

## ORIGINALITY IN BYZANTINE ARCHITECTURE

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*Résumé* : Le fait que l'appréciation de l'originalité en art et en architecture ne figure pas dans les textes ne signifie pas qu'elle n'existait pas. L'analyse de nombre de monuments religieux parvenus jusqu'à nous certifie que l'architecture exprimait et satisfaisait non seulement le besoin d'expression religieuse, mais encore parfois une volonté d'amélioration de l'espace et des formes architecturales, à l'initiative des commanditaires ou des architectes. Ces preuves d'originalité sont plus fréquentes à partir du <sup>xr</sup>e siècle.

The intent to originality dominates modern cultural output and has convinced us of the superiority of those periods that can claim a high degree of artistic and intellectual creativity. It also challenges us to trace elements of originality in cultures that are generally agreed to have been conservative, such as Byzantine culture. A collective volume published some ten years ago by A. R. Littlewood<sup>1</sup> assembled fifteen systematic studies on originality in the literature, art and music of Byzantium, in an attempt to investigate and interpret every form of originality in these spheres.

With regard to matters of architecture, especially that of the Middle and Late Byzantine period, R. Ousterhout<sup>2</sup> restated his familiar views<sup>3</sup> and developed the theory that Byzantine architecture created a variety of types and distinctive stylistic features, mainly when it was responding to certain demands of place, function and decoration, or when these types derived from changes that were dictated during the erection of the buildings. These views are essentially correct, but relegate to second place the individual creativity of the architects, or the artistic intentions of those who took the initiative in the erection, the founders: state officials in the case of public buildings or ordinary users. The question needs to be posed in a different manner.

1. A. R. LITTLEWOOD ed., *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music*, Oxford 1995.

2. R. OUSTERHOUT, *Beyond Hagia Sophia: Originality in Byzantine Architecture*, in LITTLEWOOD, *Originality* (cit. n. 1), p. 167-185.

3. IDEM, *Originality in Byzantine Architecture: The Case of Nea Moni*, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 51, 1992, p. 48-60; IDEM, *Master Builders of Byzantium*, Princeton 1999, p. 97-204, 243.

A. Cutler<sup>4</sup> has written at length on the negative attitude or indifference of the Byzantines to the idea of originality. The literary sources, certainly, are silent on the question of creativity and the tendency to innovation in art and architecture. The appropriate terminology to express these concepts does not even exist,<sup>5</sup> and there are very few cases in which a building was regarded as notable because it possessed something “ξένο”<sup>6</sup>.

Apparently, moreover, no book on the theory of architecture was written in Byzantium, or has certainly not been preserved, and the anonymity of the architects<sup>7</sup> and the silence prevailing with regard to matters of the design of buildings have been the object of frequent comment. Although the risk of generalisation is always present, the great lacunae in our knowledge of the above questions are due to nature of the Byzantine texts. Even when these exhibit an intent to evaluate (as with the *ekphraseis*), the praise is awarded either to the building itself, mainly for its size, variety and the sumptuous materials used, or to the founder.<sup>8</sup> Never, or very rarely, to the architect or the compositional virtues of the building.

If, however, the Byzantine critique of architecture passes over its essence in silence, so, too, to a great degree, does the modern history of Byzantine architecture over the last hundred years. Adherence to typology, comparison of ground plans and the search for a model in every case, combined with a defective knowledge of non-ecclesiastical architecture<sup>9</sup> and with the view that in the Middle Byzantine period buildings were erected only by practically experienced master-craftsmen,<sup>10</sup> has arrested any inclination to detect creativity, originality, or even improvisation. The excessive importance attached to the role played by Constantinople as the only artistic centre in the Middle and Late Byzantine period is also unjustified, and is due once more to the one-sided nature of the literary sources of the period.

The large number of Middle and Late Byzantine monuments known today allows us to divert attention for a while from the literary sources to the study of the buildings themselves<sup>11</sup> and to an analysis of the elements of originality in them. That

4. A. CUTLER, *Originality as a Cultural Phenomenon*, in LITTLEWOOD, *Originality* (cit. n. 1), p. 203-216, A. KAZHDAN, A. CUTLER, *Imitation, ODB*, p. 989 and *Innovation, ibid.*, p. 997.

5. A. CUTLER, *Originality* (cit. n. 4), p. 203. The word πρωτοτυπία, which means “originality” in Modern Greek, had a completely different sense in Byzantium: see DU CANGE, col. 1269.

6. Between the buildings of the palace of Digenes Acrites, one could see “... πεντακούβουκλα ξένα, μετά μαρμάρων φαιλινῶν λίαν ἀστραπηβόλων ...”, ed. I. MAUROKORDATOS, *Διγενής Ἀκρίτης*, Oxford 1956, p. 21, v. 50.

7. OUSTERHOUT, *Master Builders* (cit. n. 3), p. 39-57.

8. The restoration or the renovation of old buildings was also praiseworthy, CUTLER, *Originality* (cit. n. 4), p. 208.

9. C. MANGO, *Byzantine Architecture*, New York 1976, p. 11.

10. OUSTERHOUT, *Master Builders* (cit. n. 3), p. 58-85. Opposing views have reasonably been expressed by Th. MATHEWS (review in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 60, 2001, p. 86-87) and H. BUCHWALD (review in *JÖB* 51, 2001, p. 474-478).

11. “...it is we, not the Byzantines who see (and applaud) innovations in a dozen fields of activity...”, CUTLER, *Originality* (cit. n. 4), p. 214.

is, to a search for general design features that made some buildings unique, or which led them to play the role of model for other, later structures.

R. Ousterhout's dictum that Byzantine architecture is a response to needs is indeed valid in many cases: it represents the solution of architectural problems. To these monuments may be assigned a large number of examples in which the desire to inhume distinguished personages in immediate proximity to the place of the divine liturgy led to variations of existing building types, and occasionally to unprecedented compositions with chapels, porticoes, narthexes surmounted with two domes,<sup>12</sup> and closed burial passageways. These were sometimes incorporated in the original design of the church and sometimes added later. Occasionally, however, things go beyond direct or indirect needs. And it is here, mainly, that we can detect the artistic intent of the architects or founders, and by extension the new artistic creation.

The modification of existing types is the most common way of creating variations, with immediate repercussions on the interior space and exterior form of the churches. Variations of existing types are due to:

a) The abandonment of functions, which may lead to original variations. An example here is provided by two domed cruciform churches in Greece,<sup>13</sup> which were built without a *diakonikon*: the ceremony of the Lesser Exit from the sanctuary had long fallen into disuse and the *diakonikon* now served simply as a sacristy, which might easily be located at a different point.

b) Structural reasons. Nea Moni on Chios, the model for churches of the so-called island octagon type, was susceptible to earthquakes because only limited buttressing was provided for the disproportionately large dome by the shallow side niches. In all the copies of it, both on Chios<sup>14</sup> and in the region of Macedonia and Thrace,<sup>15</sup> the shallow niches were replaced by much stronger barrel vaults.<sup>16</sup>

c) Reasons concerning the appropriate size, that is, the relationship of the size to the type of the building. A domed cruciform church, for example, could be neither very large nor very small. When a large congregation had to be housed, as in the case of Hagia Sophia in Kiev,<sup>17</sup> a new variation of it was created through the addition of

12. ΣΙ. ČURČIĆ, *The twin domed narthex in Paleologan Architecture, Recueil des travaux de l'Institut d'études Byzantines*, XIII, Belgrade 1971, p. 333-344.

13. In two 12<sup>th</sup> century churches of Thebes, Hagia Photeine and a ruined chapel of unknown dedication, we have a bipartite sanctuary with prothesis and bema, without diakonikon. See Ch. and L. BOURAS, *Ἡ ἐλλαδικὴ ναοδομία κατὰ τὸν 12ο αἰῶνα*, Athens 2002, p. 150, 151, 154, 155, 359.

14. The churches of Hagios Georgios Sykouses, Panagia Krina and of the Holy Apostles in Pyrgi: see A. C. ORLANDOS, *Monuments byzantins de Chios*, Athens 1930, pl. 49, 32 and 39 respectively.

15. The church of Metamorphosis on Chortiates near Thessaloniki (N. ΝΙΚΟΝΑΝΟΣ, *Ἡ ἐκκλησία τῆς Μεταμόρφωσης τοῦ Σωτῆρος στὸν Χορτιάτη, Κέρνος*, Thessaloniki 1972, p. 102-110) and possibly the church of Hagios Spyridon of Selymbria (H. HALLENSLEBEN, *Die ehemalige Spyridonkirche in Silivri-Selymbria, in Studien zur Spätantiken und Byzantinischen Kunst, F. W. Deichmann gewidmet*, Bonn 1986, p. 35-46.

16. Ch. BOURAS, *Twelfth and Thirteenth Century Variations of the Single Domed Octagon Plan, DChAE* 9, 1977-79, p. 21-32.

17. MANGO, *Byzantine Architecture* (cit. n. 9), p. 325, fig. 357, 358.

side aisles and a series of narthexes.<sup>18</sup> When, on the other hand, the building was small, as in domed cruciform churches intended as side chapels, the *katholika* of small monasteries or *metochia*, in addition to a variety of transitional architectural solutions, masonry filling the four corner bays was considered sufficient and columns were abandoned, leading to the emergence of the variations of the contracted cross-in-square churches<sup>19</sup> applied in a large number of monuments. Precisely the same idea of contracting the type in order to serve smaller-scale uses can be seen in churches of the Greek cross octagon domed type (such as the chapel above which the campanile was erected in the monastery of Hosios Loukas<sup>20</sup>), and in churches of the "Athonite" type with semicircular side conches, found in a large number of small churches,<sup>21</sup> most of them late examples.

d) Inadequate technical expertise. A successful innovation in Greece during the 13<sup>th</sup> century was the creation of a new type, that of the cross-vaulted church.<sup>22</sup> Three-aisled cross-vaulted churches, which are divided into two groups,<sup>23</sup> may be regarded as a variation of cross-in-square churches in which the dome, carried on pendentives, is replaced by barrel vaults, a form of vaulting much more easy to construct.<sup>24</sup> Aisleless cross-vaulted churches, early examples of which are to be found in the Peloponnese,<sup>25</sup> were invariably small buildings whose roofing took the form of plain barrel vaults and was of a much simpler form than that of domed churches.

e) Purely aesthetic considerations. Some of the modifications of existing types seem to have had no other reason than to produce aesthetic interest in the interior of the churches. The addition of columns that did not carry any load<sup>26</sup> increased the visual interest and monumental impression of the building as a whole. An extreme example of the non-functional use of columns is provided, of course, by San Marco in Venice,<sup>27</sup> while columns placed in contact with the walls in order to set off the

18. OUSTERHOUT, *Master Builders* (cit. n. 3), p. 19, fig. 11.

19. The term "contracted inscribed cross domed church" was introduced by A. ORLANDOS, Μεσαιωνικά Μνημεία Ἁρωποῦ καὶ Συκαμίνου, *DChAE* per. 2, v. 4, 1927, p. 42. See also Ch. BOURAS, Ἅγιος Στέφανος Ριβίου Ἀκαρνανίας, Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς Πολυτεχνικῆς Σχολῆς Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης 3, 1967-1968, p. 47-53.

20. Ch. BOURAS, Δύο μικροὶ ναοὶ ὀκταγωνικοῦ τύπου ἀνέκδοτοι, *DChAE* 3, 1962-1963, p. 137-165.

21. A. C. ORLANDOS, Σταυρολογίματα ἐκ μονῶν τῆς Πίνδου, *ABME* 5, 1939-1940, p. 164-168; I. KARATZOGLOU, Ναοὶ Ἀθωνιτικοῦ τύπου στὰ Θεσσαλικά Ἄγραφα, Athens 2001, p. 123-134.

22. A. C. ORLANDOS, Οἱ σταυρεπίστεγοι ναοὶ τῆς Ἑλλάδος, *ABME* 1, 1935, p. 41-52; H. M. KÜPPER, *Bautypus und Genesis der Griechischen Dachtransept Kirche*, Wien 1996. There are several theoretical approaches to the problems concerning the originality of the cross-roofed Greek churches.

23. ORLANDOS, Οἱ σταυρεπίστεγοι ναοὶ (cit. n. 22), p. 48-50.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 41 and 52.

25. Ch. BOURAS, Ὁ Ἅγιος Γεώργιος τῆς Ἀνδρούσης, *Χαριστήριον εἰς Α. Κ. Ὁρλάνδον*, Athens 1966, II, p. 284-285.

26. The use of columns for the articulation of the facades as well as of the interior surfaces is common in Roman architecture (see M. WILSON JONES, *Principles of Roman Architecture*, London 2000, p. 118). In Byzantine church architecture it is unknown before the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

27. O. DEMUS, *The Church of San Marco in Venice*, Washington 1960, p. 100-102. For a catalogue of the columns which adorn the interior and the facades of the church, see L. LAZZARINI, *Le pietre e i*

space are to be found in the Fatih mosque at Ainos,<sup>28</sup> the church of the Mouchliotissa in Constantinople,<sup>29</sup> and in narthexes like those of Nea Moni on Chios,<sup>30</sup> Hagios Andreas *en te krissei*,<sup>31</sup> and the Hagioi Theodoroi,<sup>32</sup> also in Constantinople. In the last named church, non-bearing columns were attached to the south wall, with the objective of enhancing its visual appearance.<sup>33</sup> In Hagios Nikolaos at Kambia<sup>34</sup> and Hagios Nikolaos at Korthi on Andros,<sup>35</sup> the use of columns in place of a wall between nave and narthex created a new impression of the interior space and produced original variations of the types of these two churches.

The opening of niches in the thickness of the walls,<sup>36</sup> that have no obvious function and whose sole purpose is to organise the interior space of the church, created some original new designs in a limited number of cases.

The intent to originality and the creation of interior spaces of special interest is also to be detected in the combination of two different types in certain churches.

The Hagioi Apostoloi in the Athenian Agora<sup>37</sup> is a true typological *unicum* in Byzantine architecture and (as Choisy<sup>38</sup> noted), a masterpiece of harmony and clarity in its conception.<sup>39</sup> In it, an octaconch church with a circular tracing and four axes of symmetry is combined with a domed tetrastyle cross-in-square church that retains the hallmarks of its Constantinopolitan descent. The composition of the church attests to a carefully studied design, as does the relationship between the narthex and the conches on the two side facades of the church. The form of the dome, the tracing of the main square space, the pseudo-kufic decorative brickwork in the masonry, the series of horizontal dentil bands, and the early date, leave no doubt that the Hagioi

marmi colorati della basilica di S. Marco a Venezia, *Storia dell' arte Marciana: l'architettura*, ed. R. POLACCO, Venice 1997, p. 317-325.

28. S. EYICE, Trakya'da Bizans Devrine ait Eserler, *Belleten XXXIII*, 131, 1969, p. 351-354, fig. 84, 89; R. OUSTERHOUT, The Byzantine Church of Enez, *JÖB* 35, 1985, p. 265, 266.

29. N. BRUNOV, Die Panagia Kirche auf der Insel Chalki in der Umgebung von Konstantinopel, *BNJ* 6, 1927-1928, p. 516, fig. 7.

30. ORLANDOS, *Monuments* (cit. n. 14), pl. 10, 11.

31. A. VAN MILLINGEN, *The Byzantine Churches of Constantinople*, London 1912, p. 113-119.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 246-251.

33. According to the drawings of Ch. Texier: see C. MANGO, Constantinopolitana, *JDAI* 80, 1965, p. 320, fig. 12, 13, 14.

34. R. W. SCHULTZ, S. H. BARNESLEY, *The Monastery of Saint Luke of Siiris, in Phocis*, London 1901, p. 69, pl. 57, 59.

35. D. BASILEIADES, Βυζαντινὰ μνημεῖα τῆς Ἀνδρου. Ὁ ναὸς τοῦ ἁγίου Νικολάου Κορθίου, *ArchEph* 1960, p. 17-37, fig. 2.

36. As in the churches of the Panagia of Mouchli in Constantinople (BRUNOV, Die Panagia, cit. n. 29) and of Hagios Demetrios in Euboia (A. C. ORLANDOS, Ὁ παρὰ τὸ χωρίον Ἅγιος τῆς Εὐβοίας ναὸς τοῦ ἁγίου Δημητρίου, *ABME* 7, 1951, p. 168-171, fig. 1).

37. A. FRANTZ, *The Church of the Holy Apostles*, The Athenian Agora 20, Princeton 1971.

38. A. CHOISY, *Histoire de l'architecture*, II, Paris 1905, p. 34, 35.

39. *Ibid.*: "on sent qu'une loi règne dans ces groupements d'arcades, d'absidioles de coupoles... l'impression d'une unité puissante... c'est la clarté même de l'art grec..."

Apostoloi is directly connected with the Panagia in the Hosios Loukas monastery,<sup>40</sup> a monument that also has a large number of new formal features.

Another example of types being combined in the interests of originality is provided by the Palaiopanagia at Manolada in the western Peloponnese.<sup>41</sup> The church is in the type of the domed free-cross church combined with a wide ambulatory roofed with low hemispherical vaults. Churches of the free cross type are usually small, but in this case the church is larger, and the Constantinopolitan element of the ambulatory lends the Palaiopanagia even greater volume. The tendency to originality<sup>42</sup> can also be detected in the manner in which the dome is supported, with the curved corners of the bearing square, a rare arrangement<sup>43</sup> that was of decisive importance for the impression of the interior space of the monument.

A combination of basilica and the Constantinopolitan five-domed cross-in-square church created the Mystras type,<sup>44</sup> the earliest example of which is the Hodigitria, one of the two churches in the Vrontochi monastery. The precision of the calculation of the dimensions at ground floor level in order to produce the cross-shape of the first floor reveals that the Hodigitria is the product of systematic design<sup>45</sup> and precludes the view that it derived from modifications made during the course of its erection.<sup>46</sup> The intent to originality is evident in the overall composition of the building.<sup>47</sup>

An intent to originality, possibly imposed by the founders, is also to be found in cases of the free interpretation of an ancient model. This is true of Nea Moni on Chios, the centralised octagonal shape of which, and the pairs of columns attached to the walls between the conches, imitate an Early Christian mausoleum.<sup>48</sup> However, it acquires its own medieval character thanks to the disproportionately large dome, the modification in the form of the columns, and the elevation of the octaconch to a second vertical level. The clear intention of the architect to make the centralised octaconch shape the dominating feature of his creation can be seen in the reduction of the height and the overshadowing of both the sanctuary and the narthex, the concealing of the Platytera from the east niche of the nave and the clear distinction between the first and second level.

40. FRANTZ, *The Church of the Holy Apostles* (cit. n. 37), p. 21.

41. A. C. ORLANDOS, 'Ο Άγιος Δημήτριος τῆς Βαράσσοβας, *ABME* 1, 1935, p. 118, fig. 15; Ch. BOURAS, 'Η Παλαιοπαναγιά στην Μανωλάδα, 'Επιστημονική 'Επετηρίς τῆς Πολυτεχνικῆς Σχολῆς 4, 1969-1970, p. 233, 264; BOURAS, 'Ελληνική ναοδομία (cit. n. 13), p. 224, 225, 354, 356, 361.

42. BOURAS, 'Η Παλαιοπαναγιά (cit. n. 41), p. 247, 249.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 251 n. 1-7, 252 n. 1-5.

44. H. HALLENSLEBEN, Untersuchungen zur Genesis und Typologie des Mystratypus, *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 18, 1969, p. 105-118.

45. The galleries were necessary for the ceremonies of the Mistra court and the security of its members. For the arithmetical relationships between the diameter of the central dome and the width of the aisles see *ibid.*, p. 113-115, fig. 8.

46. OUSTERHOUT, *Master Builders* (cit. n. 3), p. 104, 105.

47. H. BUCHWALD, *JÖB* 51, 2001, p. 477, considers the above statement as completely hypothetical.

48. Ch. BOURAS, *Nea Moni on Chios: History and Architecture*, Athens 1982, p. 139-145. See also M. CHATZIDAKIS, review of the book in *Πρακτικά τῆς 'Ακαδημίας 'Αθηνών* 1983, p. 189-190.

Views have been expressed<sup>49</sup> attributing the originality of Nea Moni a) to the modification of a cruciform church during the course of its erection,<sup>50</sup> b) to the intent to give it an "exotic air",<sup>51</sup> and c) to the adaptation of the architecture to a broad iconographic programme in its mosaic decoration,<sup>52</sup> none of these, however, withstand scrutiny. The evident originality of the building can only be interpreted as a medieval version of an ancient centralised model, dictated by a specific artistic will, on the part either of the founders or of the architect, regarding the design of the interior space of the church.

The intentions of the founders, however, did not invariably lead to such successful results. Some of the most important and original churches in the kingdom of Serbia<sup>53</sup> were built by craftsmen who were ignorant of Byzantine building and vaulting methods, but who were obliged to incorporate domes in their work and create surfaces destined to receive extensive iconographic programmes. These churches can hardly be described as Byzantine.

The intent to originality, to the creation of a work of architecture that is not an imitation of what has gone before and corresponds fully to the demands firmly established since ancient times, for functionality, solidity and beauty, is to be found in "the most impressive Middle Byzantine church plan"<sup>54</sup> or "the most sophisticated achievement in structural design since Hagia Sophia",<sup>55</sup> the katholikon of the monastery of Hosios Loukas in Phokis.

Systematic analysis of this building reveals not only its adaptation to the demands of a major shrine of pilgrimage in medieval Greece,<sup>56</sup> but also its exceptional statics, which have kept the building virtually intact, and the maturity of its morphology, which is inexplicable in a pioneering work. In fact, nothing in the interior space, in the proportions of masses and spatial units, the handling of the natural light, and the balance of static forces, is suggestive of experimentation. We have a church that is large by Byzantine standards, with a number of Constantinopolitan

49. R. OUSTERHOUT, Originality in Byzantine Architecture: The Case of Nea Moni, *Journal of the Society of Architecture Historians* 51, 1992, p. 49-60; *Id.*, Beyond Hagia Sophia (cit. n. 2), p. 174-181; *Id.*, *Master Builders* (cit. n. 3), p. 97-100, 276.

50. The incorporation of strong corbels to fasten the colonnettes, at a height of 3.30 m in the eight surrounding pilasters and of 2.45 m in the four corner ones, demonstrates that the unusual design of the katholikon was implemented from the very beginning of its erection. The theory that it was modified is considered groundless by Th. MATHEWS (review in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 60, 2001, p. 87) and H. BUCHWALD (review in *JÖB* 51, 2001, p. 477).

51. There is nothing exotic in the individual architectural forms of Nea Moni. On the contrary, they go back to the morphology of the Middle Byzantine monuments of the capital city. See BOURAS, *Nea Moni* (cit. n. 48), p. 152 f.

52. The scenes from the Christological cycle in the nave are confined to eight and scarcely differ in number from those usually found in domed cruciform churches.

53. V. KORAC, Le travail d'un groupe d'architectes dans la Rascie du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, *Comptes rendus de l'Académie serbe des sciences et des arts, cl. des sc. hist.* (GLASS) 334, 1983, p. 21-35.

54. R. KRAUTHEIMER, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, Harmondsworth 1986, p. 340.

55. OUSTERHOUT, *Master Builders* (cit. n. 3), p. 204.

56. SCHULTZ, BARNESLEY, *The Monastery of Saint Luke* (cit. n. 34), p. 19, 21, 22, 23, 33.

morphological elements, but also with some that are new and which made it truly unique at the time of its erection, a little after the year 1000.<sup>57</sup> Naturally enough, the katholikon of Hosios Loukas became the model for the largest and most opulent churches of Greece<sup>58</sup> in the following two hundred years.

All this may be explained not only in terms of the financial means available, but also of the presence of a creative architect who had great design skills. As has properly been observed,<sup>59</sup> the katholikon of Hosios Loukas could not possibly have been erected without a design, given the exceptional complexity of its forms and structures. The decisive presence of a talented architect in the monastery of Hosios Loukas is also indicated by the existence of two more original, unparalleled monuments contemporary with the katholikon, in which the dome is supported on an octagon: the church in the monastery's *metochion* at Antikyrra<sup>60</sup> and that of the small "contracted" church on which the modern campanile of the monastery,<sup>61</sup> which has already been mentioned, now stands.

The church at Antikyrra, which no longer survives,<sup>62</sup> had a strong substructure (like the katholikon) and a system of eight columns in contact with the walls, which supported the dome by way of arches. Publications of the monument are unfortunately inadequate<sup>63</sup> and the comments on it contain many errors.<sup>64</sup> It is clear, however, that this was a simplified variation of the monastery katholikon, adapted to the smaller scale and with morphological features similar to those of the katholikon, which assign it to the same building programme.

Precisely the same is true of the little church beneath the campanile,<sup>65</sup> which also has a strong substructure and retains the vaulting with squinches identical in every way to that of the katholikon. The coincidence of three typologically similar churches in the same monastery and at the same period is strong evidence that all

57. The historical and chronological problems of the Monastery and its monuments are solved, thanks to recent research: M. CHATZIDAKIS, A propos de la date et du fondateur de Saint Luc, *CArch* 19, 1969, p. 127-150; N. ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΔΗΣ, The First Century of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas, *DOP* 46, 1992, p. 245-255; D. ΣΟΦΙΑΝΟΣ, Ἡ Μονὴ τοῦ Ὁσίου Λουκᾶ, Athens 1992, p. 55-79.

58. For the so called Greek cross octagon domed churches, see Ε. ΣΤΙΚΑΣ, *L'église byzantine de Christianou*, Paris 1951, p. 35-47; KRAUTHEIMER, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (cit. n. 54), p. 385-388.

59. H. BUCHWALD, review of OUSTERHOUT, *Master Builders* (cit. n. 3), *JÖB* 51, 2001, p. 476.

60. P. LAZARIDES, Μεσαιωνικά Φθιώτιδος καὶ Φωκίδος, *ArchDelt* 19, 1964, II, p. 227-230, pl. 265-271; E. ΣΤΙΚΑΣ, Τὸ οἰκοδομικὸν χρονικὸν τῆς μονῆς Ὁσίου Λουκᾶ Φωκίδος, Athens 1970, p. 226-242, pl. 175-178; A. H. S. MEGAW, *Archaeology in Greece, 1962-1963, Archaeological Reports for 1962-1963*, p. 21-22.

61. BOURAS, Δύο μικροὶ ναοὶ (cit. n. 20), p. 164-171.

62. M. CHATZIDAKIS, Μεσαιωνικά Φθιώτιδος καὶ Φωκίδος, *ArchDelt* 19, 1964, p. 226.

63. Measured drawings of the church ruins are accomplished by the architects of the Archaeological Service M. Dores and M. Philippa. The drawings remain unpublished.

64. As the statements of ΣΤΙΚΑΣ, Τὸ οἰκοδομικὸν χρονικὸν (cit. n. 60) that the basement was older than the main church and that its type was similar to that of Nea Moni, ignoring that the columns of the Antikyrra church, contrary to those of the Chian katholikon, supported the vaults.

65. BOURAS, Δύο μικροὶ ναοὶ (cit. n. 20); M. CHATZIDAKIS, Μεσαιωνικά Φθιώτιδος καὶ Φωκίδος, *ArchDelt* 21, 1966, p. 26-27, pl. 26, 27, 28.

three were the work of the same architect, who was noted for his creativity and artistic originality.

The state of our knowledge of a large number of Middle and Late Byzantine monuments precludes generalisations. It is apparent that in the Byzantine empire, architects existed alongside master craftsmen, repeated models alongside new creations, the dynamic evolution of buildings alongside design. Dynamic development involving annexes and modifications was commonly found<sup>66</sup> in churches and secular buildings, but we should not regard it as generalised phenomenon, nor exaggerate its significance. The two well-known passages in Michael Psellos<sup>67</sup> Chronicle concerning the successive radical modifications during the erection of the Peribleptos on the one hand and of Hagios Georgios of Mangana on the other are excessive and reflect Psellos' intent to defame the royal founders<sup>68</sup> by accusing them of squandering public funds, arrogance and superficiality.<sup>69</sup>

The dynamic interventions of the Byzantine founders or the later managers of the monuments stand in contrast with the design of buildings. The direct connection between originality and design is evident from the foregoing, given that new ideas require a process of trial and error that is carried out on paper or in models.<sup>70</sup> By definition "design is a process, a dynamic interaction between concept and contingency, between the generic and the specific; it evolves progressively as multiple individual decisions are assimilated into the whole."<sup>71</sup> The fact that no Byzantine designs or models have so far been discovered does not mean that there was no design in several, at least, Middle and Late Byzantine buildings. The mathematical knowledge essential to design is attested by the widespread applications of arithmetic and practical geometry, which were widely deployed in the military arts.<sup>72</sup>

Against the flat denial that architectural design was practised by the Byzantines<sup>73</sup> may be marshalled the following fact: the erection of an exact copy of a building can only be achieved by way of a design. We may mention the cases of the katholika of

66. H. BUCHWALD, Retrofit-Hallmark of Byzantine Architecture, *Form, style and Meaning in Byzantine Church Architecture*, Aldershot 1999, p. III, 1-22. See also Ch. BOURAS, Ἱστορία τῆς Ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς, II, Athens 1994, p. 192, 193. Nevertheless, we know some cases of reaction against the alteration of existing buildings, as for instance by the orders in the typikon of the Kosmosoteira monastery, L. PETIT, Typikon du monastère de la Kosmosotira près d'Aenos (1152), *IRAİK* 13, 1908, p. 56, 68.

67. M. PSELLOS, *Χρονογραφία*, ed. B. KARALIS, Athens 1992, I, p. 137-143 and II, p. 149-155.

68. *Ibid.*, I, p. 29, 30 (introduction by B. KARALIS).

69. If something like this had been the case in Nea Moni, Psellos would certainly not have missed the opportunity to criticise it.

70. The planning would have involved drawings and models and would not have taken place directly on the site, where the technical and financial difficulties would have been insuperable.

71. WILSON JONES, *Principles of Roman Architecture* (cit. n. 26), p. 49.

72. D. SULLIVAN, *Siegecraft*, Washington 2000, p. IX-XVIII (bibliographical selection of both the Byzantine sources and the modern relative works). See also E. M. BRUINS, *Codex Constantinopolitanus Palatii Veteris no. 1*, Leiden 1964, passim.

73. OUSTERHOUT, *Master Builders* (cit. n. 3), p. 58-85.

Vatopedi and Iviron monasteries,<sup>74</sup> the church of Profitis Ilias in Thessaloniki and the Komnion in Thessaly,<sup>75</sup> and finally the katholikon of the Hosios Loukas monastery and the church of the Soteira Lykodemou in Athens.<sup>76</sup> The transfer of dozens of numbers relating to dimensions from the original to the copy through memory alone is inconceivable.

The monuments cited above attest to the fact that, despite the silence of the literary sources, and above and beyond the usual repetitions of buildings, there were certain tendencies to artistic originality in Byzantine architecture that derived either from the founders or from the architects, when the latter were in a position to make use of a design and had the instructions or consent of the person commissioning the building.

The most important of our examples were built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and indeed at its beginning. The increased interest in painting shown by the urban aristocracy of Constantinople at this period, and the emergence of amateur painters, who were members of the aristocracy or educated clerics,<sup>77</sup> has already been noted. Against the background of a progressive society<sup>78</sup> with a wide range of interests, it is likely that men of the same social class also held views on architecture, which they discussed with architects.<sup>79</sup>

Against this view it could be argued that almost all the phenomena of originality are to be found in Greece, not in the Byzantine capital. Provincial Hellenic church building was more progressive than that of the cultural centre of Constantinople.<sup>80</sup> Unfortunately, the literary sources reveal nothing of the social and economic conditions in the provinces, or the relations of the local Greek aristocracy with the capital of the empire. Very little is known of the officials who came to Greece and were associated with the erection of important monuments.<sup>81</sup> These are matters that remain to be dealt with by historical research in the future.

74. St. MAMALOUKOS, Ζητήματα σχεδιασμού στη βυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική, *DChAE* 24, 2003, p. 199, 120, 122.

75. Ch. BOURAS, 'Η αρχιτεκτονική του καθολικού της μονής 'Αγίου Δημητρίου Στομίου (τ. σάγγελι), *DChAE* 24, 2003, p. 160-161.

76. Ch. BOURAS, The Soteira Lykodemou at Athens : Architecture, *DChAE* 25, 2004, p. 22, 23. In this case the dimensions of the copy are equal to the three quarters of those of the original.

77. N. ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΔΗΣ, L'artiste - amateur à Byzance, *Artistes, artisans et production artistique au Moyen-Age*, ed. X. BARRAL I ALTET, Paris 1986, p. 45-50.

78. ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΔΗΣ, *ibid.*; A. KAZHDAN, A. W. EPSTEIN, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, Berkeley 1985, p. 39, 40, 198, 199; A. CUTLER, J. M. SPIESER, *Byzance Médiévale*, Paris 1996, p. 207, 211, 221,

79. H. BUCHWALD, review of OUSTERHOUT, *Master Builders* (cit. n. 10), p. 477.

80. BOURAS, 'Ελλαδική ναοδομία (cit. n. 13), p. 368-370.

81. D. SOPHIANOS, 'Η Μονή του 'Οσίου Λουκά, Athens 1992, p. 55-56; IDEM, "Όσιος Λουκάς, Athens 1989, p. 51-54, 67 n. 97-99.

## ARCHITECTURE D'INTÉRIEUR : LE PENTAPYRGION

par Gilbert DAGRON

*Summary:* The *pentapyrgion* described in *De ceremoniis* II 15 is an arrangement of five "towers" or show-cases, a unique ensemble designed, allegedly by the emperor Theophilus, for decorating the nuptial chamber of the Magnaura. For the festivities of Easter – and for the reception of important embassies should they arrive around that date – this ensemble, symbolizing fertility and renewal, was moved to the apse of the throne room, the Chrysotriklinos. This paper attempts to explain the texts, their context and the symbolism they convey, which no claim however to a complete reconstruction of the decorum.

Les historiens ou philologues qui ont travaillé sur le cérémonial de la cour byzantine des IX<sup>e</sup>-X<sup>e</sup> siècles, à commencer par Du Cange et Reiske<sup>1</sup>, ont eu à imaginer la forme et la fonction de ce meuble ou décor auquel les sources donnent le nom de *pentapyrgion*. Leurs définitions sont rarement fausses, mais presque toujours imprécises.

- Jean Ébersolt : « Vaste armoire composée de cinq tours, dans les compartiments desquels on exposait, au moment des réceptions, différents objets » ; il ajoute en note que chacune des tours (πυργία) avait des compartiments (μεσοκάρδια)<sup>2</sup>.
- René Janin : « Une vaste armoire à cinq pans, œuvre de Théophile, dans laquelle on exposait des vases, des couronnes, etc. »<sup>3</sup>.
- Albert Vogt : « Une sorte de vaste armoire — un trésor — composée de cinq tours séparées les unes des autres par des panneaux (μεσοκάρδια), à l'intérieur desquels étaient exposés des couronnes, des vases et autres œuvres de prix. Ce genre de meuble était connu à Byzance, et ceux du Chrysotriklinos et de la Magnaura n'étaient pas d'une extraordinaire rareté... Généralement, ces armoires à tours se plaçaient dans l'atrium des palais'. Ici, il semble qu'on le plaçait

1. DU CANGE, *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae graecitatis*, s. v.; I. I. REISKE, *Constantini Porphyrogeniti imperatoris De ceremoniis aulae byzantinae*, Bonn, II (commentaire), p. 683-685.

2. *Le Grand Palais de Constantinople et le Livre des cérémonies*, Paris 1910, p. 82.

3. *Constantinople byzantine*, 2<sup>e</sup> éd., Paris 1964, p. 115-116

4. Cette indication vient de REISKE (*loc. cit.* n. 1), qui, dans une première interprétation à laquelle il renonce, renvoie à *Chron. Cassinense*, III, 34.

*Mélanges Jean-Pierre Sodini*, Travaux et Mémoires 15, Paris 2005, p. 109-117.