspective, but they used it very selectively; they knew three-dimensionality while we think they didn't and they used it very effectively because I think three-dimensionality had a very specific meaning that we just have not yet recognized.

A. ΤΑΝΟΥΛΑΣ: Thank you very much for this most interesting paper. I would like to refer to the description by Procopios where he says that one cannot grasp the building and that the eye goes from one part to another. This is a "topos" which appears since the 4th century. What he says is very essential, and many authors say the same thing in other types of "*ekphraseis*", that the eye cannot stop going from one part of the building to another. This is inscribed in a general attitude where everything is described as if it were made of details, never as being an organic entity. One could say in modern terms that, in "*ekphraseis*", architecture is deconstructed in its individual elements. *Ekphraseis* refers always to details and later, in the 14th century, the same attitude is reflected in the story according to which the great painter Theophanes the Greek, when he was asked to draw Haghia Sophia, said: "I'll draw for you just a detail because from this detail you will understand the whole". Thank you.

S. ĆURČIĆ: Well, thank you for the comment. I think this is well-known but I think the fact that this genre existed and persisted, is, I think, in concert with the general perception of things and I think it does have meaning even though it is a "topos". I think it is a very significant thing that Theophanes the Greek put it in that way that he actually used those words.

A. ΤΑΝΟΥΛΑΣ: I do not think that his attitude has anything to do with the size of Aghia Sophia, but with the concept that the detail identifies the whole.

S. ĆURČIĆ: That is what "ekphraseis" seem to be all about.

Ε. ΧΑΤΖΗΤΡΥΦΩΝΟΣ: Να θυμίσω ότι θα έχουμε την ευκαιρία να συζητήσουμε για τις εκφράσεις αργότερα αλλά και στο τέλος βέβαια, οπότε κρατήστε τις περαιτέρω σκέψεις σας γι' αυτό. Ευχαριστούμε πολύ τον κύριο Ćurčić. Να καλέσω τώρα τον κύριο Πέτρο Μαρτινίδη, τον οποίο όλοι γνωρίζετε ως καθηγητή στην Αρχιτεκτονική στο Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο. Ο κύριος Μαρτινίδης μας έχει συνηθίσει σε άλλα πράγματα, μια και η δυνότητα του λόγου του εκφράζεται στη λογοτεχνία, αλλά όχι λιγότερο και στην θεωρία της αρχιτεκτονικής.