

Artistic & Religious Culture & Heritage



“Religious Buildings”

Senior High school of Thesprotiko “Vasileios Zormpas”

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Erasmus+

ORTHODOX CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

INTRODUCTION: THE THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

At the heart of the Christian life is the Incarnation of God and the deification of the human person. “God became man so that man might become god” said St Athanasius the Great. This is a synergy of God offering Himself and man offering himself. The ultimate role of church architecture is to reflect this truth and to help our deification become a reality. Church design and construction is rooted both in heaven and in earth, in timeless principles and in the specifics of locality and time.

This means that a comparison of Orthodox churches throughout the world and in different periods shows that they have the same principles in common and that they are yet each unique, that they are indigenous and varied. A common experience of God unites them, while the local character, climate, building materials and community needs distinguish them.



Saints Sergius and Bacchus in Constantinople

But to be architecturally indigenous is not something static or isolationist, an architectural form of nationalism. Architectural styles of a given region have never been static; church designers and builders have always drawn on features of surrounding cultures. Scholars of architectural history have, for example, identified a wide sphere of influence behind the ground-breaking churches of Hagia Sophia and Saints Sergius and Bacchus in Constantinople: vaulting techniques were drawn from Mesopotamia, and groin vaults from Imperial Rome; the centralised plan came from Armenia or Rome; the pierced basket-type capitals and carved decoration came from Parthian and Sassanian architecture.

There are three main types of church design: centrally oriented (octagonal, square or circular design); basilica; cruciform.

CENTRALLY ORIENTED BUILDINGS

Centrally oriented temples are circular, octagonal or otherwise polygonal. We discuss this type here only briefly because history has shown it to be generally ill-adapted for the regular celebration of the Holy Liturgy. Its focus on the centre suits it best to martyria - where the emphasis is on the relics of the saint or the holy site - and baptisteries, where the emphasis is on the font. Examples of the former are the Anastasis Rotunda in Jerusalem (4th century), the quatrefoil martyrium in Seleucia-Pieria, Syria (5th century), the octagonal-in-square martyrium of St Philip in Hierapolis (early 5th century), and the octagonal with arms of St Simeon the Stylite, Syria (c. 480- 90). Examples of the latter are the circular Lateran baptistery in Rome (c. 315), the octagonal Baptistery of the Orthodox, Ravenna (c. 400-50), and the lobed octagonal-in-square baptistery in Riva S. Vitale, Italy (c. 500).

Christianity affirms that we are on a journey closer to God and at the same time that God is already with us. Consequently the Divine Liturgy and accompanying services require churches with a certain forward movement - along the east-west axis - as well as an inwardly focused or incarnational feeling. It is for this reason that most Orthodox churches designed for the regular celebration of the Liturgy combine elements of the basilica with elements of the centrally oriented church. Hagia Sophia, Constantinople, for example, is essentially a dome (32 m. diameter) set in the centre of a slightly elongated square (71 by 77 m.), with two half domes extending to the east and west. Where a martyrium is regularly used for worship, sometimes a basilica is simply attached to the martyrium, as in the original Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (c. 333). The Byzantine cruciform church has an apse and a narthex added to the square nave, thus subtly elongating its otherwise centrally oriented structure.



Rotonda of Galerius, Thessaloniki

THE BASILICA AND THE CRUCIFORM CHURCH

Broadly speaking, Orthodox churches designed for the regular celebration of the Liturgy fall into two types: the basilica and the cruciform. The basilica is the earlier design, and is a rectangular structure. It usually has a curved apse in the eastern end. It may or may not have two or four rows of columns running down its length. The isles formed by these columns have roofs lower than the main body of the church, and windows in the exposed upper wall, called the clerestory. The roof is most commonly of a hip design and of timber, and the ceiling is sometimes painted with designs. In some cases there is a stone barrel vaulted roof. More rarely, there can be one or more domes.



Saint Dimitrios, Thessaloniki.

The basilica was basically adopted with little adaptation from a Roman secular building type, used variously for such purposes as law court, council chamber, covered market and gymnasium. The similarity of secular and liturgical basilica is such that it is sometimes difficult for archaeologists to tell them apart. The word basilica means royal, and so by extension the building was a city building. This fitted in with the Church's sense of itself being the City of God. In any case, the basilica was the only building of the pagan Roman empire which was suitable for large Christian assemblies, since the interiors of pagan temples were designed only for the priests and the sacrifices, not for the worshipping public. Another early symbolic reading of the basilica relates it to a ship. According to the "Apostolic Constitutions" (c. 400 A.D.) "the house of the believers is long in shape like a ship [hence nave from the Latin *navis*] and directed towards the east." Here the emphasis is on the transitory nature of our present life, of our movement towards the heavenly city to come. The basilica is primarily, therefore, a church plan which emphasises action, motion. By contrast the more centrally orientated churches favoured in the east emphasise contemplation or vision.

The basic form of the cruciform type is a cross floor plan with a dome

over the centre. With time this basic cruciform shape tended to be set within a square floor plan, the areas between the arms having been filled in to make subsidiary spaces. Such a type is called a cross-in-square church or a square ambulatory church. The latter description sees the church as a square within a square, a central square with an ambulatory running around it.



Kapnikarea, Athens

The central dome of the cruciform church can be supported on a drum or may sit directly on the nave walls. The drum can be supported by columns or can rest directly on the walls and squinches or pendentives, which fill the upper corners of the square nave. Variations on the theme involve the number of domes (five is common), the type of roof over the interior dome (domical, pyramidal, conical etc.), the roof shape of the cross arms (curved, hipped), the proportions, the geometric shapes given emphasis (the onion shaped dome in Russia, for example, or the steep cone and heightened drum of some Georgian and Armenian churches), and of course, the materials used.

The cruciform style was more purpose-designed as a church than the basilica, and is therefore generally considered to be a richer and fuller expression of the Church's experience. It was probably conceived out of a combination of the basilica (with its west to east movement), and centrally oriented mausolea and baptisteries (which were circular, octagonal, or variations thereof, and usually domed). There is much discussion among scholars as to the historical origins of this church-type, but since the purpose of this essay is the practical one of assisting contemporary design, it is not necessary to outline these various theories.

On the one hand the cruciform church's east-west arms offer the basilica's forward movement, with its sense of pilgrimage from the fallen world (the west) towards the age to come (the east). On the other hand its dome (with its emphasis on the interior) and its more or less cubic nave, intimately proportioned, create a sense of being present now in paradise, of God being present among the congregation. Pilgrimage and immanence are thus combined.

EARLY CHRISTIAN MONUMENTS

In the first part of ERASMUS program we will deal with early Christian monuments of our region (Epirus).



Basilica of Dometios

Basilica of Dometios

The Basilica of Dometios dates back to the 6th century and was dedicated to Agios Dimitrios. It belongs to the type of three-aisled basilica, with protruding transverse aisle. It also has beautiful mosaics with interesting compositions and visuals from the environment. The central part depicts the land from which large fruit trees sprout. The show is surrounded by waves and circular chains depicting birds of the Amvrakikos wetland.

Basilica B' of Alcisson

In the northeast part of the city and inside the Early Christian walls there is the Metropolitan Cathedral of Nicopolis, the Basilica II of Alcisson, dating to the 5th century. The sanctuary is separated from the main church by a transverse slope. On the arch and on the side walls of the hall, frescoes are preserved. Characteristic element of Basilica's interior decoration are its relief members, which are Spolia Roman monuments. Today, a piece of mosaic decoration from the Basilica II is on display at the Nikopolis Museum. The pulpit was resting on a Roman pedestal with relief carvings and some were scraped to

fit a mosaic decoration. Of these, only two figures are preserved that are supposed to depict saints or an angel and a saint. The floors were covered with marble tiles in many designs while mosaics adorned the choir, the patio with the three galleries and the seats of the fixtures.



Basilica B' of Alcisson

Basilica D' of Withdrawal

The architectural type of Basilica D is closely related to that of Basilica A of which it is considered earlier. Common architectural features in both are the prominent transverse slope, the type of north and south bays of the narthex, the sacred pitch and the radially arranged arches around the arches. Its dating to the first half of the sixth century is mainly based on the type of its architectural sculptures, as well as the mosaic floors that have survived on the narthex and the southwestern promenade.

Basilica E' St Minas Margarona



Basilica E' St Minas Margarona

It is located six kilometers southeast of Nikopolis. Three-aisled basilica with transverse prominent aisle, narthex, exarthex or patio and a semi-circular courtyard with a tank and mosaic floors.

Basilica (Diocese)



Basilica (Diocese)

It is near and west of Basilica A'. Large Roman building with an outlined patio. Some of the mosaic floors of its galleries bear witness to use in Christian times, perhaps as a bishopric.

Kastri Rizovouni



Kastri Rizovouni

At the ancient settlement, identified with the town of Vatia, sporadic walls are preserved. In the same position below the cathedral of the dormitory there are masonry to the west, but also to the southeast corner of the temple of a larger estate. The walls are referred to as early Christian relics.

Birth of the Virgin Mary



Birth of the Virgin Mary

Just outside the settlement of Sistrouni, by the river there is the church of the birth of the Theotokos, located on the fallen ruins of an early Christian Basilica masonry. Until 1990, traces of a mosaic trace and a light-skinned cannon found in today's church were visible on the ground.

Agia Barbara

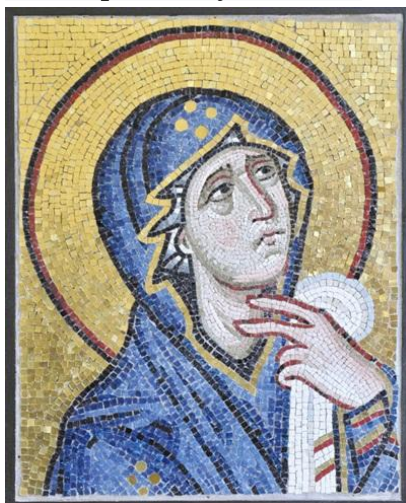


Agia Barbara

To the east of the village Stefani there is the chapel of Agia Varvara which was built in 1937 on the ruins of a Byzantine church. Maintenance work carried out at the temple a few years ago was found in front of the fine tomb gate, the details of which are still unknown.

The mosaics

Mosaics are an art that has been in the Christian period since ancient times. It is the art of coating small mosaic surfaces from natural rocks and creating beautifully decorated surfaces. The oldest mosaics appear in Mesopotamia. In the 5th century, art developed in Ancient Greece. During the 5th century art developed in Byzantium.



Byzantine Monuments

We are going to study the history of the Byzantine monuments in the area of Arta and Preveza.

The Church of Parigoritissa



The church of Parigoritissa.

The church of Parigoritissa is a byzantine church built in the city of Arta during the 13th century A.D. and is dedicated to the evangelism of the Theotokos. It is of the octagonal type, with the central dome supported by eight piers divided into three tiers. Parigoritissa was founded in 1290 by the Despot of Epirus, Nikephoros I Komnenos Doukas. The yard of the church is often used during the summer months for various events of the Cultural Associations of Arta region, causing feelings of awe. Apart from that, it is used as a museum where people can see different mosaics and oil paintings.

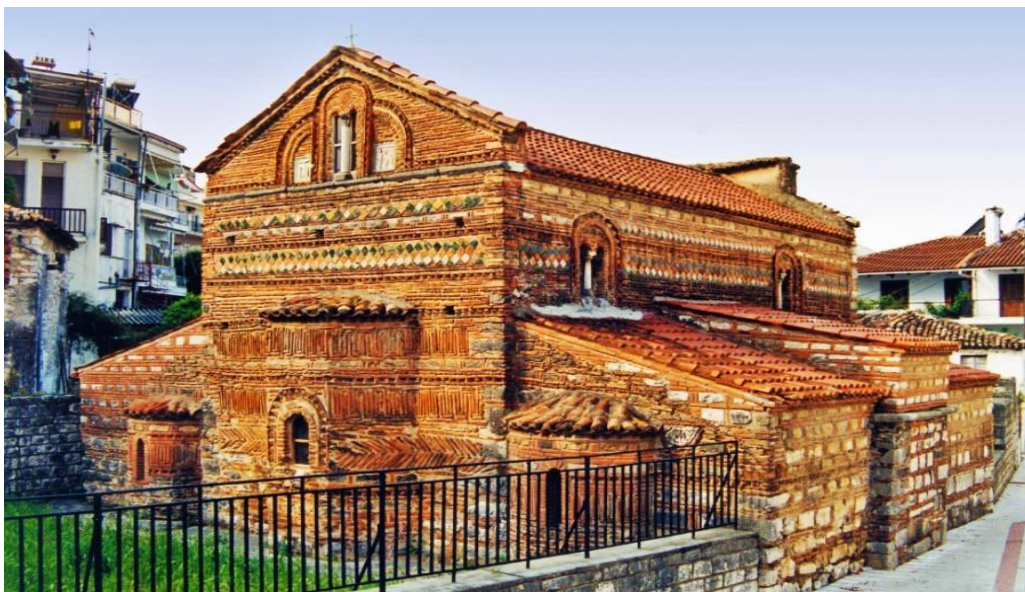
Saint Theodora



The church of Saint Theodora

The church of Saint Theodora is an important Byzantine church in Arta. It was built in the 11th century A.D. with the structure of a three-aisled basilica, dedicated to an elder queen and the patron Saint of the city, Theodora. The church is used for celebratory purposes, such as the celebration of the name day of the church's namesake. The old written and sculpted decorations of the interior of the temple are still present, even to this day.

Saint Basil



The church of Saint Basil

The church of Saint Basil is another Byzantine monument located in Arta. It was constructed in the 13th century A.D. It has the structure of a one-story, timbered basilica. The walls of the interior of the church are covered in magnificent wall paintings that represent many different saints and scenes from the Bible. The entire surface of the walls are covered in wall paintings, but unfortunately many were destroyed when the roof was burned in 1821.

Saint Basil of The Bridge



The church of Saint Basil of the Bridge

Only a kilometre away from the historical bridge of Arta, The church of Saint Basil of The Bridge resides. It dates around 900 A.D. It was thus named in opposition to the other Saint Basil of the city. It has the rhythm of a cross-shaped church with a dome.

The most distinguishable section of the wall paintings are located in the sanctuary depicting the Virgin Mary and Infant.

Virgin Mary of Vlacherna



The church of the Virgin Mary of Blacherna

The church of Vlacherna is located in a village outside of Arta. It was founded at the end of the 11th century A.D. as a three-aisled vaulted basil. It was named after the Blessed Virgin Mary in Constantinople. It was renovated into a turmeric in the middle of the 13th century. Rich and exquisite wall paintings were found in Vlacherna. The first phase of the wall paintings are speculated to be drawn at the beginning of the 13th century while the second phase is thought to be drawn during the end of it.

The Red Church



The Red Church

The Red Church took its name from the plethora of red bricks used in its construction. It was built 3 kilometres south from the village Voulgareli, which is near the city of Arta, around 1281 A.D. It is a cruciform church without a dome in the type of a double roof with a variety of roofs. From the wall paintings of the main church, only some portions were saved and can be seen above the door leading to the narthex. The narthex wall paintings were better preserved, with the icon of the Virgin Mary above the main entrance of the temple.

The Virgin Mary of Koronisia



The church of The Virgin Mary of Koronisia

It is one of the oldest churches of Byzantine Arta and it dates back to the 10th century A.D. In the middle of Koronisia, near the Amvrakikos Gulf, the church is located. It belongs to one of the rarest categories of church rhythms; a semicircular cross-section with a dome. The walls of the temple are painted, but many of the pictures are indistinguishable from the soot and many portions of them are covered in lime.

Pantanassa



The church of Pantanassa

Although many churches of Arta were able to endure the harsh weather and historic events of time, some were not so lucky. The ruins of the church of Pantanassa are located near the town of Filippiada. This church was built in the decade between 1250-1260 A.D. Before its destruction, the church had the rhythm of a cross-signed with a dome. Only a few traces of 13th century wall paintings were discovered but they're too destroyed to allow us to form a coherent image.

Modern Monuments

We are going to present the modern monuments of our area ,Arta and Preveza. These monuments are dating from the 18th century to 21st century.

The church of Saint Paraskevi



The church of Saint Paraskevi is located on the top of a rock , in a village of Preveza , called Rizovouni. It was first built in 1025 as a Catholic Monastery, then it was renovated and it functions as a church until today. Its architecture structure is basilika with a dome

The Birth of Theotokos church.



The Birth of Theotokos church is located in a village of Preveza, called Thesprotiko. It was built in 1794, but there is an inscription on pottery dating from the year 1429 from the previous church that was demolished. It is

celebrated on the 8th of September and a festival takes place in the village in the honor of Her. Its architecture structure is basilika with a dome.

The church of Saint Dimitrios



The church of Saint Dimitrios is located in a village of Preveza, called Krania. It was first built in 1869. In 1981 the temple was destroyed due to a major earthquake. So, in 2004 restoration work was done.

The church of Saint Varnavas



The church of Saint Varnavas is located in a village of Preveza, called Louros. Two inscriptions mention that the church was built in 1833. On the top of the church there is a dome and wall paintings are saved only in the sanctuary of

the church. The forest around the church it has been transformed into a recreation space.

The church of Saint Charalampos



The church of Saint Charalampos is located in the city of Preveza. It was built in the early 18th century on the ruins of a older church. Its architectural structure is single-aisled basilica. It is famous for its wood-carved and gold-plated iconostasis, a work of art of priceless value, estimated to have been built in 1827. The church is dedicated to the patron saint of the city because it healed the citizens from the plague, an illness which decimated the population.

The church of Saint Athanasios



The church of Saint Athanasios is located in the city of Preveza. It is one of the oldest churches of Preveza full of wall paintings which are dating back to 1780. Its architecture structure is one-storey basilica with a semicircular niche to the east.

The church of Saint Vissarion



The church of Saint Vissarion is located in the old town of Filippiada. It was built in 1912 and it impresses with its elaborate bell tower. On the 14th September a big festival is organised in the village in honor of the Saint.

Monasteries

1) The Monastery of Saint Ioannis Prodromos

The Monastery of Saint Ioannis Prodromos is located in a village of Filippiada, called Romia. It was built in 1852 and its architectural structure is three-aisled basilica with a small dome. Today it functions as a cemetery.

2) The Monastery of Kastri

The monastery of Kastri is located in a village of Preveza, called Rizovouni. It was built in 1670.