

The Symbolism of Byzantine Churches in Albania (VII - XV)

Arbela Kisi

Lagjia: Osman Haxhiu Rruga: Demokracia
Pallati 1184, Vlore, Albania
arbelak@yahoo.com

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Abstract. Albania history shows that its inhabitants have always resist the invaders, not to be assimilated by the ethnic and cultural perspective. In every historical epoch that we have to prove the identical, although were called by another name.

Part of the Byzantine Empire had become after 395, when the Roman Empire was time split between East (Constantinople) and West (Rome).

Byzantine civilization characterized by the symbiosis between state structures of Roman, Hellenistic culture and Christian religion. Albania has been identified as one of the Mediterranean countries, where Christianity penetrated early in the first century.

Due to its geographical position, Albania was focused on Eastern Christianity, as in terms of church organization as well as the construction of places of worship. In accordance with the historical, economic, political and social, in medieval ecclesiastical architecture in Albania, there are two periods: (1) VII - XII and (2); XII - XV, up to the full occupation of the country by the Ottomans.

1 - Architectural types common in this period are two: a nave churches and basilicas. At the end of this period the XI-XII century, begins to enter the still primitive and traditions without leaving the basilica, the type of cross-shaped church with a cupola.

2 - In the second period (XIII - XV), in which realized the unity of the Albanian population and its extension coincides generally with the territories inhabited by them today, have differences in the construction of northern Albania, southern and middle. This happened due to the strong influence of western architecture, the intervention of Western countries and the Catholic Church.

Influences direct reports to Constantinople, are made up of the site plan types, materials, techniques, forms and symbols. As special features of our monuments, are building outside the walls, containing beautification, drums feature, simply type the site plan.

In all Byzantine architectural realm, research shows that the picturesque, was among the basic principles for the formulation of spatial architectural interior and exterior.

Although the Byzantine Empire tried to form a universal culture, imposing elements, principles, structure, medieval ecclesiastical architecture back in Albania, knew how to stay rhythms of time but also to distinguish its local character.

1. Introduction

Byzantium will play a fundamental role in the medieval world. The distinguishing feature for the Middle Ages and Byzantium, was pronounced clericalism and church. Christian Church as spiritual power, strength gains and increasingly large in the context of the Christian state. Characteristic

type of Byzantine culture, should be a compilation of his Byzantium, which means: politics, economy, military, education, culture, architecture and all the rest of the Empire was to be similar to the center, Constantinople. But what unites everyone is the Byzantine church architecture. Churches with cross-shaped layout, cloisonne methods, cupolas, are also used in medieval Albania as part of the Byzantine Empire. For their realization as through imitation or through original creative work has had a long time and historical conditions not very favorable.

2. Historical developments in Albania during the centuries VII - XV.

Through the centuries V - X, large events, such as the spread of Christianity and the barbarian invasions, brought profound changes in the lives of Illyrian and Byzantine society.

The spread of Christianity : Christianity spread in Illyria was in the first century AD and took off especially after century . IV. New religion played a major role in the resistance of the historical Illyrians against the settlers , who differed not only by language, but by faith . After the division of the Roman Empire into two parts , 395 , Illyrian territories - entered the compound Albanian Byzantine Empire , as after this date is commonly called the Eastern Roman Empire under the ancient name of its capital city , Byzantium , that in honor of Constantine the Great renamed Constantinople . As he had given in century III - IV Emperor of the Roman Empire and a number of prominent retired generals , also during the early Byzantine period (century V - IX) , Albanian Illyrian territories of the Byzantine Empire gave some emperors , among which stand out the way particularly, Anastasi from Durres and Justinian I from Skopje . Reforms and measures implemented in the civil and military administration , these two emperors prepared transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages and laid the foundations of what would be the most durable empire in the history of Mediterranean civilization. (Akademia e Shkencave te Shqiperise Instituti i Historise, 2002, p. 199)

Invasions of peoples: Under Justin I and his nephew Justinian, Slavs crossed the Danube and making devastating inroads attacking cities to withdraw north of the river again. Starting from the 80, to c. VI, their tribes did not rest on the robbery, but was placed in Byzantine territory in more and more big. While ethnic accomplish this change, Heraclius, Slavic tribes were allowed to settle in their territories today. The north and west of the peninsula had already gone hand in a large scale Byzantium. This is happening just when Heraclius was finishing Hellenization State, replacing Latin with Greek as the language of administration and army and taking his Greek title "bazileus". The Balkans became predominantly Greek Byzantine-Slavic. (Castellan, 1991, pp. 35 - 36). South Illyria region has been less affected by the Slavic colonization and indigenous population of this area grew and became more compact with the Illyrian inhabitants came from northern and inland areas, where Slavic colonization was massive. Setting the Slavs in the Balkans brought major changes in this area. (Ostrogorsky, 2007, p. 74)

Slavic barbarian invasions and colonization, the central government weakened Byzantine, particularly peripheral provinces. Century. IX, the Byzantine Empire made a new administrative division under the system of themes. Organization of topics aimed at strengthening the Byzantine military. In the territories of South Illyria was created four themes: Theme of Durres, Nikopojes, Kosovo and Skopje. (Akademia e Shkencave e Shqiperise, Instituti i Historise, 2002, pp. 214-216)

After the barbarian invasions, Byzantine chronicles are limited and do not directly reflect the events of the time, so historians, this period century. VI-XI, have named as "dark era". Illyrians are mentioned for the last time in early Illyrian territories shek.VII and then left margins of Byzantine authors. However, the early medieval period brought major changes to society Byzantine, even for that Illyrian. There was the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages. To prove continuity Illyrian - Arberors exist numerous historical evidence, ethnographic, linguistic, but the most important are those such as archaeological, Koman culture. (Thengjilli, 2009, pp. 17-31)

State that constantly threaten the Byzantine Empire and its intended invasion, was United Sicily. At the beginning of the century. Xi, Norman rulers under the leadership of Robert Guiskardit, Byzantines expelled from their possessions in South Italy and Sicily and created a strong kingdom. This kingdom was addressed during the century. XI - XIII by three dynasties: Dynasty Norman (French), Hohenshtafen (German) and Anzhuine (French). The three dynasties over the centuries developed three wars against the Byzantine Empire. Albanian territories became the arena of fighting that brought a weakened Byzantine Empire in Arberia. (Petrika Thengjilli, Selim Doci, 2002, pp. 183, 218-221)

As a result of the weakening of the Byzantine Empire during the century. XII - XIII, in the Balkans was created three new states: the Principality of Arber, This state of Epirus and the Serbian State. Arberors territories, fell under Serbian rule, the period of Stefan Dusan. With his death in 1355, the Serbian Empire collapsed and territories Arberors independent principalities were created as she Topiaj, Muzakajve, Balshaj. (Thengjilli, Historia e Popullit Shqiptar 395-1875, 2000, pp. 95-110)

Place of Byzantium in 1453 will take the Ottoman Empire and Constantinople will become Istanbul. For Albanians means conquering another especially with other religious heritage.

3. Byzantine religious buildings in the century. VII – XV

An important place among the monuments of medieval architecture, occupied, Christian religious buildings. Typological classification of the medieval church is modeled on the plan of the volume of construction and structural construction. This is the traditional architectural classification, which contained studies of the architecture of the church's founding. (Meksi, 2004, p. 78)

3 . 1 Byzantine churches (VII – XII)

Slavic attacks (VI - VII) finishes a stage in economic development - social Illyria, and the consequences in construction and architecture. Traces of destruction and incineration are found in many buildings of this time. Brighter Period Anastasi I and Justinian I, the two Illyrian origin, took over. Centuries that will attend are quite dark. Balkan ethnic major transformations occur, during which formed Arbereshe nationality, today's Albanians, who testify as archaeological and linguistic studies are descendants of the Illyrians. For centuries these missing the original data, making it difficult to create even more of a full frame on the construction of this period. (Apollon Bace, Aleksander Meksi, Emin Riza, Gjerak Karaiskaj, Pirro Thomo, 1979, p. 271)

From the perspective of building the plan and volume, churches can divide into three major groups:

1 - Churches with a nave

a - Churches roof covered with wood,

b - covered with vaulted churches,

c - the church hall with dome type.

2 – basilicas

3 - Churches with cross-shaped plan with dome (Meksi, Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise, 2004, pp. 78-83)

3.1.1 Churches with a nave

These monuments are distinguished for small size, easy handling architectural, construction and rectangular form with apsida on the eastern side.

a) Churches roof covered with wood

Characteristic of these buildings, in addition to site plan rectangular and circular apse at the east side, old features that make the local tradition is coverings with wooden trusses. (Meksi, Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise (shekujt VII-XV), 2004, p. 80) . Such are: Prophet Elia in Bual,

Permet, (Meksi, Disa kapela bizantine te vendit tone, 1975, pp. 80-81), Saint Sergius and Baku in Himara (Meksi, Disa kapela bizantine te vendit tone, 1975, pp. 79-80)

b) Churches covered with barrel vaulted

This type is only one example of the century, XI-XII in the Peshkëpia Herbel. For them, the difficulties of settlement construction and structural dimensions of these churches are small and the walls are slightly thicker to cope with pressure. For these reasons, these churches have reached small number until our days. (Meksi A. , Disa kapela bizantine te vendit tone, 1975, p. 84)

c) Churches hall with dome type.

Characteristic of this type is the presence of arcs in the side walls that rely on pilastra, where the dome rises in central and barrel vaulted space on the sides. Type is originally from Armenia where built in early Christian period. (Meksi, Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise, 2004, p. 80). The only preserved example of this type in Albania, is the church of St. Nicholas in the Armenian city of Vlora. (Meksi, Disa kapela bizantine te vendit tone, 1975, pp. 76-77)

3.1.2 Basilicas

Basilicas that are stored in our country are Hellenistic type, covered with wood trusses and the central nave higher than the side, ie the same as those in late antiquity. (Meksi, Arkitektura e Kishave te Shqiperise, 2004, p. 81). Mention here the church of Saint Nicholas in Perhondi, Berat. (Meksi, Arkitektura dhe restaurimi i kishes se Perondise, 1973, pp. 19-43)

3 .1.3 Churches with cross-shaped plan with dome.

As in all the Mediterranean world under the influence of Byzantine architecture in our country finds architectural type spread with the site plan with dome-shaped cross. Characteristic of this type of church is symbolic blueprint to form the cross, where the contours of the exterior of the building of the format of the cross and the central portion is covered with dome. (Apollon Bace, Historia e Arkitektures Shqiptare, 1979, p. 274). In our country saved three churches of this type: Saint Mary of the Upper Peshkëpia (Meksi, Dy kisha bizantine ne rrrethin e Gjirokastres, 1975, pp. 75-82), Church of St. Mary in Kosina, Përmet (Meksi, Arkitektura mesjetare ne Shqiperi, 1983, pp. 110-111), Church of St. Mary in Zervat, Gjirokastra (Meksi, Arkitektura mesjetare ne Shqiperi, 1983, pp. 111-113).

3.2 Byzantine churches (XIII – XV)

This second period of architectural constructions cult, in historical terms and in that of economic and social development, coincides with the development of feudal principalities, starting with that of Arber and the strengthening of the feudal economy. During this period, we have a bloom of its buildings and preserve the largest number of churches scattered throughout the country. (Meksi, Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise (Shekujt VII-XV), 2004, p. 83)

Typologically churches classified by traditional schemes, given the chronological order within each group:

3 .2.1 Churches with a nave

Such chapels built easily, despite economic conditions. In our country, saved a number of buildings of this type, since the centuries XIII - XIV.

a- churches covered with wooden roof

Church of Saint Jovan Boboshticë, Korce (Meksi A. , Disa kapela bizantine te vendit tone, 1975, pp. 81-82)

b- covered archway churches

Group separately in typological terms, represent churches with a nave, with coverage vault. Their number is small, but sufficient to judge for their expansion in our territory. Mention here, St. Paraskevi Church in Sop Fier. (Meksi A. , Disa kapela bizantine ne vendin tone, 1975, pp. 85-86)

3.2.2 Basilicas

Basilicas, which had spread as the largest in IX-XI centuries, continued to be in use during the last centuries of the Middle Ages as the ease of building as well as for the largest number of believers who can be entered in to. (Meksi A. , Historia e kishave te Shqiperise, 2004, p. 197). Mention here: the Basilica of Suloves Klos, Elbasan. (Meksi A. , Bazilika ne Klos te Suloves, 1973, pp. 189-192)

3.2.3 Construction of dome-shaped cross

In the totality of religious constructions of the second period, the churches of the cross-shaped type, with cupola, objects represent the most important achievements and to prove more than deserves to level buildings, economic and social development and for medieval architecture Albania. (Meksi A. , 2004, p. 205)

a - cross-type Church Memorial

In our country stored two monuments with cross-shaped plan free, which clearly be emphasized contours of the building exterior and interior building. 1) Marmiroi Church in Vlora (Meksi A. , Restaurimi i kishes se Marmiroit, 1971, pp. 73-83), 2) Monastery Church of St. Mary in Zver nec, Vlora (Meksi A. , Disa kapela bizantine ne vendin tone, 1975, pp. 77-78)

b - Cross inscribed without internal support

In this subgroup entering a considerable number of churches of this period, which is characteristic of the formation of the cross inside the vault that covers the arms of the cross and on the exterior of the roofs that cover them. (Apollon Bace, Historia e Arkitekture se Shqiperise, 1979, p. 274). For example: Church of St. Michael, Berat (Meksi A. , Tri kisha bizantine te Beratit, 1972, pp. 73-82), Ristozi church in Mborje (Thomo, 1967, pp. 157-159)

c - Cross inscribed with internal support

In the totality of the church building in the shape of the cross inscribed with the dome, those with internal support, the provincial type, form the majority, but we have a case of the variant and the capital city and for this particular exhibit.

c.1 - Provincial Type

Holy Trinity Church, Berat (Meksi A. , Tre kisha bizantine te Beratit, 1972, pp. 63-67), Church ruins in Kalivac, Tepelene (Meksi A. , Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise, 2004, pp. 219-221)

c.2 - The capital type

Monastery Church of St. Mary at Apollonia (Meksi A. , Arkitektura dhe datimi i kishes se manastirit te Apollonise, 1971, pp. 103-117)

c.3 - Triple apse (Apollon Bace, Aleksander Meksi, Emin Riza, Gjerak Karaiskaj, Pirro Thomo, 1979, pp. 271-283), Mention here: the Monastery of Apollonia (Meksi A. , Dy ndertime te tipit trekonkesh, 1974, pp. 234-237), St. Nicholas Church in Kurjan, Fier (Meksi A. , Dy ndertime te tipit trekonkesh, 1974, pp. 229-234).

3.2.4 Special Construction

Besides using the type of plan in the form of cross inscribed with the dome, in our country meet and buildings that are excluded from traditional buildings, reaching specific solution or associated with different types. Such are the church of St. Nicholas in Mesopotam, Saranda (Meksi A. , Arkitektura

e Kishes se Mesopotamit, 1972, pp. 47-94), and the church of St. Mary at the Cross Labove, Gjirokastra (Meksi A. , Dy kisha bizantine ne rrrethin e Gjirokastres, 1975, pp. 82-91), which comprise buildings of paramount importance not only for our country but also the Byzantine architecture in general. (Meksi A. , Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise, 2004, p. 230)

4. Conclusions

1 - no small number of medieval churches, speaks clearly and typological diversity of forms. Distinguish among them: with a nave churches, basilicas and buildings with dome-shaped cross. (Meksi A. , Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise, 2004, pp. 167-230)

2 - Most of the church is dedicated to St. Mary. Mention a few: Church of St. Mary in Dhermi (Meksi A. , Disa kapela bizantine ne ventin tone, 1975, pp. 75-76), Church of St. Mary in Apollonia (Meksi A. , Arkitektura dhe datimi i kishes se manastirit te Apollonise, 1971, pp. 103-117)

3 - Use of the method of cloisonne to most of the buildings but especially to those of centuries XII - XV. Such are: the Church of St. Mary in Vllaherna, Berat and the Church of the Holy Trinity, Berat (Meksi A. , Tre kisha bizantine te Beratit, 1972, pp. 59-62).

4 - Comparison of contemporary architecture with neighboring countries shows a chute not its architectural Byzantine provinces, to respect them and to respect the masters and their ateliers. At the same time, creative impulses coming from Constantinople, in some cases being interlaced with those of the West, found a cultural field, a lively construction activity that made possible the creation of works, which differ for particular elements or general from other types of provinces. A proof of this construction activity are churches and Labova Mesopotami Cross, with individual solutions required, the first of which remains unique in the entire Byzantine architecture. (Meksi A. , Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise, 2004, pp. 117-118).

5 - In aesthetic terms, for buildings of worship in southern Albania, which are involved in Byzantine architecture, is characteristic of the creation of endless space in the picturesque inside and on the outside. (Mesopotam, Labova Cross) (Meksi A. , Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise, 2004, p. 122).

6 - The device inside with frescoes (Meksi A. , Trapezaria e Manastirit te Apollonise, 1974), mosaic (Meksi A. , Arkitektura e Kishes se Mesopotamit, 1972), iconostasis and other typical Byzantine symbolism, but also characteristic Albanian.

7- Churches can have three different types of contractors. They were not easily distinguished from one another: state, local church and private benefactors. Government and church often acted together but in most it was the state that costs do if partially or totally. Even the relationship between church and believers were latter was thought to invest for construction. (Mango, 1974, p. 28).

8 - All documents represent architectural constructions of great historical value for the continuation of construction traditions of the same population and the main residential areas, on the level of construction and architectural requirements as well as the country's few links with centers of empire . (Meksi A. , Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise, 2004, p. 116)

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