

Foreword

Inability and *decline* – these are only two of countless negative terms that are frequently used to describe Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture from the transitional period. It is not without reason that the time between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages is better known by the unflattering term *Dark Ages*. The negative associations may derive from the scholarship's recurring references to the smaller dimensions of the churches, the enormous amount of spolia and the lack of individual building types. This approach originated in the early 20th century, when ecclesiastical architecture was examined from a merely typological perspective and scholarship attempted to claim an unbroken development from the late antique basilica to the Middle and Late Byzantine cross-in-square church. Famous contributors were JOSEF STRZYGOWSKI with his monograph *KLEINASIEN, EIN NEULAND DER KUNSTGESCHICHTE* (LEIPZIG 1903) as well as Oskar Wulff and his book *DIE ALTCHRISTLICHE KUNST II* (BERLIN 1914).¹ How strong the methodological influence of these works – which despite the critique are still extremely valuable – was, becomes apparent from the fact that the chronologically oriented approach remained decisive for a long time² and even modern scholarship adheres to it.³

Aside from the chronologically oriented approach, the attempt to understand ecclesiastical architecture from the transitional period from a symbolic-iconographic perspective started early too. In this context, not only the symbolism of the churches' cross shape plays a decisive role, but also the significance of the domes.⁴ Particularly worth mentioning for the study of symbolic aspects is EARL B. SMITH'S *THE DOME. A STUDY IN THE HISTORY OF IDEAS* (PRINCETON 1950), where domed architecture is seen for the first time in a wider context.

Since the middle of the 20th century, further perspectives on Byzantine churches from the transitional period have been developed. This includes, for example, the architectural-iconographic approach, in which certain church types are equated with certain functions.⁵ One of the most prominent contributors to this approach is ANDRÉ GRABAR and his work *MARTYRIUM. RECHERCHES SUR LE CULTE DES RELIQUES ET L'ART CHRÉTIEN ANTIQUE* (PARIS 1946).⁶

At approximately the same time as the architectural-iconographic approach, the assumption was established that ecclesiastical architecture from the transitional

1 Similar ideas can already be found at Wulff 1903, 151–156.

2 Bühlmann 1914; Brunov 1927; Kollwitz 1934; Ebersolt 1934.

3 Buchwald 1984; Buchwald 1994, 28; Ruggieri 1995, 53–56; Schmuck 1995, 533–538; Ousterhout 1999, 259; Rasch 2008, 483–486. The difficulties of the chronological approach are also discussed in Robert Ousterhout's contribution in this volume.

4 For the cross shape, see Bühlmann 1914, 48–49; Millet 1916, 55–94; Guyer 1950, 143–199. For the significance of the dome, see Strzygowski 1918, 329–344; Krautheimer 1942; Lehmann-Hartleben 1954; Bandmann 1951. For a critical discussion of this approach, see e.g. Stanzl 1979, 93–97; Buchwald 1999, 17; Arbeiter 2008, 490–492.

5 These considerations can, however, also be traced back to e.g. Wulff 1903, 92–98.

6 See also Guyer 1950, 149–152; Smith 1950, 95–98; Stanzl 1979, 30–31; Ruggieri 1991, 138; Marinis 2014, 52. For a critical discussion of this approach, see e.g. Krautheimer 1953; Ward-Perkins 1966; Deichmann 1972, esp. 55–56; Mango 1975, 9; Buchwald 1986, 305; Ousterhout 1999, 29–30; de Blaauw 2008, 305–336.

period was adapted to changing liturgical processes.⁷ Since there are, however, only very few sources on the exact liturgical processes of the period under discussion, later developments of Middle and Late Byzantine times are often projected back onto the transitional period.⁸

More recent studies examine the churches from the transitional period in a wider context and no longer see them as a mere expression of *inability* and *decline*. First of all, there is CYRIL MANGO'S and IHOR ŠEVČENKO'S article *SOME CHURCHES AND MONASTERIES ON THE SOUTHERN SHORE OF THE SEA OF MARMARA* (1973), which tries to understand ecclesiastical architecture between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages from a demographic and socio-historical perspective. Their study focuses on Bithynia, a region which was mainly characterized by monasteries that were newly built in the transitional period. Mango and Ševčenko recognize the predominant cross-in-square type as a reaction to the fact that in the monastic environment no large-scale churches were needed anymore. In the declining population during the transitional period they see the decisive moment for the widespread use of this architecture also outside the monastic environment.⁹

The research of the past 30 years dedicated to the ecclesiastical architecture from the transitional period has primarily generated comprehensive contributions. Besides both monographs by VINCENZO RUGGIERI, *BYZANTINE RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE 582–867* (ROME 1991) and *L'ARCHITETTURA RELIGIOSA NELL'IMPERIO BIZANTINA (FINE VI–IX SECOLO)* (MESSINA 1995), ROBERT OUSTERHOUT'S contribution *THE ARCHITECTURE OF ICONOCLASM* (2001) must be mentioned, which examines not only the architecture, but also the mosaics and frescos of the period under discussion.

The colloquium on *Transforming Sacred Spaces. New Approaches to Byzantine Ecclesiastical Architecture from the Transitional Period*, which was held at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich in 2014, aimed to critically question the aforementioned perspectives on churches from the time between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages and, if required, to explore new paths for the investigation of this field of research. For this purpose, cross-genre functional and semantic aspects that are essential for the constitution of particular spatial settings were examined. The contributions from the colloquium published here can be divided into three sections:

I. Historical-cultural background – breaking with traditions

The first section focuses on the development of the urban and rural environment during the transitional period. Luca Zavagno examines the urban system from a civic perspective and highlights that the multitude of different concepts can lead to difficulties in defining a city. He analyses his examples with regard to regional differences and particularly on the basis of economic and social factors, and shows that cities of the transitional period

7 Mathews 1971, 177–179; Krautheimer 1986, 297–300; Cutler – Spieser 1996, 69; Ousterhout 2001, 16.

8 For a critical discussion of this approach, see Hallensleben 1973, 127; Ruggieri 1991, 135–136; Altripp 2013, 161; Marinis 2014, 1.

9 This position is shared by Ruggieri 1991, 136–137; Marinis 2014, 50. For a critical discussion of this approach, see Buchwald 1986, 304; Buchwald 1999, 15–16.

did not follow only one single pattern, but that each settlement found its own system (e. g. the so-called insular system). The contribution from Eleonora Kountoura Galaki starts from the opposite point, the imperial perspective. Based on various literary sources her study examines different networks of patronage and looks at the roles played by family members, the army and the ecclesiastical system for these networks. According to her model, the development of cities is part of a centrally directed patronage system and cities are dependent upon imperial decisions. In order to be considered in these matters, one had to become part of a network that guaranteed loyalty to the emperor. A third point of view is taken in the contribution of Marie-France Auzépy. In her paper, she focuses not on Byzantine cities but on monasteries. The results derive from her research in Bithynia, especially survey campaigns and the study of literary sources. The latter are of particular importance for the identification of specific monasteries in this monastically dominated region at the south shore of the Sea of Marmara.¹⁰

II. Monuments – revision of the archaeological evidence

Two contributions of the second part are devoted to case studies of ecclesiastical architecture from the transitional period.¹¹ Michalis Kappas provides a detailed overview of the architectural development of churches in Greece, where numerous monuments have been preserved. He examines both regional trends and supra-regional developments probably stemming from Constantinople. His theses are exemplified not only with well-known monuments such as the Hagia Sophia in Thessaloniki and Saint Titus in Gortyn, but also with other lesser known churches, for example from the Peloponnese as well as from Naxos. In the second paper, Sabine Feist illustrates the relationship between older predecessor basilicas from Late Antiquity and the rebuilt churches from the transitional period by using St. Irene in Constantinople as a case study. Her contribution asks whether the preservation of older structures and the excessive use of spolia must always have been motivated by pragmatic reasons or whether this phenomenon can also be explained by the fact that older structures have been preserved deliberately, and sometimes with great effort. In the last article of the second part, Robert Ousterhout discusses advantages and disadvantages of the previous chronological approaches for the ecclesiastical architecture from the transitional period. He refers to the remodeling of older churches as well as to typological, dendrochronological, structural and symbolic aspects and emphasizes the importance of scale as a critical factor. In addition to metropolitan developments, he also examines trends in other regions such as the Caucasus and Cyprus.

10 Compare to this approach also Mango – Ševčenko 1973.

11 In the course of the colloquium further monuments were presented: St. Mary in Ephesus by Nikolaos Karydis (see the recently published article Karydis 2019), St. Clement in Ankara by Urs Peschlow (the results of this study are published in Peschlow 2015, 187–244 (chapter XIII)), the Lower-City-Church in Amorium by Eric Ivison (the outcome of this study will be published in Amorium Reports, vol. 6; for an overview in print, see Ivison 2010), and the Hagia Sophia in Vize by Holger A. Klein (Bauer – Klein 2004; Bauer – Klein 2006).

III. Sociology of space – searching for reasons

In the last section, the historical, urbanistic, and archaeological evidence is examined in a broader context and against the background of current approaches to the sociology of space. Benjamin Anderson's contribution focuses on images and their changing position and function in and for churches. He examines both western and eastern examples through texts and realia, stressing the fact that images and architecture constitute a coherent system that cannot be understood selectively. The article by Vasileios Marinis analyses the relationship between liturgy and architecture. By studying the *Ecclesiastical History and Mystical Contemplation*, probably written by Germanos I, he concludes that one of the most important aspects of the Byzantine liturgy is its malleability and that there are few direct connections between architecture and liturgy. However, strong links seem to exist between the building and the ritual on a symbolic level. In the final contribution of this section, Jelena Bogdanović studies from a conceptual perspective the idea that Byzantine architecture can be understood as an icon. Based on both contemporary texts and archaeological evidence, namely canopies, she examines these micro-architectures in terms of their function as spatial icons that architecturally frame theophany, thus contributing to the discourses on the so-called iconic and spatial turns.

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