



Hagia Eirene

Summary :

The church of Hagia Eirene (Peace) is an important example of Byzantine religious and imperial architecture. This domed basilica is the second biggest Constantinopolitan church, still extant. Built to the north of Hagia Sophia after the Nika riots of 532 and rebuilt after 740, Hagia Eirene is today located in the first courtyard of Topkapi Palace, Istanbul. The monumental cross in the apse remains a unique evidence of Iconoclastic art.

Date

330's; rebuilt after 532; rebuilt after 740

Geographical Location

Constantinople, Istanbul

Topographical Location

North of Hagia Sophia, first courtyard of Topkapi Palace

1. Introduction

The church of Hagia Eirene, dedicated to Divine Peace, is an important example of Constantinopolitan imperial and religious architecture, only second in size after [Hagia Sophia](#) ([Fig. 1](#)). The church was the subject of extensive reconstructions over time and the difficulty in dating and understanding some of its characteristic features as well as its austere interior marked by the monumental Iconoclastic cross, may account for its relative neglect by scholars and general public in relation to its famous neighbour, Hagia Sophia.

According to the tradition, on the site of Hag. Eirene an earlier, much smaller church existed, when in the 4th-c Emperor [Constantine I](#) (d. 337) decided to rebuilt it, enlarge it and dedicate it to Hag. Eirene.¹ Before the inauguration of Hag. Sophia in 360, and during the rebuilding of Hag. Sophia in 5th c, the church of Hag. Eirene also served as the cathedral of [Constantinople](#).² Byzantine sources mention that the [Second Oecumenical Council](#) of 381 was held in Hag. Eirene.³ By the 5th c, the two churches – Hagia Eirene and Hagia Sophia – were within the complex of the [patriarchate](#).⁴ Burned down in 532 during the [Nika riots](#), the church was rebuilt once again by Emperor [Justinian I](#) (r. 527-65) as a domed basilica. Damaged by the earthquake of 740, the church was reconstructed by Constantine V (r. 741-55).⁵ In its present state, the lower parts of the building are Justinianic, whereas the upper parts postdate the earthquake of 740. The church was never turned into mosque, but served as an armory during the Ottoman period. Situated within the first courtyard of Topkapi Palace in the southern, European part of Istanbul, Turkey, today Hag. Eirene functions predominately as a concert hall due to its exceptional spatial and acoustic qualities.

Despite the fact that Hag. Eirene failed to gain the recognition it deserves, it remains the hallmark of [Early Byzantine constantinopolitan architecture](#) and is an original example of [cross-domed basilica](#). Furthermore, the fragmented monumental cross in the apse remains an important evidence of Iconoclastic art in Constantinople.

2. Architecture

Built after the Nika riots of 532, exactly under the same circumstances as Hag. Sophia, the church of Hag. Eirene is an extraordinary example of early Byzantine domed basilicas.⁶ After never surpassed Hag. Sophia, Hag. Eirene remains the second largest Constantinopolitan church that has survived up to present measuring ~58m ×30 m in ground plan, without [atrium](#) ([Fig. 2](#)). Hag. Eirene is a paradigmatic domed, three-aisled basilica, with galleries on three sides that opened into central space and towards the sanctuary in the east, the architectural type that emerged in Constantinople already in the late 5th or early 6th century judging by [St. Polyeuktos](#). The present [dome](#) of Hag. Eirene measures approximately 15 m in diameter and remains in the same location as the original one built by Justinian ([Fig. 3](#)). The comparable dome on [pendentives](#) (spherical triangles) that rose over the central square bay of Justinian's



Hagia Eirene

church was buttressed along its east-west and north-south axes differently. Along east-west axis the dome was supported by two unequal, relatively short **barrel vaults**, and very thin arches on the north and south sides. Side **aisles** flanking the nave were surmounted by vaulted **galleries**, lit from the relatively big windows above them.

The apparent lack of structural bilateral symmetry of Hag. Eirene is the main reason for its destruction in the earthquake of 740.⁷ The church dome collapsed and the building remained in ruins. Hag. Eirene was substantially rebuilt by Emperor **Constantine V** only around 753.⁸ Given the historical circumstances, this rebuilding of the church also gives us an insight into Constantinopolitan architecture during the **Iconoclasm**.⁹ During this eight-century reconstruction, despite the considerably limited financials, the building maintained the scale of the sixth-century original, as well as its basilical ground plan. The church acquired a cross-domed unit and the elliptical, domical vault over the western part of the naos (**Fig. 4**). The arcades flanking the nave were refurbished by reused column shafts and Ionic impost capitals from Justinianic period (**Fig. 5**). A cross-domed unit on the gallery level, resulting into transverse barrel vaults to the north and south of the dome, was introduced, most likely due to the search for the appropriate structural solution, rather than to any symbolic meaning of the architectural form.¹⁰ Other structural corrections included use of domical vaults over western bay of the nave, braced by transverse barrel vaults on the gallery level. Though still lacking bilateral symmetry in its overall structure, the vaulting system throughout the building significantly improved its stability.

During the eighth-century reconstruction, some characteristic Early Christian features were retained: an atrium and a seven-stepped **synthronon** with a **kyklion** (**Figs. 6, 7**). We also know that some kind of a **chancel screen** was used, because its marble fragments were recognized in the floor of the north arcade.¹¹ At this time, the vault of the conch of the **apse** of the **bema** was shaped slightly pointed and was decorated with the simple, two-dimensional mosaic of a stepped cross.

The Ottomans altered the building but general architectural changes were rather minor.¹² The floor level of the church was raised, with some marble fragments of liturgical furnishing embedded into it (**Fig. 8**). The arcades were also slightly altered, while some additional rebuilding also took place, such as infilling of original openings and addition of side chambers.

Besides the church proper, remains of a number of secondary buildings to the north and south of the church are still extant (**Fig. 9**).¹³ **Opus sectile** floor in some of them was revealed.¹⁴ The original function of these secondary buildings, some of which had suffered already in the fire of 564, is hard to determine, though it is highly possible that some of the remains belong to now lost Samson's hospice, which according to written sources connected Hag. Eirene and Hag. Sophia.¹⁵

3. Art

Preserved interior decoration of the church of Hag. Eirene consists predominantly of mosaics in the apse and **narthex**, fragments of frescoes in the south side aisle and **diakonikon**,¹⁶ reliefs on column capitals, occasionally with monograms (**Fig. 10**), as well as relief fragments embedded in church floor.¹⁷ The most famous is certainly the fragmented mosaic of the monumental cross in the apse of the bema (**Fig. 7**). Installed by Constantine V during the Iconoclasm this cross, with flared ends terminating in teardrop shapes and resting on three-stepped base set against a golden ground, is a unique evidence of Iconoclastic art. The decision to decorate the apse with a single, monumental cross which strongly resembles images of the Cross of Golgotha, suggests the beliefs of Constantine V and other iconoclasts for whom only the Cross and the Eucharist were acceptable images of Christ.¹⁸ Furthermore, the symbolic meaning of the Cross as a victorious standard associated with imperial tradition since Constantine I, in the historical context of the Iconoclasm could have functioned as an emblem of Christian opposition to Islam.¹⁹

The mosaic of the cross is of exceptionally high technical quality. It is done according to a style first acknowledged in Constantinople in Hag. Eirene and later widely accepted in Constantinopolitan art, which can be exemplified by the famous apse mosaic of the Virgin and Child from Hag. Sophia (867).²⁰ The cross in Hag. Eirene is outlined in black tesserae set against golden background. However, the golden background is done of golden cubes, made of golden foil sandwiched between the glass tesserae protected by a thin layer of clear glass, while tesserae made in same technique with silver foil were inserted randomly.²¹ This innovative technique was by no



Hagia Eirene

means used to cut the costs of the golden mosaic. On the contrary, the tesserae are unusually tiny and are closely set, thereby using more gold than actually needed. Rather, the use of silver tesserae suggests the intent to soften and lighten the golden background and to achieve the most expressive quality of the divine light.²² The high quality of the execution of the cross is also exemplified by sophisticated visual contrivances and careful calibration of cross' arms, since they curve downward to conform to the concave shape of the apse while being perceived as horizontal from the viewers point of view from the ground.²³

Two lengthy inscriptions in mosaic frame the **triumphal arch** of the apse and were restored by the Byzantines at some point before the Ottoman conquest in 1453.²⁴ The sources of the inscriptions are verses from the Old Testament, from the Book of Amos and Solomon's Psalms, and both inscriptions allude to the House of the Lord.²⁵

4. Hagia Eirene as a model for other churches

Other churches of the same name as Hag. Eirene were known in Constantinople. In addition to the one next to Hag. Sophia, Byzantine sources mention churches of St. Eirene in the Seventh Region, St. Eirene in Sykai (Galata), St. Eirene by the Sea.²⁶ The last, St. Eirene by the sea was also known as the New (Nea) built during the reign of Emperor Marcian and partially restored by the Emperor [Manuel I Komnenos](#) (r. 1143-1180) after its destruction in fire.²⁷

Hag. Eirene was a model for other churches outside the Byzantine domain, most notably in Kiev.²⁸ When Jaroslav the Wise (r. 1019-54), son of Prince Vladimir (r. 980-1015) enlarged and fortified Kiev in emulation of Constantinople, besides the cathedral of St. Sophia, he also built the church of St. Eirene (ca. 1050).

The iconographic programme of Hag. Eirene also set model for iconographic programmes of other coeval churches. The monumental cross and inscription from Psalm 64:4-5 from the apse conch of Hag. Eirene were partially reproduced in slightly later mosaics at Hag. Sophia in Thessaloniki. The same citation from Psalm 64:4-5 was part of a reading for the *enkainia* (dedication or anniversary of the dedication) of Hag. Sophia in Constantinople according to its early tenth-century **typikon**.²⁹

5. Hagia Eirene after the fall of Constantinople

After the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, in contrast to most other churches in the city, Hag. Eirene was never converted into a mosque, but was enclosed within the Sultan's Walls. The building was used as an armory by the janissaries (Ottoman soldiers), a warehouse for war booty, with various captured banners and Byzantine relics as emblems of victory, and subsequently became a military museum.³⁰ In 1846 it became the first Turkish museum. Today the building functions as a museum and a concert hall due to its extraordinary acoustics and space.

A porphyry sarcophagus, traditionally associated with Constantine the Great himself, remains in the atrium of Hag. Eirene, while older photographs from the site occasionally show the portion of the famous chain, which was stretched across the Golden Horn to protect the city of Constantinople during the [siege of 1453](#).³¹ The atrium of the church used to house the pedestal of the column that bore the silver statue of the Empress Eudoxia and the prismatic base of the famous monument of Prophyrios, originally from the [Hippodrome](#).³² Among other objects important for the Hellenic heritage, it is worth noting post-Byzantine church bell made of bronze on display in the south aisle of the church.

6. Historiography and Scholarship

The twentieth-century research has resolved some of the problems scholars are facing when studying Hag. Eirene. Numerous Byzantine sources, both vernacular and theological, mention the church of Hag. Eirene close to Hag. Sophia, and yet the information about the church we get from these sources is sometimes contradictory or unverifiable.³³ For example, Theophanes, Codinus, Pseudo-Codinus, Zonaras and other Byzantine chroniclers and historians often attribute the founding of Hag. Eirene to Constantine I,³⁴ while historian Socrates mentions that Constantine I enlarged earlier smaller church of Hag. Eirene on the place of a pagan



Hagia Eirene

temple.³⁵ It is now known that the church of Hag. Eirene as it stands today does not contain any architectural element that was built prior to the reign of Justinian I.³⁶

The monographs by W. S. George (1913) and U. Peschlow (1977) remain the most comprehensive research of the building.³⁷ George undertook the first extensive research of the architecture and art of Hag. Eirene pointing to its unique features, while Peschlow further proved that a domed basilica supported by barrel vaults was constructed at least around the mid-6th century. Unlike the frequent alternations by the Byzantines, the Ottomans introduced only minor changes into the building, leaving the main features of the structure true to its original Byzantine type.³⁸ Because of the limited number of surviving examples of domed basilicas, Hag. Eirene remains a unique example which offers itself for at least partial understanding of this type of Byzantine architecture.

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 2. Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* in *PG* 67, II.16
 3. On the reference from the early ninth-century Life of St. Stephen the Younger: Auzépy, M.-F., *La Vie d' Étienne le Jeune par Étienne le Diacre*. Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman monographs 3 (Aldershot 1997), sect. 44.
 4. Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* in *PG* 67, II.16
 5. Peschlow, U., *Die Irenenkirche in Istanbul: Untersuchungen zur Architektur* (Tübingen 1977), pp. 206-14.
 6. Ćurčić, S., "Design and Structural Innovation in Byzantine Architecture before Hagia Sophia", in R. Mark and A. Çakmak (eds.), *Hagia Sophia from the Age of Justinian to the Present* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 16-38.
 7. On the series of natural disasters and most notably, the earthquake of October 26th 740 see: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 1, ed. C. deBoor, vol. 1 (Leipzig 1883; repr. Hildesheim 1963), p. 412; Downey, G. "Earthquakes at Constantinople and Vicinity, A.D. 342-1454," *Speculum* 30.4 (Oct. 1955), pp. 596-600.
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 9. Cormack, R., "The Arts During The Age of Iconoclasm," in A. Bryer and J. Herrin (eds.), *Iconoclasm* (Birmingham 1975), pp. 35-44; Ousterhout, R., "The Architecture of Iconoclasm: The buildings" in J. Haldon and L. Brubaker (eds.), *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca. 680-850): the Sources. An annotated survey* (Aldershot 2001), p. 8.
 10. Ćurčić, S., "Design and Structural Innovation in Byzantine Architecture before Hagia Sophia," in R. Mark and A. Çakmak (eds.), *Hagia Sophia from the Age of Justinian to the Present* (Cambridge 1992), pp. 16-38. Ruggieri, V. S. J., *Byzantine Religious Architecture (582-867): Its History and Structural Elements*. *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 237 (Roma 1991), pp. 142-153, suggests that the new building types in Constantinople developed as a response to the earthquake of 740.
 11. Ulbert, Th., "Untersuchungen zu den byzantinischen Reliefplatten des 6. bis 8. Jahrhunderts," *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 19/20 (1969/70), pp. 349-50, pl. 72.
 12. George, W. S., *The Church of Saint Eirene at Constantinople*, (Oxford 1913), p. 71; Van Millingen, A., *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople: Their History and Architecture* (London 1912), p. 93; Peschlow, U., *Die Irenenkirche in Istanbul: Untersuchungen zur Architektur* (Tübingen 1977), pp. 140-205.
 13. Peschlow, U., *Die Irenenkirche in Istanbul: Untersuchungen zur Architektur* (Tübingen 1977), pp. 140-205.



Hagia Eirene

14. Peschlow, U., *Die Irenenkirche in Istanbul: Untersuchungen zur Architektur* (Tübingen 1977), p 148.
15. Peschlow, U., *Die Irenenkirche in Istanbul: Untersuchungen zur Architektur* (Tübingen 1977), pp. 140-205; Bardill, J., "The Palace of Lausus and Nearby Monuments in Constantinople: A Topographical Study," *American Journal of Archaeology* 101.1 (Jan. 1997), pp. 67-95.
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18. Gero, S., "The Eucharistic doctrine of the Byzantine iconoclasts and its sources" *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 68 (1975), pp. 4-22; Parry, K., *Depicting the Word. Byzantine Iconophile Thought of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries* (Leiden - New York - Köln 1996), pp. 178-90.
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20. Recently Ousterhout, R., "The Architecture of Iconoclasm: The buildings" in J. Haldon and L. Brubaker (eds.), *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era* (Aldershot 2001), p. 8, provided a comprised overview of the mosaic.
21. George, W. S., *The Church of Saint Eirene at Constantinople* (Oxford 1913), pp. 47-56, pls. 17-18, 22.
22. George, W. S., *The Church of Saint Eirene at Constantinople* (Oxford 1913), p. 47.
23. George, W. S., *The Church of Saint Eirene at Constantinople* (Oxford 1913), pp. 47-56; Underwood, P. A., "The Evidence of Restorations in the sanctuary mosaics of the Church of the Dormition at Nicaea," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 13 (1959), p. 239.
24. George, W. S., *The Church of Saint Eirene at Constantinople* (Oxford 1913), pp. 48-50.
25. The source of the first inscription is Amos 9:6. The second inscription, with some mistakes of the restorer, was originally extracted from the Septuagint version of Psalm 64:4-5; see the «Quotations» section for details.
26. Van Millingen, A., *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople: Their History and Architecture* (London 1912), p. 85; Janin, R., *La Géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin, I: Le siège de Constantinople et le Patriarcat Œcuménique, iii: Les églises et les monastères* (Paris ²1969), pp. 102-3, 106-9, with further references to the Byzantine sources.
27. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. J. Van Dieten, *Nicetae Choniatae Historia*, CFHB 11.1 (Berlin 1975), p. 206; Synaxarion for November 23rd, December 1st, June 20th, January 9th and 21st in Delehay, H., (ed.) *Synaxarion ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae. Propylaeum ad Acta sanctorum Novembris* (Brussels, 1902), pp. 185-26 (November); 269-362 (December); 363-436 (January); 721-790 (June). In the 10th-c typikon of Hag. Sophia, distinction between the new and old Hag. Eirene is often emphasized: Mateos, J., *Typicon de la Grande Église II*. *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 166 (Rome 1963), pp. 208, 274.
28. See, for example: Conant, K. J., "Novgorod, Constantinople, and Kiev in Old Russian Church Architecture," *Slavonic and East European Review. American Series* 3.2 (Aug. 1944), pp. 75-92.
29. Ousterhout, R., "The Architecture of Iconoclasm: The buildings," in J. Haldon and L. Brubaker (eds.), *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era* (Aldershot 2001), pp. 20, 24, with references to Haghia Sophia in Thessaloniki and to the typikon of Haghia Sophia: Mateos, J., *Typicon de la Grande Église II*. *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 166 (Rome 1963), pp. 186-7.
30. George, W. S., *The Church of Saint Eirene at Constantinople* (Oxford 1913), p. 7.
31. George, W. S., *The Church of Saint Eirene at Constantinople*, (Oxford 1913), Fig. 1.



Hagia Eirene

32. George, W. S., *The Church of Saint Eirene at Constantinople*, (Oxford 1913), p. 7. On the marble base which supported the bronze statue of the famous charioteer Porphyrios and on its significance for understanding its role in Byzantine Constantinople, see: Woodward, A. M., - Wace, A. J. B., "The Monument of Porphyrios" in W. S. George, *The Church of Saint Eirene at Constantinople* (Oxford 1913), pp. 79-84, pls. 26-29, with references to primary sources. See also: Bardill, J., "The Palace of Lausus and Nearby Monuments in Constantinople: A Topographical Study," *American Journal of Archaeology* 101.1 (Jan. 1997), pp. 67-95.
33. The problem has been summarized by Van Millingen, A., *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople: Their History and Architecture* (London 1912), pp. 84-105, esp. pp. 84-91 and Peschlow U., *Die Irenenkirche in Istanbul: Untersuchungen zur Architektur* (Tübingen 1977), pp. 19-23. The list of additional sources is in bibliography under primary sources.
34. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 1, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig 1883; repr. Hildesheim 1963), p. 23; Pseudo-Codinus, *Patria Constantinopoleos* ed. T. Preger, *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum*, II (Leipzig 1907; repr. 1975), pp. 139-40; Zonaras, ed. T. Büttner-Wobst, *Ioannis Zonarae epitomae historiarum libri xviii*, vol. 3 (Bonn 1897), p. 154.
35. Van Millingen, A., *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople: Their History and Architecture* (London 1912), p. 84, with reference to Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* in PG 67, II.6 and II.16. Such accounts were often copied, which can be exemplified by Theodorus Anagnostes, who in his writings reveals that he follows Socrates' text: Theodore Anagnostes, *Epitome historiae tripartite*, ed. G.C. Hansen, *Theodoros Anagnostes. Kirchengeschichte* 2. edn., Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte. Neue Folge 3 (Berlin 1995), ch. 27, 65.
36. Peschlow, U., *Die Irenenkirche in Istanbul: Untersuchungen zur Architektur* (Tübingen 1977), pp. 206-14. Various Byzantine sources inform us about Justinian's works on the church: John Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. L. Dindorf, *Ioannis Malalae chronographia* (Bonn 1831), p. 486; Synaxarion for August 8th, in Delehaye, H., (ed.), *Synaxarion ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae. Propylaeum ad Acta sanctorum Novembris* (Brussels, 1902), p. 878.
37. Other works on Byzantine architecture also discuss Hag. Eirene. For example: Van Millingen, A., *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople: Their History and Architecture* (London 1912), pp. 84-105; Müller-Wiener, W., *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls*, (Tübingen 1977), pp. 112-17.
38. However, liturgical furnishing from the church is lost. For example, in the 9th century, Photios, Patriarch of Constantinople mentions now lost ambo from Hag. Eirene: Photios, Homily 6 («Φωτίου τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου ἀρχιεπισκόπου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως ὁμιλία τρίτη, λεχθεῖσα ἐν τῷ ἁμβωνί τῆς ἁγίας Εἰρήνης τῆς ἁγίας Παρασκευῆ μετὰ τὴν ἁνάγνωσιν τῆς κατὰ συνήθειαν κατηχήσεως»), ed. B. Laourdas, *Ἑλληνικά* 12, Παράρτημα, (Thessalonica, 1857-1866), p. 62.

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Hagia Eirene

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	http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/fineart/html/Byzantine/index.htm?http&&www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/fineart/html/Byzantine/11.htm
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Glossary :

	aisle
	The part of the naos of a church set off by the internal rows of piers or columns, namely by the structures supporting the roof.
	apse
	An arched structure or a semi-circular end of a wall. In byzantine architecture it means the semicircular, usually barrel-vaulted, niche at the east end of a basilica. The side aisles of a basilica may also end in an apse, but it is always in the central apse where the altar is placed. It was separated from the main church by a barrier, the templon, or the iconostasis. Its ground plan on the external side could be semicircular, rectangular or polygonal.
	atrium
	1. Antiquity: The large, open space within a building, which is enveloped by colonnades. 2. Byzantium: The forecourt of a church in early Christian, Byzantine, and medieval architecture. It was usually surrounded by four porticoes (quadriporticus).
	bema
	The area at east end of the naos in Byzantine churches, containing the altar, also referred to as the presbetry or hierateion (sanctuary). In these area take place the Holy Eucharist.
	chancel screen of presbytery
	A short barrier between the bema and the nave. It had originally the form of a parapet that was later made of stone or of marble. It is generally an element of early Christian religious architecture, and it appears on ground plans either as a linear structure or forming a Π. It consists of small columns or pillars in the interspace of which slabs are inserted. Crosses and floral patterns are usually used for the relief decoration of the screen.
	cross-domed basilica
	Type of domed basilica. A church plan, whose core, enveloped on three sides by aisles and galleries with a transept, forms a cross. The core is surmounted by a dome in the centre.
	diakonikon
	An auxiliary chamber of the church, also known in early years as <i>skeuophylakion</i> , which could be a separate building attached to the church. There were kept the sacred vessels but sometimes also the offerings of the faithful, the archive or library. In Byzantine churches the diakonikon becomes the sacristy to the south of the Bema, corresponding to the prothesis to the north, and forming along with them the triple sanctuary. It usually has an apse projecting to the east.
	dome
	A characteristic element of Byzantine architecture. The dome is a hemispherical vault on a circular wall (drum) usually pierced by windows. The domed church emerges in the Early Byzantine years and its various types gradually prevail, while they are expanded in the Balkans and in Russia.
	gallery
	The upper level of a house where the women resided. In ecclesiastical architecture it is the corridor above the aisles and narthex of a church, from where women attended the Liturgy. Originally (in the Byzantine period) the gallery, having a special entrance, was used exclusively by the emperor and the members of the royal family.
	kyklion
	In Early Christian basilicas, it was the semicircular passage below synthronon, with a doorway at each end towards the nave.
	narthex
	A portico or a rectangular entrance-hall, parallel with the west end of an early Christian basilica or church.
	opus sectile, the



Hagia Eirene

Technique of floor or wall decoration. Thin pieces of polychrome marble are carved or joined so that a decorative motif could be depicted.

pendentive

Triangular surface used for the transition from the square base of the church to the hemispheric dome.

synthronon

Rows of built benches, arranged in a semicircular tier like a theatre, in the apse of a church. On these benches the clergy sat during Divine Liturgy. The bishop sat on the cathedra at the top of the synthronon.

triumphal arch

(Rom. :) A structure in the shape of a monumental archway, built to celebrate the victory of a Roman general or Emperor.

(Byz. Archit.) The arch formed above the Horaia Pyle (Royal Door), which frames the curve of the conch of the apse and separates the bema from the nave.

typikon

Foundation document of a monastery compiling the rules regarding its administrative organization and liturgic rituals, as well as the comportment inside a cenobitic monastery.

The monastic typika could also include the biography (vita) of the monastery founder along with a catalogue of the movable or immovable property of the monastery. They constitute an important source for the study of the monastic life, while at the same time they shed light on many aspects of the Byzantine society.

The liturgical typika were calendars with instructions for each day's services, liturgical books with rules arranging the celebration rituals.

vault

A semi-cylindrical roof.

Sources

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Ioannes Zonaras, *Epitome historiarum*, ed. T. Büttner-Wobst, *Ioannis Zonarae epitomae historiarum libri xviii*, vol. 3. Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae (Bonn 1897), p. 154.

J. Mateos, *Typicon de la Grande Église II*. Orientalia Christiana Analecta 166 (Rome 1963), pp. 208, 274.

H. Delehaye (ed.) *Synaxarion ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae, Propylaeum ad Acta sanctorum Novembris* (Brussels 1902), pp. 415, 631, 638, 878.

Quotations

The inscriptions in the triumphal arch of the conch of the apse

a. The first inscription framed by wreaths of leaves, banded at the apex of the arch now reads:



Hagia Eirene

(Ο Ο)ΙΚΟΔΟΜΩΝ ΕΙΣ Τ(ΟΝ ΟΙΚΟΝ ΣΟΥ ΚΑΙ) ΑΝΑΡΑΞ[ΙΝ] ΑΥΤΟΥ, ΚΑΙ ΤΗΝ ΕΠΑΓΓΕΛΙΑΝ (ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ ΕΥ ΗΜΑΣ ΗΛΠΕΙCΑΜΕΝ ΕΙΣ ΤΟ Ο)ΝΟΜΑ Α(ΥΤΟΥ).

The source of the original inscription is Amos 9:6: «Ὁ οἰκοδομῶν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν τὴν ἀνάβασιν αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς θεμελιῶν, Κύριος Παντοκράτωρ ὄνομα αὐτῶ.» [It is He] that builds his ascent up to the sky, and establishes his promise on the earth; the Lord Almighty [lit. the Ruler of All] is His name.).

b. Similarly, the inner borders are decorated with abstract geometric patterns with fleur-de-lys and another inscription, which reads:

(ΔΕΥΤ ΕΙ)CΟΜΕΘΑ ΕΝ ΤΟΙC ΑΓΑΘΟΙC ΤΟΥ ΟΙΚΟΥ ΣΟΥ, ΑΓΙΟC Ο ΝΑΟC ΣΟΥ, ΘΑΥΜΑCΤΟC ΕΝ ΔΙΚΑΙΟCΥΝΗ ΕΠΑΚΟΥCΟΝ ΗΜΩΝ Ο Θ[ΕΟ]C Ο C[ΩΤ]ΗΡ ΗΜΩΝ, Η ΕΛΠΙC ΠΑΝΤΩΝ ΤΩΝ ΠΕΡΑΤΩΝ ΤΗC ΓΗC ΚΑΙ ΤΩΝ ΕΝ ΘΑΛΑCΧΗ ΜΑΚ(ΡΑ)[Ν].

The inscription, with some mistakes of the restorer, was originally extracted from the Septuagint version of Psalm 64:4-5: «Πλησθησόμεθα ἐν τοπις ἀγαθοῖς τοῦ οἴκου σου, ἅγιος ὁ ναὸς σου, θαυμαστός ἐν δικαιοσύνη ἐπάκουσον ἡμῶν ὁ θεὸς ὁ σωτὴρ ἡμῶν, ἡ ἐλπίς πάντων τῶν περᾶτων τῆς γῆς καὶ τῶν ἐν θαλάσση μακρᾶν.» (We shall be filled with the good things of thy house, thy temple is holy. [Thou art] wonderful in righteousness. Harken to us, O God our saviour, the hope of all the ends of the earth, and of them [who are] afar off on the sea.)

The letters which have been restored in painted plaster in place of lost tesserae at the time of George's research are given in curved brackets and other letters in square brackets are added to comply to evident contractions. W. S. George, *The Church of Saint Eirene at Constantinople*, (Oxford 1913), pp. 48-51; R. Janin, *La Géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin, I: Le siège de Constantinople et le Patriarcat Œcuménique, iii: Les églises et les monastères*, (Paris ²1969) pp. 105-6.

The Church of Hagia Eirene attributed to Constantine I in the *Patria* of Constantinople

(48.) Ὡκοδόμησεν δὲ παραχορῆμα καὶ ἱεροὺς οἴκους ἓνα μὲν ἐπώνυμον τῆς ἀγίας Εἰρήνης, ἕτερον δὲ τῶν Ἀποστόλων.

Pseudo-Codinos, *Patria Constantinopoleos*, ed. Th. Preger, *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum*, II (Leipzig 1907; repr. 1975), pp. 139-140

The 2nd Œcumenical Synod in Constantinople (381) held in Hagia Eirene

ἐν ἱεροῖς ναοῖς αἱ ἄγιοι ἔξ σύνοδοι συνηθροίσθησαν... καὶ ἡ δευτέρα ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει ἐν τῷ ναῷ τῆς Ἀγίας Εἰρήνης,

Auzépy, M.-F. (ed.), *La Vie d' Étienne le Jeune par Étienne le Diacre*, (Aldershot 1997), sect. 44.76-7.

Chronological Table

330's: Constantinian Hagia Eirene

until 360: cathedral of Constantinople

381: the 2nd Œcumenical Council in Constantinople, held in the Church of Hagia Eirene

532: the church is burned down during the Nika riots; rebuilt as a domed basilica by Justinian I shortly after

740: the church is damaged by the earthquake

under Constantine V (741-55): repairs in the structure and the vaulting system; Iconoclast monumental cross mosaic in the conch of the apse



Hagia Eirene

Ottoman period: armory

1846: the church becomes the first Turkish museum