

Triconch Churches Sponsored by Serbian and Wallachian Nobility

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Architectural activities of remarkable quality continued to thrive north of Byzantium under the sponsorship of Serbian and Wallachian nobility long after the fall of Byzantium and occasionally even in territories under Ottoman rule.¹ As suggested by Slobodan Ćurčić, triconch domed churches, which have been enduring examples of Middle Byzantine architecture and especially of monastic architecture on Mount Athos, shaped notions of an Orthodox Christian identity shared by Serbs and Wallachians, as opposed to the Islamic architecture of the Ottoman Turks.² Interest in triconch domed churches in the Balkans started with the studies of the French archeologist and historian Gabriel Millet. Widely recognized as a pioneer of Byzantine studies, Millet proposed the idiosyncratic concept of stylistic “schools” that were located

1 Although architectural activities in Constantinople likely took place after the 1330s, nothing monumental was recorded. I summarize the major features of Late Byzantine architecture in Constantinople and relevant bibliography in Jelena Bogdanović, “Late Byzantine Religious Architecture in Constantinople / Υστεροβυζαντινή ναοδομία στην Κωνσταντινούπολη,” in *Encyclopaedia of the Hellenic World, Constantinople* (2008), available at http://www.egeonet.gr/Forms/fLemmaBodyExtended.aspx?lemmaid=10893&bothimata_State=&kefalaia_State=#chapter_1, accessed March 3, 2019. See also Slobodan Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans from Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent (c. 300–1550)*

¹ Triconch (trefoil) churches have a centralized floor plan in the form of a trefoil, or three conches (apses) attached on three sides of the central core of the structure. On some of these churches in the Balkans, see, Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, pp. 671–80, 787–98. See also the excellent and highly relevant contribution by Alice Isabella Sullivan, “The Athonite Patronage of Stephen III of Moldavia, 1457–1504,” *Speculum* 94, no. 1 (2019): 1–46. Sullivan analyzes the royal patronage of Moldavian ruler Stephen III and convincingly demonstrates that the primary aspirations behind his generous support of Athonite monasteries were piety and a wish to act as a protector of Orthodox Christianity. The latter he modeled on the role of the Byzantine emperors, who similarly supported Mount Athos as a center of Orthodox spirituality and steadfast religious practices.

(New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 528–45; and Slobodan Ćurčić, “Religious Settings of the Late Byzantine Sphere,” in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004), pp. 65–94, with references to Semavi Eyice, *Son Devir Bizans Mimârisi: İstanbul’da Palaiologos’lar Devri Antilari* (Istanbul: Üniversite Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1980).

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regionally in the nation-states of the Balkans originally in reference to painting and then, by extension, to religious architecture.³ At the time of World War One, when nation-states in the Balkans were trying to promote and maintain their sovereignty, Millet opened up a discussion of national styles in art and architecture with a regional emphasis.⁴ His pioneering work spurred development of national studies of historical architecture and arts in the Balkan states and remains critical as it documented numerous building sites in the wider region. A student of Millet’s, the architect and architectural historian Aleksandar Deroko, has promoted the more neutral terminology of “architectural groups,” rather than “national schools.”⁵ Because so few historical documents and texts survive to establish the historical context of medieval architecture in the Balkans, these buildings themselves retain important documentary and historical value.

In Serbia, Millet recognized three distinct architectural “schools” that were localized within discrete cultural and geographic regions and grouped by the national identity of their patrons: a) the so-called School of Raška was associated with architecture in the central region of the medieval kingdom of Serbia and was built under patronage of the Nemanjić dynasty predominantly during the 12th and 13th centuries; b) the so-called Serbo-Byzantine School was a general category for the emulation of art and architecture of Constantinople by Serbian rulers in the late 13th and 14th centuries in the wider territories of the Serbian medieval state, including along the Vardar River, in Macedonia, Epirus, and Thessaly; and c) the so-called Morava School was a unique national style of Serbian architecture in the Morava Valley built from approximately the 1370s until the Ottoman conquest of Serbia in 1459.⁶ A typical

3 Gabriel Millet, *La Serbie glorieuse* (Paris: L’art ancien et moderne aux mondes, 1917); Gabriel Millet, *Recherches sur l’iconographie de l’évangile aux XIVe, XVe et XVIe siècles: D’après les monuments de Mistra, de la Macédoine et du Mont-Athos* (Paris: Fontemoing/E. de Boccard, succ., 1916); Gabriel Millet, *L’école grecque dans l’architecture byzantine* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1916); Gabriel Millet, *L’ancien art serbe: Les églises* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1919).

4 The close relationship between nationalist and regionalist studies opens up numerous possibilities for further research, which go well beyond the focus and limits of this essay.

5 Deroko’s assessment was based on firsthand studies of more than three hundred medieval structures in the Balkans. On the reasons for using such rather neutral but, architecturally speaking, more appropriate terminology related to various typological groups of medieval structures, I write in somewhat greater detail in Jelena Bogdanović,

- “Aleksandar Deroko’s Work on Medieval Architecture and Its Relevance Today,” in “Aleksandar Deroko,” special issue, *Serbian Architectural Journal* 11, no. 1 (2019): 141–156.
- 6 See Millet, *L’ancien art serbe*, esp. chaps. 2 and 3. Millet formulated the “School of Raška,” the “Serbo-Byzantine School,” and the “Morava School” as three large groups of architectural monuments built in Serbia or under the Serbian domain. For the “Morava School” as a “national” type of architecture, see Millet *L’ancien art serbe*, pp. 172, 198. On “schools” of medieval architecture as formulated by Millet and their relevance today, see especially Ćurčić,

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example of the “Morava” church is the Church of St. Stephen, also known as Lazarica, in Kruševac, built under the patronage of Serbian Prince Stefan Lazar Hrebeljanović (r. 1370–89) (Fig. 7.1).⁷ It may be summarized that in their architectural style, Morava churches are recognized by scholars as being triconch in plan and lavishly decorated in extensive mural cycles on the interior and carved stone sculptural decoration on the exterior. By promoting a typological definition and development of Morava churches, Millet traced their predominant geographical and chronological distributions and situated them as a final phase of Late Byzantine architecture. According to Millet, the “Morava school” was a kind of a national school created by Serbs and later spread beyond Serbian borders, first to Wallachia, the Romanian principality situated to the north of the Danube River.⁸ He also proposed that the architectural

Architecture in the Balkans, pp. 8–10; Slobodan Ćurčić, “Architecture in Byzantium, Serbia and the Balkans through the Lenses of Modern Historiography,” in *Serbia and Byzantium: Proceedings of the International Conference Held on 15 December 2008 at the University of Cologne* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang/PL Academic Research, 2013), pp. 9–31; Dubravka Preradović, “Contribution de Gabriel Millet à l’étude de l’art Serbe” in *Z’ Επιστημονικό Συνέδριο «Το Άγιον Όρος στα χρόνια της Απελευθέρωσης», Φορος Τιμής στον Gabriel Millet* [Mount Athos during the years of liberation, Mount Athos Center 7th Scientific Conference, round table on Gabriel Millet] (Thessaloniki: Mount Athos Center, 2013), pp. 77–85; Dubravka Preradović, “Le premier voyage de Gabriel Millet en Serbie et ses résultats,” in *Les Serbes à propos des Français—Les Français à propos des Serbes*, ed. J. Novaković and Lj. P. Ristić (Belgrade: University of Belgrade, 2014), pp. 187–205; Ivan Stevović, “Serbian Architecture of the Morava Period: A Local School or an Epilogue to the Leading Trends in Late Byzantine Architecture; A Study in Methodology,” *Zbornik radova vizantološkog instituta* 43 (2006): 231–53; Dragan Vojvodić, and Danica Popović, eds., *Sacral Art of the Serbian Lands in the Middle Ages*, Byzantine Heritage and Serbian Art, vol. 2 of 3 (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2016); Dubravka Preradović, ed., *Gabrijel Mije i istraživanja stare srpske arhitekture* [Gabriel Millet et l’étude de l’architecture médiévale serbe] (Belgrade: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 2019); Dubravka Preradović, “Gabrijel Mije: Terenska istraživanja srpskih spomenika i njihovi rezultati [Gabriel Millet: Ses études de terrain sur les monuments serbes et leurs résultats],” in *Gabrijel Mije i istraživanja stare srpske arhitekture*, pp. 25–36; Jelena Jovanović and Olga Špehar, “L’ancien art serbe: Les églises i definisanje škola u staroj srpskoj arhitekturi [L’ancien art serbe: Les églises and the definition of schools in old Serbian

architecture],” in *Gabrijel Mije i istraživanja stare srpske arhitekture*, pp. 65–71; Olga Špehar, “Modaliteti recepcije L’ancien art serbe: Les églises u domaćoj historiografiji [L’ancien art serbe: Les églises et les modalités de sa réception dans l’historiographie locale],” in *Gabrijel Mije i istraživanja stare srpske arhitekture*, pp. 75–80; and Ivan Stevović, “L’ancien art serbe: Les églises jedan vek kasnije [L’ancien art serbe: Les églises, un siècle plus tard],” in *Gabrijel Mije i istraživanja stare srpske arhitekture*, pp. 81–84.

- 7 See Vladislav Ristić, *Lazarica i Kruševački grad* (Belgrade: Republički zavod za zaštitu spomenika kulture, 1989); and Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, pp. 671–74.
- 8 “Ainsi, les Serbes, aux derniers jours de l’indépendance, font oeuvre personnelle, créent un type national, qu’ils répandent hors de leur frontière, d’abord, chez leurs alliés, en Valachie.” Millet, *L’ancien art serbe*, p. 198, note.

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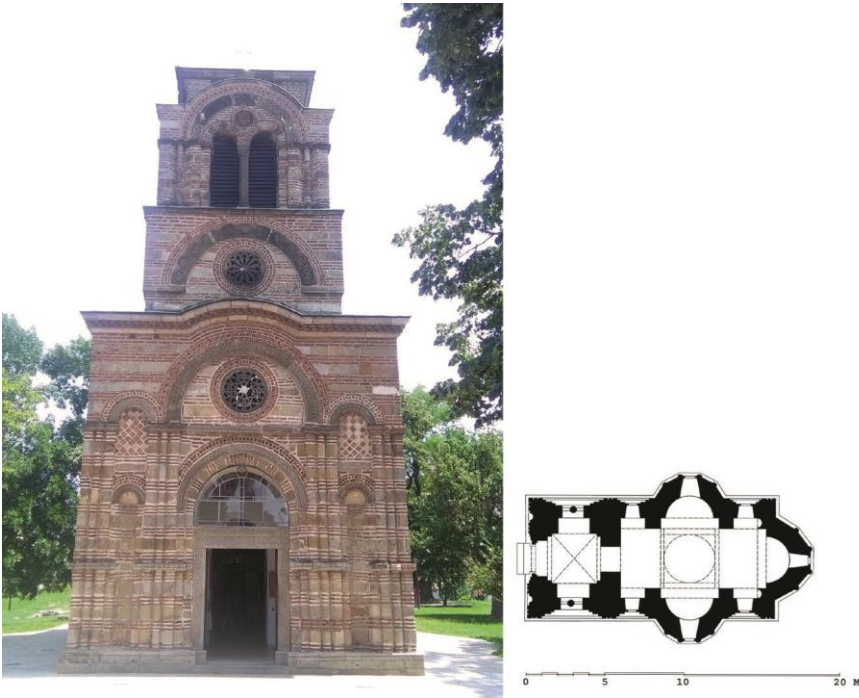


figure 7.1 A typical example of the triconch Morava churches: Church of the Holy Protomartyr Stephen (Lazarica), Serbia, ca. 1375–78, sponsored by Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović of Serbia (r. 1373–89), exterior view and floor plan photograph courtesy Ivan Krstić; drawing by Jelena Bogdanović

development of triconch churches originated on Mount Athos and reached the Morava Valley in the north as well as the territories of Serbia, via Skopje, the capital of the Serbian medieval state.⁹ Ćurčić further clarified the important role of the Serbian monastery of Hilandar (ca. 1300–11), on Mount Athos, as a model and inspiration for the formation of the sumptuous architecture built under Serbian rulers and nobility in the

[Type here]

Morava Valley.¹⁰ Like the *katholikon* (main church) of Hilandar, the major Morava churches have a fully articulated triconch design, impressive scale, and rich architectural articulation.

9 Millet, *L'ancien art serbe*, pp. 152–53. Vladislav Ristić, *Moravska arhitektura* (Kruševac: Narodni muzej, 1996), pp. 64–65, 81–88, 107–08, 144–57, considers the Skopian churches Matka, Kučevište, Matejič, and Markov Manastir when discussing the origins of architectural features of Morava architecture.

10 Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, pp. 671–82, with further references.

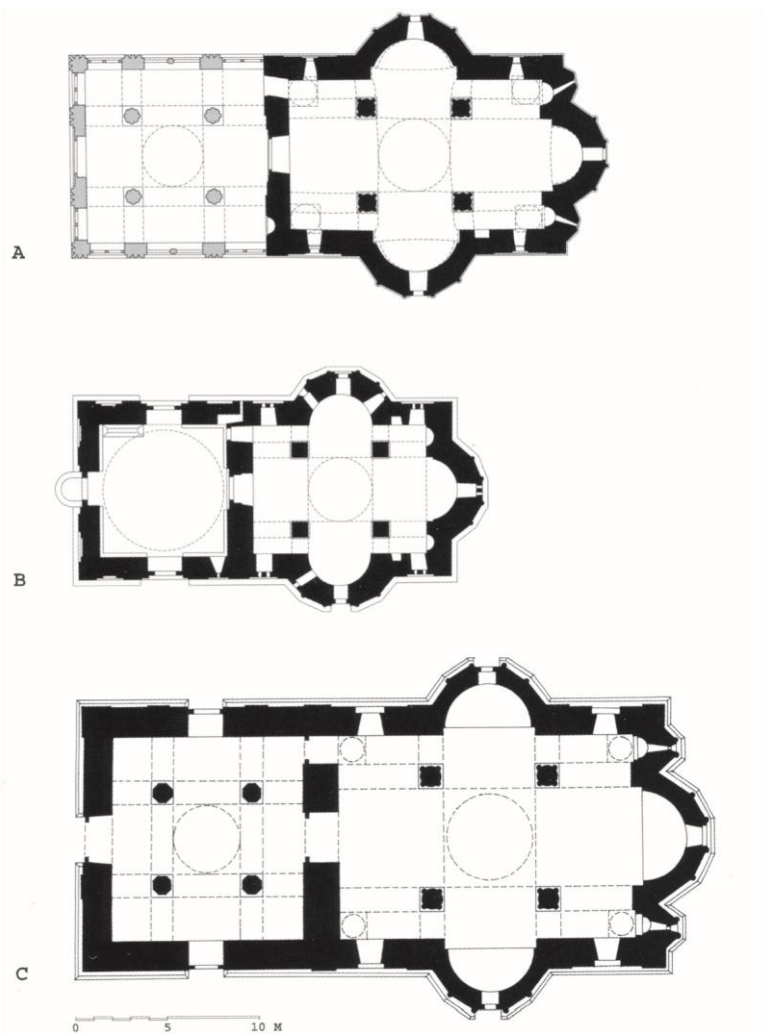


figure 7.2 Floor plans of monastic Morava churches: Ravanica (1375–78), Ljubostinja (ca. 1389), and Resava (Manasija, 1407–18), Serbia drawings by Jelena Bogdanović

These characteristics are particularly observable in case of monastic foundations built under Serbian rulers, such as the *katholika* of Ravanica (1375–78), Ljubostinja (ca. 1389), and Manasija (also known as Resava, 1407–18), which were founded, respectively, by Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović, his wife Princess Milica Hrebeljanović (née Nemanjić), and their son, the Serbian Prince and Despot, Stefan Lazarević (Fig. 7.2).

1 Architecture in the Skopje Region

In my research on churches in the region of Skopje, a major cultural and political hub in the wider region of northern Balkans, I examined structures built after the 1330s, at a time when other important architectural activities in Constantinople had virtually ceased.¹¹ The remarkable continuation of vibrant architectural undertakings in the area of Skopje was supported by Serbian rulers and aristocracy. Going beyond the ethnic, gender, and social identities of their patrons, which indeed point to shared cultural values as a group, these architectural projects are contextualized by relating them to the major artistic and civic centers in the wider region. This analysis revealed that the various architects and building workshops were familiar with Western European, Byzantine, and local traditions and engaged in the process of achieving specific design and building solutions. The multiple lines of development of Morava architecture were traced along the already recognized major south-north axis of Mount Athos—Morava Valley and also along the east-west axis of Constantinople, via Thessaloniki to the east, and the Adriatic Littoral, via Prizren to the west. Evidence that manifold, simultaneous architectural processes resulted in the recognizable architecture of the Skopje region has brought into question the narrative about medieval architecture in the Balkans as a direct offspring of Byzantine architecture. Furthermore, distinctive architectural features of post-1330s Skopian churches are identified, namely an additive and modular design combined with the gradual clustering of architectural volumes based on distinct proportional systems; the structural use of pyramidal, “triumphal arch” tectonics; the use of stone-and-brick construction; geometric articulation of the facades through the use of pilasters, stone string courses, and niches on the exterior; and rather moderate use of architectural sculpture. These elements have made it possible to point out the wider chronological and geographical spread of triconch churches and the role of various building workshops in the physical articulation of architectural concepts.

The investigation of churches built in the region of Skopje after the 1330s challenges the idea of a clearly defined “Morava school” as unique to a single nation or region. Additionally, it confirms the suggestion that triconch Byzantine-rite churches were typologically and architecturally developed

- 11 Jelena Bogdanović, "Regional Developments in Late Byzantine Architecture and the Question of 'Building Schools': An Overlooked Case of the Fourteenth-Century Churches from the Region of Skopje," *Byzantinoslavica* 69, no. 1–2 (2011): 219–66.

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from the Middle Byzantine cross-in-square structures.¹² I agree with Stavros Mamaloukos, who convincingly placed the fully formulated triconch church plan in Constantinople, or in the cultural area of its influence, before this architectural plan was applied on Mount Athos and spread further throughout the Balkans and north of Byzantium.¹³ As further analyzed in a larger study about Byzantine church design, the triconch typology emanated from the essentially diagrammatic but highly generative nine-square design and was enriched by the modular and hierarchical use of the four-columned domed canopy that serves as a spatial and symbolic core of Byzantine-rite churches.¹⁴

This analysis can be narrowed down by focusing on the generative design of the triconch churches. They could have derived from fully articulated cross-in-square churches by adding lateral conches along the southern and northern exterior walls either on Mount Athos, as initially proposed by Paulos Mylonas, or in Constantinople and its area of influence, as demonstrated by Stavros Mamaloukos.¹⁵ Their design should also be related to churches built after the 1330s in the Skopian region, starting from the large-scale, five-domed cross-in-square edifices, such as the church of Matejič (ca. 1350), to those of the so-called atrophied versions that have been reduced to a single-domed core, as in the case of the churches at Šiševo (ca. 1334), Matka (before 1371), Devič (probably after the 1350s), and Modrište (probably after the 1350s).¹⁶ The latter group is closely related to the compressed version of the triconch church of St. Andrew in Treska (ca. 1389), which Millet considered an example of the "Morava school" due to its triconch plan—although contextual and

12 See Paulos Mylonas, "Ἡ Ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους" "[The architecture of Mount Athos]," *Nea Hestia* 74 (1963): 189–207; Paulos Mylonas, "Two Middle Byzantine Churches on Athos," *Actes du XVe Congrès international d'Études byzantines*, II (Athens, 1976), pp. 545–74; Paulos Mylonas, "Le plan initial du catholicon de la Grande Lavra," *Cahiers archéologiques* 32 (1984): 89–112; Anastasios Tantsis, "The So-called 'Athonite' Type of Church and Two Shrines of the Theotokos in Constantinople," *Zograf* 34 (2010): 3–11; and Stavros Mamaloukos, "A Contribution to the Study of the 'Athonite' Church Type of Byzantine Architecture," *Zograf* 35 (2011): 39–50.

13 Mamaloukos, "A Contribution to the Study of the 'Athonite' Church," pp. 39–50.

14 Jelena Bogdanović, *The Framing of Sacred Space: The Canopy and the Byzantine Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 251–67.

- 15 See note 12 above. Mylonas also proposed that the conches of the triconch-church plan developed to meet the needs of monastic antiphonal psalmody, whereby two choirs perform while occupying the southern and northern conches. Later sources attest to this practice, which continues on Mount Athos in the present day. The conches of some other contemporaneous and earlier churches have also been used for relics, tombs, and shrines. Thus, the specific functions of the triconch churches and their individual elements, including conches as the most obvious, remain open to further investigation.
- 16 Bogdanović, "Regional Developments," pp. 219–66.

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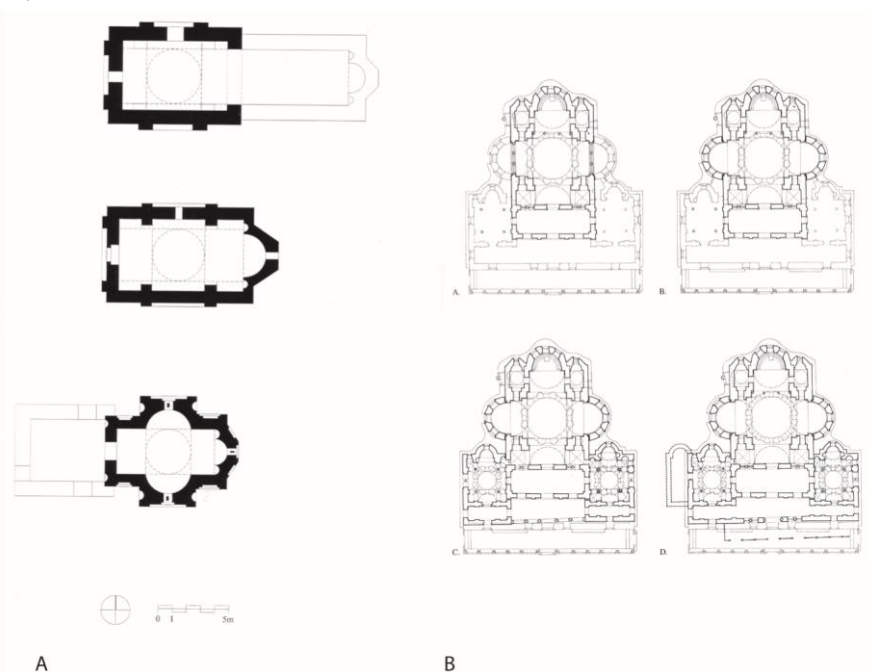


figure 7.3 Development of triconch churches from cross-in-square Middle Byzantine type:

- a) in the region of Skopje by showcasing the churches at Šiševo, Matka and Andreaš (after Ćurčić and Bogdanović, drawings by Jelena Bogdanović), b) on Mt. Athos based on the Great Lavra Monastery after Mylonas, drawing by Paulos Mylonas

architectural analyses reaffirm its stronger association with cross-in-square Skopian churches (Fig. 7.3).¹⁷

The architectural design of triconch churches was open to various stylistic interpretations and solutions resulting from the sophisticated understanding and implementation of architectural principles on the part of architects and various building workshops. It is my reasoning that medieval architects and builders fluidly exchanged their architectural ideas and practices beyond state and national divides and strict chronological

thresholds determined by sociopolitical events, two convenient but imprecise demarcations which we still too often use in our studies of medieval architecture. Moreover, the questions I am raising related to nationalist approaches and cultural identities coupled with

17 Ibid; and Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, pp. 637–44, esp. 639. On the church of St. Andrew in Treska as an example of the “Morava School” structure, see Millet, *L’ancien art serbe*, p. 133.

questions related to the methodologies employed in architectural studies may be used to enrich discussions about the creative processes and networks of architectural production. This approach, whereby the focus shifts from a sociopolitical framework to material culture, could extend to the study of other medieval artworks and artifacts, including a variety of portable church objects as well as monumental and smaller-scale images found in medieval structures.

2 Serbian and Wallachian Architectural Connections

Following Millet’s studies, and in particular his thesis that Morava churches represented the final phase of Late Byzantine architecture, scholars of architecture in the Balkans have maintained that triconch churches built in Wallachia—a principality including territories south of the Carpathian mountains and north of the Danube River that gained its independence ca. 1310—were direct offspring of the Morava style brought there by the Serbian monks.¹⁸ Such linearly explained sociopolitical development of post-Byzantine architecture starts in the western Balkans, in medieval Serbia, first reaching neighboring Wallachia and then traveling further northeast to Moldavia. This latter included the territories that remained Christian for less than a decade longer than Constantinople, as Serbia fell to the Ottomans in 1459 and Wallachia became an Ottoman tributary state in 1462. Recently, Alice I. Sullivan has questioned this narrative.¹⁹ She considers multiple lines of artistic and architectural developments and related ideologies hailing from the fluctuating territories of the medieval states of Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary (more specifically related

- 18 See, for example, Georges Balș, “Influence du plan serbe sur le plan des églises roumaines,” in *L’art byzantin chez les slaves: Les Balkans; Premier recueil dédié à la mémoire de Théodore Uspenskij*, vol. 1 (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1930), pp. 277–94; Cyril Mango, *Byzantine Architecture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1976), p. 192; Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, p. 682. For an important historiographical overview of the scholarship on triconch churches in Serbia and Wallachia, see also Alice Isabella Sullivan, “The Painted Fortified Monastic Churches of Moldavia: Bastions of Orthodoxy in a Post-Byzantine World” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2017), pp. 106–07.
- 19 Alice Isabella Sullivan, “The Painted Fortified Monastic Churches of Moldavia,” pp. 106–07; and Alice Isabella Sullivan, “The Athonite Patronage of Stephen III of Moldavia,” pp. 1–46. See also Elisabeta Negrău, “Tipologiile arhitecturale ale ctitoriilor domnești din Țara Românească în secolele XIV–XVI [Architectural Types of Princes’ Church Foundations in Wallachia in the 14th–16th Centuries],” *Analele Universității din Craiova, Seria Istorie* 16, no. 2 (Craiova, 2009): 95–114.

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to the German and Hungarian traditions in Transylvania), and Byzantium.²⁰ Additionally, she provides a detailed chronological overview of the triconch churches in Wallachia and demonstrates that their construction was nearly concurrent with the construction of those in the Morava Valley starting in the 1370s. She further highlights how architecture in Moldavia relates to contemporaneous Byzantine trends in architecture.

My independent research on this topic additionally suggests that the architectural experimentations and plastic treatment of triconch churches built by Serbian and Wallachian nobility within and beyond the territories of their domains were the result of highly complex architectural processes. Simultaneously, the churches became architecturally recognizable, pervasive statements of cultural, religious, and familial identity, rather than national identity alone. In making this claim, I too question established narratives of the autonomous national development of the so-called “Morava-style” churches and their linear and exclusive influence on churches in Wallachia.

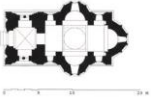

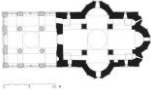

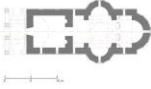

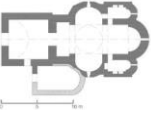

This essay does not aim to provide a comprehensive overview and study of all triconch churches associated with Serbian and Wallachian nobility. Rather, in the following sections, several triconch churches are analyzed to exemplify continuities in Byzantine material culture and triconch Byzantine-rite churches (Table 7.1). In the process, I point out how their legacy was transformed and reinterpreted in architecture north of Byzantium after the 1350s.

The aforementioned church at Lazarica dedicated to the Holy Protomartyr Stephen, possibly a court church of Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović of Serbia (r. 1373–89), and Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović’s

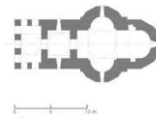
mausoleum at Ravanica dedicated to the Ascension of Christ were both built around 1375–78 and are considered the prototypes of the Morava architectural group. The Holy Trinity Church at Cozia Monastery (1387–91) in Wallachia, built by Voivode Mircea I of Wallachia (r. 1386–95 and 1397–1418), is considered the prototypical example of Wallachian architecture.²¹ The Church of St. Nicholas in Lapušnja

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- 20 The first documented triconch church in Wallachia is the *katholikon* of Vodița Monastery, built under the guidance of the monk Nikodemos/Nikodim around 1374. Shortly afterward, the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Tismana Monastery was consecrated on August 15, 1378. The Church of the Trinity at Cozia Monastery, consecrated on May 18, 1388, became a major example of the Wallachian triconch churches. See Sullivan, “The Painted Fortified Monastic Churches,” p. 107, with references.
- 21 See, for example, Gamaliil Vaida, *The Monastery of Cozia: In the Past and Nowadays* (Câlimănești-Vîlcea: Stăretia Mînăstirii Cozia, 1977); Mișu Davidescu, *Mănăstirea Cozia* (Bucharest: Editura Meridiane, 1968); and Heinrich L. Nickel, *Medieval Architecture in Eastern Europe* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1983), pp. 83–120, esp. 84. The first acknowledged dynastic church of the Wallachian rulers is the cross-in-square Church of St. Nicholas at Curtea de Argeș (ca. 1340). Like Skopian churches, it may have been a precursor

table 7.1 Comparative list of triconch churches in Serbia and Wallachia

Date	Place	Dedication	Donor	Plan	Elevation view
1375–78	Kruševac, Serbia	The Holy First Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović Lazarica	Stephen of Serbia (r. 1373–89)		
1375–78	Ravanica Serbia	Ascension of Christ Hrebeljanović	Prince Lazar Monastery, of Serbia (r. 1373–89)		
c. 1387–91	Cozia Monastery, Wallachia	The Holy Trinity Church	Voivode Mircea I of Wallachia (r. 1386–95; 1397–1418)		
1500–10	Lapušnja Monastery, Serbia	St. Nicholas Princess	Voivode Radu cel Mare (r. 1495–1508) Katalina Crnojević of Zeta, <i>Joupan</i> Gergina, Prince Bogoje and his family		

~1500s? Govora Assumption of Voivode Radu restored



Monastery, the Mother of cel Mare ?; in 16th Wallachia
God restored and Voivodes

17th c.

Mattei
Basarab and
Constantin
Brâncoveanu

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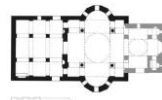
table 7.1 Comparative list of triconch churches in Serbia and Wallachia (*cont.*)

Date	Place	Dedication	Donor	Plan	Elevation view
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1356–72; Great Transfiguration	St. Athanasios remod.	Meteoron of Christ and King and in 1540s Monastery, later monk
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Kalabaka,
Greece

Ioannis-
Ioasaph Uroš
Palaeologos
(r. 1370–
1373, d.
1387/88)
Remodeled

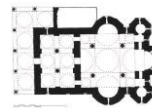


1350s–60s	Koutlouloumou- Monastery, of Christ	Transfiguration	Wallachian establ. siou
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Mount Athos,
Alexandru c.1540

Nicolae re-built
(r. 1344–64)

and
Vladislav Vlaicu
(r. 1364–77)
around the
1350s–60s



Drawings by Jelena Bogdanović and Tianling (Rusty) Xu; photographs by Ivan Krstić (Lazarica), Dekanski (Ravanica), Andrei Stroe (Cozia), Jelena Bogdanović (Lapușnja), Razvan Sokol (Govora), Jelena Bogdanović (Great Meteoron), and Adriaticus (Koutloulousiou)

Monastery (1500–10) in Serbia—built by Voivode Radu cel Mare (r. 1495–1508) and his wife, Princess Katalina Crnojević of Zeta, with the support of Joupan (or local count) Gergina and Prince Bogoje and his family—is a critical example of the perseverance of triconch churches built together by Serbian and Wallachian rulers often connected by family ties.²² In this case, the church

to the later development of the triconch churches in Wallachia. This possibility points to the same paradigmatic development of royal foundations from the compressed—or so-called atrophied—cross-in-square design toward the compressed triconch design. See note 17 above.

- 22 See Branka Knežević, “Manastir Lapušnja,” *Saopštenje* 18 (1986): 83–114; and Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, pp. 788–89.

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was built by a Wallachian ruler married to a Serbian princess. The church at Lapušnja is also an important case because Voivode Radu cel Mare sponsored the church in Serbian territory, which at the time of its construction was then under the Ottoman domain. It demonstrates the significant and diverse building activities shared by the Wallachians and Serbs in the broader area of the northern Balkans.

Another example of complex activities outside established narratives about architecture in the Balkans is the relatively understudied Church of the Assumption of the Mother of God at Govora Monastery in Wallachia, which was possibly originally built by Voivode Radu cel Mare and later restored under Wallachian Voivodes Mattei Basarab and Constantin Brâncoveanu in the 16th and 17th centuries.²³ Two further examples showcase the prolonged tradition of building triconch churches in the much wider region of the Balkans from the 1350s until the 1540s. The first is the *katholikon* of the Great Meteoron Monastery (1356–72) in Greece, which was founded by St. Athanasios and the king and later monk Ioannis-Ioasaph Uroš Palaeologos (r. 1370–73, d. 1387/88) and remodeled in the 1540s when the territory was under Ottoman authority.²⁴ Another is the *katholikon* of the Koutloumousiou Monastery on Mount Athos, which was built during the Ottoman reign in 1540 after its initial establishment with support from Wallachian Voivodes Nicolae Alexandru (r. 1344–64) and Vladislav Vlaicu (r. 1364–77) around the 1350s–60s.²⁵

23 See Radu Florescu, *Mănăstirea Govora* (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1965); and Gherasim Cristea, *Istoria mănăstirii Govora* (Râmnicu Vâlcea: Editura Sf. Episcopii a

Râmnicului, 1995). The still-existing, though severely damaged, fresco of the ktitors (founders) at Lapušnja is closely related to the preserved ktitors fresco from the 16th-century Govora monastery.

- 24 See Konstantinos M. Vafeiadēs, *Holy Monastery of the Great Meteoron: History, Prosopography and Spiritual Life of the Monastery on the Basis of the Written and Archeological Evidence (12th–20th Century)* (Meteora: Holy Monasteries of Meteora, 2019); *The Lives of the Monastery Builders of Meteora: Saint Athanasios of New Patras and Saint Ioasaph the Monk-King, Builders of the Great Meteoron Monastery, and Saints Nectarios and Theophanes of Ioannina, Builders of the Varlaam Monastery* (Buena Vista, CO.: Holy Apostles Convent, 1991); and Theoteknē Metsikosta, *Meteora: History, Art, Monastic Presence* (Meteora: Holy Monasteries of Meteora, 1987). See also Slobodan Ćurčić, “The Role of Late Byzantine Thessalonike in Church Architecture in the Balkans,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 57 (2003): 65–84; Bogdanović, “Regional Developments,” pp. 219–66; and Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, pp. 790–91.
- 25 See Paulos Mylonas, “Le Catholicon de Kutlumuş (Athos),” *Cahiers archéologiques* 42 (1994): 75–86. See also Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, pp. 789–90; and Sullivan, “The Athonite Patronage of Stephen III of Moldavia,” pp. 1–46.

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3 Implications of the Serbian and Wallachian Connections

My major findings touch upon issues of patronage, national identity, the training and practices of builders, and some typical and atypical features of triconch churches that may provide more nuanced understandings of their architecture. These sumptuous, memorable triconch structures reveal royal and aristocratic patronage that was occasionally strengthened by intermarriage between the Wallachians and Serbs and that was based on their shared identity of Orthodox Christianity, rather than national identity. The concept of national architectural schools is essentially a late 19th-century and early 20th-century convention.²⁶ While detailed typological analysis in a given region is undoubtedly important, it also localizes studies of architecture, leading to oversimplifications and overemphasis on the role of architecture as a mere tool for documenting and supporting the sociohistorical narrative. So often we miss an opportunity to study larger groups of dispersed buildings based on their shared architectural features across a wider geographical scope. The simple example of triconch churches on Mount Athos and the Great Meteoron Monastery in Greece reinforces the undeniable and long-lasting connections between Byzantine and Constantinopolitan architectural traditions and opens questions about the exclusivity and linearity of Serbian-Wallachian architectural developments after the 1350s (Fig. 7.4).

The training and practices of builders are occasionally revealed through textual sources, inscriptions, and patronage based on family connections between the Serbs and Wallachians. By extension, this evidence points to

the possibility that patrons had access to the same building groups or those trained in a similar idiom. Following the initial research by Millet, both Cyril Mango and Ćurčić in their architectural studies demonstrated how the building of prototypical churches in the Morava and Wallachia regions—that is, Lazarica and Cozia, respectively—resulted from the historically attested activities of monks, who were predominantly responsible for the geographically widespread exchange of ideas and concepts about the buildings' design.²⁷ As a consideration of those involved in the church's design, the donors' inscription from the church at Lapušnja confirms not only the shared commitment

26 See also notes 6, 19, 21. The concept of the “national style” for Morava-style and Wallachian churches is continually used in major books on Byzantine architecture. See, for example, Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, p. 192.

27 Gabriel Millet, “Cozia et les églises serbes de la Morava,” in *Mélanges offerts à M. Nicolas Iorga par ses amis de France et des pays de langue française*, ed. Nicolae Iorga (Paris: J. Gamber, 1933), pp. 827–56; Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, p. 119; and Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, p. 682.

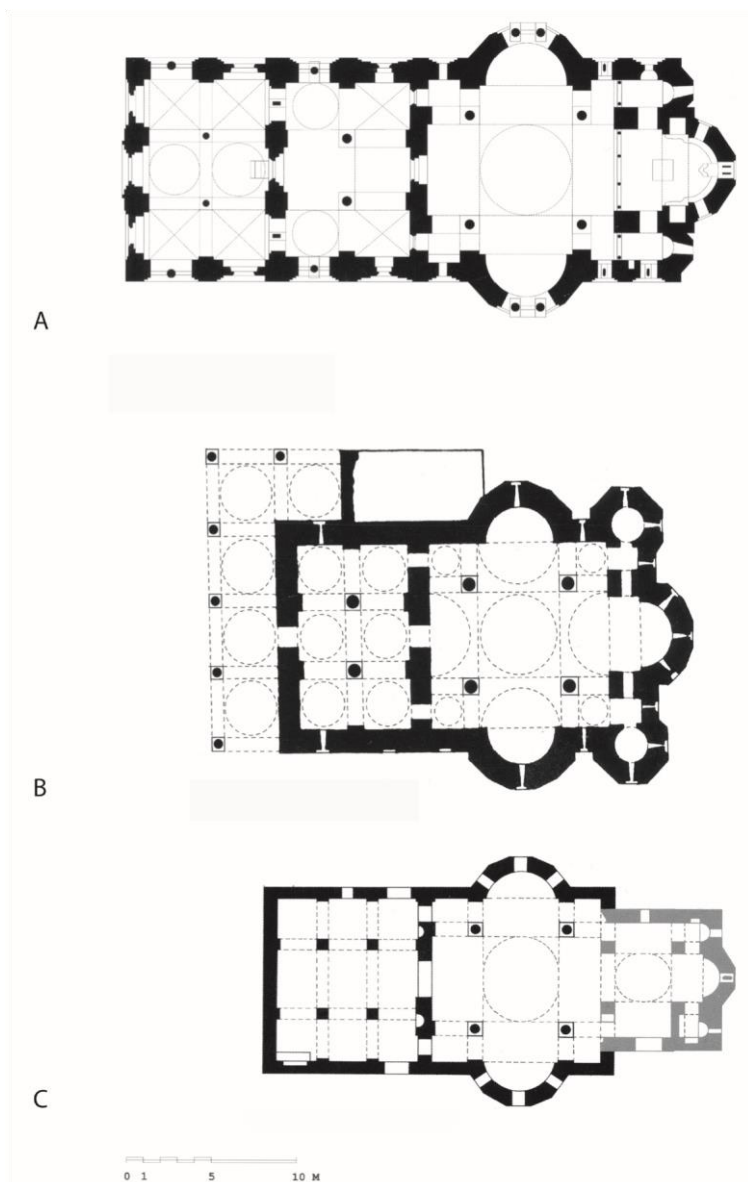


figure 7.4 Serbian and Wallachian triconch churches in the territories of Byzantine Greece: a) Serbian Monastery Hilandar, Mt. Athos, Greece, established 1196–98, rebuilt ca. 1300–11; b) Wallachian Monastery Koutloumousiou, Mt. Athos, Greece, established 1350s–60s, rebuilt ca. 1540; c) Transfiguration of Christ, Great Meteoron Monastery, Kalabaka, Greece, 1356–72, remodeled in 1540s by St. Athanasios and king and later monk Ioannis-Ioasaph Uroš Palaeologos (r. 1370–73, d. 1387/8)
drawing by Jelena Bogdanović

of Wallachian and Serbian rulers but also of hieromonks—in this case, the monks Gelasios (ca. 1500) and Theodor (1510).²⁸

The obvious architectural similarities in the construction of the churches at Lazarica and Cozia, including the idiosyncratic use of elegant, vertical colonettes for the exterior-wall articulation of all three conches in both churches, indicate a high possibility that the churches were built by, if not the same building workshops, than certainly building workshops trained in the same idiom (Fig. 7.5). Similar use of half-engaged vertical colonettes in the exterior of the Constantinopolitan monastery of Christ Pantokrator (now Zeyrek camii), which was built during the Middle Byzantine period ca. 1118–34, was followed by other, opulent examples of Late Byzantine architecture, such as the late 13th-century and early 14th-century additions to the Chora, Pammakaristos, and Constantine Lips monasteries, and these highlight the Constantinopolitan imperial aesthetics.²⁹ This atypical but memorable architectural decoration shows that the inclusion of likewise-articulated, half-engaged vertical colonettes in the 14th-century foundations of Serbian and Wallachian rulers was not arbitrary, but instead a highly educated choice. The churches of Lazarica and Cozia are further related in their compact design—here pointing to a sophisticated articulation of monumentality understood not through size but rather by means of recognizable architectural aesthetics.

Architecturally, all churches analyzed in my research share the triconch typology, be it a fully developed or compact plan (see Table 7.1). At the same time, shared features point to a variety of plastic solutions for buildings with different functions and meanings. As such, they cannot easily fit categorical and straightforward typologies related to the function of a building, which is essentially a modernist method we still retroactively apply when studying medieval structures. The lens of material culture allows the structures themselves to yield historical insights about the people who built and used them through the presence of physical continuities and discontinuities. The majority of the monastic triconch churches, such as the well-known Athonite Hilandar, demonstrate that the triconch plan basically developed by adding lateral conches to the typical cross-in-square church with a fully established three-partite sanctuary commonly seen in Byzantine-rite churches.³⁰ The entire concept

28 See Knežević, “Manastir Lapušnja,” pp. 83–114.

- 29 See Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, pp. 361–64, 533–45.
 30 Ibid, pp. 653–55. See also note 12.

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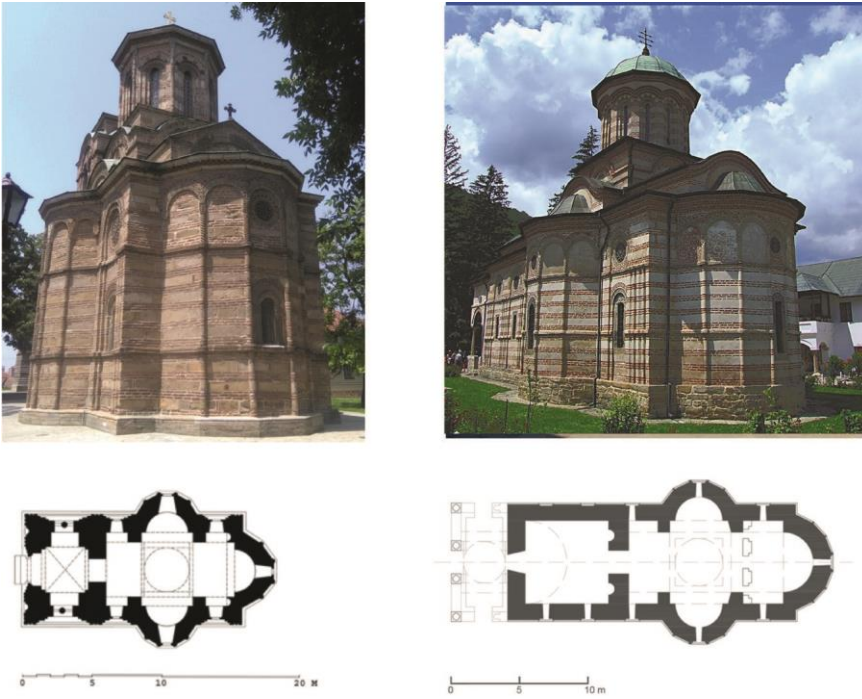


figure 7.5 Comparative analysis of typical examples of triconch churches in Serbia and Wallachia, with exterior views and floor plans: a) Church of the Holy Protomartyr Stephen (Lazarica), Serbia, ca. 1375–78, sponsored by Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović of Serbia (r. 1373–89) (photograph courtesy Ivan Krstić, drawing by Jelena Bogdanović); b) Holy Trinity Church at Cozia Monastery, Wallachia, ca. 1387–91, built by Voivode Mircea I of Wallachia (r. 1386–95; 1397–1418) (photograph by Christian Chirita, drawing by Tianling (Rusty) Xu)

was later literally adopted in Ravanica, the church that exemplifies the Morava group (Fig. 7.6).³¹

Some other triconch churches, such as Lazarica, another prototypical example of a Morava church, are actually compact solutions without a developed tripartite sanctuary.³² The design for Lazarica may be explained by its urban context and the high possibility that it essentially functioned as a

³¹ See Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, pp. 674–75; and Branislav Vulović, *Ravanica: Njeno mesto i njena uloga u sakralnoj arhitekturi Pomoravlja* [Ravanica:

Its place and role in sacred architecture of the Morava Valley] (Belgrade: Republički zavod za zaštitu spomenika culture, 1966).

- 32 See Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, pp. 671–73; and Ristić, *Lazarica i Kruševački grad*, *passim*.

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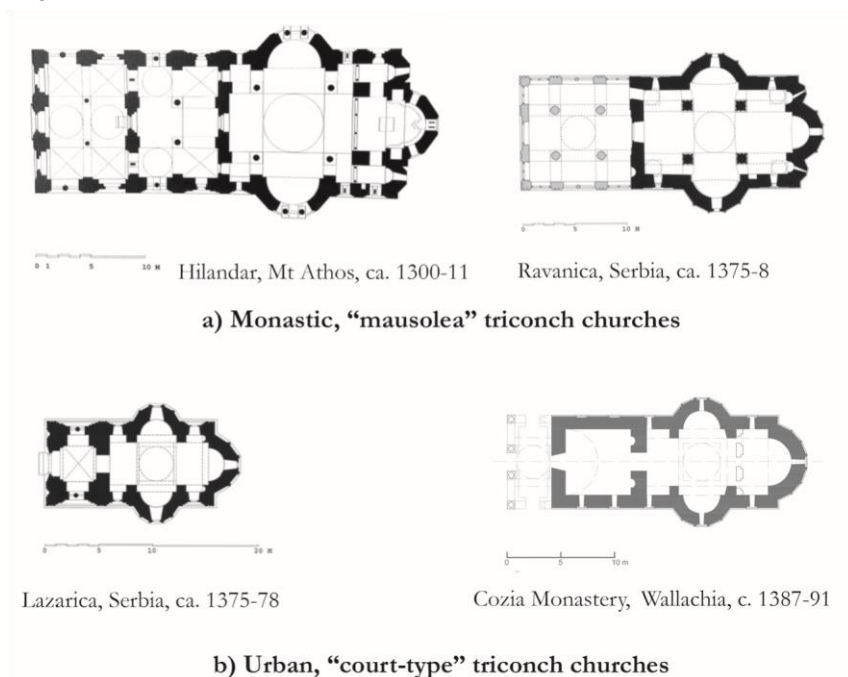


figure 7.6 Monastic, “mausolea” triconch churches: Hilandar, Mt. Athos, ca. 1300–11, and Ravanica, Serbia, ca. 1375–78; b) urban, “court” triconch churches: Lazarica, Serbia ca. 1375–78, and Cozia, Wallachia, ca. 1387–89

drawings by Jelena Bogdanović and Tianling (Rusty) Xu

court church.³³ Furthermore, in its design and architectural articulation, Lazarica can be directly related to Cozia, a Wallachian example of a “court” type of church. Yet Cozia is also a royal mausoleum. It was larger than the Lazarica church, and its size approaches the Ravanica church in the Serbian context. The latter church was a mausoleum actually built within the monastery. Hence, with regard to the function of Cozia, the structure emerges as a hybrid of a court and a mausoleum church. Its urbanity is the result of being located not in a city but rather in a monastic setting of high density. Layered, multifunctional structures within the complex additionally reflect urban usage.

The compact exonarthex of the Cozia church with the central domical vault may be related architecturally and conceptually to the use of central domical vaults in dynastic monastic and funerary foundations. These

appear in sizable Morava churches including the aforementioned Ravanica (1375–78), which was the royal mausoleum of Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović, and Ljubostinja

33 See Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, p. 673.

(ca. 1389), which was built by Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović's wife, the Serbian Princess Milica Hrebeljanović (née Nemanjić), to be her monastic foundation and mausoleum.³⁴ A third example is Manasija (also known as Resava, 1407–18), which was founded by the son of Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović and Princess Milica Hrebeljanović, the Serbian Prince and Despot Stefan Lazarević, as his own major monastic foundation and mausoleum (Fig. 7.2).³⁵ This emblematic use of canopied, domical vaults in central narthex bays was often combined with impressive opus sectile work, as in the case of the still-preserved narthex of the Manasija church. Such a combination points to the distinctive, multilayered evocations of imperial, funerary, and religious canopied installations that could be further enriched by associated rites for the veneration of the Holy (True) Cross and liturgical Easter celebrations—as were practiced in numerous Byzantine-rite churches that were also imperial. These rites and ceremonies also took place in the ruler's foundations and, recurrently, in their mausolea.³⁶ While scholars have acknowledged imperial references for the veneration of the True Cross and its role in the building of a ruler's Christian

34 See Ljubica D. Popovich, "Portraits of Kneginja Milica," *Serbian Studies* 8, no. 1–2 (1994): 94–95; Zaga Gavrilović, "Women in Serbian Politics, Diplomacy and Art at the Beginning of Ottoman Rule", in *Byzantine Style, Religion, and Civilization: In Honour of Sir Steven Runciman*, ed. Elizabeth M. Jeffreys (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 75–78; Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, pp. 678–81; and Srdjan Djurić, *Manastir Ljubostinja* (Belgrade: Republički zavod za zaštitu spomenika kulture, 1983).

35 See Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, pp. 680–82; Vojislav J. Djurić, *Resava (Manasija)* (Belgrade: Jugoslavija, 1966); and Jadranka Prolović, *Resava (Manasija): Geschichte, Architektur und Malerei einer Stiftung des serbischen Despoten Stefan Lazarević* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2017).

36 On the architectural and spatial integration of canopied vaulted bays with smaller-scale, portable canopied installations during services, see Bogdanović, *The Framing of Sacred Space*, pp. 235–41. For the imperial connections with the veneration of the relic of the Holy Cross and extended ceremonies, albeit without detailed discussion of their architectural settings, see Holger A. Klein, "Sacred Relics and Imperial

Ceremonies at the Great Palace of Constantinople,” in *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft*, ed. Franz Alto Bauer, *BYZAS* 5 (2006): 79–99; Holger A. Klein, “Constantin, Helena, and the Cult of the True Cross in Constantinople,” in *Byzance et les reliques du Christ*, ed. Jannic Durand and Bernard Flusin (Paris: Association des amis du Centre d’histoire et civilisation de Byzance: 2004), pp. 31–59; Jelena Bogdanović, “The Relational Spiritual Geopolitics of Constantinople, the Capital of the Byzantine Empire,” in *Political Landscapes of Capital Cities*, ed. Jessica Christie, Bogdanović, and Eulogio Guzmán (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2016), pp. 97–153, esp. 117–18; and Jelena Erdeljan, “Trnovo: Principi i sredstva konstruisanja sakralne topografije srednjevekovne bugarske prestonice / Tŭrnovo: Principles and Means of Constructing the Sacral Topography of a Medieval Bulgarian Capital,” *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 47 (2010): 199–214.

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identity, little is known about the architectural settings of such ceremonies.³⁷ The historical record remains predominantly silent about the possession and use of the relics of the True Cross in Serbia after the 14th century. The relics were last documented as guarded by Mara Branković (ca. 1416–87), a member of the last ruler’s dynasty of medieval Serbia. Some references point to their division and dissemination as gifts to the Athonite Vatopedi monastery but also to Italy, Russia, and elsewhere.³⁸ Nevertheless, the reminiscent references to the ceremonial religious and imperial stations of the True Cross, including the central domical bay of the narthex of the ruler’s foundations and mausolea, should not be underestimated.

In her work, Danica Popović details the use of the relics of the True Cross in medieval Serbia and additionally highlights the healing ceremony using water sanctified by the True Cross as documented in Serbian hagiographies.³⁹ Very little is recorded regarding the site of such ceremonies. The rite of the blessing of water by the cross was related to the domed architectural canopy, known as *phiale*, and points essentially to two major locations within the Byzantine-rite churches: in front or south of the western entrance to the church or incorporated within the domical bay of its narthex.⁴⁰ Especially telling in that regard

37 See, for example, Anthony Eastmond, “Byzantine Identity and Relics of the True Cross in the Thirteenth Century,” in *Eastern Christian Relics*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Progress-Tradicija, 2003), pp. 204–61; and Alexei Lidov, “A Byzantine Jerusalem: The Imperial Pharos Chapel as the Holy Sepulchre,” in *Jerusalem as Narrative Space*, ed. Annette Hoffmann and Gerhard Wolf (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), pp. 63–104.

38 See Danica Popović, “Реликвије Часног крста у средњовековној Србији” “[Relikvije Časnog krsta u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji, The relics of the Holy Cross in medieval Serbia],” in *Konstantin Veliki u vizantijskoj i srpskoj tradiciji*, ed. Ljubomir Maksimović (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2014), pp. 99–121, esp. 110; and Ida

- Sinkević, “Afterlife of the Rhodes Hand of St. John the Baptist,” in *Byzantine Images and Their Afterlives: Essays in Honor of Annemarie Weyl Carr*, ed. Lynn Jones (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 125–41.
- 39 Danica Popović, *Relikvije Časnog krsta*, pp. 99–121, esp. 107–08, with references to Domentijan, *Живот Свемога Саве и Живот Свемога Симеона* (Život Svetoga Save i Život Svetoga Simeona), ed. Radmila Marinković (Belgrade: Prosveta and Srpska književna zadruga, 1988), p. 142; and Teodosije, *Жумуја* (Žitija), ed. Dimitrije Bogdanović (Belgrade: Prosveta and Srpska književna zadruga, 1988), p. 202. Both sources record the healing ceremony using water sanctified by the True Cross. Moreover, Popović locates this practice in medieval Serbia within a wider network of healing practices and ceremonies using the remnants of the True Cross, as studied by Anatole Frolow, *La relique de la vraie croix: Recherches sur le développement d'un culte* (Paris: Institut français d'Etudes byzantines, 1961), pp. 174, 195, 251, 334; and Holger A. Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das “wahre” Kreuz: Die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004).
- 40 On *phiale*, see, for example, Bogdanović, *The Framing of Sacred Space*, pp. 241–43; and Bogdanović, “The Phiale as a Spatial Icon in the Byzantine Cultural Sphere,” in *Holy*

is the triconch design of the Pătrăuți Church of the Holy Cross, the oldest surviving church of the Moldavian ruler Stephen III, also known as Stephen the Great, which was built in 1487.⁴¹ The Pătrăuți *katholikon* is highly comparable in plan and size to representative monastic churches in the Morava Valley built by Serbian rulers, such as those of Naupara, built by Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović in the late 14th century, and Ljubostinja, built by his wife, Princess Milica Hrebeljanović (see Figs. 7.1 and 7.2). Even if the *katholikon* at Pătrăuți is architecturally articulated as a mixture of traditionally recognized Byzantine- and Gothic-style elements, in my opinion, its floor plan belongs to the compact version of the triconch with a single, square bay of the narthex and a domical vault.⁴² The domical vault may be related to its evocative imperial references and veneration of the Holy Cross in this eponymous church. Moreover, this monastery, one of the few Moldavian foundations built during Stephen III's rule and one populated by nuns, initially was intended for healing and care of the wounded from the battles around Suceava.⁴³

While noteworthy architectural elements shared by select churches may point to specific functions and rituals within, it is also possible for them to reveal some shared architectural practices and roles of the building workshops. The undeniable architectural and spatial resemblances between Lazarica and Cozia indicate potentially the same builder(s), who may have used similar and highly sophisticated, generative architectural designs for the two churches. The question of the use of architectural concepts by building workshops becomes even more complex when we consider the *katholikon* of the Koutloumousiou Monastery (see Table 7.1). The church demonstrates the renewal of building traditions on Mount Athos under Wallachian nobility in the

Water in the Hierotopy and Iconography of the Christian World, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Theoria, 2017), pp. 372–96, with further references.

41 See Gabriel Herea and Petru Palamar, *Pătrăuți 1487—Monument UNESCO* (Pătrăuți: Heruvim, 2015); Gabriel Herea, *Pelerinaj în spațiul sacru Bucovinean* (Cluj-Napoca: Patmos, 2010); and Gabriel Herea and Petru Palamar, *Pătrăuți* (Suceava: Asociația Prietenii Bucovinei, 2011).

42 See Herea and Palamar, *Pătrăuți 1487*, passim; and Nickel, *Medieval Architecture*, pp. 87–88. On Gothic and Byzantine references in Moldavian churches, see Dragoș Năstăsioiu, *Gothic Art in Romania* (Bucharest: NOI Media Print, 2011), pp. 30–49; Alice Isabella Sullivan, “Western-Byzantine ‘Hybridity’ in the Ecclesiastical Architecture of Northern Moldavia,” *Romanian Medievalia: Thraco-Dacian and Byzantine Romanity of Eastern Europe and Asia Minor* 12–13 (New York: Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality, 2015): 29–49; and Alice Isabella Sullivan, “Architectural Pluralism at the Edges: The Visual Eclecticism of Medieval

Monastic Churches in Eastern Europe,” in “Marginalia: Architectures of Uncertain Margins,” special issue, *Studii de Istoria și Teoria Arhitecturii / Studies in History and Theory of Architecture* 4 (2016): 135–51, esp. 141, 146.

- 43 See Gabriel Herea, *Pătrăuți*, online at www.biserica.patrauti.ro, accessed April 22, 2019.

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1540s. Its architecture demonstrates recognizable regional characteristics of Athonite architecture, which since Middle Byzantine times adhered to a developed triconch design. Simultaneously, and seen through the lens of Byzantine architecture, this church also strongly references architecture in other parts of Byzantine Greece, beyond Mount Athos. Among those referenced are the massive triconch churches within both urban and monastic contexts, such as the Church of Prophet Elias in Thessaloniki (ca. 1360s–70s) and the *katholika* of the monasteries of H. Demeterios at Mount Ossa (1543) and H. Dionysios at Mount Olympos (16th century).⁴⁴ Such a wide chronological and geographical span elucidates the perseverance of design principles and goes well beyond a simple explanation of building workshops based on master-and-apprentice practice or the unquestionable relationships between the architectural form and function of a given structure. In my opinion, this phenomenon points to more developed and sophisticated architectural training and practices.

In my research on medieval architecture, I distinguish the role of architects and their use of various design principles from the work of builders who were responsible for the actual construction at the building site and who may or may not have been aware of all the nuances of highly complex architectural concepts. The lack of textual evidence about the architectural training of medieval builders as well as the nonexistence of surviving architectural drawings in the wider Mediterranean region after the 7th century are usually taken as definitive proof that medieval architects were merely master builders who oversaw construction.⁴⁵ By embracing more recent methodologies stemming from the studies of material culture, the buildings themselves as material evidence challenge this proposition about the lack of architects and architectural practices. The profession of medieval architect, indeed, may have been significantly different from the one established during the Renaissance or early

44 See Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, pp. 792–93, fig. 907.

45 Based on our inability to confirm systematic architectural education in the Mediterranean basin after the 7th century, Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 174–78, suggests the nonexistence

of architectural drawings. Robert Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2008), p. 58, similarly embraces the opinion that architectural drawings were not used in Byzantium. I concur with Slobodan Nenadović, *Gradjevinska tehnika u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji* (Belgrade: Gradjevinska knjiga, 2003), pp. 46–49, who, based on the architectural evidence itself, claims that preparatory models and schemes were used within the Byzantine realm.

I discuss this topic also in Bogdanović, “Regional Developments,” pp. 219–66.

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modern periods.⁴⁶ Whether medieval architects and builders used some essential design tools that had been applied in architecture since antiquity, such as grid or proportional systems, and whether they communicated their designs by using plans, drawings, or models are hotly debated topics in Byzantine scholarship.⁴⁷ We may even speculate that donors and monks, who are often mentioned as creators of sacred architecture, communicated their ideas about architectural projects through more luxurious, three-dimensional tools, such as models.⁴⁸ Similarly, the role of a few surviving architectural drawings has

⁴⁶ See, for example, Catherine Wilkinson, “The New Professionalism in the Renaissance,” in *The Architect: Chapters in the History of the Profession*, ed. Spiro Kostof (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 124–60.

⁴⁷ Among the texts that address the opposing views about the architectural design processes and the role of architects and building workshops are Richard Krautheimer (with Slobodan Ćurčić), *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 238–57; Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium*, pp. 58–127; Marina Mihaljević, “Change in Byzantine Architecture: Architects and Builders,” in *Approaches to Byzantine Architecture and Its Decoration*, ed. Mark Johnson, Robert Ousterhout, and Amy Papalexandrou (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 99–119; Bogdanović, “Regional Developments,” pp. 219–66; Bogdanović, *The Framing of Sacred Space*, pp. 251–63, 299; Σταύρος Μαμαλούκος [Stavros Mamaloukos], “Από τον σχεδιασμό στην κατασκευή: Ζητήματα εφαρμογής στη βυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική / From Design to Construction: Aspects of Implementation in Byzantine Architecture,” *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 4, no. 39 (2018): 83–97; and Magdalena S. Dragović, Aleksandar A. Čučaković, Jelena Bogdanović, et al., “Geometric Proportional Schemas of Serbian Medieval Raška Churches Based on Štambuk’s Proportional Canon,” *Nexus Network Journal: Architecture and Mathematics* 21, no. 1 (2019): 33–58. On the role and meaning of architectural models and drawings in Byzantium, see, for example, Чedomila Маринковић [Čedomila Marinković], *Слика подигнуте цркве: Представе архитектуре на ктиторским портретима у српској и византијској уметности* [The image of the built church: Representations of architecture in donors’ portraits in Serbian and Byzantine art] (Belgrade: Bonart, 2007); Slobodan Ćurčić, Evangelia Hadjistryphonos, et al. *Architecture as Icon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Evangelia Hadjistryphonos, “Presentations and Representations of Architecture in Byzantium: The Thought behind the Image,” in *Architecture as Icon*,

pp. 113–54; Maria Cristina Carile, “Buildings in Their Patrons’ Hands? The Multifunctional Function of Small-Size Models between Byzantium and Transcaucasia,” *Kunsttexte.de* 3 (2014): 1–14; and Dominik Stachowiak, “Church Models in the Byzantine Culture Circle and the Problem of Their Function,” *Novae: Studies and Materials VI. Sacrum et Profanum*, ed. Elena Ju. Klenina (Poznan: Instytut Historii UAM, 2018), pp. 243–56.

- 48 The role of monks in spreading architectural building types and styles across vast geographies is well attested to, as when the monk Nikodemos from Mount Athos was mentioned as involved in the construction of the Cozia monastery. See also note 20. On the proposition that neither the donors nor the artisans but, instead, specially trained individuals were fully aware of the cultural and theological references behind the design of sacred space, see Alexei Lidov, “The Creator of Sacred Space as a Phenomenon of Byzantine

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not been adequately explained.⁴⁹ Architectural drawings have been used in Western Europe and potentially in the Byzantine periphery, on the borders with the West, since at least the 13th century.⁵⁰ The use by painters in the 1400s of preparatory working drawings to depict important iconographic scenes in monumental church painting, known as *anthivola*, has been confirmed not only through texts that record their existence in wills and selling deeds, but also by the few late-medieval *anthivola* that remain.⁵¹ The existence of *anthivola* opens the possibility that similar schemes and preparatory drawings were used for architecture as well. Certain atypical but shared architectural features of the built structures analyzed in this essay reinforce the high possibility of the existence of architects and architectural designs, including how these related to building workshops. Architectural drawings and models could be circulated over a prolonged period. The triconch churches analyzed here were built over hundreds of years, from ca. 1350s until ca. 1550s. This expansive period includes multiple generations of builders, who would typically work for some 20 to 30 years in a given locale. The triconch churches were likewise built across far-flung territories. In this study of Serbian-Wallachian architectural domains, the concepts of triconch design were derived from various corners of the territories of the former Byzantine Empire, including its centers in Constantinople, Thessaloniki, and Mount Athos. They then expanded further north and to the territories of medieval Serbia and Wallachia. For example, the sanctuary of the Great Meteoron near Kalabaka, Greece, was remodeled in the 1540s from what was essentially an older, 14th-century cross-in-square church with a tripartite sanctuary and an original but atypical access point to the sanctuary only through the prothesis to the north (see Table 7.1).⁵² Exactly the same solution for the tripartite sanctuary was adopted in the early 1500s for St. Nicholas Church at Lapušnja in a rural area of eastern Serbia. The entire solution of basing

such a triconch structure on the cross-in-square design is in this case more closely related to the earlier and contemporaneous solutions of

Culture,” in *L’artista a Bisanzio e nel mondo cristiano-orientale*, ed. Michele Bacci (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2007), pp. 135–76. On the question of models, see note 47 above.

49 Again, see note 47 above.

50 See Nenadović, *Gradjevinska tehnika*, pp. 46–49.

51 See Maria Vassilaki, ed., *The Hand of Angelos: An Icon Painter in Venetian Crete* (Farnham, Surrey, UK, and Burlington, VT: Lund Humphries in association with the Benaki Museum, Athens, 2010); and Vassilaki, “From Constantinople to Candia: Icon Painting in Crete around 1400,” in *The Hand of Angelos*, pp. 58–65. I thank Alice Sullivan for her suggestion to point to *anthivola* as an important counterpart of similar drawing tools used in architecture.

52 See note 24 above, and especially Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, pp. 790–91.

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Athonite monastic churches, rather than, strictly speaking, Morava churches, and especially not those of the urban, court type.

4 Conclusion

It is notable and telling that some of the churches discussed in this essay were built after the fall of Constantinople. In fact, the majority of these churches were built when Serbia and Wallachia were under the Ottoman domain. When one considers the current scholarly narrative through the lens of Constantinople that church architecture in the Balkans declined after the downturn of Byzantine architecture—especially in Islamic territories, which witnessed the rise of mosques and other Islamic religious structures—it might seem paradoxical or surprising that these churches are remarkably sizable and architecturally impressive. The churches share certain aesthetic qualities, such as the attenuated proportions, the “pyramidal” clustering of volumes, and the use of predominantly stone and stone-and-brick construction. Most also demonstrate highly sophisticated architectural articulation. Occasionally, exterior architectural elements and their uses—as in the case of the distinctive engaged vertical colonettes framing the conches—represent recognizable features of Constantinopolitan imperial architecture established in Middle Byzantine times. Therefore, such atypical, idiosyncratic features suggest a subtle eclecticism and their ultimate source in Byzantine material culture. Somewhat modest sculptural decoration following the definite economic and political decline of Serbia and Wallachia, indeed, points to fluctuating

possibilities for the use of secondary architectural elements, like exterior architectural decoration, beyond the building envelope. In that regard, for example, Lapušnja has moderate architectural decoration and is much closer in its appearance to post-1330s Skopian churches rather than the more exuberant and chronologically and territorially closer Morava churches (Fig. 7.7).

The methodological question of establishing the cultural context of artistic and architectural traditions and the architectural considerations here expanded upon through several examples of triconch churches in Serbia and Wallachia may be further extended to the examination of the churches' interior and exterior decorations and to artistic accomplishments and churches in other geopolitical domains. By expanding beyond the territorial and chronological domain of triconch churches built by Serbian and Wallachian nobility ca. 1350s to the 1550s, the research definitely demonstrates that the state and national divides that have been used to define and explain the churches north of Byzantium are essentially modern and incorrect constructs. Indeed, 192



figure 7.7 Church of St. Nicholas, Lapušnja Monastery, Serbia, 1500–10, sponsored and built

by Voivode Radu cel Mare (r. 1495–1508), Princess Katalina Crnojević of Zeta, Joupán Gergina, Prince Bogoje and his family, Hieromonks Gelasios (ca. 1500), and Theodor (ca. 1510)
 photograph by Jelena Bogdanović

Serbian and Wallachian rulers and nobility were major sponsors of monumental structures, yet especially their joint projects reinforced a primary aim—to maintain their common Christianity above distinct ethnic identities. At a time when Mount Athos was the foremost center of Orthodox Christianity, its recognizable triconch churches—originally stemming from Middle Byzantine Constantinopolitan traditions—seemingly became the most desired and predominant architectural paradigm. It has already been revealed that monks, such as the Athonite monk Nikodemos, originally from Prilep, could have been responsible for enabling the transmission of architectural concepts for triconch churches that were widely dispersed in the Balkan regions and as far removed from one another as were Morava Valley and Wallachia.⁵³ That these monks—as representatives of the medieval intellectual elite—also shared ar

⁵³ See notes 20 and 48 above.

chitectural drawings or models is highly possible, based on the architectural solutions of the built structures themselves, although this is almost impossible to prove due to the lack of explicit historical texts. The design of triconch domed churches is highly complex, and the ability of architects to promote and modify these plans to achieve diverse spatial solutions across remote territories and over hundreds of years should not be underestimated either. This focus on architecture and concepts of architectural design as inseparable parts of material culture within wider networks of their production and reception, and well beyond national identity or territory, points to vibrant, continuous, and enriching processes within the developments of Byzantine and postByzantine architecture.

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