

## **Typological Classification of Post-Byzantine Churches in Albania**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Monumental historical structures are symbols of the cultural identity and continuity and they are the main part of the heritage and the human history. They should be preserved in their own settings with their original characteristics or with as minimum changes as possible. On the other hand, natural or man-made hazards cause a serious risk for the survival of them. In order to develop suitable restoration projects for these buildings without neglecting any of the cultural values, it is vital to determine the current conditions of these structures.

From this point of view, this paper aims to classify the churches in Albania built in post-Byzantine period based on the plan and spatial composition of these structures.

The typological classification helps to follow the development of post-byzantine architecture in time and space, the particularities that characterized this architecture in different periods and regions, the preference for certain types and forms in these periods and regions, their inter-relation, etc. The classification generally follows the criteria used in the study of byzantine architecture, which are mainly based on plan and spatial composition.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Albania has many historical buildings from various civilizations including churches and mosques. Hundreds of masonry churches have been constructed in Albania during hundreds of years. The majority of them exist at their original location; a significant part of them are not still in use. However, natural or man-made hazards cause a serious risk for their survival. While some of them require to be strengthened only, some should be relocated to a new site, since there is no means to save them without transporting. They are the major points for the continuity of history to the future.

From this point of view, this paper aims to classify the the churches built in post-Byzantine period based on the plan and spatial composition of these structures.

### **TYPOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION**

The typological classification helps to follow the development of post-byzantine architecture in time and space, the particularities that characterized this architecture in different periods and regions, the preference for certain types and forms in these periods and

regions, their inter-relation, etc [1]. The classification generally follows the criteria used in the study of byzantine architecture, which are mainly based on plan and spatial composition [Figure 1].

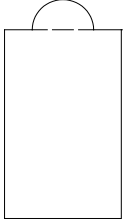
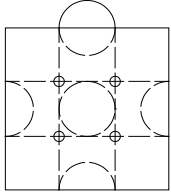
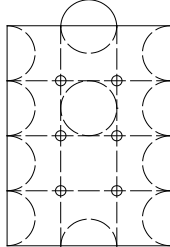
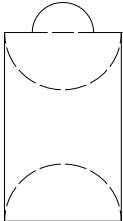
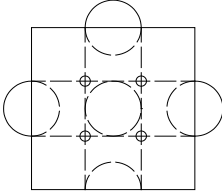
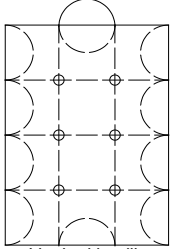
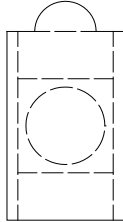
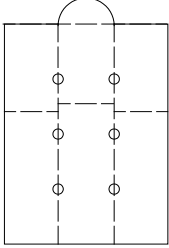
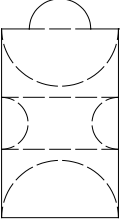
Single nave	Cross-in-square	Basilicas
 <p data-bbox="395 707 496 730">Single nave</p>	 <p data-bbox="730 703 963 725">Cross-in-square single-apse</p>	 <p data-bbox="1161 748 1286 770">Domed basilica</p>
 <p data-bbox="336 1061 544 1084">Single nave barrel vaulted</p>	 <p data-bbox="730 1043 935 1066">Cross-in-square tri-conch</p>	 <p data-bbox="1168 1043 1292 1066">Vaulted basilica</p>
 <p data-bbox="357 1370 520 1393">Domed single-nave</p>		 <p data-bbox="1126 1366 1347 1388">Flat interior ceiling basilica</p>
 <p data-bbox="386 1653 507 1675">Cruciform roof</p>		

Figure 1. Typological classification

The type is defined first of all on the basis of plan composition; single nave, domed cross-in-square churches and basilicas. Spatial composition, especially of the interior space, which is such an important component of the psychological and aesthetic conception of religious buildings, helps define the different categories within each type. Thus, the first category of the first type comprises churches with no interior ceiling (the internal roof structure is visible); second category comprises those churches whose interior space is

covered by barrel-vault; third category comprises those churches whose interior space changes vertically through a central dome over a drum or not; fourth category comprises those churches whose interior covering system is also visible from outside as a cruciform roof [2].

The second type of church, cross-in-square with dome is a much unified type as far as interior spatial composition is concerned. There are two categories within this type, where differences in plan have influenced the composition of the interior space: single-apse churches and three-apse churches.

The basilicas may be categorized in three categories. The first category comprises the domed basilicas (with dome on high drum). The second category comprises those basilicas whose interior spaces are covered by a system of vaults or curved structures. The third category comprises those basilicas whose interior space is covered by flat ceiling.

## TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

The single nave church with timber roof represents the simplest and most frequently encountered form, used in all periods and areas [Figure 2]. Its main characteristics are its small dimensions, simple interior space and meagre architectural and decorative composition.

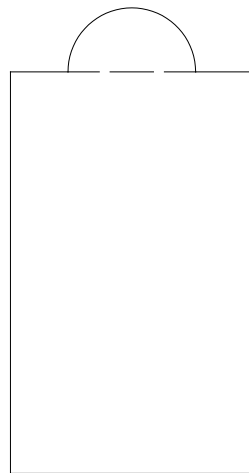


Figure 2. Single Nave

Single-nave barrel-vaulted churches present the first variations on this simple conception of interior spatial composition [Figure 3]. The simplest sort has the interior covered by an uninterrupted barrel vault (Jorgucat, Vithkuq). A more advanced solution is seen when the longitudinal walls have columns connected with arches in both directions. The transverse arches interrupt the main vault acting as rigidity ribs, while the longitudinal ones act as the side support of the vault.

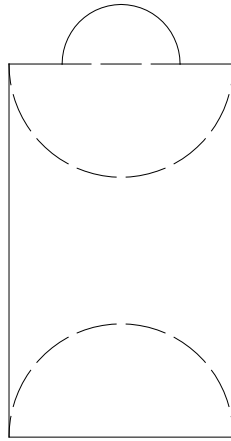


Figure 3. Single-nave barrel-vaulted

The main principle in the interior spatial composition of the domed single-nave churches is the creation of an independent compartment, which is given a separate covering of different types [Figure 4]. In Barmash and Shales, this compartment is capped with a dome with no special differentiation of the interior space. The next stage in this development sees the differentiation of the central area, which is covered by a dome without a drum (Vithkuq), or when it appears in the external spatial composition through a dome over a drum.

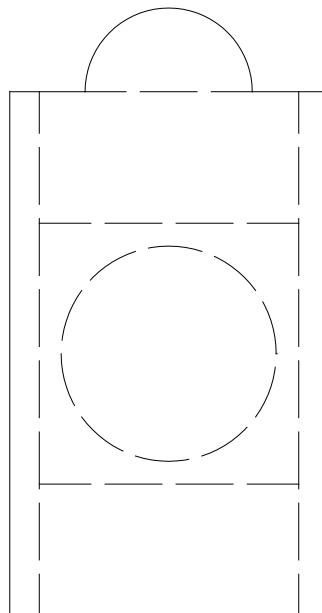


Figure 4. Domed single-nave

The main characteristic of the churches with a cruciform roof is the intersection of the longitudinal vault with a transverse vault higher than the first, and the reflection of this structure in the exterior view as well [Figure 5].

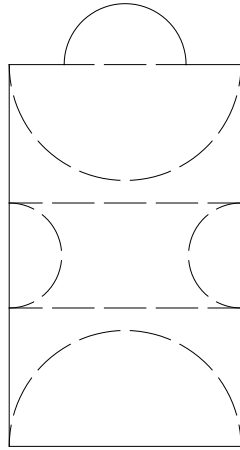


Figure 5. Cruciform roof

The compositional criteria for the interior space of the cross-in-square churches are the same as those applied to Byzantine churches of the same type. Four interior piers create a central space covered by a dome over a drum, which is fitted on the barrel-vaulted arms of the cross [Figure 6]. The piers are connected with the side walls by arches, forming four corner chambers covered by spherical caps with cross vaulting or barrel-vaulting. But although the basic compositional criteria are the same, many variations do appear. Its two main variations are: the cross-in-square with one apse and the Athonite type with side apses. The differences between them are seen in every feature of their composition.

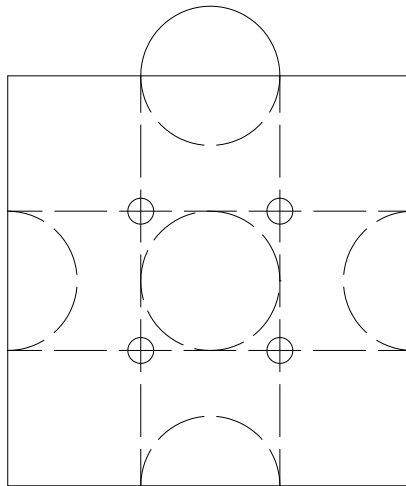


Figure 6. Cross-in-square single-apse

In general, the churches of this type are of the simplest variation, with four piers [Figure 7]. But there are examples (Dhuvjan, Voskopoje) where the plan is compound, with the sanctuary separated from the nave in forming the cruciform shape. The post-byzantine cross-in-square churches are characterized by their linear extension, accenting the longitudinal axis and correspondingly shortening the arms of the cross. The presence of side apses breaks this linear extension, and re-establishes the cruciform plan. The side apses also create a free space, with an easy transition to the central dome. The interior structure of post-byzantine churches is not fully displayed in their exterior spatial composition. At best, it is wholly or partially seen in the volume of the transept, while the corner chambers are covered by the pitched roof

of the nave (Zervat, Polican, Dhuvjan, Vanishte, Dervican, Kakome). In other cases, the interior structure is completely hidden by a pitched roof, which is interrupted in the central part only by the drum which bears the dome (Voskopoje, Koshovica, Krorez, Dervican, Qeparo).

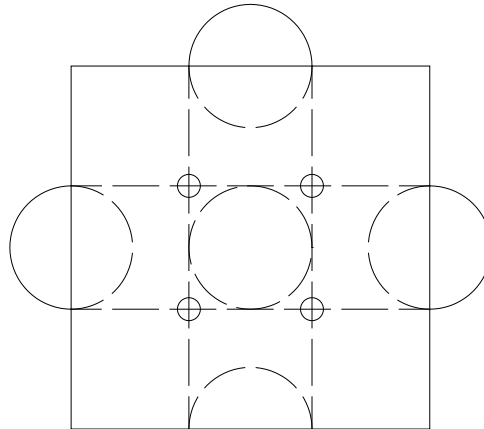


Figure 7. Cross-in-square three-apse

The domed basilicas are distinguished from the domed cross-in-square churches by the number of columns (more than four), as well as by the clear division of the aisles and often by the lack of a transept [Figure 8]. The aisles may be intersected by a transept which in some cases is apparent from the outside (Vithkuq, Koklondas) and in other cases is not (Leuse, Vllahogoranxi, Nivan, Lukove).

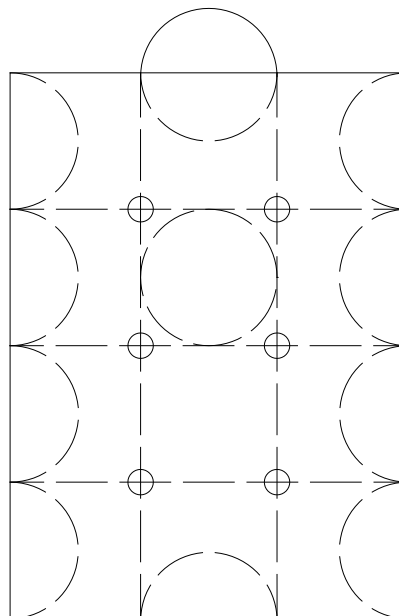


Figure 8. Domed cross-in-square basilica

In the vaulted basilicas we find a number of different solutions to the problem of covering the interior space [Figure 9]. In the simplest solution, each aisle is covered by a single uninterrupted vault (Lipe, Gjirokaster). But generally the columns are connected with

one another and with the side walls by means of arches in both directions. This creates a number of compartments covered in different ways: with vaults (Koncke, Chimarra) or partially or completely with domes (Gjirokaster, Skore, Topove, Permet). Then, we have composite composition in Vithkuq, where a transept intersects the aisles, and in Sopik, where each compartment covered by a dome in the nave is balanced by two compartments covered by spherical caps, while in the basilicas of Voskopoje the columns are grouped in fours, creating the impression of two intersecting inscribed cruciform spaces.

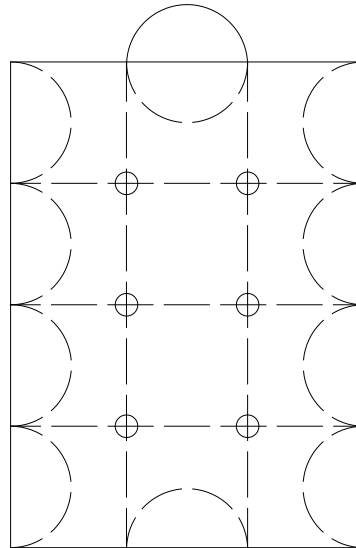


Figure 9. Vaulted basilica

In the case of the basilicas with a flat interior ceiling, the interior space is both simpler and more uniform. The nave and aisles are generally covered by ceilings at the same height, but there are also cases where the ceiling over the nave is higher.

## CONCLUSION

Historical monumental structures are one of the most crucial parts of the cultural inheritance that reflect the history of mankind. Protection and preservation of this heritage is very important. Without them, it is impossible to understand, interpret and retrace the period of civilization. Conservation and restoration of historical monumental structures require a careful systematic study in order to achieve proper results.

In this study, the typological classification of post-byzantine architecture has been done based upon the plan and spatial composition of these structures. In cultural heritage preservation, typological analysis of these historical structures will help to identify their structural forms for performance evaluation, disaster preparedness and prior knowledge of potential hazards

## REFERENCES

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