INTRODUCTION

This book examines the interchange of architecture and ritual in the Middle and Late Byzantine churches of Constantinople, those dating between the ninth and fifteenth centuries. I begin with the obvious and perhaps for that reason often misconstrued premise that because churches were constructed primarily to house ecclesiastical services, knowledge of the latter is essential to any interpretation of the former. The organizational layout of the parts that composed a church corresponded on a basic level to the requirements of the official rituals they housed. That said, the exact nature of the relationship of architecture and liturgy is surprisingly difficult to pin down. Both buildings and rites transformed over time, as did the interchange between them. Thus, throughout the book I argue against the approach that has dominated the study of Byzantine church architecture, namely, that of functional determinism – the view that "form follows function," that architectural form necessarily follows the shape of the liturgy.

Proceeding chapter by chapter through the interior spaces of the Byzantine church, I investigate how and why spaces were used. In doing so, I concentrate on the different ways architecture responded to the exigencies of liturgical rituals, but I am also concerned with how some parts of the church functioned apart from the liturgy, occasionally acquiring new or different uses. Architectural forms, along with evolutions in their use, were sometimes based on developments in the Byzantine rite and sometimes not. Many factors might have contributed to the form of the buildings as seen today: the symbolic

interpretation and significance of a space, the agenda and desires of founders and patrons, and the needs of the community that used the church, not to mention practicalities such as budget, availability of materials, or workshop practices. Thus, rather than viewing church buildings as static structures, frozen in time by the laying of last brick or tessera, I argue that Byzantine churches were material as well as open-ended social constructs and so were never finished, but they were continually in the process of becoming. This is apparent not only in the written sources but also in the material evidence: interior spaces were rearranged, their symbolism and importance changed, chapels and ambulatories were added. Within that changing framework, the most fundamental way for a church to "become" remained the rituals, both liturgical and nonliturgical, that developed in its spaces.

The thirty-odd surviving Medieval churches in Istanbul are the foundation of these inquiries.[1] They constitute the material context and, frequently, stand as an expression of the rituals they housed. Although earlier buildings continued to function throughout the Byzantine period, I focus almost exclusively on churches constructed after the ninth century, because they best embodied contemporary ritual and reflected architectural developments. I refer to pre-ninth-century foundations only for the sake of contrast and comparison, with the exception of Hagia Sophia (Figs. 1, 2). The Great Church stood at the center of the ritual life of the city throughout its history, and both its architectural presence and its recorded rites are essential components of my study.

When considering the hundreds of new foundations in Constantinople known from the sources in the Middle (843–1261) and Late Byzantine periods (1261–1453), the present sample may seem limited. Yet the variety in dates of construction, types, sizes, interior arrangements, and functions does permit some generalized, albeit cautious, conclusions. Nevertheless, the material evidence remains problematic. The buildings have survived in various states of preservation. Many are still standing, but others have become piteous ruins or have completely disappeared and are known to us primarily through the work of pioneer scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[2] Virtually no building has remained in a state that would have been recognizable in the Byzantine period. They now stand irremediably altered and out of context, odd presences in the sprawling megalopolis of present-day Istanbul, devoid of their original architectural and natural settings. After the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the vast majority of the churches were gradually turned into mosques at some point or another. Because Muslim worship required an interrupted unified space, the interior arrangements were altered

[1] I restrict myself to the buildings surviving in the historical peninsula because they constitute a closed sample. However, I employ as parallels foundations in nearby areas.

[2] See, for example, Boğdan Sarayı (V), Hagios Georgios *ton Manganon* (X), and Şeyh Murat Mescidi (XXII).

dramatically, often by the removal of columns or additions of galleries and enclosed spaces for women.[3] Domes and roofs have been replaced and rebuilt, auxiliary spaces have been removed or added, windows and doors have been blocked and new ones opened. With precious few exceptions, the painted, mosaic, and sculptural programs, which did not simply adorn but invested the interior of Byzantine churches with meaning, have been obliterated. The interior furnishings, such as altars and templon barriers, were long ago dismantled. Both the continuous use and neglect of historic buildings have taken a heavy toll. That many churches still lack a secure identification and date of construction may be attributed, in part, to these accumulated factors.

However, the situation is not as disheartening as it might at first seem. Even though most foundations have disappeared, for many there exists enough physical and written information to reconstruct both spaces and rituals, if not in their entirety then at least in certain noteworthy aspects.[4] The profusion and diversity of textual sources set Constantinople apart from any other region in the empire and amply compensate for the loss of artistic and architectural evidence. Furthermore, since the inception of Byzantine studies in the nineteenth century, Constantinople has rightly been considered both an originator and a broker of innovations and styles. Because so much seemed at stake, the city's monuments became the focus of considerable scholarly attention. As a result, more than a century and a half of research has resulted in a more or less accepted view of how the city's ecclesiastical architecture developed. Throughout the previous century and continuing today, fieldwork projects have significantly extended our knowledge both in the details and in general issues. Ongoing discoveries from excavations and surveys in Istanbul are adding to the data, at once broadening and refining our understanding of urban and architectural trends.[5] Some of the major buildings, such as the monastery of Chora (VI) and Kalenderhane Camii (XIV), have been the subjects of exemplary and exhaustive monographs.[6] The intense interest of modern scholarship in the city continues unabated, as the footnotes of this book testify.

Ritual constitutes the second component of this study. By ritual I mean primarily liturgical ceremony, a series of codified services that composed the Byzantine rite. The most important of these services was the Divine Liturgy – the Eucharist – which was performed with great frequency in both secular and monastic churches throughout the year. It is for this reason that most of

[3] The alterations in the interior of both churches in the monastery *tou Libos* (XXIII) typify this process.

[4] See, for example, the monasteries *tou Libos* (XXIII) and Pantokrator (VIII). Although the monastery of Evergetis does not survive, its foundation and liturgical typika provide sufficient evidence for the general reconstruction of the physical spaces and a fairly detailed understanding of the daily ecclesiastical rituals.

[5] See, for example, Özgümüş 2000; 2004; Karamani Pekin 2007.

[6] Ousterhout 1987; Striker and Kuban 1997–2007.

my discussion focuses on the Divine Liturgy. However, the Byzantine rite also included a variety of regular services, such as the Hours, and special ones, such as ordination, tonsure, and burial. I refer to those whenever I consider them important for the interpretation of a space's usage. The liturgical services were the primary, but not sole, function of a Byzantine church. Because buildings were part of a social and cultural nexus, the rituals that took place in them could not always be confined in prescribed rubrics. Therefore, I include in my discussion various nonliturgical activities that occurred in Byzantine churches, pertaining typically, but not exclusively, to popular piety.

Given that we can no longer observe the Byzantine ritual in its Medieval form, I rely most often on texts for its reconstruction. Liturgical sources pertaining to the Constantinopolitan liturgy are abundant. A large number of the surviving *euchologia*, the prayer books used by clergy, belong to the rite of Constantinople. For some periods we know the structure of liturgical rituals in great detail. The tenth-century *Typikon of the Great Church* describes the services for each day of the year, along with the cycle of immovable feasts. The eleventh-century *Synaxarion of Evergetis* details the liturgical rituals, hymns, prayers, and processions of this monastic community throughout the year. Commentaries such as the eleventh-century *Protheoria* and the treatises of Symeon, archbishop of Thessalonike (d. 1429), explicate the symbolism of the liturgical actions and, occasionally, of the church building. Monastic founders' typika and testaments provide invaluable information about everyday life, both liturgical and practical; they also inform us about different commemorative rites, an issue of great concern throughout the period. The liturgical sources are nicely complemented by the astounding wealth of other textual sources on Constantinople. The city, its monuments, and its rituals were of great interest to Byzantine and foreign authors. In addition, historical and hagiographic sources, homilies and *ekphraseis*, canon law, as well as pilgrims' and visitors' accounts, assist us in integrating ecclesiastical architecture with liturgical and extraliturgical practices and charting their continuously evolving social and cultural context. Such texts provide a host of explicit and incidental, but always essential, references to buildings and rituals. Often such references take us to the realm of actual, everyday practice, even if the latter is projected through a context in which the liturgical praxis itself is of lesser importance.

The amplitude of textual evidence relating to the Byzantine rite does not provide facile answers. I consider many of the specific issues – monastic versus episcopal practice, Constantinopolitan versus Hagiopolite tradition – in Chapter 1. The rite has always been a living, continuously evolving tradition. The indispensable work of such scholars as Miguel Arranz, Juan Mateos, and Robert Taft has outlined developments and clarified details. Yet much remains to be done, both in terms of editions of liturgical texts and in terms of interpreting the results in the context of Byzantine culture at large.

An important problem concerns the nature of directives in liturgical texts. The vast majority of euchologia contain nominal rubrics, consisting usually of the title of the prayer and when it was to be said, but not exactly where. Liturgical typika give the order of services, the lections for each day, as well as the list of hymns and prayers, but provide only the most basic spatial information. Liturgical commentaries are concerned mostly with the explication of the ritual and interpret a church part only occasionally, in most cases without indicating its specific form. Only in the twelfth century do we get more complete "choreographies" in the *diataxeis*, books of rubrics for the clergy.[7] All in all, the building itself is tantalizingly absent from texts associated with rituals practiced in it.

In investigating architecture and ritual in Middle and Late Byzantine Constantinople, one faces two kinds of evidence. On the one hand, there are the standing buildings, all very much altered, having lost their original appearance, decoration, and interior furnishings. A few other foundations now destroyed are known sufficiently from sources. On the other, there is a plethora of textual information pertaining to rituals and functions, from collections of rubrics and prayers to descriptions of liturgical and nonliturgical practices drawn from hagiography, histories, travel accounts, and other Byzantine texts. This book attempts to wed for the first time these two kinds of evidence together in a coherent and comprehensive account.

For the particulars of this synthesis I rely on a combination and retooling of earlier approaches. In a seminal article published in 1991, Cyril Mango identifies four methodologies used in the study of Byzantine architecture: typological, in which buildings are classified according to type, elevation, masonry technique, and so on; symbolic, which, according to Mango, has limited usefulness as it is rarely concerned with actual forms; functional, which interprets architectural form as a response to the rituals it housed; and socioeconomic, which places architecture in the context of general historical developments.[8] In this book I am concerned primarily with function, but I arrive at my conclusions by engaging the other categories as well. The typological approach has dominated the scholarship on the Medieval churches of Constantinople due in large part to the city's assumed role as a center of architectural innovation and prestige.[9] Despite Mango's rather dismissive assessment, typology prompts close attention to forms and, by extension, to documentation and to relationships with other areas of the empire. I employ typology, or rather its results, in order to make broader arguments about function. For example, the predominance of medium-sized churches with unified naoi in the Middle Byzantine

[7] There is evidence, however, that diataxeis might have existed as early as the tenth century; see Taft 1978: xxxv–xxxviii.
[8] Mango 1991. See also Johnson et al. 2012: 12–15.
[9] See, most characteristically, Toivanen 2007.

period points to a ritual that was largely self-contained and practiced by small congregations. Symbolism explains little about the specifics of architecture, yet the symbolic interpretation of church spaces greatly affected their function. From very early on the church building was associated with, compared to, and contrasted to the Jerusalem Temple; it also adopted the Temple's horizontal gradation of spatial holiness, which progressed from the outside courts to the Holy of Holies.[10] As I will argue in Chapter 4, the narthex as a symbol for earth accounts for its multitude of uses, including as a place for penitents and site of burials – in contrast to the holier naos, which symbolized heaven, and the holiest bema, which stood for the supercelestial realm. Mango himself utilized the historical approach with great success. For example, he connected the popularity of the cross-in-square type with the increase of monasteries inside the city after the ninth century.[11] The medium size of the surviving buildings, in comparison with earlier churches, and the lack of internal divisions corresponded to the needs of contemporary monastic communities, which in this period were fairly small and restricted to one gender. I would take Mango's argument further and claim that such considerations applied not only to the cross-in-square type but also to a large number of Medieval foundations that had a unified naos.

Thomas Mathews's fundamental study on the early churches of Constantinople best exemplifies the functional approach.[12] Using archaeological, liturgical, and historical sources, Mathews argued that the architectural features of Constantinople's early churches (fourth to sixth centuries) were to a great extent determined by the form of the pre-seventh-century Byzantine rite in the city. Although Mathews never explicitly took the position that "form follows function," this axiom was implied in his methodology and conclusions. For example, the strong horizontal axes of the basilica, the most common building type at that time, suited both the processional character of the liturgy and the collective assembly of the congregation that witnessed it. The large atrium, a standard feature in early Constantinopolitan churches, provided a place for people to gather while awaiting the arrival of the solemn procession that occasionally began far away. Mathews's conclusions were widely accepted with very few exceptions, and his methodology, or parts thereof, was applied in other geographical regions and in later periods of Byzantine architecture.

Scholars have periodically employed the functional approach, in whole or in part, to study the Medieval churches of Constantinople. They have often concentrated on a specific part of the building, usually the sanctuary. Often

[10] Wilkinson 1982; Branham 1992; Ousterhout 2010a. The association between Temple and church building continued throughout the Byzantine centuries; see, for example, the comments of Symeon of Thessalonike in *PG* 155: 644–645.
[11] Mango 1976a: 96–98.
[12] Mathews 1971.

the liturgical texts played a nominal role in these analyses, and developments in other regions of the empire were used to explain Constantinopolitan practice. For example, the arrangement of the tripartite bema in Middle Byzantine churches of Cappadocia, where the side apses did not communicate with the central one and appear to have been independent chapels, was used as an argument for an identical function of these spaces in Constantinople. Making such connections requires significant leaps of scholarly faith. Even beyond the basic premise that masonry buildings in the capital may be compared with rock-cut churches in a distant province, the side rooms in Constantinople did communicate with the main apse – their physical form and evidence for function differ. Furthermore, liturgical rubrics for Constantinople, which assume that the north room was used for the prothesis, the preparation of the Eucharistic elements, nowhere say that it functioned as a chapel (for a complete discussion of these issues, see Chapter 2). Thus, it is imperative to approach both the material and textual evidence with caution. Nowadays, it is unfashionable to speak about architectural "schools" in the way Gabriel Millet understood workshop production at the beginning of the twentieth century.[13] Yet no one can reasonably deny that the different regions of the empire developed distinct architectural styles, as recent scholarship has confirmed.[14] The fundamental work of Taft, Stefano Parenti, and others has proved beyond doubt that liturgical developments were similarly localized. Thus, just because something happened in Cappadocia or Southern Italy does not automatically mean that the same thing occurred in Constantinople. I am not implying that in its architecture and liturgy the empire was an agglomeration of island cultures that had nothing to do with one another. Ideas and practices traveled, as evidenced in the discussion of the development of the Byzantine rite in Chapter 1. Indeed, I occasionally employ parallels from outside Constantinople, but only when there is evidence to suggest that something similar occurred in the city. But I proceed with caution, and I resist the uncritical application of parallels from different times and disparate regions.

Liturgical ritual was to a large extent responsible for the general layout of a Byzantine church. Yet if we consider the totality of usages, ritual cannot always provide sufficient reasons, either for the function of some spaces or even for the motives for their existence. For example, how do we explain the appearance of the galleries above the narthex? Some liturgical activity certainly took place there, but nothing that would make these galleries an essential part of a church. More likely they were places of honor where the imperial party or an aristocratic founder attended services and thus were not necessary elements in all churches. Subsidiary chapels are an even more telling case. Many conform

[13] See Millet 1916.
[14] Ćurčić 2010.

to essential liturgical requirements, having a space for the clergy separated by a chancel barrier and a small area for the congregation. Yet, as I argue in Chapter 5, they did not meet any more specific liturgical need. Rather, their construction was due in some cases to Byzantine concepts of a saint's role in a person's salvation, in others to the desire for an appropriate burial structure adjacent to a church, where the souls of the deceased would benefit from continuous prayers by the congregation. In other words, how a church space was used could vary widely and did not always depend exclusively on liturgical ritual.

A formalist interpretation that neatly matches the exigencies of the ritual to the form of the architecture, as in the early Byzantine period, has limited application after the ninth century. I note this point tangentially throughout the book and develop it explicitly in the Conclusion. Suffice it to say that there is only an approximate correspondence between form and function. After the ninth century, churches in Constantinople comprised a sanctuary for the clergy, a naos for the congregants, and a narthex, a liminal space between the outside world and the church. This basic layout came in a variety of sizes, shapes, and interior configurations. A comparison between two roughly contemporary buildings, Toklu Dede Mescidi (XXVII), a small single-nave church, and Gül Camii (XI), a fairly large cross-domed church, clearly underscores this point. There were many reasons that might affect the final form and appearance of a church. Yet such variety was possible because of the malleability and adaptability of the Byzantine rite, which could be celebrated without any impact on its efficacy, albeit without the same solemnity, in spaces small or large, in chapels as well as in sizable monastic churches.

The following study is divided into six chapters. The first surveys the development of the Byzantine rite between the ninth and fifteenth centuries in order to provide the context for the ensuing discussion. The second chapter investigates the bema, the locus of most liturgical activity, and the templon, the barrier that separated it from the rest of the church. I connect the emergence of the tripartite sanctuary after the ninth century with significant changes in the character of the Byzantine liturgy, namely, the abandonment of outdoor processions, the predominance of monastic foundations, and the development of a complex preparatory service for the Eucharistic elements, known as the prothesis rite. In Chapter 3 I examine the naos, the space for the lay community attending the services. In the Medieval period the naos was usually square or rectangular without interior dividers. Its form accommodated the circular route of the two major processions during the Divine Liturgy. The lack of architectural divisions implies that the separation of sexes was not a concern, and it may be attributed to the predominance of monastic foundations during that time. Chapter 4 surveys the narthex and exonarthex, which over time acquired a multitude of uses. I maintain that the reasons for this development

lay in the symbolic interpretation of these spaces as being not quite as holy as the rest of the church. In the fifth chapter I investigate subsidiary spaces, such as chapels, galleries, and crypts, which were not essential parts of a Byzantine church. Although the frequency of liturgical activity in them varied, their use connected them with themes and concerns very close to those expressed in liturgical texts. The last chapter deals with nonliturgical rituals performed by both individuals and groups. Some of these related to the character of the church as a holy space, while others pertained to the fact that churches were integrated into a social and cultural nexus. The Appendix is a comprehensive catalogue of the surviving Middle and Late Byzantine churches of Constantinople, along with some recorded earlier but which have since disappeared. Each entry focuses on aspects pertinent to the discussion, followed by an essential bibliography. A detailed Glossary explicates many of the terms used in the book.

Needless to say, this book does not purport to have answers to all possible questions, but I hope to initiate a more critical discussion of how Byzantine churches fit within Byzantine society. It will certainly not be the last word on the subject. New discoveries of monuments or texts could alter our discussion in ways we cannot imagine. It is my sincere hope that this study will contribute, however modestly, to an increased and more nuanced understanding of the several themes it investigates.

CHAPTER ONE

LITURGICAL RITUAL: THE SHAPE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BYZANTINE RITE

The Byzantine rite, the liturgical system of the Byzantine Orthodox church, consists of a series of services comprising the sacraments, such as Eucharist, baptism, and ordination; the Divine Office or the Office of the Hours, the daily corporate prayer services, such as Matins, Vespers, Compline; a cycle of fixed feasts and saints' days, such as Christmas and Epiphany, celebrated throughout the liturgical year; a cycle of movable feasts, such as Easter; and occasional vigils and lesser services.[1]

The Byzantine rite is a hybrid, having gone through many stages of evolution and development. As a living tradition it is still evolving and changing, albeit less drastically after the inevitable standardization of printed texts. Robert Taft has distinguished five phases in the development of the Byzantine rite: (1) the palaeo-Byzantine period up to 330, about which there is little information; (2) the Imperial period, which lasted until the beginning of the thirteenth century; (3) the Transitional period, from the beginning of the seventh century to ca. 850; (4) the Stoudite synthesis, from ca. 800 to 1204; (5) and the ensuing neo-Sabaitic synthesis, which began after 1261.[2]

[1] For a succinct history of the Byzantine rite, see Taft 1992. See also Mateos 1971; Egender 1975; Arranz 1976; Schulz 1986; Wybrew 1989; Rentel 2006; Taft 1978; 1980–1981; 1991; 1993: 273–291; 1997a: 203–232; 2000b; 2008a; 2008b; Parenti 2011. The majority of the following is based on these texts. References to specialized studies will be given throughout this chapter.

[2] Taft 1992: 16–21.