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Author(s): Anthony Cutler

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A Baroque Account of Byzantine Architecture Leone Allacci's *De templis Graecorum recentioribus*

ANTHONY CUTLER Emory University

IN 1640, Jean Morin, a French priest of the Oratory and sometime spiritual counsellor to Queen Henrietta Maria, was summoned to Rome by Urban VIII. The Pope's intention was to assemble the scholars most learned in the history of the Orthodox faith, his ultimate purpose to consummate the ancient dream of union between the Latin and Greek churches. In the course of his two years in Rome, Morin met and became a firm friend of Leone Allacci, a *scriptor* in the Vatican library. Both men were converts to Catholicism: Morin had abandoned Calvinism and Allacci the Orthodox faith of his childhood on Chios.

Some combination of a fervent attachment to their adopted confession, their mutual antiquarian interest, and their concern for the oecumenical aspirations of the Pope, led to discussions which resulted in *De templis Graecorum recentioribus*.¹ Allacci's book takes the form of two long letters² to Morin which describe

not those immense structures made from Christian piety and designed when the Empire of the East ruled . . . but those which the faithful erect secretly under the most bitter servitude and oppression of their religion (I, 1).

It is obvious from the text of these letters that Morin had requested such a description from Allacci and he himself supplied the author with diagrams of types of Orthodox

churches (Figs. 1–3). No history of Byzantine architecture was requested and none was supplied. The purpose of the letters was rather to acquaint the reader with the living practice of the East Christian faith in its architectural setting, introducing only such historical and social information as would illumine their subject matter. Allacci's intention was to offer an alternative to actual experience. Emphasis throughout his book is on the liturgical usage of the different parts of the Church. Structure for its own sake did not interest the Greek author and buildings are not described except in terms of their detailed liturgical function. It is as if architecture were seen by the two friends as an extension of the work to which they had devoted their literary lives. Allacci's youth had been spent in teaching and setting down the differences—in history and actuality—between Greek and Latin beliefs.³ Morin, more involved in public service, had yet found time to write an historical account of the time when the two faiths were one.⁴ Now, in the same city and during the same years that da Cortona and Borromini were changing the face of ecclesiastical architecture, two scholars, neither of them Italian, addressed themselves to the problem of why Greek worship and church building were so different from that of Rome.

1. Cologne, 1645. For Morin's letters to Allacci, Cardinal Barberini, and others on the same subject see P. Desmolets, *Mémoires de littérature et d'histoire*, Paris, 1749, I, pt. 2.

2. Cited below as I and II with additional reference in Arabic numerals to Allacci's own subdivisions of the letters.

3. See for example his *De ecclesiae occidentalis atque orientalis perpetua consensione*, Cologne, 1648. A complete list of Allacci's published works and a thorough account of his life is given by Mario Cosenza, *Dictionary of the Italian Humanists*, Boston, 1962, I, pp. 134–139.

4. *Histoire de la délivrance de l'église chrétienne par l'empereur Constantin*, Paris, 1630.

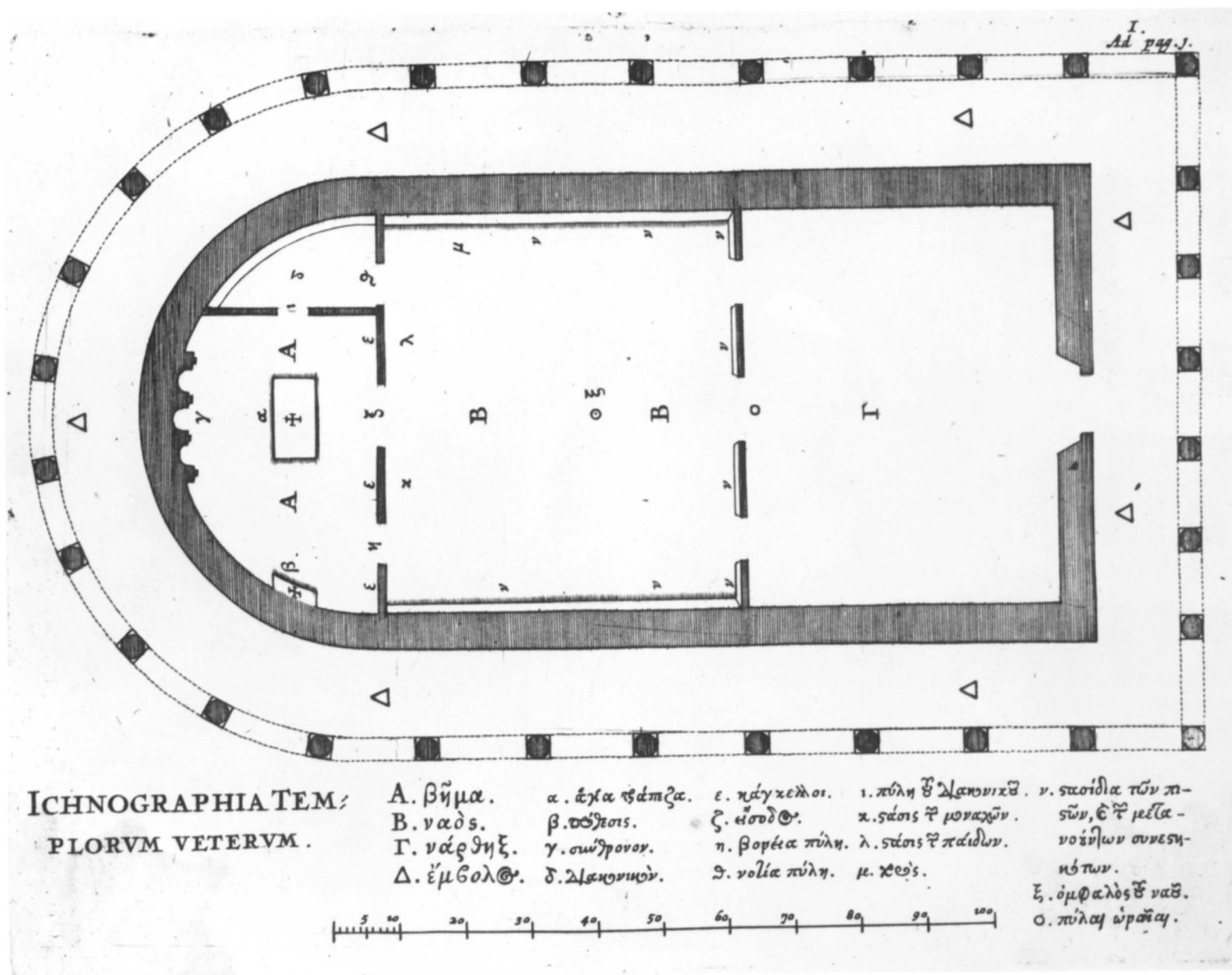


Fig. 1. Leone Allacci, *De templis Graecorum recentioribus*, 1645, plate I (photo: Emory University Library).

I

The result is not the earliest work devoted to Byzantine architecture that we have. But the few previous accounts had been written by Italians and usually about Ravenna.⁵ The Greek tradition was different. After the sixth century⁶ the *ekphraseis*, the descriptions of individual monuments, owe nothing to Vitruvius and show no interest in structural mechanics. Nor do they share that concern for the pristine Roman text that was to characterize Italian writing in the field after Alberti.

5. For example Desiderio Spreti, *Della grandezza, della ruina e della restaurazione di Ravenna*, Pesaro, 1574.

6. The last major Greek writer to concern himself with structural detail is Procopius. For a typical later *ekphrasis* see Nikolaus Mesariotes, "Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople," ed. Glanville Downey, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* XLVII, 1957, pp. 853-974.

Allacci, like his Greek predecessors, professed no interest in construction. But the *De templis* is full of philological investigation and its author must be counted the first to apply this Renaissance approach to Byzantine architecture. He frequently cites Greek writers for his statements but these are intended to suggest documentary corroboration rather than sources of spiritual inspiration and authorization. He argues not in the manner of a medieval disputant but as a textual critic: "this I have written . . . that I might respond to some doubtful propositions" (II, 10). Good seventeenth-century scholar that he is, he quotes from his *Euchologium* (II, 8) with approval not for its theological insights but because of the prayer book's "very accurate description of the altars of the Greeks."

Within the compass of fifty pages he is often more informative than Du Cange, the great lexicographer who is usually considered the first exponent of the textual approach

to Byzantine art and architecture.⁷ Yet the *De templis* was written more than forty years before Du Cange's work and was frequently cited by the Frenchman as an authority⁸ on architectural matters. Since Du Cange, Allacci's research in this area has been ignored while scholars celebrate his achievements as a divine and as custodian of the Vatican library.⁹

He was elevated to this position in 1661 and it seems safe to speculate that this preferment was made on the basis of his literary achievements. Mostly polemical in nature, these have insured for him a reputation of being "violent against the Greek Church."¹⁰ But none of this animosity appears in his architectural writing, which, to a lesser man, would have provided opportunity for jibes at the sorry state of Orthodox churches. Instead he regards as extraordinary the persistence of the Greek rite under Turkish domination and the lengths to which the faithful went to rebuild collapsing churches and even, with bribery, to circumvent the Ottoman prohibition on the construction of new buildings. Both the restored and the newly built "temples" interest him:

Granted that everywhere in Greece at this time a great number of temples is to be seen, not however with one exterior common to all, nor with one interior aspect; but varied in cult and decoration according to time and place and the abilities of the builder. Some are small, rude buildings. Others are made of the humble soil. Still others are to be despised for the meanness of their walls and woodwork.¹¹ But however they are made they do not lack for veneration, but with frequent meeting of believers divine service is accomplished in these (churches) and, if you will judge it so, in a not unbecoming manner. Moreover they recover the beauty of the perfect temple . . . (I, 1).

At this point begins his detailed description of a typical monastery. Not till the second letter does he categorize the variety of church structures and only very rarely does he cite specific buildings. The first letter is an attempt to present the Byzantine liturgy and its setting as a vicarious experience for the Catholic. To this end he portrays the rustic environment of the monastery and is often at pains to con-

7. See his *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae Graecitatis*, Lyons, 1688. The introductory material to this lexicon includes a plate illustrating details of Byzantine architecture which owes much to Allacci.

8. For example at cols. 196, 378, 963, 1622.

9. Thus L. Petit, *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* I, cols. 830–833, merely lists the *De templis* among Allacci's earlier works without further discussion. For his other writings and achievement in bringing the Palatine library to Rome from Heidelberg, see H. Lämmer, *De Leonis Allatii codicibus qui Romae in bib. Vallicelliana asservantur*, Freiburg, 1864.

10. Cosenza, p. 137.

11. Allacci uses the word *contignatio* in a variety of senses: flooring, joist, woodwork, etc. Cf. Vitruvius, I, 5; II, 9.

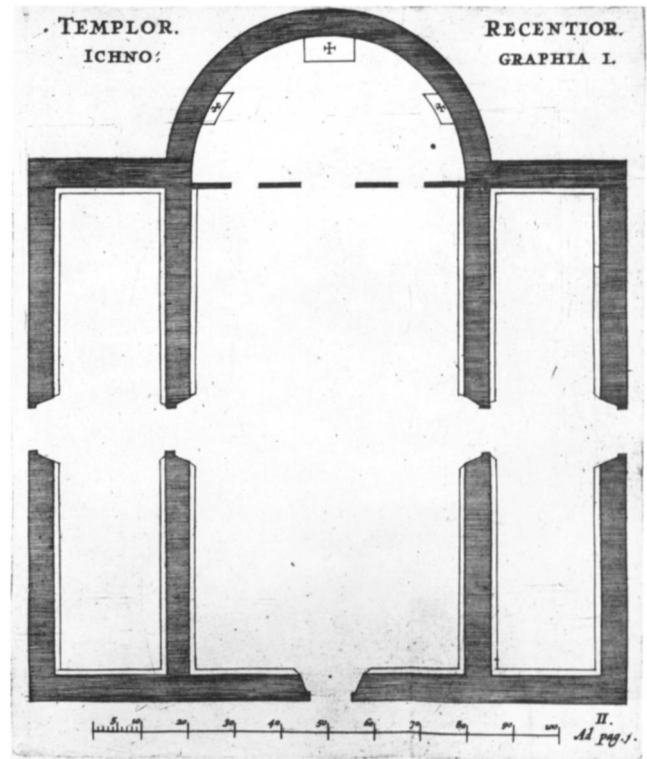


Fig. 2. Leone Allacci, *De templis Graecorum recentioribus*, 1645, plate II (photo: Emory University Library).

trast the city church familiar to his reader with the place of the Greek church in a rural community. The town is fortified with walls but the Orthodox monastery is protected by its icons (I, 2). He suggests the apotropaic function of images—"here is protection from airy creatures and harm from other things"—an idea that must have appeared curious to his sophisticated audience. Nothing could have been more remote from the unsullied interior lines of a Cinquecento church than the triple tier of frescoes that decorated the walls of the churches of his childhood:

Inside the Roman church¹² all the walls are covered with the smoothest possible marble and nothing is represented on the bare surfaces. In the churches of the Greek, all is changed by means of pictures. With no unpraiseworthy skill they set before the spectator images of saints and offer for his contemplation historical events and six hundred other things. And so that the obscurity of the subjects does not afflict the mind . . . the deed is made known to readers by a brief description (II, 4).

Nor could Allacci, living amid the seventeenth-century renaissance of wall painting in Rome, find these decorations

12. He is referring to San Spirito in Sassia, rebuilt by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger in 1540.

extraneous or improper. Rather, by their means, “the mysteries of things divine gradually insinuate themselves” and faith is confirmed and strengthened.

These are almost the only references in the book to pictorial decoration and are quickly passed over for architectural features and church furniture which derive, Allacci believes, directly from the liturgy.¹³ Similarly, lengthy quotations from the typicon of St. Saba and the hymns of Theodore of Stoudios are used to vindicate the ancient practices of summoning the faithful by striking a sheet of iron or the *semanterion*.¹⁴ Particularly painful to a man from Chios, an island famous for its many bell-towers,¹⁵ was the Turkish ban on bell-ringing. He declares that the Turks feared the noise of bells would strike terror into departed souls. The prohibition was the more regrettable since he read that bells had been used as late as the time of George Pachymeres, the historian of the early fourteenth century. Only on the holy Mount Athos were there still bells and “sundials made out of iron disks which, without help, tell the hours by the noise they produce” (I, 3).

Allacci’s method of exposition is to conduct the reader from the courtyard of the monastery, through the atrium and narthex into the sanctuary. The peculiarities of the Byzantine fore-court (*proaulion*)¹⁶ are presented, from the rain-trough—which the writer identifies as the *impluvium* of the Roman atrium—to the *garsonostasion*. The latter is not explained by Allacci, but its etymological significance as a waiting-place for servants is somewhat laboriously elucidated by Du Cange.¹⁷

The *De templis*, however, discusses the narthex in much greater detail (I, 5). Once again, a distinction between town and country is made. “In the city this is the place intended for women; in the monasteries, for those monks who have not yet entered holy orders.” It is also the place for penitents and the dead awaiting burial. But Allacci’s primary concern is whether this *pronaos* is part of the church.¹⁸ He acknowledges the position of earlier writers that, liturgi-

cally, the narthex is “outside the church.” But he cannot ignore the architectural proximity. “It is really neither the church nor separate from the church but contiguous with it.” This is more than the cavil of a mind trained in theology. In essence the problem is one of acoustics. How could the narthex be separate from the church when those who stood in it must be able to hear the lections read from beside the sanctuary?

Allacci returns to the problem in the second letter when he describes churches with a double narthex such as exist “in the parishes” (*parochialibus*) and in the churches of urban populations (*plebanis*). He specifically mentions “a temple on Chios called the Campana¹⁹ . . . on both sides of which the nartheces project far beyond the length of the church.” Here the women know their appointed place (*stationis ordo*), separated from the church proper by a projection²⁰ and sometimes by a brick or cement wall:

This is not as high as a man but somewhat lower, so that the women who stand may look into the church and hear the rite satisfactorily. Above the *tabulatum* are lattices which conceal the women from the sight of men (II, 6).

The force of this custom is so strong that even in small country churches where choir and narthex are undifferentiated

the women occupy one part, the men another if this can be conveniently accomplished. If not, the majority are (accommodated) in this way. As happens very often when feasts and solemn anniversaries are attended by large numbers of men and women, the women for the most part hear the rite from outside the doors of the church.

While historians of Byzantine architecture have insisted upon a general reduction in the overall area of Comnenian and Palaeologan churches,²¹ Allacci suggests a novel increase in the length and grandeur of both the choir and the narthex. “In the same way as the church itself, the manner of the narthex is more ample and extravagant,” so much so that “no one minds if he must stay in the narthex while the great majority of men push to enter the choir.”

He does not allude to any particular example but refers presumably to the type of church characterized in Fig. 3.

13. The explanation of the evolution of Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture as a response to liturgical needs has had its modern champions. See E. Freshfield, “On Byzantine Churches, and the Modifications made in their Arrangement owing to the Necessities of the Greek Ritual,” *Archaeologia* XLIV, 1873, pp. 383–392.

14. A set of wooden blocks struck with a mallet, still used in churches on Mt. Athos and elsewhere.

15. See Arnold Smith, *The Architecture of Chios*, ed. Philip Argenti, London, 1962, pp. 90–91.

16. Cf. Mesarites, XLI, 1; XLII, 1.

17. *Glossarium*, col. 238: “in quo scilicet consistebant procerum famulli, quos Garcones . . . Graeci vocabant.”

18. His full discussion of the subject, *De narthecae ecclesiae veteris* is bound with the 1645 edition of the *De templis*.

19. I have been unable to identify this church. It is not listed in Smith-Argenti, note 15 above.

20. Allacci uses the word *tabulatum*. In other places he seems to mean either a raised level or a masonry projection separating distinct parts of the church. Du Cange does not discuss the ambiguous term. See also below.

21. See, for example, T. G. Jackson, *Byzantine and Romanesque Architecture*, Cambridge, 1913, I, pp. 121–144.

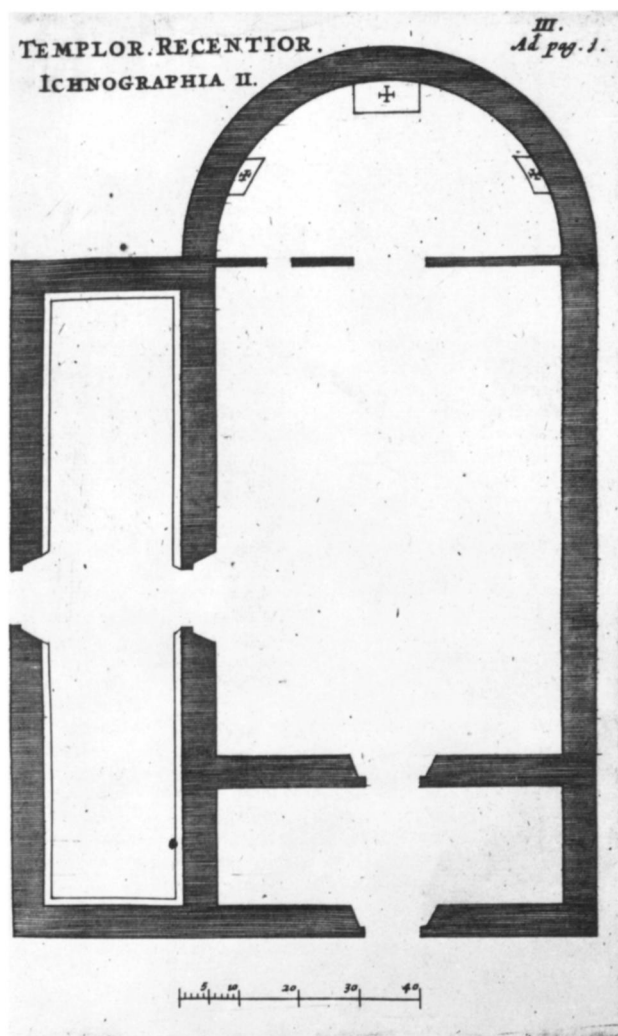


Fig. 3. Leone Allacci, *De templis Graecorum recentioribus*, 1645, plate III (photo: Emory University Library).

As in each of his plans, no superstructure is indicated but we may infer an inscribed-cross type with dome such as the early fifteenth-century Evangelistria at Mistra.²² Again, the narthex of this church possesses a gallery that would seem to fit Allacci's use of the word *tabulatum*.

Strangely enough, the *De templis* makes no reference to the church with two naves, each with an apse and altar of its own, that is so pronounced a feature of late and post-Byzantine architecture on Chios.²³ Nor does the almost universal development of the double narthex—as at the Karye Çamii in Constantinople—receive more than a pass-

ing mention (I, 5). It may be that consideration of such elegant and disproportionately large vestibules would have too long postponed his account of the interior. But more probably Allacci understood that the topic deserved entirely separate treatment.²⁴

Since he is concerned with liturgical movement, the author is at pains to clarify the functions of the several sets of doors within the church. A Latin might well be confused by the various epithets—*pulai hōraiai*, *pylai basilikai*, *pylos angelikos*—used by Codinus and others to denote the passages from the narthex to the choir. For the center portal Allacci decides upon the name of “beautiful door”²⁵ but only after the reader has learned to distinguish this form from the “holy doors,”²⁶ the means of access to the sanctuary. This thoroughness is not mere pedantry, for his ensuing description of the various Offices would be nonsensical if these doors were confused. Their position is indicated on his plan of the older Greek type (Fig. 1) but not on those of more recent churches, presumably because they remained an unchanging feature of Byzantine design.

So, too, the different benches, “made of nut-wood or pine or other common board,” are indicated on the plan together with their customary occupants. The members of the choir are carefully segregated from those of the faithful but all sit on *accubitoria* placed adjacent to the wall. With a fine sense of function—and to distinguish Greek from Latin practice—Allacci explains that this arrangement permits the choir to contain “as many as possible” (I, 8).

He reverts to philology to explain the *omphalos* (navel) of the church, not omitting reference to Delphi and appropriate quotations from Homer and Pindar. This is the only occasion on which the *De templis* makes use of pagan authors. But the author quickly returns to the Christian Roman empire and its history, entering with obvious delight into the argument concerning the Emperor's right to enter the sanctuary. Byzantine apologists for this prerogative²⁷ are roundly described as sycophantic and the Greek charge

24. Note 18 above.

25. *Porta speciosa*.

26. *Sanctae portae* (Gr. *hagias thuras*). Allacci grants that many doors in the church might be called “holy” (I, 10). But he confesses that the gate of the sanctuary is so called “either for its magnificence or that it might be venerated the more or to acknowledge its many lattices.”

27. Theodore Balsamon, the twelfth-century patriarch of Antioch, and the contemporary historian John Zonaras are specifically mentioned. Against them Allacci uses the views of St. Ambrose and asserts that at least as late as Theodosius II (408–450), the emperor did not remain in the sanctuary after making his oblation. On the theory and practice of this imperial participation, see O. von Simson, *Sacred Fortress*, Chicago, 1948, pp. 27–39.

22. Mary N. Drandaki, *Mistra*, Athens, 1959, pp. 17–18.

23. See Smith-Argenti, pp. 85–86 and pls. 166, 170.

that Latins permit women to enter the *sancta sanctorum* is met with the response that in Orthodox churches such as “the famous temple of our Lord Jesus Christ in Chalkis, whoever wishes may enter the sacred shrine without impediment” (I, 9).

Allacci uses the word *templum* to denote both the sanctuary and the church as a whole. When this ambiguity must be avoided he latinizes the term *bēma*, identifying it with the *hierateion*²⁸ of the Greek prayer book. He explains that from the *bēma* came the name of the order of consecrated priests: *hoi apo tou bēmatou* or *taxis bēmatou*.

Similarly, he finds variety in the names given by Byzantine writers to those persons who serve at the altar. Generally however they are called deacons and the *diaconicon* that room in which they keep coals for the burning of incense and for heating the church. When this area is separated from the sanctuary by a wall it is called the *parabēma*, in the same way, Allacci explains, as “a lesser chapel next to a larger temple” is known as a *parekklesion*. The aperture in this wall is shown in Fig. 1 but his plans of later churches (Figs. 2, 3) show only a third altar “to the left upon leaving (the sanctuary) on which are placed books, vestments, and other utensils” (I, 13). In the light of his text, this altar must be understood as standing on a different level. By whatever means the *diaconicon* is separated from the *bēma*, the distinction has its origin in rank and function. The *parabēma* is the place for deacons, and neither the priests nor the *hyperetai* (sub-deacons) have any business there. In Allacci’s words, “it is not possible for one man to discharge the office of deacon and that of candle-snuffer.”

None of these details is unfamiliar to the Byzantinist; they were already familiar in the seventeenth century. But in the *De templis* alone do we find that extraordinary sense of the interpenetration of ritual, architecture, and history that enabled Allacci to rectify the interpretations of contemporary Roman and Protestant scholars.

He takes issue, for example, with Xylander,²⁹ a German Protestant scholar who, in his commentary on Cedrenus, had speculated about the nature of the *mitatōrion*. Allacci points out that this alternative name for the *diaconicon* is a corruption of “*minsatōrion*, so called from the table which was set up there for things to be laid on it” (I, 15). Xylander had suggested that it was “perhaps a profane part of the temple” and that knowledge of the early church did not help in understanding contemporary practice “since it is

clear that among the light-headed Greeks a thing is frequently changed.” This draws the full force of Allacci’s wrath:

It is not to be wondered at if among heretics part of the temple is considered profane since with them the entire temple is so. For us Catholics the temple has several parts to it and so it is for the Greeks who feel differently about respect for the temple than do the heretics . . . Who is being more light-headed here, Xylander or the Greeks themselves?

This is not simply abusive, for Allacci sees the Eastern Orthodox church, like the Roman, as “following the most ancient Fathers and Councils (and) affirmed by the blood of martyrs and the opinions of the most excellent doctors.” Protestant errors—both theological and philological—are the cause of

such raving against holy buildings. And what wonder is there in this when profane men, in their most profane languages, have distorted the Author of such buildings . . . and cast Him down from the throne of majesty and holiness? (I, 15).

It is odd to see Counter-Reformation zeal thus applied to the defense of the doctrinally schismatic Greek church; and the more interesting in that the occasion for this enthusiasm was a Protestant’s misconception of Byzantine architectural history.

Allacci returns at last to his discussion of the sanctuary, the north altar of which is identified in his first plan (Fig. 1) as the *prothesis*. But his explanation again suggests that this preparation of the Eucharistic elements is primarily a function and only by derivation a part of the church. There follows a full account of the Orthodox communion which contains much about liturgical utensils. As a source of information this passage (I, 16–20) was frequently cited by Du Cange.³⁰ Historians of Greek society in the centuries after the Ottoman conquest might well emulate his example and learn from the *De templis*. Allacci, again digressing, records the nocturnal ceremony in which crumbs of consecrated bread are taken to the sick as well as the Turks’ willingness to act as bodyguard to this devout procession. Allacci suggests, in fact, that many restrictions imposed upon the Greeks were honored rather in the breach.

Not the least contribution to peace was made by the relationship between Turkish women and the Greek church. In exchange for baptism of their children, the wives and daughters of the Conqueror made sure that “the light before the holy images does not fail lest they suffer harm.” From the same source, Allacci continues, the priest and his

28. See also Procopius, *De aed.*, I, 4, 12.

29. The hellenized name of Wilhelm Holtzmann (1532–1576), the classical philologist responsible for the first German translation of Euclid.

30. See *Glossarium* s.v. *margarita*, *artophorion merida*, *mixomelon*.

family grow fat. Christian and Turkish women, he reports, compete to bring gifts to the church. And a further function is added to those that the *parabēma* already discharges since “not only money but bread and wine, sometimes beans, sweets, and other dishes” are stored there “to be brought to his own house after the Mass” (I, 23).

Recollection of the priests of his own childhood on Chios reminds the author of his subject. Although he refuses to enter into discussion of monastic equipment such as the smelting-furnace—“I do not want to turn this letter into a volume”—he does add a few points omitted from his previous discussion of the church’s architectural elements. The ambo, that indispensable pulpit of earlier Greek churches, is now ignored by speakers who prefer to stand in the middle of the church. And there must be noted the exterior staircase leading to the women’s gallery. Serving the same purposes as the lattices “which the Italians call *gelosiae*,” this enables the women to descend undisturbed “and to leave the church by a door accessible to them alone.”³¹

Allacci’s first letter ends on a melancholy note: “What more should I tell Morin about the churches of the recent Greeks since no one treats these sacred matters as momentous or weighty?” Even before this observation the reader already has the impression of a scholarly exchange, remote from the interests of all but the correspondents who alone realize the relevance of architecture to the oecumenical purpose. For this reason the Greek had prepared these *ichnographia*, these records of the traces of what had gone and what was left of a great tradition. Allacci’s method, like that of his contemporaries, is philological rather than archaeological. Not from this but from his ardent concern for the subject do we sense a somewhat lonely pursuit of truth. It is as if the acquisition of factual knowledge were not an end in itself but a step toward wisdom. The foundations of this almost Platonic attitude to architectural history were to be laid in the more systematic considerations of the second epistle.

II

From the start the last epistle is more dispassionate than its predecessor. Gone are the theological digressions and lengthy social observations, to be replaced with a new sense of purpose. Byzantine ecclesiastical buildings must be categorized by their form and the nature and etymology of several problematical parts of the church must be discussed.

31. Allacci insists on the antiquity of this feature, having read of it in Philo and Clement of Alexandria. For the post-Byzantine staircases of Chios, see Smith-Argenti, p. 87 and pls. 168, 172.

Only then will Morin’s request be answered and the record of these types of buildings be complete. In the light of this prodigious task, we might well read a deliberate ambiguity in the letter’s closing words to his friend: “nothing that is commanded by you in the future will ever seem laborious to me.”

The only justification expressed for a second letter is that Allacci had received some “pictures” from Morin. Nowhere does he mention the number of these *tabellae*, nor does he suggest that the three fairly unhelpful plates bound with the *De templis* were drawn by the Frenchman. It is somewhat incredible that these plans could occasion the remark, “I have from you pictures, which reproduce the always four-square form of these sacred buildings, the chance which I desired” (II, 3). In contrast to Allacci’s painstaking attempts to describe the different types of structure verbally, the plates reproduced provide a minimal amount of information. They certainly would not enable the author to “take possession of my concepts with my eyes,” as he tells Morin. It is remarkable that both plans of the “newer temples” show only the single apse that characterized the post-Byzantine architecture of Chios³² and not the triple form common at Mistra³³ and elsewhere in continental Greece.

To orient the Latin reader, the author records Morin’s suggestion that the characteristic Greek sanctuary is to be seen in at least two places in Rome. The church of the Greek College of St. Athanasius, where Allacci studied and taught in his youth, and the upper church of St. Clement³⁴ both exhibit the Orthodox relationship between the *bēma* and the choir.

The classification of Greek churches, to which he now turns, Allacci regards as an excursus. This appears strange to the modern reader for whom the structural nature of the church would seem prior to the details of the interior and its furnishings considered in the first letter. Yet his subject is not church construction as such but the physical circumstances of the liturgy. He thinks in terms of movement in two dimensions: the procession from altar to *prothesis*, into the aisle and back through the gates of the sanctuary. Concepts of volume—and therefore the expression of such concepts—come to him only with difficulty.

Thus he describes his first category, the *troullōta*—churches such as Hagia Sophia at Constantinople³⁵—as “those which

32. Smith-Argenti, pls. 164–170.

33. Cathedral, Pantanassa (Pl. 4), Aphantiko, Peribleptos (Pl. 5) etc.

34. Jackson, *Byzantine and Romanesque Architecture* I, pl. 50.

35. For the classic description of the vaulting of Hagia Sophia, see Procopius, *De aed.*, I, 1, 32–54.



Fig. 4. Pantanassa, Mistra, apse and portico (photo: author).

are arched in a decreasing orbit, and which, at their highest point, are rounded in a vault.”³⁶ The term *troulla* “which signifies an arch or a vault” he takes from Codinus’ descriptions of the Great Church, its construction and repair.³⁷ It is by analogy rather than by analysis that he seeks to explain the form to the reader: “such a type we can see today in the Trastevere region of Rome, the temple of the Carmelites to the Holy Virgin.”³⁸ Choosing, however, to read *kupariasin* (cypress) for *kiasarin* (pumice), he points out that cupolas of this type were not always of stone but sometimes “put together of wood that never rots.” In this case the beams “come together as in a shield.”

Before entering into discussion of the *troullota*, Allacci had already suggested that there “is not too much difference between” the various types (II, 3). Indeed he makes the same comparison to suggest the form of the *tholos* type:

all the beams come together in the middle of the roof and are fixed bordering on each other as in a shield or the navel. This will have been the tortoise (*testudo*) of temples, growing high and in a circular shape which stops at a sharpened point.

Because of the imprecise language it is difficult to know precisely what sort of dome Allacci has in mind. The description would cover such diverse structures as the tenth-century church at Aght’amar and the late twelfth-century Church of the Virgin at Studenića.³⁹ His only elucidation is to suggest the similarity of this form to “huts [*tuguriola*] . . . where the monks or hermits [of Egypt and Palestine] kept themselves shut up.”

While his *kylindrota* type, “which rose symmetrically from a round base to the form of a cylinder,” suggests a cupola such as that of Hagios Nikolaus at Monemvasia,⁴⁰ it might be a reference to the high-domed churches of Calabria that he had known as an adolescent.⁴¹ His remaining domical category is no more explicit. The *kamarota* “are those which end in a vault. They are held together by arch work and an in-turning roof.” The cupola of the Peribleptos at Mistra (Fig. 5) appears to fit the description of the vault as “really a tortoise or arch, the higher part being an inclined roof curving back in the form of a tortoise.” It is

supported on the arches of the drum in a fashion that suggests to Allacci “those garden pergolas which give shade to walkers with various kinds of trees and thickets with creeping shrubs and which lean upon supports” (II, 3).

The *kamarota* are not one of the author’s five “basic types” (*summa genera*). Like the *stavrota* and the *dromika*, which he next considers, they are “derived from or can be referred to” the forms that he has already discussed. It is unlikely that Allacci found classification by types of dome unsatisfactory. Nonetheless his remaining types are distinguished by their plan rather than by their structure or manner of vaulting. Employing this new criterion, churches exemplifying his domical categories might equally well be accommodated within the types now defined by plan. The possibility of this discrepancy apparently did not occur to the author.

Thus when discussing the *stavrota*, the form known today as the inscribed-cross type, he does not mention the great variety of domes used to cover this ground-plan. For Allacci, the type is simply defined as that in which the arms of the cross “subdivide the part of the church in which the altar is located from that part which leads to the entrance” (II, 3). Offering as an example the Church of the Blachernae at Constantinople, he prefers to quote from Cedrenus and Zonaras concerning its plan rather than from Procopius’ enlightening passage on the relationship between plan and elevation in this church.⁴²

Allacci is obviously more familiar with “the recent churches of the Greeks . . . [which] can nearly all be seen to be *dromika*.” This is the customary Greek name for the basilica and to document this usage he cites Codinus on the pre-Justinianic form of Hagia Sophia.⁴³ He suggests that such structures, “provided they are not looked into,” resemble private houses. This is perhaps the reason that the type prevailed in the cities of the late Empire and into the author’s own day, for “*trullae* and *tholoi* are rare in cities lest their splendid appearance entice the eyes of enemies and excite envy” (II, 3).

In this instance, Allacci partially describes the church’s structure. “The *dromika* have a square form with either equal or unequal sides. At the roof . . . rafters are held together with purlins [*cantheria*] and concealed with tiles.” Then, in what seems to be an attempt to explain the structure of a dome with squinches, “they are vaulted in a semi-circle⁴⁴ which encloses the rectangular level by angles, just

36. “*Troullōta sunt, quae summam sui partem trullatam habent, quae nempe in supremo sui fastigio in arcum rotundata, ambitu descescente arcuantur.*”

37. *De structura templi S. Sophiae*, ed. Bonn, pp. 141, 143–144.

38. Santa Maria in Transpontina, begun in 1470 by Meo del Caprino and modified by Bramante and Bernini.

39. W. L. MacDonald, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, New York, 1962, pls. 75, 88.

40. MacDonald, pl. 81.

41. For example La Cattolica at Stilo, MacDonald, pl. 98.

42. *De aed.*, I, 3, 3–5.

43. *De signis Constantinopoli*, ed. Bonn, p. 64.

44. Again evident is Allacci’s preference for the two dimensional concept *semicirculus*, rather than the volume-defining *hemisphaera*.



Fig. 5. Peribleptos, Mistra, apse (photo: author).

before the sanctuary” (II, 4). If this is his purpose, then the author has described the eleventh and twelfth-century solution to the problem of interior support for the dome and we must suppose reference to a type that would include Hosios Loukas in Stiris and the *katholicon* of the monastery at Daphni.⁴⁵

Surprisingly, Allacci makes no mention of the transverse-vault much used in southern Greece from the thirteenth century through the Turkish conquest.⁴⁶ But he does mention the vertical combination of the basilica and inscribed-cross which, like modern scholars, he called the mixed type. The most notable of these *dromika* with vaulted galleries and

dome are the Aphantiko and the Pantanassa (Fig. 4) at Mistra, although as usual he furnishes no specific examples.

One last type of church interests Allacci, characteristically for philological rather than structural or aesthetic reasons. This is the church with *emboloi*, “already investigated by others, though I do not know if it has been satisfactorily explained” (II, 4). The term is used by Codinus in an obscure passage and every commentator since the seventeenth century has accepted Allacci’s explanation of the word. Lambecius, indeed, writing six years later, quotes *verbatim* (and without acknowledgement) from the *De templis*.⁴⁷

There is little doubt that, in medieval Greek, *embolos* denotes a porch, an interpretation that Allacci was peculiarly

45. MacDonald, pls. 77–79. Allacci was almost certainly familiar with the church of the Nea Moni on Chios which is similarly constructed.

46. For example at the Church of the Theodoroi in Argolis.

47. *De originibus Constantinopoli*, ed. Bonn, p. 15; Lambecius’ comments, pp. 220–221.

qualified to present. For on Chios most late Byzantine churches possess such a feature.⁴⁸ Generally the porch, and the benches that it protects, are located only at the west end. But Allacci attests to the fact that, in some cases, porticoes extended along both sides of the church as at the Pantanassa at Mistra (Fig. 4).⁴⁹ His schematic representation of the older Greek church (Fig. 1) has an *embolos* that entirely surrounds the building. Obviously their form varied greatly. He speaks of tiles laid over wooden rafters supported by stone columns and brick piers. The portico at the Pantanassa is an elegant and rare combination of piers and columns. But whatever its manner of construction, Allacci insists on the pleasure and shelter afforded by this unique feature of later Byzantine churches. For him, it constitutes quite a different type of building from those that he has already discussed: the church with *emboloi* is in a class by itself.

The remainder of Allacci's second letter consists for the most part of answers to some precise inquiries from Morin. He explains the protocol of seating in a Greek church for both clergy (II, 6) and laymen (II, 8). The construction of the Orthodox altar and its hidden repository for relics is touched upon. And returning to the monastery, that harbinger of Byzantine civilization, the author explains the liturgical use of the *parekklesia* (II, 7).

All of this information is the product of personal experience confirmed and set in its historical context by his profound knowledge of the Byzantine classics. But neither source could help Allacci solve one question addressed to him by his correspondent. Morin desired to know the meaning of the word *solea* as used by the historians Codinus and Cedrenus in descriptions of Hagia Sophia at Constantinople to denote the raised pathway leading from the sanctuary to the pulpit.⁵⁰

Manifestly the term was no longer current in post-Con-

quest Greek. The problem was therefore philological. But this is not the only reason why Allacci should regard it as a particular challenge. The contexts in which the word was used suggest that it was an elaborately decorated part of the Great Church. Originally made of onyx, it was adorned with silver by the Emperor Justin II. It was moreover specifically associated with the imperial and the patriarchal presence in Hagia Sophia and therefore probably possessed some liturgical significance, the more so since it was located "beside the *bēma*." Because the historians spoke of the *solea* being entered and crossed, Allacci is inclined to dismiss the possibility of identifying it with the Latin *solium* (throne). The idea of connecting it with the sun (*sol*) appeared to him as no more attractive. If it were part of the pavement before the sanctuary, then, in the light of its rich fabric, it was some very special part. If it were some raised level, then this must have been unique to Hagia Sophia since "Greek churches as they now stand, save for steps . . . at the altar and the entrance, are distinguished by their level, uniform ground" (II, 5).

In the absence of sufficient documentary evidence, Allacci refuses to speculate concerning the nature of the *solea*. For the first time in his discussion of Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture furniture and he admits defeat: "I seek for one certain fact about the *solea*." Du Cange echoes him in this confession of ignorance.

Already, then, in the seventeenth century the traces of Byzantine civilization were growing indistinct. The more reason, therefore, that what was left should be carefully recorded. Allacci's book begins with the declaration that he is concerned only with the newer temples. But in the course of his exposition he comprehends almost the entire course of Greek church building, bringing the account up to his own day when fragments of this tradition still survived. These he would set down for the sake of the buildings themselves and for the liturgy that they served. Architectural historians have largely ignored these later churches, in particular those built after the Turkish conquest. In this they have shown themselves as yet insensible to Allacci's premise that in building the most recent Byzantines found what was perhaps their most articulate means of expression.

48. Smith-Argenti, p. 91 and pls. 166, 168, 170, 179.

49. Only the north portico survives today.

50. Codinus, *De structura templi S. Sophiae*, ed. Bonn, p. 142, 144; Cedrenus, ed. Bonn, I., pp. 676-679. Cf. R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, Harmondsworth, 1965, pp. 76, 362.