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Reconstructing ninth-century Constantinople

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Abstract
In 879, following what was called a "victorious return from campaign", the Emperor Basil I staged a triumphal entry into the city of Constantinople. After spending the night at Hebdomon, he moved in solemn procession toward the city, stopping for a costume change at the monastery of the Avraamites before passing through the Golden Gate.

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10. Reconstructing ninth-century Constantinople*

Robert Ousterhout

In 879, following what was called a 'victorious return from campaign', the Emperor Basil I staged a triumphal entry into the city of Constantinople.[1] After spending the night at Hebdomon, he moved in solemn procession toward the city, stopping for a costume change at the monastery of the Avraamites before passing through the Golden Gate. Stational ceremonies, punctuated with acclamations by the city's factions, were staged at the Sigma, the Exakionion, the Forum of Arcadius, the Forum Bovis, the Capitol, the Forum of Theodosius, the Artopolia, and the Forum of Constantine, where the Church of the Virgin was used for another costume change. Basil then proceeded on foot to the Milion, and then into Hagia Sophia for a liturgical service, before, finally, finishing with a banquet in the Triklinos of Justinian at the Great Palace.[2] The city had been cleaned up, dressed up, and decorated for the occasion, and the spectacle was apparently spectacular enough to have been recorded in some detail.[3]

It would be much easier to envision Basil's triumph if we knew what Constantinople looked like in the late ninth century. Following several centuries of depopulation and decay, and despite Constantine V's attempts to repopulate the city and tend to the urban fabric, the city seems to have been

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* Many of my observations derive from a larger study in progress, entitled *Byzantine Masons at Work*. I am grateful to Charles Barber for a critical reading of the text.

[1] J.F. Haldon, Constantine *Porphyrogenitus, Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, *CFHB* 28 (Vienna, 1990), 140–47; see M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Ceremonies of Triumph in Byzantium and the Latin West* (Cambridge, 1986), 154–7, on image-making and Basil's uneven success in the ongoing war.

[2] McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 154–7, 212–30, for analysis.

[3] For the preparations for an imperial triumph, see McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 198–230.

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in the midst of a renewal during the reign of Basil.[4] Still, the stations utilized in his triumph were traditional, established already in early Christian times, and of them only the Church of the Virgin at the Forum post-dates the sixth century.[5] It had been built by Basil himself, and its inclusion in the ceremony would have helped to associate the murderer and usurper Basil with his illustrious predecessors.[6]

With the notable exceptions of Hagia Sophia and the Golden Gate, virtually nothing remains of these great ceremonial spaces. The area of the Forum of Theodosius is today strewn with broken bits, and only the large but pathetic Burnt Column survives from the Forum of Constantine; scholars still disagree about the size and shape of both fora.[7] What did ninth-century Constantinople actually look like? Presumably some of the grandeur of the late Roman city still survived, with its marble piles and brazen colossi. But it may be worth mentioning that Basil had added the church of the Virgin at the Forum, as we learn from the *Vita Basilii*, so that workers would have both a place of spiritual refuge and 'a place to go to get out of the rain'.[8] Mango singled out this statement to indicate that the church had replaced all other centres of social interaction. At the same time, it suggests that the colonnades and porticoes – which were part and parcel of the antique city – had either disappeared or had been filled by shops and stalls.[9]

The starting point for any discussion of architecture in the second half of the ninth century is the *Vita Basilii*, which enumerates thirty-one churches in and around Constantinople restored by Basil, in addition to his new constructions in the Great Palace. But the text gives emphasis to the restoration of isolated religious foundations, rather than to new constructions, or to civic buildings, or to the larger concerns of urban planning.

> ... the Christ-loving emperor Basil, by means of continuous care and the abundant supply of all necessary things, raised from ruin many holy churches that had been rent asunder by prior earthquakes or had fallen down, or were

[4] As discussed by C. Mango, *Byzantium: Empire of New Rome* (New York, 1980), 81–2; see also W. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival 780–842* (Stanford, 1988).

[5] For the monastery of the Avraamites, see Janin, *Églises*, 4–6; for the church of the Virgin at the Forum of Constantine, ibid., 236–7.

[6] Although C. Mango, 'The Life of St Andrew the Fool Reconsidered', *Rivista di studi bizantini e slavi* 2 (1982), 302–3, suggests that the church may have been renovated rather than newly constructed.

[7] W. Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls* (Tübingen, 1977), 255–65, for the remains of these spaces.

[8] C. Mango, 'The Development of Constantinople as an Urban Centre', *The Seventeenth International Byzantine Congress, Major Papers* (New York, 1986), 117–36, esp. 130–31; *Vita Basilii*, in Theoph. Cont., 339.

[9] See H. Saradi-Mendolovici, 'The Demise of the Ancient City and the Emergence of the Medieval City in the Eastern Roman Empire', *Echos du Monde Classique* 32 (1988), 365–401.

> threatening immediate collapse on account of the fractures [they had sustained], and to the solidity he added [a new] beauty.[10]

For the architectural historian, the details of the *Vita Basilii* raise the uncomfortable fact that none of these buildings, nor any of the other great monuments of ninth-century Constantinople, survives. Can we actually talk about an architectural revival in ninth-century Constantinople? In the earlier part of this century, it all seemed much clearer. Van Millingen, for example, viewed the reign of Basil as one of the formative periods of Byzantine architecture, and he consequently dated several churches to the ninth century, including those now called the Fethiye Camii (Theotokos Pammakaristos), the Gül Camii (sometimes identified as St Theodosia), the Kalenderhane Camii (Theotokos Kyriotissa), and the Atik Mustafa Paşa Camii (sometimes identified as SS Peter and Mark).[11] These churches all fall into the categories of domed basilicas or cross-domed churches – that is, with the dome braced by four barrel vaults – and they thus fit within the evolutionary framework for Byzantine architecture adopted by Van Millingen and subsequently by Ebersolt, and more recently by Krautheimer.[12] However, all but one of these monuments have now been securely relocated in the twelfth century on archaeological grounds.[13] More recent scholarship has questioned the typological basis for the beginnings of Middle Byzantine architecture.[14]

The absence of securely-dated ninth-century monuments in Constantinople is further emphasized by the survival of two early tenth-century monuments, the Theotokos tou Libos and the Myrelaion, both small cross-in-square or four-column churches, where the sophistication in design, construction, and detailing certainly did not come from nothing.[15] But what exactly happened during the preceding century? If we attempt to fill

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[10] Theoph. Cont., 321–5; English tr. from C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453* (Englewood Cliffs, 1972), 192–9.

[11] A. Van Millingen, *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople: Their History and Architecture* (London, 1912), esp. 333.

[12] J. Ebersolt and A. Thiers, *Les églises de Constantinople* (Paris, 1913).

[13] For a discussion of this problem, see my 'The Byzantine Church at Enez: Problems in Twelfth-Century Architecture', *JÖB* 35 (1985), 261–80, esp. 265–70. For a mid twelfth-century date for the Gül Camii, see H. Schäfer, *Die Gül Camii in Istanbul. Ein Beitrag zur mittelbyzantinischen Kirchenarchitektur Konstantinopels*, IstMitt 7 (Tübingen, 1973), esp. 77–81. For the late twelfth-century date of the Kalenderhane Camii, see C.L. Striker and D. Kuban, 'Work on the Kalenderhane Camii in Istanbul: Fourth Preliminary Report', *DOP* 25 (1971), 258. For the Pammakaristos, see C. Mango and E.J.W. Hawkins, 'Report on Field Work in Istanbul and Cyprus, 1962–1963', *DOP* 18 (1964), 319–40, esp. 338 and 340.

[14] See T. Mathews and E.J.W. Hawkins, 'Notes on the Atik Mustafa Paşa Camii in Istanbul and its Frescoes', *DOP* 39 (1985), 125–34, esp. 125.

[15] C. Striker, *The Myrelaion (Bodrum Camii) in Istanbul* (Princeton, 1982); T. Macridy *et al.*, 'The Monastery of Lips (Fenari Isa Camii) at Istanbul', *DOP* 18 (1964), 251–315. Neither study addresses the ancestry of these buildings types.

the *lacunae* in our architectural history with texts, how do we bridge the gap between descriptions of buildings that do not survive and the pitiful remains of unidentified buildings that do? In the following pages, I would like to look at several familiar texts that have been used and misused by architectural historians. I will suggest some ways they can be best employed to evoke if not the image at least the spirit of ninth-century Constantinople. I shall then turn to the archaeological record for monuments outside Constantinople that may relate to developments in the Byzantine capital, and I shall conclude by raising more questions than I can answer. In deference to Alessandra Ricci, whose essay follows, I limit my discussion to churches.

The most common type of text used by architectural historians is the *ekphrasis*, a form of evocative writing found throughout Byzantine literature.[16] *Ekphraseis* have often been examined by modern scholars for the information they provide about lost works of art or architecture, although in this respect they are of limited value. An *ekphrasis* had a literary function that took precedence over the exactness of the recording. This is not to say that a Byzantine description of a work of architecture does not reflect the truth, and most are remarkably accurate, as Wulff once demonstrated by comparing *ekphraseis* with surviving buildings.[17] But *ekphraseis* emphasize perceptual understanding and may be best understood as expressions of spiritual realities, rather than as archaeological records.[18]

In a well-known example of an *ekphrasis*, Basil's famous church, the Nea Ekklesia, built around 880, is described in the *Vita Basilii*.[19] Here we learn that the church was dedicated to Christ, along with Gabriel, Elijah, the Theotokos, and St Nicholas:

> This church, like a bride adorned with pearls and gold, with gleaming silver, with the variety of many-hued marble, with compositions of mosaic tesserae, and clothing of silken stuffs, he [Basil] offered to Christ, the immortal bridegroom. Its roof, consisting of five domes, gleams with gold and is resplendent with beautiful images as with stars, while on the outside it is adorned with brass that resembles gold. The walls on either side are beautified with costly marbles of many hues, while the sanctuary is enriched with gold and silver, precious stones, and pearls ...

The *Vita Basilii* provides no information about the plan of the building, nor about its construction materials. It tells us that the church had five domes

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[16] See, among others, H. Maguire, 'Truth and Convention in Byzantine Descriptions of Works of Art', *DOP* 28 (1974), 113–40; A. Hohlweg, 'Ekphrasis', *RBK* 2 (Stuttgart, 1971), 33 ff.; L. James and R. Webb, '"To Understand Ultimate Things and Enter Secret Places": Ekphrasis and Art in Byzantium', *Art History* 14/1 (1991), 1–17.

[17] O. Wulff, 'Das Raumerlebnis im Spiegel der Ekphrasis', *BZ* 30 (1929–30), 531–9.

[18] A point stressed by James and Webb, 'Ekphrasis and Art'.

[19] Theoph.Cont., 321–5; English tr. in Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 192–9.

but not how they were arranged, and scholars are fairly evenly divided on the possible reconstructions. In 1925, Wultzinger published a hypothetical plan, based on dubious archaeological evidence incorrectly recorded, attempting to place the church above a small cistern below Topkapı Palace (Figure 10.1).[20] In 1942 Conant similarly provided a detailed reconstruction of an elaborate cross-domed church with corner chapels as a part of an ambulatory (Figure 10.2).[21] Both attempts bear more than a passing resemblance to proposed reconstructions of the eleventh-century church of St George in the Mangana – and I suspect here that one hypothetical reconstruction may have influenced the other – and to the twelfth-century church known as the Gül Camii, which was believed to be from the ninth century.[22]

More recently, both Krautheimer and Mango have described the Nea as a cross-in-square or *quincunx* church, with four minor domes at the corners; they see it as a forerunner to a standard Middle Byzantine type.[23] Mango claims that the Nea was 'in all probability of the cross-in-square type'; he does not clarify the arrangement of domes, although he compares the Nea to the Theotokos tou Libos, built c.907, a cross-in-square church with four domed, gallery-level chapels that did not communicate with the interior (Figure 10.5).

In contrast, Ćurčić has proposed that the naos was more likely cruciform, with four minor domes over corner chapels, in the manner of St Panteleimon at Nerezi (Figure 10.3).[24] He suggests, wisely, that the five-fold dedication may indicate a church with four annexed chapels. In the sixth century, domes were used as modular space covers, as at Justinian's church of the Holy Apostles. But in the Middle Byzantine period, a dome normally signified a separate functional space, as it does at the Theotokos tou Libos. It is only in provincial buildings, as at the Cattolica at Stilo in Calabria, that the corner domes relate directly to the naos in a cross-in-square plan. Krautheimer, under the influence of Ćurčić, modified his description of the Nea in the 1986 edition of his handbook to read, ambiguously, 'quincunx or possibly a cross-domed plan'.

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[20] K. Wultzinger, *Byzantinische Baudenkmäle zu Konstantinopel* (Hanover, 1925), 52–63; but see H. Tezcan, *Topkapı Sarayı ve Çevresinin Bizans Devri Arkeolojisi* (Istanbul, 1989), 220–22, for correction.

[21] K.J. Conant, *A Brief Commentary on Early Mediaeval Church Architecture, with Especial Reference to Lost Monuments* (Baltimore, 1942), 15 and pl. 22; reproduced in N. Schmuck, 'Kreuzkuppelkirche', *RBK* 5 (Stuttgart, 1991), fig. 3.

[22] For the clarification of the date, see Schäfer, *Gül Camii*, 177–81.

[23] R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 4th edn rev. by R. Krautheimer and S. Ćurčić (Harmondsworth, 1986), 355–6; C. Mango, *Byzantine Architecture* (New York, 1976), 196–7 and 203.

[24] S. Ćurčić, 'Architectural Reconsideration of the Nea Ecclesia', *Byzantine Studies Conference Abstracts of Papers* 6 (1980), 11–12.

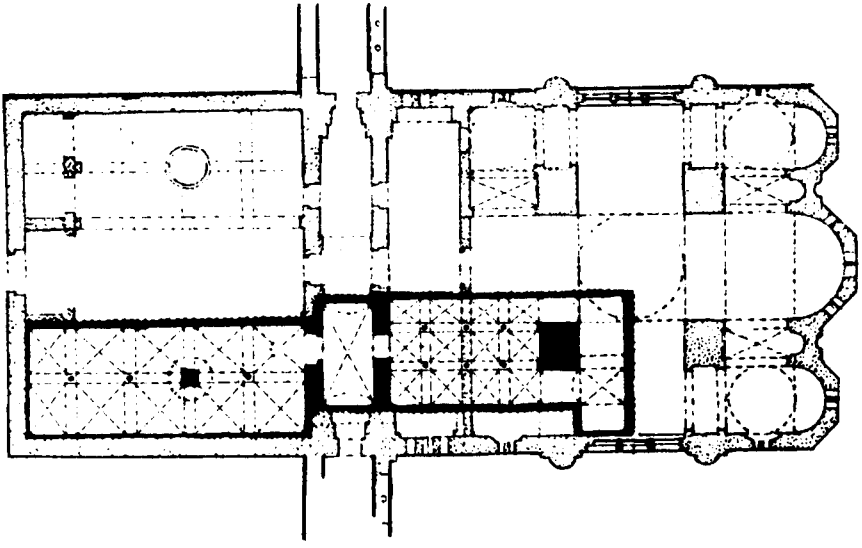

Figure 10.1 *Constantinople, Nea Church, hypothetical plan (as reconstructed by Wultzinger).*

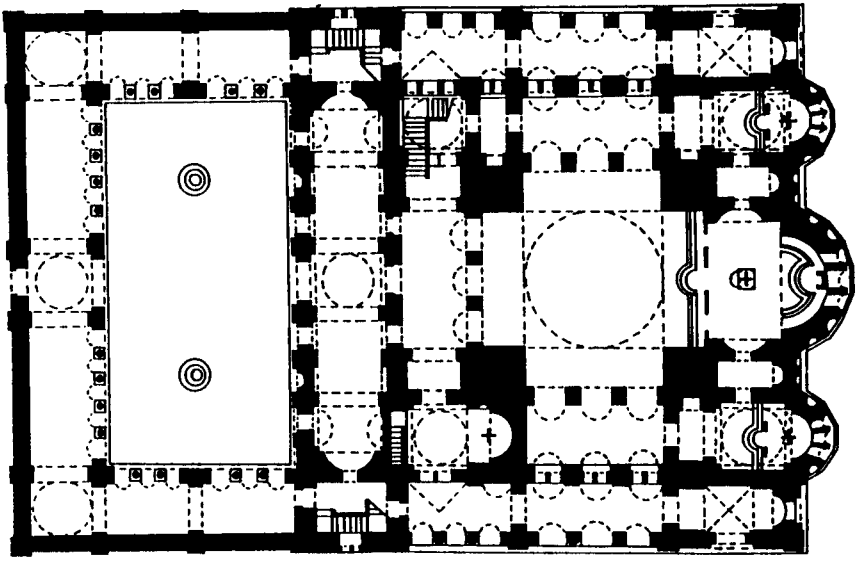

Figure 10.2 *Constantinople, Nea Church, hypothetical plan (as reconstructed by Conant).*

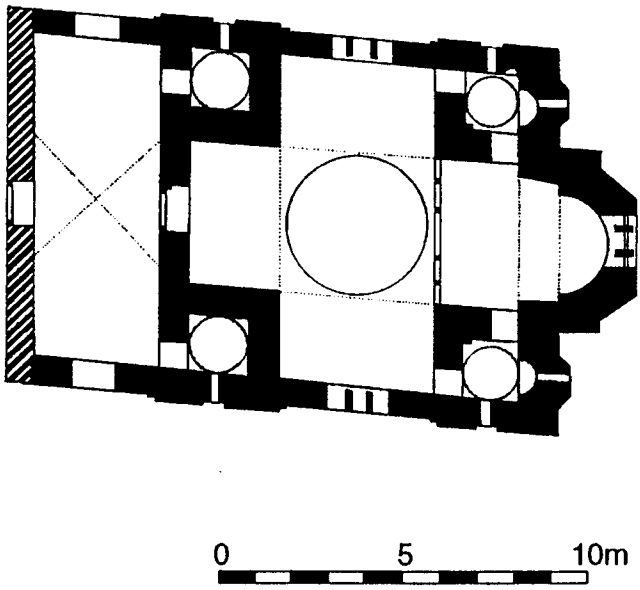

Figure 10.3 *Nerezi, St Panteleimon, plan (Ćurčić).*

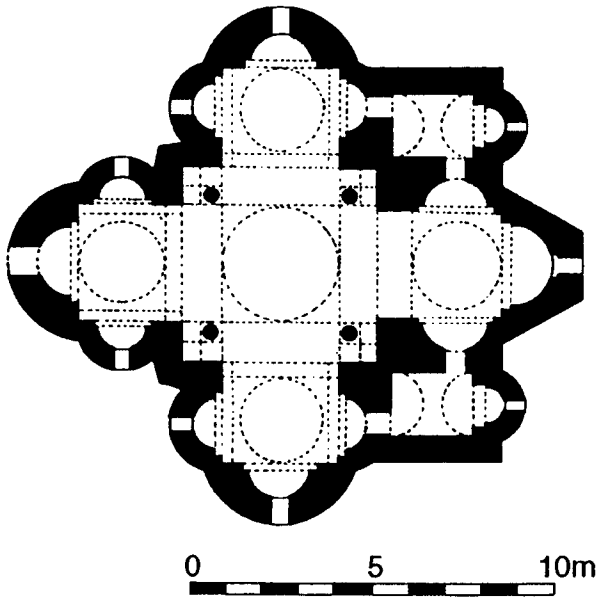

Figure 10.4 *Persisterai, St Andrew, plan (Krautheimer).*

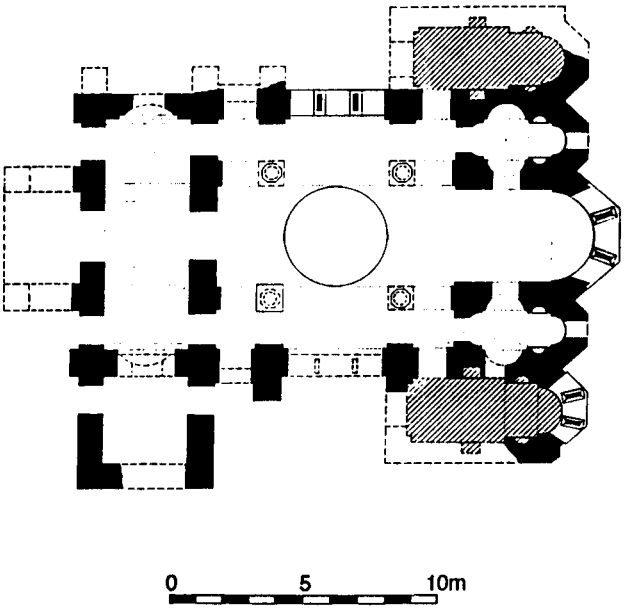

Figure 10.5 *Constantinople, Theotokos tou Libos, plan (Ćurčić).*

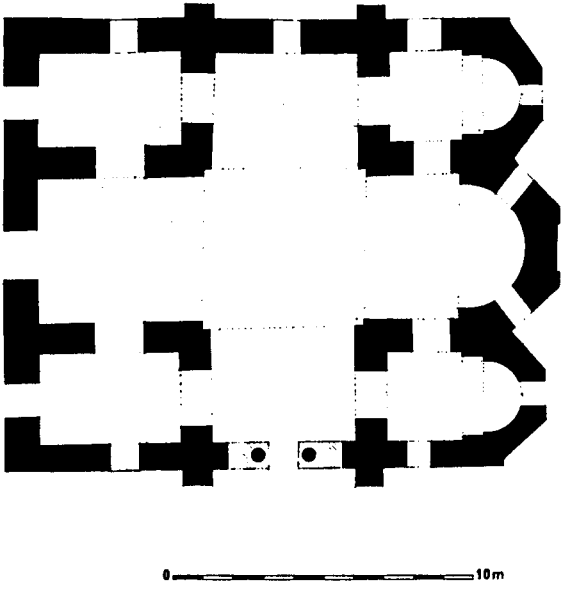

Figure 10.6 *Constantinople, Atik Mustafa Paşa Camii, plan (Ebersolt and Thiers).*

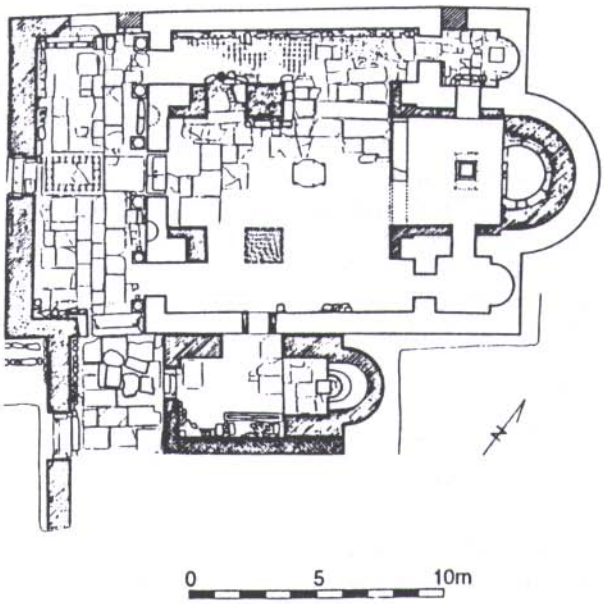

Figure 10.7 *Selçikler, church, plan (Fıratlı).*

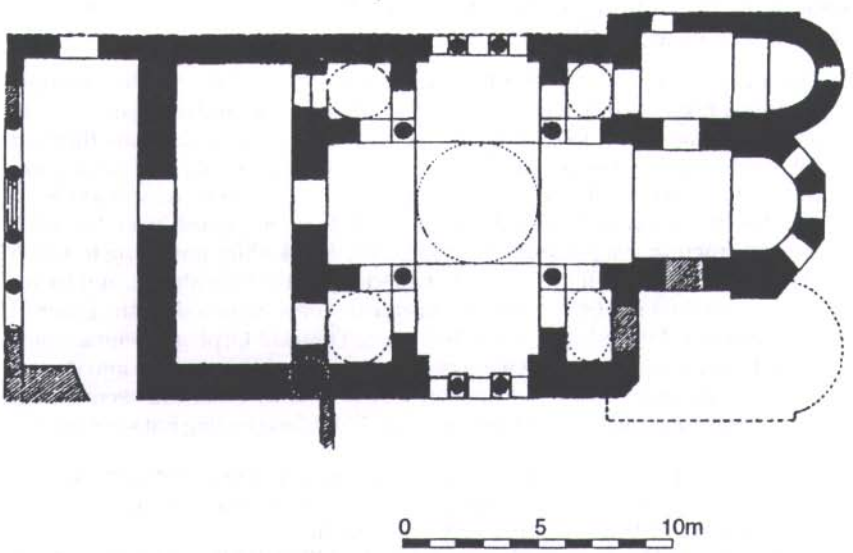

Figure 10.8 *Trilye, Fatih Camii, plan (Hasluck).*

Yet another intriguing possibility, once proposed by Buchwald and generally ignored, is that the five domes covered the naos in a cruciform arrangement, like the nearly contemporaneous church of St Andrew at Peristerai, built in 870–71 (Figure 10.4).[25] That is, the ultimate model was the church of the Holy Apostles, a building that Basil renovated. The curiously sophisticated plan of Peristerai is at odds with its rough construction; with the earliest clearly dated cross-in-square unit at its core, its design certainly did not originate in the Macedonian village. As Buchwald insists, a 'ceiling composed of five domes' would apply much better to something like Peristerai, where the domes are prominent on both the exterior and the interior, than to a cross-in-square church, in which the corner domes would have been barely visible on the interior.

More recently, Paul Magdalino, in an otherwise illuminating article on the Nea, remarks rather vaguely that it bore 'an approximate likeness' to the Theotokos tou Libos and to St Sophia in Kiev – two churches I find to be not very similar, except for their multiple domes.[26] In the final analysis, I suppose we can say that any or all or none of the proposed reconstructions may be correct. The fact that there is no agreement surely emphasizes the futility of using the *ekphrasis* as an aid to reconstruction. And even *if* the funny little church represented in Panvinio's 1540 view of Constantinople *is* the Nea,[27] it offers no clarification. Just as the domes of the Nea announced the city to approaching ships, the *ekphrasis* announces to us its signifying features, but it can bring us no closer.

In another well-known example of an *ekphrasis*, the Patriarch Photios described the church of the Virgin of the Pharos. The following is the description of the forecourt:

> The atrium of the church is splendidly fashioned: for slabs of white marble, gleaming bright and cheerful, occupy the whole facade, and by their evenness and smoothness and close fitting they conceal the setting of one to another and the juncture of their edges, so that they suggest to the beholder's imagination the continuousness of a single [piece of] stone with, as it were, straight lines ruled on it – a new miracle and a joy to see. Wherefore, arresting and turning towards themselves the spectator's gaze, they make him unwilling to move further in; but taking his fill of the fair spectacle in the very atrium, and fixing his eyes on the sight before him, the visitor stands as if rooted [to the ground] with wonder. Legends proclaim the lyre of Thracian Orpheus, whose notes stirred inanimate things. If it were our privilege also to erect truth into legend and make it awe-inspiring, one might say that visitors to the atrium were turned with wonder into the form of trees: so firmly is one held having but see it once.[28]

[25] H. Buchwald, 'Sardis Church E – A Preliminary Report', *JÖB* 26 (1977), 277–8.

[26] P. Magdalino, 'Observations on the Nea Ecclesia', *JÖB* 37 (1987), 51–64.

[27] Reproduced in Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, fig. 46.

[28] C. Mango, *The Homilies of Photius* (Cambridge MA, 1958), 185 ff.; repr. in idem, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 185–6. See also R.H. Jenkins and C. Mango, 'The Date and Significance of the Tenth Homily of Photius', *DOP* 9/10 (1956), 123 ff.

It is noteworthy that Photios has concentrated on a single detail to give the impression of the whole. He simply and briefly described the revetment of the facade, concentrating on the reaction of the viewer, but no other information about the atrium is provided. Was it rectangular and colonnaded? Did it contain trees? We are simply not told.

As in this example, it is instructive to note what writers single out to mention when they discuss a building, because this tells us what they thought was important. The ground plan is not described, although occasionally forms of vaults are. Materials are normally noted in detail, particularly if they are costly or rare. Marble revetments and expensive or exotic varieties of stone are perhaps the most frequently mentioned elements in all descriptions. But the point is that the writers were interested in providing a degree of specificity in the description of detail to emphasize the uniqueness of the building.

Perhaps the emphasis in such descriptions of buildings is indicative of a general medieval attitude toward architecture. That is to say, the parts could be taken to represent the whole – the details could assume an importance comparable to that of the entire building. Indeed, this is exactly what Krautheimer concluded in his study of the iconography of medieval architecture.[29] In copies of important buildings, some but not all elements of the prototype were singled out for repetition, but the scale and the plan were almost invariably altered in the transfer. It would seem that the details were the features that made each building distinctive; and they were repeated as representative of the whole. Thus, in a description of the monastery of Kauleas at Constantinople, Leo VI paid special attention to the marbles and mosaics, concluding, 'These have a beauty that corresponds exactly to that of the rest of the church'.[30] Although a general conservatism prevailed in terms of design and construction in Byzantine architecture, it was the finish materials, the decoration, and the furnishings that gave a building its particular character.

Among the numerous restorations recorded in the *Vita Basilii*, most buildings are claimed, vaguely, to have been 'rebuilt from their foundations', 'made more solid', or 'made anew', although a few examples are more specific.[31] I find one reference here particularly interesting, as it may put us on a somewhat firmer archaeological footing:

> He [Basil] also repaired and beautified the handsome church at the Portico of Domninos – the one that is dedicated to the Resurrection of Christ our God

[29] R. Krautheimer, 'Introduction to an "Iconography of Medieval Architecture"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942), 1–33; repr. in idem, *Studies in Early Christian, Medieval, and Renaissance Art* (New York, 1969), 115–50.

[30] Sermon 28: ed. Akakios, *Λέοντος τοῦ Σόφου πανηγυρικοὶ λόγοι* (Athens, 1868), 245 ff.; for English tr., Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 202–3.

[31] Theoph.Cont., 321–5; English tr. in Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 192–9.

> and to the martyr Anastasia – by substituting a stone for a wooden roof and adding other admirable adornments.[32]

The writer surely meant that vaulting was introduced into the restored building,[33] and this would accord with a number of archaeologically documented architectural transformations of around the ninth century. For example, the excavations at Selçikler in Phrygia conducted by Nezih Firatlı revealed a small early Christian basilica that had been transformed into a cross-domed church, probably in the tenth century, with the addition of thick internal walls and vaulting (Figure 10.7).[34] A similar process has been observed at the large basilica at Amorion, which had vaulting introduced in the ninth or tenth century, as well as at the basilica at Kydna in Lycia.[35] On-site observations at the cruciform church at Büyükada near Amasra, for which Eyice proposed an eighth-century date, suggest a similar transformation, and a thorough reexamination of the site would be instructive.[36] In all, a cross-domed church seems to have been created within the framework of an older basilica.

The cross-domed plan introduced into all of these buildings accords with what may be the only ninth-century church still standing in Istanbul, although much altered. The Atik Mustafa Paşa Camii has never been convincingly identified, but its ninth-century date is generally agreed upon (Figure 10.6).[37] Recently, Dr Lioba Theis was able to examine the building during an otherwise undocumented restoration conducted by the Vakıflar, and she suggests that the building included lateral porches and upper level chapels over the corners.[38]

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[32] Theoph.Cont., 324.

[33] It is taken this way by J.J. Norwich, *Byzantium: The Apogee* (New York, 1992), 96, who states, 'Many other, humbler shrines were similarly restored and in several cases re-roofed, the older wooden roofs – always a dangerous fire risk – being replaced by new ones of stone, frequently domed'.

[34] N. Firatlı, 'Découverte d'une église byzantine à Sébaste de Phrygie', *CA* 19 (1969), 151–6.

[35] C. Lightfoot, *Amorium: A Brief Guide to a Late Roman and Byzantine City in Central Anatolia* (Istanbul, 1994), 22-5; J.-P. Adam, 'La basilique byzantine de Kydna de Lycie', *Revue archéologique* 1 (1977), 53–78.

[36] S. Eyice, 'Amasra Büyükadasında bir Bizans kilisesi', *Türk Tarih Kurumu Belleten* 15 (1951), 469-96; I thank Y. Ötüken for observations on the site.

[37] Mathews and Hawkins, 'Notes', 133–4. Mathews has discounted the commonly-held dedication to SS Peter and Mark, but his identification of it as Basil's church of the Prophet Elijah in Petrion is unfounded, as he himself admits. The identification of the church as H. Thekla, given by S. Eyice, *Istanbul. Petit guide à travers les monuments byzantins et turcs* (Istanbul, 1955), 66, may also be discounted, as Mathews notes (*supra*, 133).

[38] L. Theis, 'Überlegungen zu Annexbauten in der byzantinischen Architektur', in B. Borkopp, B. Schellenwald, and L. Theis, eds, *Studien zur Byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte. Festschrift für H. Hallensleben zum 65. Geburtstag* (Amsterdam, 1995), 59–64, esp. 63 for the 'Schildwand-Motif' that suggests a lateral porch; Dr Theis promises a new study of the building. See also Mathews and Hawkins, 'Notes', esp. 129–30, and the reconstruction of the south facade, fig. 10, where the two levels of windows would support Theis' interpretation.

Krautheimer once noted that it did not appear possible to establish clear relationships between one building type and another in Byzantine architecture.[39] This is true if we view buildings as static elements, fixed in time, and if we view architectural design as a theoretical exercise. However, there are any number of buildings in which we can detect such critical transformations, and this is borne out by texts as well.[40] The history of Byzantine architecture, particularly in Constantinople, is one of constant rebuilding, remodelling, enlargement, and replacement, reflecting the transformations of society and the special functions each building housed.

Probably a similar process of experimentation, at about the same time, led to the development of the cross-in-square church, judging from the rather clumsy forms evident in the church of St John of Pelekete, the Fatih Camii in Trilye (Figure 10.8), and Church H at Side – the last of which might benefit from a more detailed analysis.[41] But the controlling factor in our interpretation of the evidence should be scale, and not typology: the centrally-planned, domed churches that appear in this period were most often private foundations for small congregations, and they thus must be understood in a context very different from the great basilicas that preceded them. Once introduced into the architectural mainstream – perhaps through a process of redesign during reconstruction – the vaulted, centrally-planned church proved to be an eminently suitable setting for the more private worship of the Middle Byzantine period.

I would like briefly to add some information from recent dendrochronological investigations in Constantinople and vicinity and their possible implications for the period under consideration. In the spring of 1995, Professor Peter Kuniholm and his staff at Cornell University were finally able to connect a long series of tree-ring data, extending their chronology for the Byzantine period back to the year 362.[42] We can now say, for example, that the remodelling of Hagia Eirene following the earthquake of 740 did not occur until at least 753 or very shortly thereafter. The related church of Ayasofya at Vize in Thrace may be dated sometime

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[39] R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 1st edn (Harmondsworth, 1965), 201–13.

[40] See my 'Beyond Hagia Sophia: Originality in Byzantine Architecture', in A. Littlewood, ed., *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music* (Oxford, 1995), 167–85; and 'Originality in Byzantine Architecture: The Case of Nea Moni', *JSAH* 51 (1992), 48–60.

[41] C. Mango and I. Ševčenko, 'Some Churches and Monasteries on the South Shore of the Sea of Marmara', *DOP* 27 (1973), 236–8, 242–8; and more recently, M. S. Pekak, 'Zeytinbağı Trilye Bizans Döneme Kiliseleri', *XIII. Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı* 1 (Ankara, 1996), 307–38; S. Eyice, 'L'église cruciforme de Side in Pamphylie', *Anatolia* 3 (1958), 35–42.

[42] P.I. Kuniholm, 'New Tree-Ring Dates for Byzantine Buildings', *Byzantine Studies Conference Abstracts of Papers* 21 (1995), 35; idem, 'Aegean Dendrochronology Project December 1995 Progress Report', 3-4; idem, 'First Millennium AD Oak Chronologies', report of 14 March 1995. I thank Professor Kuniholm for sharing these Wiener Laboratory reports with me.

after 833, bearing out Mango's interpretation.[43] The Fatih Camii at Trilye, often suggested to be the oldest surviving example of a cross-in-square church, can now be dated to the early ninth century, with the latest tree-ring date at 799. Also dating into the ninth century are several modifications to Hagia Sophia. A beam in the Baptistery suggests an otherwise unsuspected remodelling or reconstruction after 814. The room over the southwest vestibule dates sometime after 854, and this accords with Cormack and Hawkins' dating of the mosaics.[44] In addition, an intermediate room in the northeast buttress dates after 892. All of this is useful information in a period for which we have few securely dated monuments.

On the buildings that fall into this discussion, several observations are in order. First, the older churches of Constantinople received continued attention. Innovation encompassed both the new and the renewed. Second, several different building types existed side by side, and at dramatically different scales – something we tend to forget when looking at slides or photographs. The eighth-century remodelling of Hagia Eirene, with transverse barrel vaults above the galleries, found acceptance in larger foundations of the ninth century, as in the church at Vize in Thrace, as well as at Dereağzı in Lycia. Although closer to the capital, the church at Vize is rather heavy and unsophisticated in its forms, but this may be in part the result of later remodellings.[45] The Dereağzı church, set in the wilds of Lycia, compares quite nicely with Constantinopolitan examples in its construction and details, and Morganstern has dated it to the late ninth or early tenth century.[46] According to chemical analysis, the bricks used at Dereağzı seem to have come from the region of the Sea of Marmara, and I expect the master mason did too.[47] Both buildings may provide some sense of the contemporaneous architectural developments in the capital.

The cross-domed element crucial to the design of these domed basilicas appears on a smaller scale at the Atik Mustafa Paşa Camii. On a still smaller scale, the cross-in-square plan, seen at the Myrelaion, provided an ideal setting for worship by a small congregation – whether family, parish, imperial court, or monastic. This is not to say that one building type developed out of another, but that different scales required different

[43] C. Mango, 'The Byzantine Church at Vize (Bizye) in Thrace and St Mary the Younger', *ZRVI* 11 (1968), 9–13.

[44] R. Cormack and E.J.W. Hawkins, 'The Mosaics of St Sophia at Istanbul: The Rooms Above the Southwest Vestibule and Ramp', *DOP* 31 (1977), 177–251, esp. 235–47.

[45] Mango, 'Byzantine Church at Vize'; S. Eyice, 'Trakya'da Bizans Devrine Ait Eserler', *Türk Tarih Kurumu Belleten* 33 (1969), 327–33.

[46] J. Morganstern, *The Byzantine Church at Dereağzı and Its Decoration*, IstMitt 29 (Tübingen, 1983), 81–93.

[47] Ibid., 92–3 and notes 293–4.

features: galleries are superfluous in small buildings, just as a large dome could not be stabilized above four columns.

In buildings of all scales, we see the development of subsidiary chapels, frequently positioned on the gallery level.[48] Both Vize and Dereağzı had chapels on the upper levels above the pastophoria, and one wonders how the east gallery rooms added in the eighth-century remodelling of Hagia Eirene might have functioned.[49] The Atik Mustafa Paşa Camii had corner chapels on the ground floor and apparently on the gallery level as well, as did the Theotokos tou Libos. All would seem to address the more intimate nature of Byzantine worship in the age after Iconoclasm.

In conclusion, I must apologize for not satisfying the expectations that my chapter title may have raised. Instead of discussing larger issues of urban transformation, I have focussed on isolated examples of churches. What I have presented might be best taken as a sort of *ekphrasis* on ninth-century Constantinople: that is, I have attempted to evoke the spirit of the whole through the analysis of specific details. This might also accord with what the *Vita Basilii* suggests for Basil's renovation of the capital: his cultural revival was made manifest by the restoration of a few select buildings, augmented by the construction of a few lavish, new ones. Both Mango and Magdalino have suggested a sort of programme for the additions within the Great Palace, echoing the earlier buildings of Constantine and Justinian,[50] and one wonders if a similar programmatic reading should be applied to Basil's other building activities as well – or at least to their inclusion in the *Vita Basilii*.[51]

What exactly does a close reading of the *Vita Basilii* tell us about ninth-century Constantinople? Does the fact that so much of Basil's work was restoration suggest large-scale urban decay or simply the natural passage of time – and the necessary reaction to the earthquake of 869? Does the fact that the workers in the Forum have no place to go to get out of the rain signal urban decline or economic prosperity? Is there no mention of urban planning in this period because it was simply not necessary? Or are we witnessing with Basil's lavish triumphs and assorted reconstructions the replacement of actual order by a symbolic order? Have we gullible scholars of the twentieth century been taken in by Basil's carefully constructed propaganda and the rhetorical embellishments of his grandson?

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[48] For an analysis of the phenomenon, see S. Ćurčić, 'Architectural Significance of Subsidiary Chapels in Middle Byzantine Churches', *JSAH* 36 (1977), 94–110.

[49] U. Peschlow, *Die Irenenkirche in Istanbul*, IstMitt 18 (Tübingen, 1977), 49–50.

[50] Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, 196–7; Magdalino, 'Observations', 63.

[51] See also L. Brubaker, 'To Legitimize an Emperor: Constantine and Visual Authority in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries', in P. Magdalino, ed., *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th Centuries* (Aldershot, 1994), 139–58.

Looking back on the ninth century, we are a bit like a ship at sea. The gleaming domes of the Nea may announce to us the arrival of the Macedonian 'revival', but from the point of view of ninth-century architecture, I am hard pressed to say if this was an actual renaissance or a symbolic one. In the final analysis, we simply cannot write an architectural history without buildings. And for now, it seems, an *ekphrasis* may be as close to ninth-century Constantinople as we can come.